

### 13. DIRTY DEEDS

My instruction has already proved worthwhile. Alea is becoming an accomplished writer. She knows how to put together a tightly wound plot. She is just having trouble with point of view. Her characters seem cold and remote. They don't seem motivated by what affects everyday people. They don't laugh and cry. They are these cardboard cutouts that you find in mystery novels. Even then, she doesn't know how to involve the reader in her situations.

"Mystery novels need some desire to move the story along."

"Are you saying that I need to add some sex?"

"This is all about motivation. The protagonist needs to be willing to put himself in a compromising situation. You have to exaggerate his pleasure, so that the character would do anything to get this taste of paradise."

So the novel has to be a tale of punishment. He has to feel such guilt from the beginning of the story, that he feels paradise is his only way to escape his feelings of worthlessness."

"And your female lead? She has to mimic all the emotions felt by the protagonist.

Where he has a soul, she has none. That is what ultimately makes her so dangerous."

"Why do you make the female inferior?"

"She is actually the superior one. She is not held down by the strictures of conventional morality. She can do whatever she pleases."

"This seems fascinating."

"It is. The model adds another level. The woman is disassociated from all social groups. All things that give us our normal view of the world. She has almost crossed over into a supernatural realm. She conveys this to the guy. That is what excites him. He can taste it even when he is with her. He feels that power. He is driven by it. It is worse than the fever for gold."

In the abstract, my lesson makes total sense to her. But it is harder to make it work in an actual story. She favors the ideas of the bad seed. Like in the movie *Psycho*. Some incident in the past has planted the seed that creates the propensity for evil. At no time in her life is she ever immune from this influence. She has always been bad. She can't escape her nature.

"I thought that your character wanted to escape the norms."

She asserts, "Down deep she is held by the limits of traditional morality. That is the appeal for the reader. She is afraid of sex. That is why she has to make it so dangerous. It is not about sex. It is about belief. That is desire."

We will see how she has applied her lesson.

I am finished after a long day at school. I am going to catch the train back to my place in the city. She sees me waiting for the train.

"I have to go in the city to do some shopping. We'll ride together."

Alea is in my creative writing class. She is working on a novel, a mystery novel.

"I haven't seen you in a while. I thought that you dropped out until I called the registrar. How is the book coming?"

"Well."

On the way in, she tells me the story.

"Professor, maybe you could meet me later on. I have something that I want to talk to you about."

I agreed to meet her around 7:30 at *Lessons*.

"I've got this problem. I've met this guy. He lives in one of those drab subdivisions in northern Virginia."

I listen carefully.

"I don't why I'm telling you this. But I have no friend that I can trust, and I can't tell my parents. He's married. And he and his wife aren't getting along. You know how it must get when you move so far from true civilization. But like a married guy, he's got to become really comfortable with sex. He makes me feel really comfortable. I feel like we're meant to be together. Only he's still with someone else."

"Go on," I let her continue without saying anything.

"I'm not expecting him to leave his wife. But everything about his life seems so comfortable. He an executive for one of those banking slash credit card firms. You know the ones with the big buildings and stand out logos. They're all over northern Virginia."

"Sound like the CIA!"

"He has a good job. A real good job. But he lives the high life. He lives way beyond his means. You know the fast cars, drugs, a sail boat on the Chesapeake. And she can't keep up any more. She's a bit of a lush. The only way he can keep the lifestyle going is to tap her money. Her father is loaded. Government contracts, kickbacks, the whole rigamarole. So the husband can't get a hold of her money. Unless she had an accident. Now the father has all these FBI connections. And they'd investigate privately if something happened, so it would have to be good. I couldn't be around. The husband couldn't be around. No one."

"Why are you telling me this? I'd say break up with him. He's a jerk."

"I'm having more fun than I've ever had in my life."

"It's short lived. You're going to wake up one day and realize that even the wife has it better with her alcohol problem."

"That's it. It would be so easy to do something to her."

"It might make a good story. That's how far as it goes."

A couple of weeks go by, and she turns in a story about this whole thing. Her murder mystery. Only there's another character. A guy who falls for her."

"This new character makes no sense. What is he going to get out of all this. It's still going to be the husband's money. The new character can't live up in the guest bedroom with the other two."

"He can do it for the money."

No amount of money is going to convince him to do the deed. It's not worth the hassle. The only person who could kill like that would be someone who's done it before. The husband is only going to dump you and no one will get paid. You're story makes no sense. The wife has to be the bad seed. She gets caught. And then she gets blackmailed."

"That's what you have to do. You have to meet the wife."

"She's a prisoner in northern Virginia in one of those military compounds. It's not my job to rescue her."

Alea looks forlorn.

"You should have come to more of my classes rather than try to work on your own. I could have diagramed all of this for you earlier."

“I was having too much fun.”

“I know.”

She needs to go back to the drawing board. She meets this b boy street-tough-wannabe at a dance club. He has nothing to lose. He wants to be the next Jesse James. He makes a play for the wife.

“This seems implausible. The wife is going to have no interest in this character. She’s at home pining for her husband while he’s banging you. Who’s this character going to kill—the husband? He has no money. The wife. So what does he get for it? You’re going to go back to the husband. He needs better motivation. That’s what I’ve been telling you all along.”

She seems crestfallen.

“Ditch this guy in northern Virginia. He’s more trouble than he’s worth.”

She hasn’t got the hang of things. Her story idea is sputtering. Her life is spiraling out of control. She needs a miracle.

Caroline thinks that he husband is having an affair. She could easily divorce him. He has a good job. But he is living beyond his means. She can’t keep track of where the money goes. Her father is still giving them money. She has a trust fund that’s due when she’s twenty nine. It’s only a year away, but at this point it seems like a century. She spends her days in the wasteland of gin and tonics and margheritas. She never starts drinking until late afternoon. She tells herself that it’s in preparation of her husband coming home. But he always gets caught late in traffic. By the time he gets home, she is already zooming on cloud nine.

She muses, “What’s happened to us?”

“We’ve happened to us. We got too close. When you get that close, it gets too honest.”

“Maybe we just want different things.”

“I like the city, and you’re comfortable out here.”

“Meet me in the city some time. I could like it.”

They want to reconcile their estrangement. He agrees to meet her in Washington for lunch.

The meal starts well. She is eager to please. She has been shopping. She looks great. He starts to remember old times. It all makes sense. He wants her.

But by the time she finishes her entree, she feels the disgust. She looks at him. She can’t stand his hair. Nothing about him.

He has to leave early. He arranges the bill. It is now raining. She is standing outside the restaurant.

“Do you need a cab?” the doorman asks.

“No, my car is parked near here.”

But she is not ready to move. She stands there watching the rain fall.

“Nasty weather.”

She looks over at some guy trying to chat her up.

“It is pretty nasty.”

She turns and looks out in the distance. She doesn’t make eye contact. He keep talking. She doesn’t listen.

“Does someone need rescuing?”

She wonders where he appears from.

“I saw you across the way. I could see that guy was a drag on you.”

“Oh, that’s nothing. He’s not here any more.”

“You gave him the silent treatment.” She looks in his eyes and smiles. He has bright blue eyes.

“What are you doing now?”

“I was going home. I live in the south suburbs.”

“Have you had dessert.” She didn’t know this person. She hesitated.

He jumps in, “You didn’t. I can tell by your hesitation.”

“I’m on a diet.”

“What? You look great. You can always use a little chocolate.”

“You’re trying to seduce me with candy. My mother told me to keep away from strangers with candy.”

“Your mother probably didn’t have the kind of life that you did. You need some cheering up.”

He certainly was right. “What’s your name? Mine’s Caroline.”

“I’m Brian.” Brian had a waiting umbrella. He knew a great pastry shop near the restaurant.

They sit together over dessert and coffee. When you’re riding a passion high, risk is everything. The chocolate only kicks in that buzz that is her stock and trade. After all the talk, it is nearing the hour that she would normally be sipping a drink or two. It’s never pleasant to drink alone.

“We’re adults. Do you know somewhere that we can get some adult beverages.”

He snickers. They trail off to find a local saloon.

With a few drinks in her, she has bathed in the fountain of youth. If she feels years younger, he is noticing that girlhood magic in her.

“You want to hang out at my place for while.”

She knows what this means.

“Look at yourself. You’re in no shape to drive.”

She realizes that she in shape for a little mischief. Too much mischief.

“Brian, I’m married. You may be used to this sort of thing. But it’s a change for me.”

“I just thought we could chill out before you have to hit the road.”

She wants to miss the rush hour. She consents to go back and watch a movie. Her tolerance for alcohol is pretty great, but today she feels out of it. She falls asleep while watching the television. When she wakes up, it is almost 8.

“I need to get home. My husband is going to beat me home.”

Kevin is already there when she walks in.

“Where have you been?”

He feels an advantage over her.

“I did some extra shopping. Before I knew it, it was late. I thought that I’d wait out the rush hour.”

“I guess you found out that it’s almost impossible to wait it out these days.”

Kevin is seeming extra nice. She hates it. She wants him to be his usual ordinary self. The prick that she has learned to hate.

She is thinking about Brian. About him inside of her. She didn't do anything today But she might as well have done it.

The next day she leaves the house a little while after Kevin. She parks her car at the Kiss-Ride and takes the train downtown. She goes to same sweet shop. It is almost noon. She orders a pastry and some coffee. She waits there for about an hour. Some guy is reading a book across from her. He is trying to make eye contact. He looks up after he reads a few pages. Then he looks down again. It is his ritual. She will not give him any play. Her impatience builds to the point that she simply leaves to go about her business.

She takes the next step. She rings up Brian's apartment. He seems groggy.

"Sure, come on up."

He is just getting up. He went out drinking after she left.

"I was trying to forget you. I don't think it worked. Now you're in one of my nightmares."

She laughs. He seems without a care in the world.

"Do you even work?"

"I design web sites—on my time."

"You're funny."

He is sitting on the couch trying to open his eyes.

"Let's get some lunch. My treat."

She is up for the game.

When they return to his place after lunch, there is only one thing on her mind. He is such a adept lover. He massages his way deep inside her. He is such an adept love maker. His hands divide her body into two so that only he can complete that rift. When they are apart, she aches for his touch. She lives to have him inside her.

Each time that she sees him (it has become a regular thing), they hardly say a thing. She feels speechless until he make her whole. Her whole body sings with their connection. She floats endlessly and endlessly on. She is in a trance.

As she accustoms herself to his body, her transport becomes entirely physical. She welcomes the sport. Her workouts push the body. She has prepared herself for this exertion. But he is taking her beyond. She longs for pure physical stimulation. It takes her to the brink of insanity. Nothing but his body, his sex. His skin radiate all his power.

She is on the verge. She cannot help but break down. She drinks less. She lives for his body. She has now crossed into another realm. She floats on air. She barely touches the ground.

One day they are at lunch after a particularly exhausting session together.

"My husband is having an affair."

"I wonder what gives you the right to be so moralistic."

"We are doing something real. He is only taking. He does not know how to give."

"I want to believe that. I just feel so selfish."

"I want you to kill my husband. I want you to kill Kevin."

"Divorce would be a much better option."

She seems enraged."

"Divorce is not part of my vocabulary."

He wants to teach her a new word. She will not hear of it."

“He will try to tie me up in court. He has no money. I have money. He’s only good dead. At least I can get his insurance money.”

“It’s out of the question. I’m a lover not a fighter.”

She encourages him to come to Virginia. She picks him up at the train station. They head back to her place while Kevin is at work. She takes particular pleasure from her activity in her own bed. She is brazen. She does not even change the sheets.

“What if he complains?”

“There is nothing to complain about.”

It keeps getting worse.

“I despise Kevin. He makes me want to vomit.”

Kevin realizes the distance. He tries to patch things up. She plays along. She even makes out with him. She has learned new techniques from Brian. Kevin thinks that she really cares about him. It keeps him hanging on. She has to do something.

A bad snow prevents her from going into the city. She goes on a bender. Brian tries to get out.

“Hey, girl.”

He sees Alea, an old friend.

“Let’s go get some coffee.”

“What have you been doing?”

“I’m still at George Mason.”

“I miss you. You have to come back to the house.”

They go back to Brian’s after coffee. They make love as they have in the past.

“Brian, you know that we can never get together again. I’m seeing this man.”

“Really.”

“Yeah.”

“Tell me about him.”

“He has lots of money. But he’s married. His wife will never give him a divorce. She says that it would destroy his life. But they can’t stay together.”

“Watch out. That sounds like a terrible situation.”

They agree to see each other the next week to talk.

The weather clears the next day. Caroline comes over. She realizes another girl has been there.

“What have you been doing?”

“You’re getting possessive on me. You’re married.”

“This is special.”

She wants him to feel the same way for her that she feels for him. How can she make him feel that way?

She wants to punish him. She refuses to come visit him the following week. He meets Alea for coffee.

“You want to come over to my place.”

“I thought that you had a lover.”

“Come for old times’ sake.”

“I can’t. That would be like trying to start again.”

He is desperate. Caroline refuses to take his calls. He feels that he is losing his power. Girls look down when he stares at them on the street.

He hops a train to Virginia. From the station, it is a long cab drive. He is willing to pay.

“What are you doing here? I told you that I didn’t want to see you. Come in. I don’t want my neighbors seeing you. What am I going to sa?. Everyone knows everyone here.”

“Tell them that I’m your drug dealer.”

“That’s going to sound even better than my home delivery lover.”

They laugh. They embrace in the hallway. He has sex with her on the stairs.

“You can’t stay here. I’m going to have to take you back on the train.

That evening Caroline is still in her short dress. It is warm in the house. Her husband looks at her well-shaped legs as she ascends the stair. He wants her.

“Honey, not now. I’m going to get dinner ready.”

She does not want him inside her ever again. She feels like she is violating him.

“You’re home early today.”

“I had a meeting then I was finished for the afternoon. I wanted to avoid traffic.”

She wonders if he saw Brian at the station. Probably not. I has been a while.

She is now clever about her visits. She is a drug, and she is monitoring the doses. Brian recognizes his addiction. He will do anything for his fix.

One day, she feels like they have gone further than ever before. Can the body take any more?

“Brian, I need you to come see me at my place.”

She plans the rendez-vous. She starts off by pouring candle wax on his body. He relishes the pain. It makes the release inside her seem all the more potent.

She convinces him to tie her up.

“I want you to talk mean to me.”

“You miserable slut, I’m going to kill you.”

“More, more.”

“If you think that this is something, you haven’t seen anything yet.”

“I want you to be even more extreme. And I’m going to try to fight you off.”

“You miserable whore, I ought to kill you.”

“How did you get in here?”

“I can come in whenever I like.”

Later on she compliments him.

“That was fantastic.”

She is surprise by how much she has enjoyed it. She doesn’t want to talk about it. He only feels shame.

“If it is pleasurable for you, I’ll do it. It just seems a little sick.”

“I just want you to give me what I need. I always do the same for you.”:

“What you want or what you need.”

She keeps getting more bizarre. He finds that he is finding more and more extreme ways to satisfy her hunger. Afterwards, their love making is so full of abandon. He has never felt anything like it. He cannot think of anything else. He wakes up in his own bend, and thirsts to be inside her.

Her family visits the next week, and she is not able to get together with him. Now he is suffering. When she calls him back, he is like a trained dog. He will do anything.

She wonders if he is capable of doing the deed.

“My husband has found out about us. I think he has the ammunition to take everything from me.”

“You haven’t made tapes or anything.”

“Don’t worry. We just have to stop seeing each other. I think that I can win him back.”

“We can’t do that. Not now.”

“We have to. You have to be a man about it. If we’re lucky when things die down, I can come see you in Washington. But never here. Never here again.”

He is crazy with anger. But he needs to hold it in. He needs a plan. He decides that he has to get to know Kevin’s habits. Find out when he is home. Learn his weaknesses, He commits himself just to that task.

Brian figures out a way to disable the motion sensor. He waits in the bushes for Kevin to come home. He sneaks in the garage before the door comes down. He has a tire iron with him. He jumps Kevin the minute that he opens the door to the hallway. He is able to deliver the fatal blow before Kevin sees what hit him.

It angers that Kevin does not struggle. It makes it too easy. He is able to take a life without hardly thinking about it. He hasn’t understood why he has done this. She has no idea that he is here, no idea of his plans.

She is up in the bedroom. She hears a commotion. She calls the police. There is already a cruiser in the neighborhood. It arrives in barely an instant.

“He’s in the house.”

“Don’t shoot me. I don’t have a gun,” Brian screams to the officer.

Caroline is on the stairs.

“He’s the one. He’s the guy who broke in and tied me up.”

The back up soon arrives. Brian is subdued. Caroline is screaming.

“He killed my husband. He would have killed me if you hadn’t have arrived.”

“What are you doing to me?”

The police already have the surveillance tapes of him threatening her.

“You fucking whore, I’m going to kill you.”

The detective looks at the tape, “He would have killed her if his husband hadn’t have surprised him that first time.”

His partner looks on, “That guys is one sick mother. It’s too bad we didn’t get him back when he first broke in.”

“It’s him. His fingerprints are all over the place.”

In jail he realizes how stupid he has been in getting set up by Caroline. He tries to remember how suddenly it happened. It was simply the accident of running into her at that restaurant that started it all.

“It was so easy. I just made myself available. He just walked in from there.”

“I told you that he had a weakness for sex. He really thinks that he’s a great lover.”

“Everyone does.”

Alea sat on Caroline’s couch. Caroline continued talking, “How did you get him over



there at that moment.”

I called him from across from the restaurant. I told him I needed one of CD's. He was watching you from the moment that you came out of the restaurant. He has a weakness for blondes.”

“You're not blonde.”

“That's why we'd never survive together.”

It seems that Kevin went down pretty quickly. Would it have been in his interest to fake his own death? Once he is out of the way, Alea's role in the plot becomes clear. She had been setting him up from the beginning. He has been entirely too pliant at every step in the way. Also, his desire to reconcile with his wife could have jeopardized the plan. But she can't let him suspect that she is involved with another man.

The real question is whether Brian has the nerve to execute the attack. It's one thing to be pissed off. It's quite another to enter a man's home with the idea of actually killing him. Would he need the help of Caroline to pull it off? Wouldn't it be more appropriate for Caroline to have an accomplice that night. Imagine if she was tied up already. She couldn't very well do it to herself and also warn the police.

It is critical that police already be in possession of a surveillance tape from the night of Brian's apparent failed attempt. How could he have gotten past the alarm that night? The police would have to accept Caroline's story at face value. This might be difficult given Brian's protestations about his own innocence. She no doubt would have to use her influence in the community to direct the investigation in her favor. But if they could actually pin the whole matter on her, she would be a bigger catch.

I question Alea whether she accepts her role as the silent partner.

“Kevin never would have been able to touch her money after her death. It would have all gone back to the family. His only solution would have been to wait until Caroline inherited. I didn't want to wait that long.”

“How did you make acquaintance with the wife?”

“I did it on my own. I took your advice. I saw how Kevin was dawdling around. He never could have made the necessary decisions to effect his plan. He was waiting to be found out.”

“Why didn't she want to kill you?”

“I gave her the opportunity to escape a life that she hated.”

“What about a divorce?”

“She knew that Kevin could drag that out until her trust fund was actually community property. It was all for the best.”

Alea had all the answers.

“What about your apparent sympathy for the victim. You took a man's life. Not only some man, but a man who you apparently loved.”

“He was persecuting Caroline.”

“She seemed to be letting it happen.”

The conspiracy relies on Brian's concupiscence. Even Caroline's apparently spiritual awakening is submitted to her homicidal impulses.

Alea philosophizes, “Caroline needed to liberate an assertive side of herself. That got the

plot in motion. Once she had been affected by Brian, she figured out how to influence him. It was brilliance.”

She continues, “Kevin is the only one who seems to have gone through no spiritual enlightenment.”

“He doesn’t deserve to die for that reason. He simply wanted what Caroline already had. Security. Old money.”

“But he was using his position. Look how he treated me.”

It appears that Alea is trying to pawn the bulk of the plot on my inculcation.

“If you hadn’t awakened me to the possibilities, I’d still be lost in a hopeless affair.”

“So I did this to you.”

“Almost.”

“How?”

“Your designs on me. You wanted me to be a criminal. This would have confirmed your moral superiority.”

“You’re making the argument. Wouldn’t you have been more superior if you had resisted my influence?”

“I had to do it before I realized the full extent of your influence.”

“That lets you off the hook.”

“No, it put you on one.”

“That would suggest your next course of action is to kill the maker.”

“Since you say that, are you already read for me to do that?”

“It transfers any apparent guilt from me to you.”

“Isn’t that what you wanted all the time?” She is trying to corner me. But is her strategy fraught with danger since she assumes that I set the plot in motion from the beginning. How could the teacher have missed the crucial final step?

“I don’t want to get my hands dirty.”

“They already are soiled.”

“But you have to finish the plot on your own. You don’t have Kevin around to do your dirty work.”

“He could do it while out on bail.”

“He’s not going to get out on bail in Virginia. It’s not DC. Not in a community like that.”

“Are you saying that there aren’t criminals roaming the streets there?”

“They have better covers. That was Caroline’s skill.”

“So I’m learning well.”

“You have two teachers. I only feel that I am somehow being schooled by all of you.”

“You’re letting yourself off the hook.”

“The thing that astounds me about the both of you is that you are using your guilt to focus your homicidal impulses. Your conscience only makes you more deadly. Moreover, you get someone else do the dirty work. Ultimately, the state is the ultimate executioner.”

“If this isn’t a case for the death penalty, I don’t know what it. We didn’t make Brian do it. We just found the circumstances that made it more likely that he would be caught. Once he had tasted the rewards, this was his eventual outcome.”

“You were only giving him a test, and he failed. Now you want your credit for playing teacher. But your student is facing death.”

“He’ll probably do life. His lawyer will get them to go light on him.”

“There is no parole for murder in Virginia.”

“You’re making that up.”

“I could be the last step in the conspiracy. I’m getting you to incriminate yourself.”

“Whose good would that be? Caroline? I’ve already documented how she used Kevin from the beginning. I’m not stupid.”

“Let’s just say I’m working for a higher power. It’s one thing to entertain these conspiracies. It’s quite another to act them out.”

“You encouraged me.”

“I was teaching you to write a story.”

“But the only way to realize all the details was to live them. You knew that. I was already involved with Kevin. That just ran its natural course.”

“Murder?”

“I did what I had to do.”

“I still don’t grasp your motivation.”

“You made me see something about myself. I was only being used by Kevin. Once he got rid of Caroline, he would have dumped me. He would have tried to pin the murder on me. Once those people have a taste of power, they’re not going to let go.”

“You’re trying to turn murder into a revolutionary act.”

“Yes, I am.”

“You’re no different than they are.”