

Mahogany & Monogamy

By Jedidiah Ayres

The first time I saw Janis I knew she was a ball buster. That was part of the appeal, honestly. Mom had been one and my kid sister, Denise? That's all I got to say. But Janis had something special and I'm not just talking about her industrial-strength rack and bear-trap thighs. She also had that elusive thing that I just can't resist, and if I knew what it was I probably wouldn't have a story to tell.

We had our own song, "Sweet Child O'Mine". It was our first dance. She danced, that's what she did, and when it got to the 'where do we go?' part, she slowed way down and tried to grind it outta me with her hips. Then she did something strange. She stopped and looked me right in the eye. It made me pop. She rocked my world with just a look, then kept on dancing. Sure, she helped lotsa guys do the same, but me? After the first time I saw her, there wasn't anybody else, you know?

"You're never gonna find anything," my old man said, "written down in a book." He was a loser till the day he died, fucked over and left by my mom, but he did manage one memorable line near the end when the lucid spells were brief and unpredictable. He was talking about when he first met my mother. He said he knew she was the one for him because she made him wanna grow up and produced the previously impossible in his life - mahogany and monogamy. I thought it was just a nice rhymey thing to say till that night.

Janis didn't notice anything special about me at first, and that was okay. Working at the Beaver Cleaver, she didn't meet many prizes, and to look at me, you'd not stop and think, 'guys a sex machine' or 'what's his secret?' But people change. They do grow up. They can surprise you sometimes. Gimme a chance and who knows? Could might be I make an impression.

Could be I'd made a life change. Could be I'd got my shit together. Could be I had fifty-thousand dollars in a gym bag in my trunk. Could be.

The thing about a guy like me having that kind of money on him? Yeah, it means somebody else is short that much. I never invested in stocks or had a business. I never went to high school or had anything fancy education-wise and I never paid taxes unless you count cigarettes. Which, come to think of it, maybe you should. Because, damn if they don't go up all the time, for real. So, yeah has to be somebody missing it.

The question then, is who?

Relax, might not be an Einstein or any other brainy heeb you care to name, but I'm not as dumb as you might initially think. It's not like I robbed a bank and got my picture took, or ripped off some solid citizen who'd wanna bring lawyers into a fair fight. And I aint about to take on no badass, because I know a thing or two about when I'm outta my depth.

No, it was just Benji, that skinny tweaker with the fuzzy upper lip you wanna scrape for him. Seriously, I'm no square, but damn, some motherfuckers just ain't intended to wear mustaches. I took it from a hole in the wall behind his medicine cabinet. Just stumbled onto it and took it.

Pee-Wee, the guy who runs Carl's Bad Tavern down off Cherokee? He sees me getting up to leave the other night and slips me twenty bucks to take Benji's ass home. Benji's passed out in the bathroom, puke everywhere except the fucking toilet and a cloud of that rat poison he smokes stinking up the place.

Not one to look a gift horse up the ass, I take the twenty and put him in my Chevette. Thought about just dumping him around the corner, because he stank like he'd been practicing, but I shut that shit down because it was time to get a little forward-thinking in my game. In the future, could be Pee-Wee knows I'm solid for this kinda thing. Could be he thinks of me first, next time. Could be some regular gigs coming, or at least a free drink now and then. Never know. Could be.

I wasn't about to fuck with that possibility by taking the man's money then not doing what it is he says he wants, like some short-sighted asshole who thinks he just played a man. So I took Benji back to his place, wasn't far, and let myself in with the keys I found in his pocket. Not a part I relished, reaching into a man's pants like that - especially a stank-ass motherfuck like Benji - but, like I said, I wanted to do this right. I was already thinking about future jobs.

Maybe I'd get some of those disposable rubber gloves, if this was gonna be regular. You know the kind they make them wear at Subway to make sandwiches? Or maybe, and this is even better, talk to my cousin Rob, the plumber. Find out what he does when he's gotta reach into some shit water and find a wedding ring, because you know plumbers don't fuck around when it comes to that. Hell, I could just get some Ziploc bags and put them on. Would be cheaper. If I paid taxes, I bet I could write that off.

I was getting a little carried away, but it felt good, being trusted with a job like that. Pee-Wee was a serious guy...shit... That was something else. Stop calling him Pee-Wee. He was connected to real people, and I didn't wanna blow any chance I had with him now by offending him. Herman hated that nickname.

The way I saw it, it was time to take a little responsibility. Time to think about a career. Not that shoveling shit outta bars was a career I'd like to have, but you know, it was a start. I'm sure Janis didn't wanna climb a brass pole for amateur gynecologists the rest of her life.

I brought Benji inside the door and no further. Fuck him if he thought I was gonna tuck him in or give him a bath. Not for twenty bucks. No way. But, I'd have a look around, thanks. It was how I made most of my money anyhow. A little B&E here and there, I wasn't above it. The beauty of this was, it was E without B, and Benji wasn't conscious the whole time, wouldn't have any idea how he got home when he woke up.

Benji was poor white trash, up and down. His basement apartment had plain white walls decorated with black light posters of like Pantera and hemp plants and shit. His clothes weren't in the dresser except for some underwear and socks, and those that were on the furniture and the floor were one pair of jeans - black and ripped, like the ones he was already wearing, and heavy metal t-shirts. There was no jewelry (surprise, surprise) and no electronics worth taking.

There were cassettes all over the floor, not in the cases, which is something that personally really irritates me. It was the same story with the VCR stuff. Couple of tapes just marked with pen: *Missing In Action*, *Running Man*, *Bloodsport*. Say what you want about his lifestyle, his taste in movies was righteous.

Pisser was, I didn't find any drugs. Turned over his mattress, checked the freezer, behind the toilet, went through all his food, a jar of mayonaise, some Sanka and Kool-Aid. I was so frustrated, I went back to his grungy-ass bathroom and grabbed his razor. Didn't bother with any water or foam. Shaved that shit dry. Bled a little, but still looked better. Shit, that was two favors I did for him in one night.

When I put the razor back in the medicine cabinet, I noticed it was a little loose, like it was on a hinge or something. I gave it a little tug and it swung open, revealing a little hiding spot in the wall.

Fuck, there was a lot of money.

It was arranged in those neat little stacks you see rubber banded together in movies. I didn't even count it, just threw it in a gym bag and drove straight to the Beaver. I peeled off a couple hundred and went in looking for Janis.

Could've been my walk or the intensity in my eyes. Could've been the super-heavy testosterone vibes pouring off of me. Or could be she just saw me changing a couple c-notes for singles. Whatever it was, she knew right away that I was different. She put on "Sweet Child O'Mine" before I could even request it. She got every penny, too.

I started hanging out at Carl's every night. I'd keep my eyes peeled for losers ready to pass out or puke in the john. Fifty-thousand dollars was a nice start, but not exactly enough to retire on and I was serious about making a good impression on Herman. Besides, I couldn't tell anybody about my good fortune, because when a little shit like Benji had that kind of scratch? Right again, somebody else was missing it.

That was one thought causing me mild discomfort when it came up. How had Benji come upon that much money? When? And what the hell was he spending it on? I decided it wasn't my problem and I didn't want to know, so I shut down that negative shit quick. The way I saw it, if I kept up my regular schedule and didn't get flashy, I had it made.

The only change in my routine was stepped-up visits to Janis. Most nights, I'd come in with a single hundred-dollar bill and leave when it was gone. Though I realized I'd made a tactical mistake that first night bringing two hundred in and spending it so quickly. Janis had come to expect a little more from me, but so had I, and I was trying to show a little discipline. So it was one hundred every night...let's not go crazy, you know. I was trying to pace myself a bit and make her work a little harder for it.

Janis wasn't the only one working a little harder for her money either. Herman had noticed me and given me a couple more disposal jobs. Nobody I knew, though. I had to dig out their ID and find an address, and then I had to figure that shit out. Got to be, I was calling cabs and going with them to make sure they got inside. Oh well, it's like they say: you gotta spend money to make money. Yeah, I was, most of the time, blowing what Herman gave me on cab fare. But I was counting on that back end score once I got them home, and most of the time that worked out. A couple times there was a pissed-off wife or mean-ass dog waiting for me, but it was a safe bet anybody passing out at Carl's doesn't have much waiting for them at home.

I heard a preacher on the radio once say "Love is patient. Love is kind." All I could think was: he didn't love Janis. It was getting a touch restless between us. She was less patient, I was less kind, and we were becoming something of an item. One night

during my dance I guess she felt I was being a little stingy because she stood up suddenly and said, "What the fuck Ethan? I am not doing one more number for a lousy hunderd bucks. We're halfway through the first guitar solo and I barely got thirty-five outta your tight ass!"

Well that pissed me off a bit. The way I saw it, I'd been spending my money on her exclusively for some time now and hadn't got so much as a friendly hummer to show for fidelity.

"At least one of us still has one," I said, and left with money in my pocket for the first time. I decided she'd got her last score off of me.

Did I stop going? Hell, no. I still went every night after leaving Carl's, but I wasn't a one woman man anymore. No, I spread the wealth. New girl every night. I'd watch Janis out the corner of my eye and I could tell my being there pissed her off. The tension between us could tune a piano. Could be our thing had gone to the next level. Could be I was in my first serious relationship. Could be, I was finally growing up. Could be.

The night they broke Benji's arm, everybody assumed it was over sports action. It happened from time to time. That or drugs. Everybody knew that happened when you fucked around with the drugs. I had to keep it to myself that I suspected it had more to do with some missing cash.

He came into Carl's, his right arm hanging off him like a purse. He clutched it with his left, but was stumbling and running into shit every few steps. When he used his left to steady himself, the right would swing free and he'd scream loud enough to stop traffic in other neighborhoods. Before he passed out, he pleaded for somebody to get him a fix and get him fixed, just don't take him to no hospital, he had warrants.

He should've been a little more cautious about the company he'd make an announcement like that in, because there's a couple sick puppies in there just curious enough to try setting his arm without any idea of what they're doing. And nobody was gonna give him any drugs without cash up front.

When those dudes got tired of playing with his arm, I nodded at Herman, who took out a fifty this time. When I came to collect it, he grabbed me and whispered, "Take it easy tonight, huh?"

I looked into Herman's eyes and my asshole puckered. That guy looked scary. Maybe I'd just met the edge of where my hard ass turned to pussy, but he was like E.F. Hutton or some shit - I was listening.

"No hospital. Get him a fix."

So, what do you think I did?

I knew the arm needed to be set and secured, but shit, I mean, I didn't know any better than those biker fucks what I was doing. At least I scored him some good shit. Some shit anyhow. I never trucked with that stuff, so I don't really know from quality, but he slept through it all and I wandered alone in his apartment again. I think the place had been tossed, but it was hard to tell.

I felt a bit responsible looking at the kid, laying there with his busted wing, bound with a fuckload of scotch tape. I stopped for just a moment and let the feelings match up to thoughts about what exactly my role in this had been. It was a rare quiet moment of reflection for me.

“Look. You fucked up. That’s who you are; the guy who fucks up. I’m just the guy who benefited this time. The way things go, man. No hard feelings.”

He groaned through his opiate stupor and I continued.

“If it makes you feel better, I aint blowing it on pussy anymore. I mean, yeah a little bit, but I got bigger plans then that.” In truth, I felt a little guilty. In fact, I didn’t even get a dance that night.

I was back the next night, though. Lil’ Debi was starting to get the bulk of my business. I’m not sure if it was her looks or style or what. She had big bangs that were stiff if you touched them and favored a very strong Strawberry scented perfume. It kinda smelled like she’d used a whole pack of chapstick on her crotch and maybe she had, but I suspect the real appeal was her name. There was something kinda kinky sexy about thinking I was getting dry humped outta my money by a snack cake.

Since Janis was there, I was playing my usual Motley Crue pick, “Don’t Go Away Mad (Just Go Away)”. I liked to think it bugged the shit outta her. I closed my eyes at the moment and sought out Janis’s gaze with my mind. It pleased me to find it white hot at the base of my skull, and I savored it a moment, knowing that the jealousy of a woman tasted sweet.

So, it shocked me when I opened my eyes and saw Janis on the other side of the room, not paying me no nevermind. So surprised I was that I pushed Debi off my lap unceremoniously and spun around to see who it was looking at me.

Couple mopes dressed in nylon track suits and wearing jewelry, just bringing down the property value over in the corner, talking with Don the bartender. Following his pointing finger over in my direction. Didn’t stick around to find any shit out, didn’t help Debi up. Just left quick, before they could talk to me.

Five in the morning, my phone woke me up.

“Mmmm...”

Whispered: “Ethan?”

“Mmmm.”

“Hey, I just got off. I need to see you.”

“Janis?”

“We need to talk. Meet me at Uncle Bill’s.”

I found Janis at a booth, three Kools in the ash tray and one in her lips. She shoved the coffee she’d ordered for me into my hands. “Hope you like cream and sugar.”

She let me finish the coffee in silence, watching me intently while the whites of her eyes swelled with deep drags of menthol. She held my empty hand and sent electric tickles up and down my arm with her touch. The look in her eyes was intense and expectant - if our song was playing, I’d probably have wet my pants. It should have scared me, but I was only flattered. When I set the empty cup down she said, “So?”

“Yeah?”

“What did you do, Ethan?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Why are those scary guys looking for you?”

Immediately I half stood and looked around. “What guys?”

“You know, the ones at the club? What do they want from you?”

I shook my head. “I don’t know. I’ve never seen them before.”

She smiled and grabbed both my hands in hers. “You can tell me, baby.”

Apparently it was some kind of turn-on. Danger hung off me like ten inches. We got a room at the Motor Inn and danger threw a party. Afterward, she slept and I watched TV till she got up about noon. Her makeup was a mess and her Tawny Kitaen hair bunched at odd angles from all the product and sweat and sleep. Her eyes worked hard at a twinkle when they met mine, but and maybe it was the daylight and not insincerity, the effect was sexy as...well not very. But when she dropped the sheet and walked to the bathroom, there was a pleasant tingle south of my navel.

I’m not sure what she’d heard from loose talk at the club or what she’d managed to get out of me during our little romp. Could be she’s smart. Could be she’s wired with a sixth sense for money matters. Could be I’m transparent. Could be... Because when she comes out of the shower a few minutes later, wrapped in a towel and looking sweet and fuckhungry simultaneously, she lets that little motel issue napkin fall and in the same instant nails me with, “So, how much we got?”

Nobody at the Beaver knew my last name. Janis had my phone number and that was it. She was the only one who could tell those scary guys in the sweat pants who I was. That made us partners, she figured. Partners in what?

Dude. Spending, of course.

Now, I’m not hypnotized over snatch so bad I can’t see what’s going on here. But come on... I am just exactly what you think I am: horny, lonely and a bit low on the old self-esteem. And if not this, then what the fuck is it money is supposed to buy for you?

So?

“Fifty.”

“Fifty!” she says like I just won her the teddy bear popping balloons at the fair.

“Fifty-thousand bucks, baby. All for us.”

Being the meat in fuck sandwich with Linda Carter and Erin Gray? Flying co-pilot with Jan-Michael Vincent? The Hair Club for Men? These were things I had given serious thought to over the years. Life expectancy was not. Had I devoted some time in consideration of it, could be some things I’d have done different.

Could be I’d not have started smoking at eight years old. Could be I’d never have told that loudmouth Brian Belisle about fingering Tanya Hopeck behind the dumpsters in Jr. High. Could be I’d not’ve stuck around St. Louis after stealing fifty-thousand dollars.

Might’ve turned out I’d not been such a sickly kid, gotten my ass kicked every day by Jeremy Hopeck or into some serious shit with an opportunistic stripper. But I’ll tell you what, nothing would’ve stopped me from smoking, fingering or stealing in the first place.

It was going to take a couple days for Janis to wrap up her affairs. Minor things like getting some money she was owed and finding somebody to take her cat. But the plan was to leave town together, go to Vegas or New Orleans, live fast and loose for a while. Forget my future working for Pee-Wee. Guess I could call him that again...not to his face mind you, but he scared me too much to wanna be around. I was gonna see how much happiness, or at least pleasure I could make the money good for.

In the meantime, we agreed it would be best for us to continue our regular routines, so as not to call attention to ourselves. At least she should. I’d already got

some attention. So, I gave her a thousand in walking around money. Enough, I figured, for her not to nag me for a bit, and too little for her to split on me with. She left me at the Motor Inn for work around six.

I was too antsy to stay at the motel, so I jumped in my car for a drive. Flipped the radio to 94.7 and scored an omen. "Sweet Child O' Mine" blasted from my shitty speakers and I rolled down the window, wishing my hair were still thick enough to wear long. It'd feel good to let it whip around in the breeze while driving. Crossed the Martin Luther King into Illinois and started cruising the east side, thinking long as she was playing this whole relationship mercenary style, might as well get some strange while the getting was good.

The song ended and another G'N'R tune immediately kicked in, must be two-fer Tuesday or some shit. "I used to love her, but I had to kill her..." I sang along, nodding my head at the simple sage-ness of the saying, "...and I can still hear her complain." Deciding to check out the Ten Foot Pole, I headed south. That's when the omen took a darker turn.

Normally, you can't catch shit on the radio. Seems I always have to twist the dial immediately after one good song, so back-to-back ass kicking tunes usually make my day - let alone Guns followed by AC/DC. But the thoughts I was beginning to have? Shit was dark. "Got You By the Balls" followed by "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap" sunk my mood. For real.

Would you be surprised to find out she'd told the six-million dollar man and his butt-buddy exactly who I was and where I lived? Okay, she didn't know, herself, but she knew my name and I'm in the book. So, no, I wasn't too surprised either, to come home to wash Ginger and Mary Ann off of me and find my apartment torn up.

I smiled a little smile, knowing that they hadn't found shit. I thought of zero sum nights, rooting around somebody's home, going through drawers and closets and under rugs, behind paintings and coming up empty handed. I thought of how frustrating that can be and the smile grew a little broader.

"Fuck you greasy fucks," rolled off my tongue as cool and understated as Bruce Willis might ever accomplish. I grabbed some clean clothes and skipped the shower. Who knew if they were watching the place? I went out the back door and down the fire escape. Even if they saw that much, I knew I could lose them down the alley and I'd parked the car three blocks away in caution.

I crossed the river again and ditched the car. I staked out the Beaver, waiting for Janis to get off. It was a long wait, but I didn't mind. I was savoring the thrill of playing the game a step ahead of these yo-yo's. Janis came out half-past four, with three other girls and a big ape. The girls got to their cars, the bouncer went back inside, and I did a half-crouched run up to Janis's passenger side.

"Judas Priest, Ethan! You scared me," she exclaimed as I let myself in.

"Hey baby, I just couldn't wait to see you." I kissed her and felt the hesitation on her end. Could be she thought she'd never see me again. Could be she was afraid I knew about her betrayal. Could be she was scared of what I might do. Could be.

She recovered quick, though. She smiled and grabbed my junk while she stuck her tongue down my throat. "You're supposed to lay low, but I'm glad you're here."

“Baby Doll, I hope you got paid, because I’ve decided. Fuck your cat, we’re leaving tonight.” See how she likes that.

She didn’t. She looked concerned. Chewed on her bottom lip for a second, but just like the calculating cunt I knew she was, she improvised just swell. Switched gears and went with plan B. “You’re right. I don’t wanna come back to this shithole ever again. Let’s go now!” She kissed me quick and started the car, all smiles. The sincerity of the twinkle in her eye chilled me. Felt like a block of ice in my intestine.

I sat back, a little unnerved and said, “Airport.”

At least, I’d taken the liberty of changing our plans. Miami never came up in our talks, so I figured I’d be safe enough there to do what I had to before disappearing for good. Now I needed to take the driver’s seat, be the man here.

She played it through convincingly enough, if I hadn’t known better. She even liked my new assertive style. It was different for her, following the leader. At the Beaver, or any other place like that, the women control everything and tell you how it is.

She slept against me in our first class seats and I pretended it was sweet. I pretended we had a future and were a team. I pretended all the way to the hotel, all the way through room service and the lazy sleepy sex before the nap.

I woke up an hour later and looked at her lying on her side, turned away from me. I let some light in through the window and took in the view. Really was something. I thought I should find another girl soon and come back here again. I turned around and looked at Janis. Looked clean and sweet and had that something - that definite something I still couldn’t put my finger on. I slipped back into pretend mode, and while I was there, thought about our future.

Took a long hot shower. Scalding, really. Stood under the stream, walking through what I had to do. When I realized the hot water wasn’t going to run out, I turned it off and scrubbed myself completely pink with those big white towels. When I stepped out of the bathroom, Janis was sitting, the sheet pulled up to her armpits, talking on the phone. She was whispering into it while I looked at her from the doorway.

Snapped me back. She never missed an opportunity. In truth, it made me love her just a little bit more. I thought: *That’s my girl. You’re so smart. And capable. I want to be just like you someday.*

She quickly hung up when she saw me watching.

“Who’d you call?”

Beat. “Oh, just Trish at the club.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, I told her I wasn’t coming back to work and where the spare key for my place was. She’s gonna take care of Angus for me.”

“You tell her where we were?”

She looked at me, confused. “Course not. I didn’t say anything about a ‘we’. Just said I wasn’t coming back to work, would be gone awhile.” She was pretty smooth, I gave her that.

I still had time for pretending, so I sauntered, yeah sauntered over to the bed and dropped the towel dramatically. She responded by rising to her knees and dropping the sheet. She smashed her world-class knockers against me and put her head on my

shoulder. A regular Chrissie Hynde. I tilted her chin up to look at me and said, "Let's get married."

When I came back to St. Louis, six months later, I was tan. I was dressed smart, I even talked differently. I had come in to my own. I had gone into business for myself, used the money to buy in bulk. That's what they say: you gotta spend money to make money. And what do you know? They were right, this time. What ten thousand will buy wholesale will go for thirty, thirty-five retail.

And I wasn't out of my depth, like maybe you're thinking. Certain things you experience really prepare you for down the road events so that you know when the shit comes down, you're going to be ready. For me, it was killing Janis - when I drowned her that afternoon while she was talking about weddings and shit, like she was really into it. When we'd gone off to a private spot along the beach and she looked at me and said, "I want to spend the rest of my life with you," it was just the opening I was looking for.

I said, "Honey, you're going to," and did it right then and there. Knocked the wind out of her with a stomach punch, then onto her back in two feet of water while I sat on her shoulders. She died looking into my face, knowing I knew all about her plans for me, and I was reborn looking into hers knowing I was all grown-up now and could take care of myself.

We'd taken a trip out to Key West to celebrate our engagement and I left her without I.D. She'd had a few drinks by that time and had drowned, not been strangled, so I wasn't sure if they'd think she was a murder or an accident, but I didn't care much. I didn't think anybody'd try too hard to connect her to me, let alone find me across the country. I figured by the time anybody who gave a shit enough to put it together got around to my last known address, I'd have changed my identity and moved on.

And I did all that. I became John Connor, which was respectable enough. I figured the only thing looking for me was a cybernetic assassin from the future, and if he looked anything like Arnold, I could see that coming a mile away.

I came back to St. Louis for shits really. An odd feeling of destiny pulled me back just to look at the old stomping ground with my new eyes. I went to an afternoon ball game and drove through Soulard and Dutch Town just to see it again. I rolled up on Carl's Bad Tavern and thought, *what the hell?* and went in for a taste.

Nobody recognized me, which confirmed to me that I was one hundred percent changed. I casually sat at the bar and ordered a scotch, which I'd taken to recently. The bartender was new and I asked him where Pee-Wee was, used the name and everything.

He looked around nervously, hoping nobody'd heard me and it tickled me to see the discomfort in his eyes. "Herman's out right now. You wanna leave a message?"

"Nah, just thought I'd say 'hey' if he were around." I finished my drink and got up to leave when one of the regulars - I couldn't remember his name - stopped me and said: "Hey, I know you, right?"

I looked him right in the eye and gently clapped his shoulder. "Not even close," I said, then took out a bill and put it on the bar in front of him. "Bartender, a drink for my new friend." And I was gone.

I spent the rest of the day sightseeing and stopped in for just a sec at the Beaver. *What a shithole*, I thought. Guess I'd come up in the world. Didn't even stay for a whole

minute. Went to PT's, which was more my speed now. Had a couple drinks and was getting a private dance when "Sweet Child O'Mine" came on the sound system.

Shit.

Wasn't prepared for it. Hadn't heard that song in months. Not ashamed to say, I got a little misty-eyed and sang along under my breath, "Now and then when I see her face...probably break down and cry." Nah, fuck that, I got up and left in a hurry. The girl called me an asshole and I didn't argue. I walked out and bumped into a couple unhappy patrons on the way to the door.

Was pacing, trying to wash the song out of my system, walking along the riverfront, on the way to the car. I always liked looking at downtown from the east side at night. The river rolling under the bridge was soothing with the lights from the casinos reflected on its surface.

"I used to love her, but I had to..," I whispered, to change the tune in my head.

Could be I was so intent on calming the fuck down, that I didn't see him follow me. Could be my thoughts were elsewhere all the way to the hotel. Could be he took me completely by surprise at the door, me thinking it was room service. Could be, but I'm not sure.

I'm not sure because I never saw his face, just the knife. Even when he stood over me after ransacking my room (rather poorly I'd say), I didn't have to look at his face to know who it was; just the way he stood there and the way his right arm hung funny,.

So, I don't know. Maybe I was inviting it. Maybe I'd put it together some time ago. I mean, all the guy had to do was remember where he'd passed out. And maybe Herman told him who'd taken him home that night. Why not, right?

Fucking Benji, man.

Could be I wasn't so smart. Could be he wasn't so dumb. Could might even be she wasn't so guilty. Fuck. Could be.

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