

Warning: This book contains adult content and language.

# DISHONOR THY WIFE

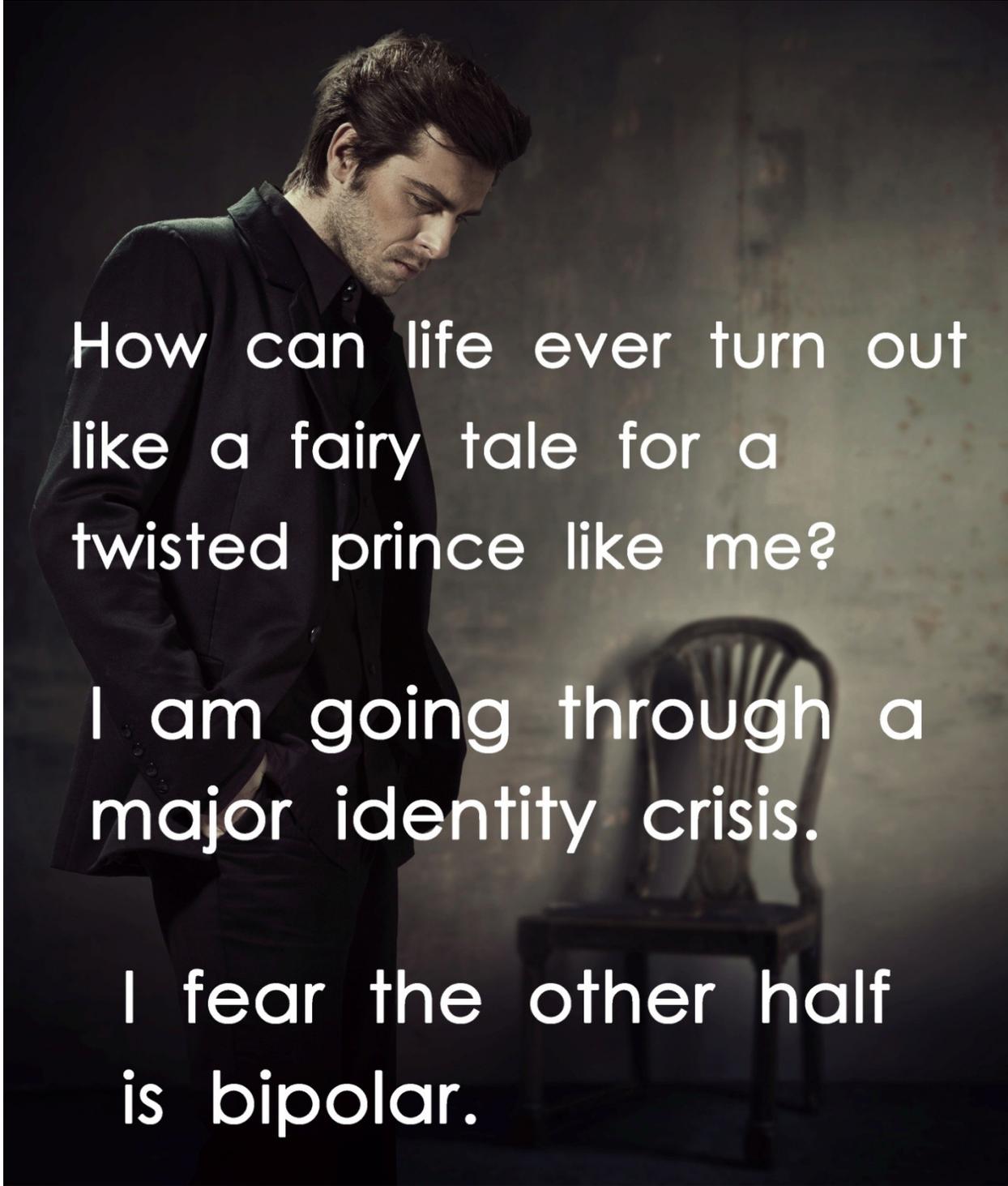
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By

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A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit, is looking down and to the right. He is standing in a dimly lit room with a textured wall. In the background, there is a dark wooden chair with a curved back. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

How can life ever turn out  
like a fairy tale for a  
twisted prince like me?

I am going through a  
major identity crisis.

I fear the other half  
is bipolar.

August 27, 2015

A CRAZY JEALOUS MAN LEFT BLOODY FOOTPRINTS LEADING TO MY MASTER BEDROOM and enough DNA evidence to hang me. The police claim I am the star of murder shot by a camera on a tripod. I do know the victim, which makes my incarceration even stickier. Her picture hangs on the wall of my bedroom and get this; she is wearing a wedding gown.

Nevertheless, I am *not* the maniac who filmed a movie starring himself knifing a woman to death. I confess to being photogenic but not to slaying a woman. I am a heartbreaker, not a killer, a deceiver, not a liar. Yeah, there is a difference.

Some men laugh when they are nervous; I recite music lyrics. The group *Pulp* has a raw edge that grates my soul. “You’re the body hidden in my trunk. You’re the last drink I never should have drunk. You are the cut that makes me hide my face. You are my secrets on the front page every week.”

According to the *Bible*, I am an adulterer—my alibi is another man’s wife. The *Book of Exodus* quotes that *the sins of the father are visited upon the son*. Well, my father, whoever he is, should have kept his pants zipped up—like father, like son! *Exodus*, right—I should have fled across the border to Canada earlier but wanted to protect her.

Running away was cowardly, abandoning her unconscionable, and there are enough sins on my plate.

*Do not trust anyone—above all her, my sweet alibi! If she ever finds out how many lies I have told...no, make those untruths, a kinder, gentler word.*

Handcuffs blister my wrists. The cops will be here any moment to torture me into a confession. Officer Big Boobs will smother me with her chest. She calls me her *psycho lockup* and flirts. How sick is that?

My trouble started at a bar in Philadelphia and one too many drinks of AMF.

Hell, my snake pit really began on the day I was born.

Sh! There are footsteps outside the interrogation room.

\* \* \*

## Part One: The Game

May 23rd; Austin, Texas 13 Weeks Earlier

### Chapter 1

Glaring from the screen of my ebook-reader was the cover of a book downloaded at Kennedy airport—*How to Be a Good Husband for Dummies Whose Wives Are Clueless about What Kind of Shits They Are Married to or just how Far the Cheats Will Go to Get what They Want*. I must have been smashed while waiting for the plane to Austin to agree to a scheme so distasteful, illegal, immoral, so...

I yanked out a prescription pad with the name *Dr. Brad O'Boyle*, and scribbled with a shaky hand. Note: Call in the morning and tell him I want to back out. The scam is too risky. We will be caught!

~~Note: Call in the morning and tell him I want to back out. The scam is too risky. We will be caught!~~

Crap! He would call me a weak pussy for changing my mind. He might laugh in my face as he did when he first proposed the conspiracy at the medical conference in Philly. He talked me into treachery by drowning me with liquor and his words “we should be best friends. Long time no see!”

My nerves rattled so much I could not remember the wife's name. *Think! Think, you moron! Jackie Daniels? Ginny Beam? Cherry Brandy? Sherry Wine?*

Well here goes, one foot in front of the other, only about 20 steps from the car to the door. Empty miniatures rattled in my suit pockets. Wheeling a suitcase helped my mobility, like pushing a wheelchair.

Damn keys would not open the frickin' garage door! Maybe this last key, the one shaped like a guitar could open a hole like a rock star.

The light sensor of the laundry room blasted my eyes like a *Star Wars* lightsaber. I hummed two verses of the Darth Vader Imperial Death March. “Dum dum dum, dum dee dum...what what is the wife's name?”

Oh, God, why did I consent in Philly to such a wicked scheme? I grabbed a paper sack near the sink and breathed into the bag to avoid passing out from hyperventilation. A picture of a bridal couple leered in the harsh light of the den. That mousy brunette in the picture was my wife, but at least she was temporary. Like mother, like daughter, her mom had been a stripper. In the wedding photo, she appeared the opposite of her mother, more like a nun dressed in a simple wedding gown of bone-colored satin with jet-black hair pulled back from her pinched face. She resembled a Mormon wife from a polygamist compound or one of Charlie Manson's girls with eyes wide open like a zombie.

I sang some drunken notes to the Rolling Stones song, *Sympathy for the Devil*.

Speak of the devil; she shuffled into the den. “You’re home,” she said in a flat voice.

*How very observant of you, my dear. One would think you had a brain.* I was too chicken to voice my sarcasm. I guzzled the rest of my martini, choking on onions, olives, and maybe toothpicks. Quick, I flipped through mail on the kitchen counter and glared at the name *Ronni O’Boyle* stamped across a department store bill. Right, Ronni was a short, masculine name for Veronica, a shopaholic who sucked a man’s credit cards dry. The woman was a ball buster, born on the wrong side of the tracks. She dropped out of high school at 17 and recently earned her GED. She was now attending college to become a dental assistant. Whoop-de-do! Trailer-trash Ronni won the lottery when she married a doctor.

Well here goes, now it begins, a devious plan concocted in Philly. “You look nice, Ronni.” Wow! My voice had gone up as if she clenched my balls because the wife looked unbelievably sexy. In soft light, she appeared almost pretty with her hair mussed. One strap of her t-shirt drooped over her shoulder.

Okay, down boy! Quit picturing how she would look with pointy nipples tingling with excitement, and legs spread wide, hips humping. I cursed the desire welling inside my dark soul. I must not sleep with her—ever! That was our agreement. “Ronni?” I said in a eunuch voice.

“Well, who were you expecting, Brad? Fool!”

Next to the wedding picture was a photo of a child, supposedly my daughter. The oldest trick in the book was to trap a man with pregnancy.

“No one calls me a fool and gets away with it!”

She ran towards the stairs.

My legs were longer and I grabbed her arm, laughing at her kicking and missing.

I spun her around, trapping her with my arms. Our bodies touched everywhere and I held her even tighter. “You smell of jasmine,” I moaned, lowering her to the stairs and raining kisses across her neck. Her wiggling aroused me beyond belief. I throbbed, pounding with such pressure; all I could think of was easing my pain in Ronni. My blood rushed to that one spot where my need was desperate. At this moment, the act was worth any price. Guilt could come later. I closed my eyes, and muttered, “God, I promise to say ten Hail Marys later even though not Catholic.”

I shoved her hand on my pants, rubbing her palm against me. “Please, I need you, Ronni. Feel how much I want you. I need you so much, Ronni. Please, stroke me, pet me. Yeah, that’s it. More!”

She quit struggling and groaned.

I removed my hand and she continued rubbing. Squeezing. Pulling. Caressing.

My breath came in deep gasps. “Unzip me,” I panted and tugged at the zipper of her pants, my fingers clumsily poking her.

“Ouch, get off me you oaf!”

She slapped my cheek hard, sobering me, making me remember who we were and that bed was out of the question between us. “Again, Brad? You’re raping me again?”

I stood, straightening my pants and feeling rather sheepish about the rape thing. I plunked down on a step to conceal my throbbing arousal, looking like a petulant child. Any moment now, I might have a temper tantrum—Ronni really should give out to her husband. She was a tramp, just as her mother had been.

“I wish you stayed in Philadelphia permanently, Brad, or the plane crashed,” she snapped.

I never struck a woman in my life and clenched my hands into fists, resisting the urge to punch her. It took a minute for my pants to deflate. I then stumbled up the stairs, banging my ankle against the last step.

At the end of the hallway was a view of a woman’s room, decorated with flowers and all that female crap, the sanctity of the wife’s four-poster bed.

Ronni narrowed her eyes and hissed. “You know you can’t sleep in here, Brad! Drop dead, sucker.” She slammed her bedroom door, shaking the rafters.

I made a jerking off motion at the closed door. “Far be it from me to invade the sanctity of your bedroom!” It was the liquor else, I would never have attempted sex with Ronni. Nor would I be having a conversation with a door and flipping off the wood. One more drop of liquor and I would try to have sex with the door.

I dropped to my knees poking my eye at the keyhole.

She peeled off her pants, revealing long sexy legs and muscles bulging from still wearing heels. Ah, she was wearing black boyshorts, a woman confident enough with her own femininity to wear a girly take on snug, tiny boxer shorts. Mm, instead of a bulge the panties showed her slit.

She yanked off her blouse revealing a pink lacy bra.

Oops, my knees creaked and my breathing had gone sex heavy. Damn, she quit undressing!

A soaking wet washrag flew across the bedroom, connecting with the doorknob and splashing my eye, startling me so much, I fell on my ass.

I staggered down the hallway trying to find my room. *Have to honor our agreement of no sex with the wife. Must honor our agreement.*

I yanked off my tie but then the sports decor of the other master bedroom, engulfed me with warmth. I hugged each of the trophies of soccer, basketball, football, and even baseball, rubbing my cheek on the cold statues. The trophies went all the way back to Little League and up to high school.

This room was *the* coolest man cave. *Star Wars* paraphernalia and posters of playboy bunnies surrounded the room.

I lay on the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Bedspreed Edition* bare-chested, rubbing my nipples. Desire still heated my blood, and I drilled against the sheets, imagining rubbing inside the wife even though I pushed against Miss January's luscious, wide-open, cherry-red lips. *Yeah, baby, right there where my body throbs with want. Faster. Yeah, move, virgin.* "Oh," I groaned.

Ronni's bedroom door opened and footsteps padded down the hallway, and then pounded down the stairs.

I threw the covers over my head, wondering if the wife heard me acting like a horny teenage boy. Maybe my moans turned her on and she would come to my room. *Please. Please. Please.*

The refrigerator door closed, followed by the garbage disposal grinding up my dick.

What in all that is unholy came over me to attempt to seduce Ronni? At a bar in Philadelphia, I had drunkenly stared at her wallet photo, wishing I never made a deal with...I was no husband, more like an unwanted guest.

Misgivings once more churned my stomach, making my stomach growl with nervous hunger. The kitchen was off limits because Ronni was in her dungeon mixing poisons or doing whatever it is wives do when they plunge their hands into the garbage disposal. The only food in the bedroom was a bag of stale airline peanuts, the salt causing an unbearable thirst in my wine-dried mouth.

There was a bathroom off the bedroom and I shoved my head under the faucet. The mirror reflected water running down my chin. How pathetic to be holding a dirty tissue smudged with semen from having screwed the bedspread. In this light, I appeared ominous—no wonder Ronni acted afraid. Damn Philadelphia, I never should have gone along with the plan! I punched the mirror; shattering the glass and making my reflection appear jagged.

*You deserve to have your face cracked, fool!*

With a shard of mirror, I sliced my neck, just a scratch, to remind me to leave Ronni alone. I can get through these weeks if Ronni keeps her distance, yet my hands shook as I dried them on a towel with the initials BO. An egotist puts his initials on his towels. Once more, I loathed myself for what I plotted for the next weeks.

I lay beneath the covers shivering, dreading going into the office in the morning and pretending that nothing was different and that I had not changed since Philadelphia.

I pulled at my face, feeling the imaginary cracks I had seen in the shattered mirror.

Footsteps pounded up the stairs and Ronni's bedroom door closed.

There. She turned in her sleep.

I closed my eyes, imagining Ronni wearing a pink airy thong sliding up the crack of her butt.

*Okay, get some sleep. Quit walking in quicksand.*

What the fu...? A jarring noise screeched from a radio on the night table followed by a voice blaring, “The National Weather Service in Austin has issued a tornado warning for Travis County, Williamson County, and Hays County. There are multiple tornados headed your way! Blow away butthead!”

Goddamn it was dark like the devil’s assholes—Ohmigosh, I passed out wearing a Darth Vader helmet!

I ripped the helmet from my sweaty head and felt a stirring in the center of my universe—ah, the force awakened. I slammed the off button of the weather alarm radio, groaning about that part of my body. I had done stupid things in my life, but this fiasco was the most idiotic venture.

The National Weather Service in Austin issued a tornado up my rear, twirling my insides, causing stress burps, and a ball tightening right below the ribcage.

For a short time, I could bluff my way into being a good husband. After a couple of weeks, I would be rid of Ronni for good and never have to see her accusing eyes again.

What a roaring start, nearly raping the wife, idiot!

It was only two in the morning, still time for a good night’s sleep to help me face the patients in the morning.

I dreamt of chasing my shadow, which was completely detached with a mind and personality all its own. My shadow laughed wickedly as it ran through a dreary ally punching women, kicking the homeless, and breaking a few necks.

I finally caught up with my shadow, and we jogged on a Philly street alongside a garbage truck littered with stinking corpses.

We ran up the steps of the Museum of Art and bounced, punching each other. (Have you ever done shadow punching and lost?) My shadow raised its fist in triumph like Sylvester Stallone in the film *Rocky*.

The music to the *Rocky* movie played in the background as my shadow and I both swung by our necks beneath a tree in Philadelphia, across from the south facade of Independence Hall.

Odd, no bystanders had cheered our jogging like in the movie, but everyone cheered our hanging. The pigeons were dead in the park.

The weather alarm radio went off again, waking me from the nightmare.

Thank God for tornados!

## Chapter 2

WIFE

Even the cat was relaxed while Brad was in Philadelphia. Brad named our daughter's beige and white tabby cat *Pussy*, thinking it a great joke.

While Brad was gone, *Pussy* meditated, sitting in a yoga pose on Brad's recliner with her eyes closed, legs wide open, whiskers droopy, and tongue hanging out. *Pussy* crossed her paws in Buddha fashion, her claws retracted.

I was relaxed enough to meditate with *Pussy*. There was no Brad yelling, "Ronni, my home looks like a donkey lives here!" Well, Brad, you live here and *you* are an ass.

"What's all this straw on the floor? And cat hair, too! I am gonna drown *Pussy* if you do not keep this house cleaner! *My* house, Ronni! This is *my* house! *Pussy*, quit coughing up hairballs! I am gonna get me a pit bull to clean up your box while you're using it!"

*Meow!*

Brad dropped his suitcase in the den and *Pussy* flung her body against the wall, falling to the floor, unconscious.

Brad must have had fun at the medical conference. His eyes were bloodshot as if he barely survived a weeklong party with nurses jumping from cakes.

His snoring is keeping me awake. Brad has never snored before.

When we lay on the stairs like two stacked pancakes, my nose in his collar, he smelled somewhat syrupy. I forgot liking Brad's sticky sweet smell.

When he removed his body from on top of me, I somehow felt cheated. I actually clenched my hands to keep from hitting him and yelling, "Is that all there is?" It took all my control to hide my shaking desire, and unfulfilled...what? What exactly is missing in this sex puzzle thingy?

Ugh! I wanted to have sex with Brad O'Boyle! Mama was a prostitute and I fear to be like her. *And I am. I am.*

Brad's fingers fluttered like butterfly wings across my vibrating stomach, and stopped...at the center of my universe.

His hand cupped my crotch, pressing against me, the heat of his skin seeping beneath the denim. I actually whimpered.

I now kick the sheets off, writhing on the bed, my hair sticking to my neck. Oh, God where is the cool air? Have I suddenly become a fallen angel? I am mortified to have grabbed my husband, rubbing my hand against the lump in his pants that was so hard and hot even through the fabric. *I hate you, Brad O'Boyle! Do not ever touch me again!*

The stink of a woman was on him, some female sweating between the legs for Brad O’Boyle. Most likely, he drove straight home from his mistress of the dark that tramp Barbie. She must not have put out for Brad, which is why he nearly raped me—again. I was 17 then but should know better now. Brad still insists there is no such thing as date rape. *A guy knows when a girl wants it*, is his motto. Well *statutory rape* has the word *rape*, date or not.

The last time my husband showed any interest in having sex with me was about six years ago. Now, suddenly Brad returns from Philadelphia and is climbing all over me and panting like a horny teen.

My best friend Riley and I, when we were high school juniors, managed to climb out the window one Saturday night and hitchhike to Sixth Street. Yippee, Sixth Street is always one big weekend party with nightclubs and music, where college students hang out getting drunk, begging to get laid. Our butts jiggled in short-shorts with blouses tied above our flat stomachs. We were sticky hot chicks, clicking our stiletto heels up Six Street, sweating up a storm, and rubbing elbows with the midnight crowd. We slapped fake ids of women a decade older looking nothing like us, into the wet palms of bouncers whose eyes never strayed from our boobies.

At the third club, stood handsome Brad O’Boyle, rich intern, lounging against the bar to keep from falling down drunk. We danced or he danced all over me. We talked; actually, he slurred, I talked; and then we began seeing each other in secret.

Do not judge a poor, ignorant girl for trusting a man because of one motion picture show and two hamburgers. I was a naïve virgin who never heard of date rape. When Brad begged to lie on top of me on the grass, I did not know his lump against my leg meant danger. “What is that,” I had whispered.

“I promise not to do anything bad to you, Ronni. You’ll like it, trust me.” He groaned as if hurting. “I need you,” he moaned and stupid I believed a doctor only spoke the truth. Brad needed *me*.

A desperate, naïve girl believes two dates signifies a relationship. She mixes up sex with love, and makes excuses for rape. *He had too much to drink. He is really a good man. He does not apologize because he feels guilty. He really believes all that Love Story movie bullshit about love means never having to say you are sorry, ever*—omens of futures filled with screw you, Ronni!

Tonight, Brad returns from Philadelphia, and his walk is slightly off, as if unsure of himself. He acts passionate with *me*. Tonight, my husband made me long for a loving marriage and then I remember that the alternative to Brad marrying me was prison. My grandfather, Pops, put a shotgun to Brad’s head and threatened statutory rape charges, to force him to marry me because he knocked me up.

I now tiptoe to the bedroom door and snap the lock in place.

Brad is up to something. He actually wanted me and in a sexual way, not his normal way of screwing with my head and my heart. When I was in the kitchen earlier, I grabbed a screwdriver from the junk drawer and hid it under my pillow.

*I'll screw Brad all right, with this!* I lunge at the air with the nine-inch-shaft screwdriver several times. I shift to the other arm. The movie *Psycho* is my favorite. This is fun, quite a workout, *arms of screwdriver steel*. I should videotape myself and upload it on YouTube. *Ronni's Exercise Video—Five Minutes to Sculpting Your Husband*. A million hits!

I wear myself out with plunging and then tuck the screwdriver beneath my pillow. The feel of cold steel seduces me to sleep.

I dream of a big black hole. I grip the sides, trying to climb out as a man with a shadowy face shovels dirt, filling the hole and smothering me.

I wake up in the morning with a gritty mouth and fling the blankets over my head, shivering and coughing.

*Scary, shitty nightmare seemed real.*

## Chapter 3

### HUSBAND

They have a saying in Texas; if you don't like the weather, come back in five minutes. Last night a tornado blew me in from Philly. This morning, the weather alarm radio screeched, "The National Weather Service in Austin has issued a flash flood warning for Travis County, and Williamson County. Drown dickhead!"

I might have missed the toilet in a flash flood and then slipped. How in the hell did I wind up sleeping on the toilet rug?

I do not usually drink until wasted any more but my new best friend from the medical conference hung out in the bars with me for my flight home yesterday or should I say flights home. We rebooked our flights so we could continue to party. We drank our way through the airports of Philadelphia, Boston, and New York where we then separated, me for Austin.

He gave me a goodbye hug and said, "Good luck, and don't be nervous. Everything will go as planned. For a hangover, the Germans eat raw herring with onions and a pickle. Or you could chew the dried penis of a bull like Sicilians do."

*Raw pickled herring with onions or dried bull penis.* I shoved my head in the toilet and vomited up to the eighth level of dry heaves.

No little girl should ever witness her father in his underwear hugging the toilet bowl and stinking of vomit and piss.

Traci stared with big, luminous eyes. She was small for a six-year-old. Her stringy hair made her resemble a scarecrow.

She took a step back with hands clasped behind her back and her face stretched tight.

"You can come in, kid, no need to be afraid of a pint of fermented grain mash. Whiskey after a hangover is like rotten toast with rancid butter." I stood on rocky feet, a black sock sagging around one ankle. I yanked my undershorts higher on my waist. Odd, being shirtless and not wearing pants in front of Traci did not cause discomfort. On the other hand, not having a watch on my wrist made me feel undignified.

The kid had the balls to flush the toilet but seemed shy. After being gone for over a week, a little girl should throw herself in her daddy's arms. *Quit staring kid, as if at an alien. I removed the Darth Vader helmet yet you are still making me feel like I am breathing in an iron lung.*

Traci took a shaky breath.

"Uh, sorry I didn't bring you anything from Philadelphia, Traci. I, uh, forgot."

Traci stood with her hands hanging limp at her sides. The child inherited from her mother a gift for making me feel like a heel. "Well, uh, I have to get ready for work."

"Okey-dokey." She skipped towards the bedroom door.

“Hey, Kid! Have a good day at school, huh?”

The sight of Traci smiling as if she liked me turned my insides to mush.

She waved before she ran out the door and I wiggled my fingers, grinning crookedly. I would have liked to have pecked Traci on the cheek but we did not have that type of relationship.

In the light of day, the bedroom engulfed me with joy, and I giggled like a girl. Each of the photos in the room was of a young boy at various ages and I held the pictures up to the mirror in comparison. I was the young age of 32 but getting older was still a bitch. Nowhere in this thoroughly masculine bedroom were there any pictures of the wife or kid, but then it was a man’s domain.

My head was like a balloon about to pop and my mouth tasted like dog shit.

I felt more human after a shave and shower and was thinking of sneaking out the back door to avoid Ronni and then she yelled, “Come on, Traci, let’s go,” followed by the front door slamming.

There was 45 minutes before work, the house all to myself, and Ronni’s bedroom door was unlocked!

The décor was virginal with a white eyelet, frilly bed cover and a swirly white-ruffled canopy. A row of red and white teddy bears reclined against a mountain of fluffy pillows.

A mirror swept around the dresser so that a vain woman could see not just the front of her face but the sides of her face as well.

A print of a *Gustav Klint* painting hung on a wall. The print was *The Kiss* portraying a couple beneath gold blankets. The man was kissing the woman but held her head at such an angle on her shoulders that she appeared beheaded. The woman in the painting sort of resembled Ronni. Yeah, the wife would look just as pretty with her head cut off and sort of tilting on her neck. One little jiggle and her head would roll down her arm and bounce on the carpet.

One of the dresser drawers was slightly open revealing a row of underpants prettily lined in a row like a garden of delights. Red. Black. White. Navy blue. Lace. Bikini. Hot pink. Sexy boy shorts.

Ronni, Ronni, quite contrary, how do your panties grow?

With silver balls and cock shells and pretty puss all in a row.

My face grew hot when stroking the lingerie. Only a peeping Tom would gawk into a woman’s panty drawer. Jesus, I should have left well enough alone. Now every time Ronni walks by I’ll imagine...I yanked the sexiest panties from the drawer and rubbed the black silk triangle, a thong no more than a crack up a rounded butt and a small tent to hide *Mount Bushmore*. I had never been a thief but now shoved the panties in my pants pocket.

I drove to work, distracted by an image of Ronni modeling her undies. Her underwear so tangled my mind that I got lost for seven minutes but finally found the office.

I felt creepy and transparent walking into the office. *They will know I have changed. They will smell the wolf on me.*

*Whew, the staff is all smiles!*

The redheaded receptionist, Brandy, placed the files of today's appointments on the desk along with the schedule for the week. It was going to be a long day and a half-full bottle of whiskey in the right top drawer of the desk was tempting, but drinking on the job would not be added to my list of sins.

In the left top drawer of the desk was a framed 8 x 10 of a Texas beauty queen with a plastic smile and a greedy look in her blue eyes. A flowery signature was scrawled across the photo: *To Brad, love forever. Your poopsi whoopsi, Barbie.*

Brandy sashayed into the office and dropped a load of file folders on the desk. She leaned across and the top three buttons of her blouse popped open.

I slammed the drawer shut, hiding Barbie's picture.

Brandy whispered in a little girl voice, "I missed you, boss man." She ran a finger down my sideburn.

I pushed the chair back from the desk, grinding the wheels in a nervous whine. "Well that's, uh, very nice of you, Brandy." A wedding ring with a large diamond circled Brandy's finger. "I don't want your husband blowing my head off. Just cool it for now, okay?"

"Yes, doctor huge." She sashayed back out of the office, wiggling her tight ass in an exaggerated fashion.

I tiptoed to the door, locked it, and then made a phone call.

A receptionist, a woman by the name of Irene, answered. "Dr. Tremblay did not come into the office today."

"Jayden canceled all his appointments? Is Dr. Tremblay sick?"

"Dr. Tremblay said you might be calling, Dr. O'Boyle. He said not to worry. Everything is under control."

Under control, huh? That is what he said in Philly.

I gave a heartfelt sigh, my balls sucking into my body and pushing against my kidneys in frozen fear. "Have you ever done anything you've regretted, Irene?"

"Sure. Who hasn't?"

"Well, it was good to hear your voice." I hung up with a shaky hand. Irene had a motherly sounding voice, and I almost confessed everything to her

## Chapter 4

WIFE

It has been a week since my husband came home from Philadelphia and Brad has not turned back into a frog. Hell must be freezing over if my husband has really shed his skin into a new-and-improved Brad.

Our daughter no longer hides behind the sofa when he is at home. Brad sits on the recliner watching television, holding Traci on his lap. He watches the children's station while *Pussy* sits on the arm of the chair, licking her paws and cleaning her fur.

Brad plays computer games with Traci, or reads to her. He helps our daughter with her homework. For the first time in our marriage, Brad is acting like a daddy, and Traci is blossoming.

In the morning, he fixes two bowls of cereal and eats breakfast with Traci. He ruffles her hair and yanks her ear. Giggles fill the kitchen.

"Would you mind driving Traci to school? It's just for this one morning." I try to keep the whiny pleading from my voice because Brad has told me countless times, "When you are in one of your pathetic moods your voice rises, making you sound like a cat in heat."

"Sure, I'll drive the kid." Brad drops a few strawberries in Traci's cereal bowl. He does not scream about how, "I am too busy to drive the damn kid! My job is more important than your measly dental appointment! You are a lazy-ass parasite taking part-time classes yet want me to drive your daughter to school? I put a roof over your head and feed you both, and now you expect me to drive Traci? Well, screw you, bitch!"

Nor does Brad kick over the kitchen chair and throw his cereal bowl at the wall.

"Have a nice day and I hope your visit at the dentist is not painful," he adds.

"Thanks," I mumble, unused to kindness in his voice.

Quick! Run out the door before he changes his mind about Traci!

## Chapter 5

WIFE

This evening, again none of the cars is missing from the garage. Brad has suddenly become a homebody. He even loads the dirty dishes in the dishwasher. A devil does not suddenly change into an angel. The one and only time I ever asked him to clean up the kitchen, he broke all the dishes in the sink. “Oops, sorry, Ronni, slippery fingers. Ha!” He then picked up a carving knife and jabbed the blade at me. He then stomped on the dishtowel and flung it at my face. So forgive me for repeating that the new Brad is odd.

He has never enjoyed reading classics before but Brad sits on a comfortable study chair reading *Pride and Prejudice* of all books and a paperback no less. Brad has always claimed to prefer the *True Crime* genre and reads ebooks but more likely smutty pornographic hard-core erotica.

The study is my homework domain in the evening. I push the power button on the computer and cough as a hint for Brad to take his book elsewhere.

He burrows his rump more comfortably into the leather chair, turning the pages.

*Fine, I am used to ignoring you.* I wrap myself in an imaginary cocoon and pretend Brad does not exist. A prophylactic suddenly comes to mind when thinking of a cocoon, with me inside the silk condom vibrating against the sides because of the condom I found in Brad’s pants. He wore the pair when he came home from Philadelphia. I was not snooping but washing clothes. The condom was labeled *Trustex*; like in *trust your ex to still want to have sex with you until he finds someone else*. The wrapper read that the rubber was made of animal membrane, so of course, it belongs to Brad, and did not leap into his pocket from another man’s pants.

Brad lifts his eyes from the book and stares at my legs, rolling his eyes upward. He boldly stops at my crotch and licks his lips as though he can see what pair of panties I am wearing.

I cannot concentrate on my schoolwork because of the creepy feeling that Brad has been spying on me this past week. He is memorizing my routine. Again, he looks at his watch as I walk up the stairs to bed.

“Ronni, whatever you want, just ask.” he says in a voice that would chill wine.

I toss my head, yet a devil in me makes me shake my behind.

“You’re a tease, spreading your legs under your short skirt.” His voice is hoarse with yearning.

My heart rises to my throat. I grip the handrail, deliberately stopping high enough where he can see my panties. *My hand is shaking and my chest, I cannot breathe.*

He slowly begins climbing the stairs and I spread my legs even wider and bend slightly so my skirt rises.

Brad is looking up my skirt, and I am letting him.

I move my rear slightly, a few times in a humping motion, thinking of pole dancing.

He moans slightly and his footsteps quicken.

I walk slower until he catches up to me.

His fingers walk up the zipper of my skirt and grasps at the clasp.

With trembling hands, I grab his thumb to stop him. *Not here, it is too hot. I am going to faint.* “No,” I manage to gulp out, “the past haunts us, Brad.” My voice cracks with remembrance.

He holds up his hands as though burnt by a hot stove and steps back.

Breathless, I scurry down the hallway to the master bedroom and quietly lock the door.

His knees crack as he kneels in the hallway breathing heavily against the wood. Brad is watching at the bedroom door, his eye to the keyhole.

I perform a slow striptease in the bathroom with the door flung open, humming a burlesque song, and probably looking ridiculous as I throw my bra across the room. I pour glass after glass of water on my head to wet my t-shirt.

I stand, facing the door with breasts thrust out and nipples soaking wet.

Surely, he has gotten an eyeful so I drop to the floor and strip off the rest of my clothing.

I crawl to the bed, not wanting him to see my naked sweaty body.

I slide beneath the covers and listen with my breath in my throat.

There is panting outside the door, and God help me, I grow even more excited and touch myself, imagining Brad in my bed, wanting my husband, remembering how he felt when I squeezed him through his pants.

I throw off the covers and leave the light on, knowing that Brad is watching. I loathe him for making me act like Mama.

At the age of ten, I snuck out of the house to the titty bar Mama worked at. I hid under a table and watched while she stripped in front of leering men. One gruff-looking biker stuck his hand in her underpants, filling her crotch with cash.

When it was the next stripper’s turn, Mama went to the alley with the biker who gave her 10 five-dollar bills.

I hid inside the garbage can with the lid lifted an inch, spying on my alley-cat mama.

The girl I once was with stringy hair, hollow stomach and a face washed with spit, still lives inside me. That poor pathetic child cries out, her heart wringing because her mama abandoned her when she was ten, running off with the biker who didn’t like children.

The child inside me still longs for the daddy she never knew, and searches for *respect* in the face of every man she sees. She tells herself, *I am as good as anyone is*.

I often stroke the fine wood and luxurious leather in my Tudor-style mansion and the girl inside me is comforted. I never really expected love in a marriage, not when my own mama left me and my daddy did not want me. The only time I have had sex was the date rape with Brad.

When I first met my husband, his healing hands made me think, *what a wonderful man he is. Here is a man who saves lives*. Soon after marrying, I learned that Brad O'Boyle is more destructive than healthful.

Well, I was never the brightest kid in the projects and am playing a dangerous game with Brad.

I am masturbating while he spies through the keyhole.

And God help me, for the first time in my life, I am enjoying the power of my sex.

## Chapter 6

### WIFE

Brad is only technically married to me since our marriage is celibate, but if Barbie Simpson was free, Brad might murder me. Ha! I am joking, but still Brad would see me as a threat to his financial health. Pops made sure there was no prenuptial contract, a condition of Brad not going to prison for statutory rape. Brad accused me of not telling him I was 17. “It’s about disclosure, Ronni, full disclosure, something you know nothing about.”

“It’s about disclosure, Brad, full disclosure, something you know nothing about.” Brad never revealed that he was engaged, or that he had a fight with his fiancée Barbie on the day we met. The dumbest lie a girl can tell herself is *he did not tell you about his fiancé because he loves you and does not want to lose you.*

It will take about four years attending college part-time to become a dental hygienist and earn financial independence. Given Brad’s volatile moods, I plan to walk out on him then. I was never mean until my husband taught me to be.

I was not always cynical. When we first married, I was naïve enough to think that his anger towards me would abate and we would have a real marriage and live happily ever after. Brad remained cold and distant all through the pregnancy. Traci was born and the baby should have brought us closer together. We created a life, a miracle, but a child born of a loveless marriage widens the gulf between man and wife.

Brad only became friendlier after we made an agreement to stay out of each other’s way. Giving Brad a peep show last night violates our agreement. All week long, I dress like a nun in long skirts and shapeless shirts, my feet in manly shoes. I hover in a corner expecting him to lash out at me for being like my mother.

The darkness eats away his insides—the darkness he usually shows his wife and child. Brad is resisting his mean urges such as yelling, “Goddamnit, Ronni! I told you to hang up my jeans as soon as you take them out of the dryer! Get your butt over here and iron them!” His rotten behavior is before Philadelphia, and I sniff his shirts before doing the wash but his scent is unchanged.

Traci has become a traitor. A little attention from Brad for the first time in her life and she is all giggles and grins for her father.

This morning Brad says “good morning” and I bark at him,

“Well, who got into your panties?” he says.

“Not you,” I snap.

He laughs as if that is the funniest joke he has ever heard. “Your eyes are puffy and red, like you’ve been crying.”

His gentle voice makes me want to slap him. What has Brad been playing at, acting so nice since Philadelphia, yet his eyes appear cold and his smile is creepy. Last time I told him good morning, before Philadelphia transformed him into a kind man, his response was, “go to hell, Ronni.” He then pushed my coffee cup with lipstick marks away from him. My favorite cup fell to the floor, shattering to pieces. The cup was in shards but I pieced the words together on the ceramic—*My husband went to Vegas and came back a bigger asshole!* The devil will have to stick his pitchfork up his own butt before I ever wish Brad O’Boyle a good morning again.

“Don’t forget about your parents this Sunday,” I remind him before he heads out the door for work.

“Parents,” he squeaks. Brad is quite the mama’s boy yet he pales at the mention of his folks.

“Our usual monthly dinner on Sunday, remember, Brad?”

“Oh, yeah, right. It’s just my mind is preoccupied with work.” He gives me a peck on the cheek as if we are a normal couple.

I am seriously thinking of driving to one of those custom t-shirt places and having them make up a design on a red t-shirt with words printed in bold white:

My husband returned from Philadelphia with his brain tattooed.

Pussy rubs up against his leg now, making me think Brad has changed.

However, can I really trust a cat that licks my husband’s balls?

## Chapter 7

### HUSBAND

The more Ronni ignored me, the more I purposefully threw myself in her direction. I would kneel in the hallway outside her bedroom door after she retired for the night without even wishing me sweet dreams. Every night my eye looked through her door as if the keyhole was a telescope, watching Ronni strip off her clothes and give into her baser instincts. *She wears a see-through red nightie with a big heart on the chest and wedge heels with straps criss-crossing her long muscular legs like a Roman soldier. Yeah, I could ride her like a horse.*

She was so close yet unattainable and driving me crazy with her strip teasing and all the other sex games.

She went out Friday evening dressed like she was meeting a boyfriend so I sat on the den sofa with my arms crossed in front of my chest, waiting up for her. She found me amusing when she got back after midnight!

She kicked off her shoes, aiming the heels in my direction and laughing. She had obviously been drinking. “Why in heaven's name are you staying home? Well I go out to get away from your suffering company! You make me sick with your newfound sweetness,” she slurred and threw a beer can at me.

I must be more careful. Ronni accused me of being up to something.

I began making a rocking horse for Traci. I needed something to unleash my pent-up frustration and the violence of cutting wood helped. When I first walked down the steps to the basement, a wave of guilt struck me. Traci watched me make the horse, her eyes dancing. She chattered away as if a bird set free from its cage. It was unpardonable what I was doing to her and her mother.

To make it up to the kid, I was creating a magnificent wooden horse with real horsehair, leather saddle, and beautifully polished.

Ronni again went out Friday wearing a skirt that barely covered her buttocks and had a big zipper down the front as if she was advertising *Open Me*. I would make one hell of a private eye and did not need the help of a zipper *Yeah, I could take a magnifying glass, bend on my knees, and look up her skirt. Just call me private dicktective.*

I stood with the garage door slightly ajar, spying on her driving away from the house.

Hers was the Chrysler Cruiser, virginal white with fake wood paneling across the sides.

Mine was the Darth Vader Death Star black Mercedes Benz, a car forged in Hades that drove itself home when the driver was sloshed.

The colorless, grey SUV was ours. The color grey was middle ground, but the wife and I could never meet in Middle-earth except on quicksand. Lint grew beneath the gold band around

my sweaty wedding finger—One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them. Except for disliking hairy big feet, I was a fan of *The Lord of the Rings*.

I followed Ronni and with great stealth, parked the black Mercedes several cars behind her Cruiser, watching her walk into a bar a half block from Sixth Street.

I stood on the dark street across from the bar, keys dangling in my hand. I have been tailing Ronni for a while now but her peep show every night had given me the balls to get closer.

I swaggered towards a bar named Lovejoy's.

My cockiness vanished as soon as I walked into the bar. I never used to be so sneaky but since Philadelphia, I have changed. I leaned against the bar, one boot on the footrest, and nervously drummed my fingers against the wooden counter. The bar was carved in the shape of a coffin.

What excuse could I make for being at Lovejoy's when she left the house just fifteen minutes ago? Ronni was already suspicious of me.

Well, hell's bells, America was supposed to be a free country. I had as much right as anyone to be in Lovejoy's.

“Hit me with a beer,” I told the bartender and loosened my tie. I was dressed like a doctor or like an undertaker.

I removed my black suit jacket and slung it across a gold metal pipe that wrapped around the wooden bar. I rolled up the sleeves of my white shirt and yanked a black tie over my head, nearly choking in the process.

I grabbed a mug of beer and guzzled the entire contents. “Hit me again.” I burped.

The rest of Lovejoy's looked more like a living room than a bar. Ronni was sitting on a couch with her back to me chatting with another woman. Her friend, Riley, looked cheap. Her skirt rode up her hips, and revealed a bit of white panty.

Ronni and Riley drank the hard stuff and seemed to be having a serious discussion. Neither paid attention to the men in the bar ogling the women. I walked quietly with my hand hiding my face, and then stood against a counter across from them and eavesdropped.

Ronni said, “Brad just seems so different. He is somewhat sweet, you know? He actually fried me eggs for breakfast on Sunday.” Ronni's shoulders slumped and her chest sunk in. Her voice sounded heartbroken. “I almost hoped...”

“You and Brad might have a happily ever after?” Riley raised an eyebrow. She took out a cigarette and lit the cancer stick. Riley then sucked on the cigarette, turning her face sideways to prevent smoke blowing in Ronni's face.

“Traci runs down to the basement every day when she comes home from school just to stare at the pieces of the rocking horse he's making. I swear that horse will rock Traci to heaven when Brad is finished with it.”

“Are we talking about the devil Brad, your husband? Well, I would not trust him. How can a man and woman live in the same house together for over six years and not have sex? Brad has always been a bastard. Your husband propositioned me one time.”

“I know,” Ronni said in a small voice, “but that was a long time ago.”

“That a-hole wanted to have sex with me only because it would be a coup to sleep with your best friend and forever put a wedge between us.” Riley turned her face in my direction and blew cigarette smoke.

I shoved my hand in front of my face.

“Well. Well,” Riley said, “Your hubby is spying on us.”

Ronni swung her head over to me and my heart beat so fast everyone at Lovejoy's must have heard my blood pumping. I threw some bills on the bar top, grabbed my jacket, and turned towards the door.

*Do not even look in her direction, you ass. You will only make things worse.*

Ronni jumped in front of me, blocking my path. “Are you following me, Brad?”

“I, uh, came over here to play pool.”

“We have a pool table at home.”

“I wanted a beer.”

“We have beer at home.”

“We don't have my favorite homebrew that is sold only at Lovejoy's.”

“Are you, uh, meeting someone here?” She bit her lip.

“Nope. Not meeting anybody. No plans. I'm all alone.” I sighed as if I was the loneliest man on the planet. “How about you and I play a game of pool, huh?”

“Mm. We have that pool table at home but you and I have never played a game. What shall we play for, money?”

“If I win,” and my voice dropped two octaves, “you give me what I want.” A sensual gleam lit my eyes and a grin split my face. My voice filled with intimacy making this bar seem too small for the two of us.

“And if I win?” she softly said and swallowed.

“Then, I give you what you want,” I said in a voice that implied she must want the same thing.

“Anything?” She grinned.

“Anything.” We shook on the deal.

I stacked up the balls and Ronni broke them.

I raised my eyes to the ceiling and silently swore. The woman knew her game. Three balls went in on the first break. “Hustler,” I muttered.

“Excuse me?”

“Nothing.” Damned if my pool stick skipped and nearly tore a hole in the green fabric of the pool table. I always had bad luck with green felt but figured Ronni would be an easy win.

She chuckled and I gave her a dirty look.

There was nothing like the public humiliation of having your ass kicked in public by a woman. In just four shots Ronni announced, “Eight ball, left corner pocket.” Bam—the ball went in.

“Ball breaker,” I muttered.

“Did you say something, Brad?”

“You win.” I shoved the pool stick back into the holder on the wall, so hard that the holder crashed to the floor and all the pool sticks tumbled down on my head.

Ronni laughed aloud at me.

I glared at her.

She reached her hand up and straightened my hair. “There,” she said, “now you don't look so wild.”

I turned my head and kissed her wrist, one swift lick of the tongue, and then lowered her hand between us, not letting go. My voice lowered to a husky tone. “What do I owe you, lovely lady, for beating me at pool?” I stared at her expectantly, trying to act cool.

“Oh, I want what every girl wants.”

Her hand scorched my skin, her heat seeping through my bones, boiling my blood. Ronni burned for me.

She burst my bubble by adding in a whiny voice, “I want flowers,” and then shook her hand free of my grasp.

“Fine! I doubt any florists are open so I'm going home.”

“Well, you don't have to be such a bad sport,” she said, grinning.

“And why are you laughing?” I said to Riley.

“Because if you knew your wife better, you would know that Ronni has been a pool shark since sixth grade when she began hanging out at the pool halls while waiting to escort her grandpa home after he'd had too much to drink. Ronni was practically raised at the pool hall.” Riley turned to Ronni and kissed her on the cheek. “I've got to go. There's my date.”

Ronni spun on her heel, ran out of Lovejoy's, and pulled her car out of the parking space.

I raced to my car and jumped in.

I lifted my foot from the gas pedal and slowed the car down, hiding a few cars behind her. The smile on my face was the predatory smile of the hunter.

(Thanks so much for reading.)

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