

Chapter III

The Mind's Eye

The Magic in Your Reality

[The Mind's Eye – The power in the mind's ability to visualize and the scene it creates.]

The *quality* of a man's life is directly correlated to *how much stress, pressure, and anxiety he can handle* before coming unglued.

There were two points in an interaction with a woman that I felt my heart rate peak.

The first was in the moments right before I attempted to talk to her. The second was the moment right before I had to go for a kiss.

I thought men were supposed to automatically know how to kiss a woman, so I felt like half of a man because I never knew how to just do it.

Logically, it's simple. Pull her in, close eyes, and touch lips. But I couldn't get past step one of just pulling her in or having the balls to do that, or even knowing if she wanted to.

I also didn't want to experience her rejecting the kiss and the awkwardness that came afterward. Even if I had all the recourses, I couldn't get past that hump.

It was like a Scantron for a test where every answer was correct if you knew how and when to pull it off.



You had answer (A), the ‘Almost Kiss’ where you say (at some point in the interaction after you’ve made her laugh or at some emotional high point), “Let’s do the ‘almost kiss,’ but promise me that you won’t kiss me because I’m not going to kiss you.” You get in super-close like you’re going to kiss, hold the tension, and then back away. Do that a few more times until the kiss actually happens.

You had answer (B), the ‘1-to-10’ where you simply ask her, “How good of a kisser are you on a scale of one to ten?” If she says, “Seven [or below]” then tell her, “You should be more confident; let’s find out” and pull her in for a kiss. If she says, “Eight [or above]” then you say, “Wow, you’re cocky; I’ll be the judge of that” before pulling her in for a kiss.

You had answer (C), the triangular gaze where you simply build sexual tension while staring into her eyes and then at her lips, and back to her eyes, and if she wants a kiss then she will look at your lips.

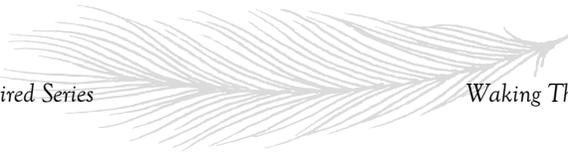
You had answer (D), a romantic routine where you lean in close and look into her eyes. You then say, “If we stare into each other’s left eye for thirty seconds, our hearts will beat at the same pace and our breathing will become in sync.” Hopefully, she will want to try it, and then you lean in for a kiss.

But even with line after line and act after act, it didn’t matter if I couldn’t apply it. That’s what they say about knowledge – that it isn’t actually powerful until you can apply it.

Of all the stones on Thanos’s gauntlet in the *Avenger* movies, the stone that I most wanted to have was the reality stone, which let you literally change reality in an instant.

I wanted complete control over my sex life, and over the past couple of months of learning, I was slowly taking control of my own reality.

I knew the next level was a kiss that I had to initiate to be the alpha male I never learned how to be. My kisses from the past usually happened because the girl initiated it, but I wanted to feel more control.



After talking to her and establishing some form of attraction, eventually a kiss would have to happen. The hardest part was just saying the actual words to see if she would take me up on the challenges. It isn't the actual kiss that scares a man but what would happen if she rejects it.

In the movies, whenever the man goes in for the kiss, it seems to just happen, but the last time I followed Hollywood's advice, I got fucked – and not in the fun way.

I wanted to prove to myself that I could, and I finally would that night.

Part



Green Lights

Sometimes in a game, you get a hot streak. Tonight, I'd win the game.

This was the big event that I was preparing weeks for. My arsenal was packed with everything I could stuff into my brain. The lines, the quick responses, the moves, the body language, and the mindset. I just needed the man to come out.

I used to believe that the strongest and tallest man got the hottest girls. The football players or the bodybuilders, because even Jay had muscle and some height. If you put those two together then I felt it would be unstoppable. I remember when I didn't talk to my first girlfriend for two days because she called Channing Tatum from *Twilight* "hot." I was jealous as fuck because I thought muscles equals a woman desiring you, and I had no muscles, so I believed that was holding me back from success.

I knew that looks mattered to some extent. If we aren't physically attracted, it'll never work. A girl will be stuck in the blue zone on the scale forever.

Therefore, I had to dress myself according to the crowd in order to amplify scarcity.

Scarcity is something that we can use to our advantage. For example, if you see ten girls in the club and nine of them are all wearing the same skintight black dress – but then there's one girl who's wearing a bright red dress – subconsciously your mind puts more value on the object that is scarcer – the red-dress girl.

So, to offset my insecurity, I put on the pinstripe outfit because I figured most people would be wearing T-shirts and jeans. I wanted to be out there, but not an eyesore. Quickly, my belief about the strongest man prevailing would be exterminated from my mind.

I wasn't wrong; the strongest man will get the woman, but not physically. The mentally strongest man will win her heart because limits exist mostly in the mind.

Walking into Skateland, I expected maybe a number – if I was lucky – or maybe a kiss.

In line to get skates, both girls and guys kept turning around and whispering. They were side-eyeing Jay and me. I didn't say anything, but I wondered if Jay felt it too.

I thought the clothes I was wearing would bring attention, but dozens of people took notice. At the front of the line, we got our skates, and the worker behind the desk kept darting his eyes to mine, then looked off into the distance behind me and then back into my eyes.

With warm and partially damp skates – probably from the person before me – we turned around to put our stuff in the locker bay.

“Holy shit,” Jay whispered.

It all connected. The worker and the people in line weren't looking at me, they were looking at who was behind me.

She was sparkling.

Her golden-blond hair gleamed as if she had the starring role in a shampoo ad. Her body language oozed confidence like the female boss of some big corporation who's used to telling men what to do. She casually held one hand on her hip that was wrapped in bright blue denim jeans that stretched to the max around her curves. You could see every detail. A robin's-egg-blue cotton hoodie with the DJ's logo on it that matched her blue eyes completed her wardrobe. But it was her perfect smile that was the cherry on top. This was what pierced hearts like a dagger.

She was like a Picasso but, you know, better.

The men stared at her and melted in her presence while the women in line uncomfortably side-eyed her. It broke the scale of beauty. There is hot, and then there is so hot that other girls are uncomfortable around her.

I felt the power behind her gaze that could split a man in two when I walked past her. She was talking to the security guards, the apparent

manager of the place, and two friends, including the DJ who Jay was promoting.

The DJ was a mixed-race girl who looked like she should have been born in the Eighties wearing cuffed jeans and bright neon colors.

That's when her blue eyes and mine connected like a Lego piece. I had to hold it.

I once heard a quote, "Beauty lies like the sparkling sea." Tests don't only come in words but also in beauty and what isn't said. Beauty itself is a test. It separates those who are hypnotized by it and melt under its pressure from those who are able to keep their cool. I kept my cool, slowly looking away with a smirk on my face.

There were three hours before the foam concert – the main event – and during that time, the girls danced inside the DJ booth. The guys were like zombies lining up outside the red velvet ropes trying to strike up conversations with the girls. One kind soul tried to get the blonde's attention, and she shook her head at him. He walked away red-faced and embarrassed.

But it wasn't until she put on her skates and went out into the whirlpool of skaters that men really crashed and burned.

Dozens of men tried anything to get her to notice them. Just to have a chance at the plate.

They would skate next to her and talk, but she ignored them like there was an invisible glass wall separating them. One brought her a slushie and she said, "No thanks." It was like watching a tiger versus a house cat every time.

Nobody could break her walls.

At the end of the event, it was time for the foam concert. It took fifteen minutes to move the DJ equipment outside. I went to the locker bay to collect my stuff. I didn't really want to do the foam, but Jay did. We argued about it while the locker bays filled with more people. More people meant louder noise, so our argument grew louder until an instant silence took over the locker bay for a few seconds.

I noticed someone at the locker right next to mine on my left. It's like when you're driving and every time you pull up next to someone,

you have to look at them. I turned and looked at who was right next to me. I couldn't believe it. It was her – the blonde.

Was this called fate?

I looked at Jay, who was to my right, wide-eyed. He made a gun with his pointer finger and thumb signaling to pull the trigger and go for it.

I gulped.

Fear takes control of your chest and your knees first. It feels like you have no strength as your stomach does loop-the-loops inside. You sweat, but you feel cold, and then you feel nothing until you notice your heart beating at the pace of a galloping gazelle fleeing from a predator. I was no match for this perfect specimen of femininity, so I had to be an incredible actor.

To be successful is to be the opposite of what everyone else is. Attention seemed to equal rejection with her. Every man who gave her some was nothing less than annihilated. I had to get her to 'open' me somehow to get a massive edge. I heard that women don't want to open the man though. They want the right man to open them and take charge. According to the chart, girls will act differently around a man they find attractive. In my peripheral, I analyzed every detail.

She flipped her hair and laughed loudly with her friend as if she wanted to be noticed.

Her laughing might have been my signal to break the ice and shoot my shot. But after a few moments, she broke it instead.

I was looking at my phone and something of hers dropped by my feet. She knelt, picked it up, and on her way back up, 'accidentally' bumped her elbow against my ass.

"Oh my gosh!" she blurted. "I'm so sorry!"

This was her way of breaking the ice...by abusing me.

I knew in this moment that I had to commit to believing in myself fully because women are apparently three times more 'sensory aware' than men. She would recognize insecurity, manipulation, or insincerity in a microsecond. I'm sure that she had witnessed every single small detail of low-value men. She would instantly pick up on

one sniff of fear, one bluff in my eyes, one slight fidget, deflating her curiosity.

This was pressure, but I loved it.

I gave her a surprised look. “How forward of you,” I insisted. “This is how you flirt with someone?”

Over time, I began to get better at assessing reality. In every moment, we are in control of two things: the way we interpret our reality and our reactions to it. For example, an unconfident man subconsciously communicates, ‘She’d never want me...’ while a man who views himself as the prize communicates, ‘She wants me so bad that she would touch my ass while acting like it was an accident.’

Maybe it was an accident, but either way, it was an opportunity. It was time to upgrade my operating system to compete in the big leagues.

She chuckled. “You think *I’m* flirting with *you*?” Her sarcastic huffing implied that I was crazy to make this assumption. But it wasn’t crazy...she literally touched my ass, and that’s the game – whose reality is stronger? The game had begun.

Luckily, she reacted emotionally, which was what I needed to spark desire.

Her response – a test – was designed to throw a weak man off his center, but I knew the secret.

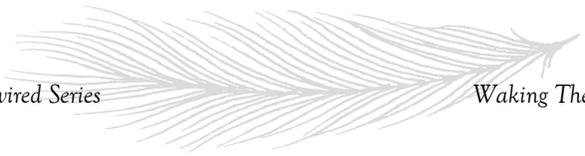
I had to use it to gain leverage.

I disconnected our eye contact and smirked. “Well, flirting starts with words, and touching usually comes later...” I took a slight pause before continuing. “Slow down, babe, you’re rushing me a little bit.”

She bit her lip, and a smile grew slightly.

“Oh my gosh, shut up!” Her face reddened, just like every guy she’d rejected before me.

Most men hit on her, and that was the frame of their conversation – that she was being rushed and hit on. I reengineered that idea and accidentally stumbled upon something that’s absolutely intoxicating to a woman, implying that not only was she the one who was hitting on me but that she was rushing me. It was a lethal card to play.



“Tell me something interesting about you,” I said, positioning my body away from her so it looked like I could walk away at any moment if she couldn’t keep me interested. I was doing and saying everything I could to make her chase me.

She told me she was a model, which was obvious. But I remembered a line from Neil Strauss, author of *The Game*, and used it when I saw this opportunity.

“A hand model?” I asked, slowly looking down at her hands. A mischievous smirk formed as I looked back into her eyes.

“A hand model?” she retorted, and then caught on to the tease. She gasped and slapped my chest teasingly. “Wow!”

I chuckled.

“Oh, ha-ha,” she fake-laughed. “So funny. No. I’m actually a model for the Colgate toothpaste commercials.”

Jay wheeled around us and began to flirt with her friend – a girl with blonde hair but skin that reminded me of a redhead I knew. My peripheral noticed that everyone around us was listening to our conversation. I was so nervous that my sweat was sweating. Every guy there wanted her, and every person there could clearly see how she was reacting to me. Not a single man that night had gotten more than seven seconds with her. These guys wanted me to join the rejection club with them, but I’d paid my time in that club far too long. Just a second in that club was a second too long because...I chose that. It was my belief and my commitment.

Now I chose to be a winner.

“Sure, you’re pretty okay,” I said, reciting a push-pull line, “but in my experience, the prettier the girl, the more boring she usually is.”

She scanned me slowly from my shoes up to my eyes. “You’re so confident,” she replied.

I copied her, scanning her from her boots, up her skintight jeans, and all the way to her eyes. “Go on,” I whispered, “I love being sweet-talked.” I smiled ear to ear.

She started laughing. “No!” she snapped. “The way you act... You’re the kind of guy who talks to lots of girls.” She paused, staring

into my eyes. "Or a lot of girls fall for you."

"But that doesn't mean I like them back," I countered instantly.

"I don't like guys like that." Her tone completely changed. She was pulling away as a test to see if I would chase. It's not what she says but what the message is behind what she says.

I had to assess my options in a split second. Logically, I wanted to respond, "I'm not that type of guy" because logically this made sense.

She said she didn't like that type of guy, so if I told her I'm not, then she would like me more.

But it's actually the opposite.

She'd lose interest because she'd know I would only say that to prove myself to her. She was playing emotionally, so I had to play her game. I had to do what's called a pattern interrupt to break this negative state she was in.

My heart raced because I was risking the entire conversation.

"Oh, really?" I responded. "I can tell how much you don't like me, you know, by the way you grabbed me from behind earlier." I looked away, or rather, pulled away because I had set the bait for her. I exaggerated because she hadn't grabbed my ass, but if she was going to argue about it then I'd win this.

She broke out in laughter. "What?! That's not true!" She kicked me with her skate. "You know I didn't grab it! Besides, there's nothing to grab."

I looked at her, offended at first, and then I thought about it. She had just indirectly said that she was checking me out. I just stared into her eyes as if I was onto her.

"What?!" she said again.

I shut my locker as if I was about to leave.

"What's your name?" she asked. I told her and then realized it was a slight loss in opportunity. I could have made her guess so it felt like she was working for me, but no problem. I found out her name was Caitlyn.

"Well, Connor, will I see you at the foam concert?"

I held out my hand. "Only if you take me there."

Caitlyn grabbed my hand, and all four of us walked outside to the VIP area of the concert. Me, Caitlyn, Jay, and his newfound girl, Becky.

Part



Misdirection

Some people are car geeks, some are video-game geeks, and I happen to be an anime geek.

Misdirection, a term coined from *Kuroko No Basket*, is a technique that diverts the opponent's attention, allowing its user to vanish. Commonly, misdirection is seen in magic tricks, specifically sleight-of-hand tricks, in order to manipulate what the attention is on.

The game of flirting is won by how well a man can handle pressure, and misdirection was my newfound ability to counter a test.

I realized I did have something special.

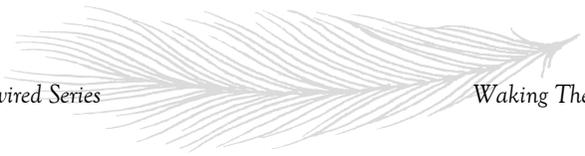
I could process quickly, and when I figured out how to use that, it created a huge advantage.

Attraction builds by how well a man is able to handle the emotion of the interaction. Usually, it comes from tests to see if a man emotionally reacts. For example, if she says, "I don't like that shirt on you," maybe she doesn't, but if you change your shirt to please her then she disrespects you because you're giving in to her test by attempting to please her. Also, if you react to her test by saying, "I paid \$70 for this shirt," she sees she can throw you off your center.

Instead, to pass a test, misdirection is key. Also known as a playful interpretation or reframing, the key is to reflect her test back onto her.

In that example, she is bringing the attention to your shirt, attempting to throw you off of your center, but you misdirect it back onto her by saying, "Please stop sweet-talking me, you know it's my weakness. I know what you're trying to do." Or, "You just can't keep your eyes off of me, can you?"

You take the attention away from your shirt and redirect it back onto her as if she is the one hitting on you.



No matter what she is saying, you play the role that she is hitting on you. She will test again, and you will say, “Stop, it’s not going to work. Like you’re cute and everything, but pretty words aren’t enough to get me into bed.”

This is addicting for a woman because if she can’t get you to emotionally react then it indirectly implies that you are strong – that she can trust you and that you could protect her because she can’t have her way with you emotionally as she does with every other guy. It’s about what her actions are saying because 93 percent of communication is nonverbal.

You shouldn’t reply logically to her words because this game isn’t logical. It’s about how a man can make her feel. Supplication, changing your answers to match hers, and logic will make her feel bored. Never try to convince her on why she should go out with you, but create a strong frame and interpretation that will make her feel excitement and passion, and leave her wondering what’s going to happen next like a good love story.

She told me she wouldn’t like a man like me, but *she’s* the one who touched my ass. *She’s* the one whose full attention is on me.

Hidden in people’s words are always signs that tell you what they are really thinking. She put the attention on me by saying she’d never like me, but I mirrored that attention back onto the flawed contradictions in her actions.

Also, contradictions are one of the best ways to flirt with a girl. If she’s eating candy, for example, but says that health is important to her, you can pull away like Ace by saying, “Yeah, I can really tell” in a sarcastic tone.

I still had a problem, however.

I could carry a conversation, and I could potentially trigger some desire and flirt when months ago I could barely talk to a girl. I felt like a man of the world with Caitlyn dancing on me and the crowd staring at us, but when she turned around and moved her face to within inches of mine, she stared into my eyes. I needed to kiss her. But my body wouldn’t move the few inches to do it.

I feared rejection – sexual rejection, just like it was with the softball player.

If she said “no” then I didn’t know how to bounce back from that, and everything I’d built would disappear with one word.

Life is about choice. If I didn’t go for it then she would most likely view me as timid and I’d lose. She’d see the real me that I was trying to hide. If I went for it and she declined the kiss then I’d also lose. There was a chance I’d get it, though, and I had to figure out a way.

I remembered watching *Titanic* when Jack kisses Rose for the first time in that famous scene where she said “I’m flying,” and even though she was married (unhappily), he went for the kiss, and she kissed him back. From that point, she was hooked on him. She was obsessed to the point where she let him draw her naked. I wanted to feel what it felt like to be obsessed over, so I had to take the risk, like Jack, and expand my comfort zone.

I mustered up the courage when I saw Jay also take a risk. He asked Becky to go somewhere alone, and when she said, “I should stay with my friends,” he still walked away. She hesitated and then followed him. In order to get success, you must risk failure.

I grabbed Caitlyn’s hand and led her back to the rollerblading alley so we could have some quiet alone time. We sat at a table, and the black light from the alley lit up each of my pinstripes in a purple glow.

We flirted and bantered for a few minutes, but she was right next to me, and she was close.

I had to say it. I’d heard another way besides options A to D from earlier – option E – but it required two sentences that I had to force out.

“Let’s play a game,” I said, reciting the first line.

“What game?”

All I had to say was eight words that I’d heard from the dating coach Jason Capital. My hands were cold but sweating. Butterflies flapped around in my stomach. I was so nervous, but I spit them out in a stutter.

“If I... If I win, you have to kiss me.”

She stared at me for a moment. Fuck. Fuck. She had to be on to me. This was a bad decision. I was like a little kid trying to play a game with her. I should've just gone for it when I had the chance.

"Okay," she said, smirking. "You're on."

Relief.

The game consisted of five simple questions – at least that's what I told her.

I redesigned the questions to my liking, the first being, "What's your favorite song out right now?" She told me it was a song by The Weeknd. The second question was: "If you could be anywhere on vacation right now, where would you be?" She said she would be in Cancun to party. The third question was: "What's your favorite thing to eat all time." She told me it was Chinese food. Question 4 is where the kiss happens.

We were sitting together on a bench, and our legs were touching.

I held up one finger and told her to watch it.

I moved it in close, right between her eyes, and touched her nose.

Then I backed it a hair away. She was cross-eyed.

"Am I touching you right now?" I asked, saying the final question.

"Um, no."

"Bésame," I told her, using one of the only two words I remembered from Spanish class. (The other was "Té amo," which means "I love you.")

"What?"

"That's 'kiss me' in Spanish," I whispered, leaning in. I pointed to our legs, showing her that we were in fact touching the entire time.

Her mouth dropped, and she let out a laugh right before we finally kissed. It was the best kiss I'd ever had. Her lips locked perfectly with mine.

"You're an asshole," she whispered between kisses.

"I don't like losing," I whispered back, bringing her in to kiss some more. Right before we kissed again, Jay and Becky walked in.

"What's going on in here?" Becky said, implying that sparks were flying.

Becky explained that her friend Stacy, the DJ, needed their help. I gave Caitlyn my phone to put her number in, but they were in a rush.

I didn't see her the rest of the night.

I felt so good until I realized on the drive back that night that she put in nine digits and accidentally forgot the tenth digit in the cell-phone number. This meant I couldn't contact her.

Dammit.

I didn't know if she did that on purpose, or maybe it was the fact that she was being rushed, or maybe it was the opinion I've heard about models being brainless.

Part



Insider

While waiting to see if Caitlyn would call, I received a call from Noah, an old university mate of mine before he transferred to Indiana University to enter the Kelley School of Business.

He also had a dream to be a fraternity boy. Breaking ‘code,’ he showed me some of the things he had to do to even be considered a part of the ‘family.’ This is known as ‘hazing.’

I remembered two videos that were in a deep chat archive. One of the newbies took a doll, put it in a stroller, and pushed the stroller into oncoming traffic. The cars slammed on their brakes or swerved around the stroller. The other started with a student walking down a hallway. I didn’t know what his plan was, but I covered my mouth when I found out. He walked into the middle of a class that was in session. The teacher was lecturing about forty students. He then yelled in a monotone voice, “I. Have. Hemorrhoids.” The professor turned to him, staring, and the two kids (the one with hemorrhoids and the videographer) ran off before he could say anything.

Noah was born into an upper-class family, kind of like mine at first, but the only difference was that his family was still together.

Raised by Christians, he was shunned away from any talk about sex and had been programmed to target one special girl who he could marry after college. Growing up, he and I were put into the same crib together when we were babies, but then his family drifted away from ours after the divorce until we reunited in college and stayed in contact.

“The reason I called was that I saw you at the foam concert,” he told me on the phone, “but I saw you with a girl, and I didn’t want to interrupt.”

I updated him on Jay, the community, and Caitlyn. We bonded over talking about girls.

He said that he made a mental note to call me later to invite me to a special event at IU called ‘Little 5.’

Noah told me that IU is one of the biggest party schools in the country, and this event went for days on end and was known worldwide. More than 25,000 people traveled from across the country to attend, including professional athletes, famous DJs, models, and more. The parties never stopped, all day and all night for an entire week. The way he described it as alcohol, foam, and mascara-covered girls giggling up and down the streets of Bloomington. It didn’t take much convincing for me to agree to attend it with him.

When I thought of partying with girls like this before, my heart started to race just thinking about it because I didn’t have the ability to make a girl like me. Now, I couldn’t wait to test out this newfound power I had adopted. If for some reason I get rejected, I could just turn around and probably see a new girl to try the techniques on again and keep doing that until I win.

“It’s in fourteen days, but one more thing,” Noah said. “I’ve been dating a girl for the past month and she’s the girl who I want to settle down with, so if you and Jay decide to come, make sure not to hit on Selena.”

Noah was a virgin, claiming to be waiting for the right one, but I felt that deep down that wasn’t the truth. I think he wanted to be the Jay or the Ace. One of the major reasons he left my university was because he was messaging girls left and right looking for dates, and when he finally got one after dozens of tries, they went out. After treating her like a gentleman – buying flowers, opening the door for her in the Porsche his parents bought him – she still called him after three weeks to say, “Let’s just be friends.”

A week later, he migrated to IU, running into Selena at some fraternity party, but the only thing that changed was the environment, not him.

“So, have you, like, slept with her yet?” I asked.

“She let me kiss her once,” he snapped. Every time that I asked him about his experience with women, he tended to get awkward or would retaliate as if I was saying it to attack his ego.

“She’s different from the girls you and Jay tend to go after,” he continued. “Selena doesn’t want sex; she’s not into that stuff.”

One of the things I was beginning to understand was that women want sex just as much as men do, if not more, but when I tried to give him advice to seduce her, he went back to his old self.

“You need to romance her, tease her, and be bold by going for the kiss with her,” I said, revealing some of the tricks I discovered on how to go for the kiss. “Women want a man who will take the lead, the high-value man who will bring out her wild side.”

“Well,” he responded, “that stuff works on easy women. So, when you guys come, don’t do any of that and mess it up between me and her.”

We had bonded through the pain of rejections, but when I felt like I finally had a fresh start and could move both of our lives in a different and better direction with girls, he was resistant to it. I couldn’t tell if he craved power like Jay, if he was in denial, or if maybe he was actually right that a man should focus on finding someone different like Selena.

Maybe I was wrong because I felt different about Caitlyn, but I couldn’t deny that what Jay had taught me yielded huge results. Part of me was like Noah because ‘the one’ was an idea that my parents pushed when I was younger.

Even Casanova, arguably the world’s most famous charmer, had one special woman he fell in love with – Lucia. However, she disappeared, and it was said that his hundreds of love affairs were an effort to evade the pain of the one who got away.

Maybe Caitlyn was different just as Noah had described Selena being. Maybe she was my Lucia. Or maybe I was letting old habits take over.

I realized that Caitlyn was truly different when I went out with her for the first time.

Part



True Colors

I had two sides to me.

There were two places I loved most on this earth that represented these sides: the isolated mountains and the populated city. My dad tended to take my brother and me on vacation to the mountains – the Smoky Mountains and the Rockies in Wyoming and Montana, while my mom took us to beach cities – Cancun, Miami, and cruises with stops at big cities.

It seemed like my mother always saw me as the extroverted flirtatious guy because when I went out to the clubs or on cruises, I talked to everybody. But with my dad, I rarely talked and tended to isolate myself and go into deep thought. People typically only saw one side of me and believed that was the true me.

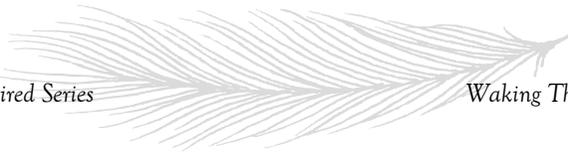
I was like the moon. One side lit up and glowed, but the other side remained cold and dark. Depending on which side you saw, that was who you believed I was.

I always felt like my dad wouldn't like the extroverted wild side to me, so I tended to stay quiet, but then my mom never liked it when I was quiet. I was constantly changing who I was around other people like an actor.

I found out that Caitlyn was much deeper than my surface interpretation of her when we finally went out on the next weekend.

On the outside, I saw her as perfect.

She probably had a great family with few issues. I thought her dad probably spoiled her like Noah's parents did for him. She had guys hitting on her constantly because of her beauty, and her confidence most likely stemmed from that. Quickly, however, I realized that the opposite was true.



She had tracked down my number from Becky, who got it from Jay.

“So, you just weren’t going to contact me ever again?” she asked.

“Um, you only gave me part of your number, so what did you want me to do? Fill in the numbers and text each one until I finally stumbled upon you?”

“That would have been so sweet if you did that.”

I guess I could have done that.

“How did you forget to put your number in my phone?”

“I don’t know! I was being rushed, I guess.”

She lived forty-five minutes away from me, and the gentleman in me decided to see if this Noah tactic really worked. I drove over to her place, and by the time I reached her house, it was dark. It was in the middle of nowhere in the boonies of Indiana, and according to the Google Maps, it was in a dense forest.

“All I see is a cobblestone driveway leading into complete darkness,” I told her on the phone when I got close to the house.

“Yes,” she said. “Drive into that.”

So, I drove into the dark forest to a medium-sized log cabin that looked like it was made in the 1800s. Bugs flew around the lights and buzzed passed my ear.

When I raised my fist to knock on the door, she opened it before my knuckles could strike the heavy wood.

Eye-catching as usual, she wore a skintight metallic red dress and wore her blonde hair in a bun with zigzag bangs.

“Come in,” she said, hugging me. She smelled like a flower-filled meadow. “Someone wants to meet you.”

The room was dimly lit with a crackling fire burning in the chimney. The shadows danced off an old man in a wheelchair. He had clear plastic tubes leading from a tank to his nose. His handshake was weak, and his body might have been giving up on him, but his spirit seemed to make up for it.

He nudged me with his elbow. “Caitlyn has never had a boy over before.”



Caitlyn embarrassingly bantered with him. We talked, he asked me questions about my intentions and how Caitlyn and I met, and we finally left.

“Your grandfather seems like such a ladies’ man,” I told her.

As we talked in the car, she slowly opened up about her past. Her mother died when she was young, and she was sexually abused by her father after her mother’s death. He was eventually thrown in jail. After her grandparents found out, they took her in. Her grandmother had passed a couple of months before, and her grandfather was going to be going soon as well.

He had lung cancer, hence the breathing device in his nose. So, she took care of him.

Men just saw her as a piece of meat they could stick their meat into. Not her soul, her heart, and what made her who she was. I liked connecting with people and hearing their stories because ever since I was young, connection was the thing I lacked. Connection was my greatest asset but my greatest curse as well.

I had an ability that allowed people to believe they could trust me, that they could tell me anything.

It was because of my past. When I felt alone as a child I craved a connection. What aroused me most was the feeling that they were showing me a side of themselves that they kept locked away – their true colors. If they felt they could show me that, then they must trust me.

I had to make sure I didn’t abuse that gift, but it was intoxicating to know you’re someone’s escape – that you are priceless in someone’s life.

As she told me about her life, I listened, but I also *felt* what she was saying. I listened deeply to what her heart and soul were truly saying. I realized that when I told her about my past, I was showing her my true colors too. It was like our souls were intertwining. I wanted her to be obsessed with me, but perhaps she already was.

I led her into Kumo, a Japanese hibachi restaurant. As we were being escorted to our table, every eye was on her.

I noticed a husband with his wife as we walked by their table; he was checking her out, and the wife caught him, provoking a scolding look.

“Everyone is looking at me,” she whispered to me as we sat down.

“You think so?” I asked. “Because I was going to say the same thing to you about me.”

She rolled her eyes. “You’re so confident.”

After we ate, I took her to a park nearby, and we talked for hours.

When I took her home, I walked her up to her doorstep like a gentleman, as Noah would call it. We began to kiss passionately. The unromantic sound of bugs flying in our ears and swatting them with our hands as we kissed caused her to say: “I can’t stand this. Do you want to come in?” Of course, I did.

We snuck past her grandfather sleeping in his chair and went upstairs. Each wooden stair creaked. She led me to her room, and then went down to check on her grandfather. I couldn’t help but notice some pictures on her desk. I picked up the pile and started to sort through them. It was her and another guy. He had black hair, a smile that looked as though it was a stick-on, and reddened eyes as if he’d been smoking. The last picture showed them kissing. On the back, she wrote, “Mitch and I” with a date that was from a month and a half ago.

I heard the stairs creaking. She was coming back up.

I put the pictures back and hopped on the bed.

She had changed her clothes while she was downstairs into a T-shirt and shorts. She fell on me, and we instantly started to make out. I forgot about the other guy in those pictures as my hand felt what had teased my eyes earlier. I began to take her clothes off. She stopped me.

“I’ve never had sex with a guy before,” she said. I stood up because I was shocked.

“We’re so similar,” I told her.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve never had sex with a guy before either,” I said, smiling. I leaned in to kiss her some more.

She pushed me away, laughing. “No, seriously, Connor.”

I hadn't been trained or studied for what I needed to do when she rejected a kiss. I thought it would be a nightmare, but I found the resistance to be arousing.

I knew that patience was key in this situation.

When a man tries to pressure, chase, or rush to try to get a kiss or a date from a woman, she becomes extremely uncomfortable. Nowadays, we hear sickening things about rapes and other fucked-up things that happen to women. When a man tries to force or pressure instead of letting a woman come to him, she subconsciously categorizes him in that creeper zone, hoping that she doesn't become the next story that makes the news.

There is this idea in the pickup world that sex was based on survival back in the Stone Age – that women wanted to mate with the alpha male because of his genes. If they could produce the strongest offspring, they could survive and reproduce, keeping their genes in existence.

But I realized that this is no longer the truth of relationships.

Women respond to alpha-male characteristics, but women don't need a man anymore to pay the bills or provide food for her like in the old days. She is fully capable of doing that herself. Also, men don't need a woman to clean the house or prepare the food. These gender role ideas are dying.

Relationships now are based on the connection.

As we sat there, Caitlyn looked at me so innocent and pure. "I don't want to lose it to someone and then regret it later," she whispered.

Under all of that beauty and the tough act was just a fragile and caring girl.

I leaned in closer to her, resting my arm on the side of the bed.

"The last thing I want to do is make you uncomfortable," I said, reassuring her. "I'm enjoying what we have going on right now. When you're ready, and when I'm ready, that's when it will happen." I took a big inhale and smirked. "I can't help but notice that you talk about your virginity and sex a lot around me."

She blushed and dug her face into the pillow. “I can’t help it,” she whined into the pillow. “I want you, and I think you might be that person.”

“Then show me how much you want me,” I whispered, reciting a line I heard from a movie. I looked into her eyes and at her lips, exercising the triangular gaze.

It started with a slow kiss and grew in heat and passion after each second like an oven that was on preheat.

I read in Robert Greene’s *The Art of Seduction* that being a great seducer involves bringing all of your passion into the moment with her. For that brief moment, it’s as if you are madly in love with her, and you kiss her as if you are. I also heard that women will infer what sex will be like with you based on the first kiss, so I had to make it passionate.

I took my shirt off. I put her on her back.

“Put your hands above your head,” I whispered into her ear. They went up like a draw gate. I slid her shirt up. She had goosebumps. I kissed her starting above her pelvis bone and, in a line, all the way up to her sternum and in between the black Calvin Klein bra she was wearing. Her back arched. I took the shirt and continued past her head.

As her head popped out, her hair was tattered up.

She thought I was taking her shirt off, but I wasn’t. I decided to release a small portion of *50 Shades of Grey*. I had witnessed time and time again how Jay tended to dominate his girls in the bedroom, and now I needed to be that man I never knew how to be. I put her wrists together, and right when the shirt reached her palms, I wrapped it around them. Her hands were now tied together as if in handcuffs.

I acted like I was going to kiss her; she closed her eyes.

I moved my head to the side of hers and used the front of my jaw to turn her head.

Her sternocleidomastoid popped out of her neck. I never thought I’d use anatomy in this book, but besides all of the cheating I did off my neighbor’s tests in that class, I knew what this muscle was – the kissing muscle.

It runs from the bottom of the ear to the center of the collar bone.

It was my ace in the hole for a turn-on.

Lip-biting and kissing it, I was an educated young man applying school for once.

It was as if I was playing a DJ board. Every part of her body that I licked, bit, or sucked caused a different noise to come out.

She put her hand over my jeans and rubbed my dick. I took off her shorts and saw the matching Calvin Klein underwear. She was soaking through them. I rubbed her clitoris over the underwear and then moved her panties down, slipping a finger in.

Commotion came from downstairs.

“Caitlyn?” her grandfather yelled. “Come down here, hurry.”

Of all the times, it had to be right then. Just like that, the moment evaporated. It took hours to build and only one sentence to blow away.

She put her wrinkled shirt back down and ran her fingers through her hair as she left the room.

When she came back upstairs, she told me that her grandfather was having health issues. She needed to take him to the hospital.

“Do you want me to take you guys to the hospital?” I asked, putting my clothes on.

“No!” she hissed. “Are you crazy? I don’t want him to see you’re still here.”

“Well, I’m kind of in the driveway.”

She pondered that for a moment. “We are going to sneak you out.”

Somehow, I snuck past the old man when he wasn’t looking, opened the door leading into the garage, and shut it too. Then, in the garage, I went out through the back door and snuck around her house to the driveway. Finally, I got into my car and somehow pulled out of that pitch-black driveway with very little light. I got home around 3:30 in the morning.

I knew the next time I was with her, it would happen.

Part



Calm Before the Storm

I had exactly seven days until Little 5.

This was when I received a phone call from Adonis describing his first sexual experience.

Adonis had his own version of value.

He was the guy who you would beat twenty times in a video game, and as soon as he beat you once, he would say, “I’m retired, man.”

Then you wanted to play him again. This was especially true for Ace.

“I’m better than you!” he would argue. “I beat you every single time.”

Then Adonis would pull out his unique voice. “Whatever you want to think, man,” he would say as if he was stretching and then moved his shoulders acting as if he was walking away even though he was sitting down. “But we both know who number-one is.” Finally, he moved his shoulders up and down, holding up one finger.

He had his own way of capturing your attention, and it was intoxicating to me how he told a story, leaving me in tears of laughter practically every time. It wasn’t flashy nor was it magnetic to women, but to Ace and me, it connected everyone.

“I have to tell you about this experience,” he said.

He had this slow, deep storytelling voice and threw in extremely long and dramatic pauses. I couldn’t ever describe it, but I could do it.

If you asked a question, he would look at you slowly, then go “humph” as if he was snickering, and then say, “Duh.”

“I go over there, and I’m being all sweet and nice to her mom. But she’s foreign from somewhere in Asia. I couldn’t understand a word she was saying. Eventually, my girl says we are going to the basement,

and I was like, ‘uh-oh,’ that’s when you know it’s on.”

“She took you downstairs?” I commented.

“Hell yeah, baby, and we started watching a movie on Netflix. You know, Netflix and chill, right? We were spooning on the couch, and my dick was hard as fuck. She had to have felt that shit. It was like stabbing into her back. Like *boom!* Right there.”

He paused to go into a separate room to finish the story.

“I offered to give her a massage,” he said. “The dirty masseuse.”

“That’s like the oldest trick in the book!”

“Yes,” he said. “She looked in my eyes during it, and I looked into her eyes. I know she wanted the D. I started making out with her. I felt her everywhere. Then I started sucking on her titties. She had those Asian boobs, the ones that are pointed.”

I had never been with an Asian girl before, but I made a mental note to perhaps see for myself at IU.

“Then I went into her pants,” he continued. “And I literally gave her the ultimate technique.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“The finger-blaster 9000, baby,” he answered in ‘the voice.’

All I could picture in my head was a jackhammer or a nail gun.

“Well,” I said, “I’m glad you had fun.”

Even if the dirty masseuse was the oldest trick in the book to turn her on, it worked. I wasn’t sure about the finger-blaster 9000, however.

The next person to call me was Jay.

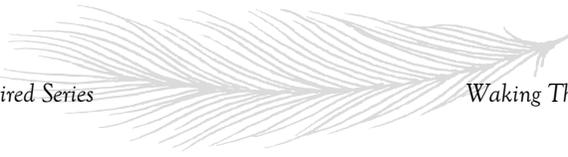
“What do you mean we can’t go to IU on Saturday?” he asked.

“Caitlyn and I are supposed to go out Saturday, but after we go out you and I can stay down there the whole rest of the week.”

She had asked me to hang out on the following Saturday, and I wanted to, so I postponed the IU trip for the next day.

“This is why,” Jay huffed, “you have to be able to say no. We have stuff to do, which is why we can’t be close if you bail on plans.”

He was going to be promoting a club in Bloomington on the last night of Little 5, and he wanted me to attend it with him.



Over time as I watched Jay interact with women, he tended to have his own style that worked, and I finally began to see how it worked.

He would flirt with them, but somewhere in the interaction he would say, “It’s too bad it would never work between us.” Or, “You’re awesome, we will make great friends.” Or, “Blonde girls are my favorite” when he was talking to a brunette.

I realized that his style was disqualifying the girl to make her desire him more. Hot girls are usually lusted after by men. To them, men like that are abundant, but Jay did the exact opposite. He would in essence imply that he was interested, but verbally say he wasn’t. It kept her guessing. When she has men asking her out on dates all the time or buying her things but then a man tells her, “We will make great friends,” she tends to respond, “Ha-ha, definitely...wait, friends?” Because she’s used to men hitting on her, when he did the opposite, it created scarcity.

All of a sudden, she would try to persuade him why he should sleep with her.

He was using a similar tactic on me and, even though I knew what he was doing, it still managed to work on me.

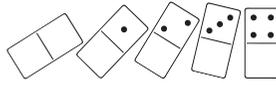
“Let me see what I can do,” I responded.

The next call was from Caitlyn.

“I won’t be able to go out this weekend,” she said. “I know I said we could, but I’m going to be at home taking care of my grandfather. Can we reschedule?”

I guess it all worked itself out. I called Jay back and told him that I canceled on Caitlyn, which was a lie, but he didn’t need to know that.

I wanted to be in peak performance form for Little 5. Even if there were thousands of options, I wanted to be so much in sync that I could win on my first try.



Chapter IV

La Douleur Exquise

Wanting Someone You Can Never Have

[La Douleur Exquise: A French term defined as “The pain of feeling like you found your soulmate but realizing you aren’t theirs.”]

This university was a spawning ground.

Every time I walked out of a party, club, house, or fraternity and then went back in, it seemed that the room had completely refreshed.

Hotter women appeared out of thin air every minute.

It was perfect for gaining experience at a lightspeed pace.

“My fraternity is starting its party tonight at 11,” Noah said as we walked around the campus. “And we are all on the guest list. I had to jump through hoops to get you on it, but it’s going to be packed with IU’s hottest girls.”

Noah dressed like a fraternity boy now. Khaki pants, loafers, and an unfitted burgundy button-down shirt. He had tan skin, messy black hair, and his best attributes, hazel eyes and a winning smile. Even though he was five-foot-six, I felt that if he knew how to sell himself then he would be a total monster, but he was still in denial. In contrast, I came dressed in plaid grey pants, suede tan boots, and a dark-blue long-fit T-shirt.

“Is Selena joining us?” I asked.

“No, she isn’t really into the partying thing,” he said. “I promised her I wouldn’t be drinking or talking to any girls.”

Jay snickered.

“What?!” Noah snapped.

“If you don’t just fuck that girl already,” he said.

“We are waiting; it’s what you do when two people respect each other.”

I thought they would bash heads like rams. We had the preppy boy from the suburbs who was raised by a nice family versus the city boy who practically raised himself and focused only on getting results.

It looked like the White House with a huge flag hung in front with random letters that apparently were Greek. When I asked Noah what the name of it was, he said what sounded like “Phi Grammar Zelda.”

So, that’s what I called it.

“You live here?” I asked.

“Well,” he hesitated, “not yet. They didn’t let me in, but I helped them with the guest list so hopefully, that will get me in.”

“So, you’re being used?” I asked.

“It takes time,” he assured me.

It sounded bogus. I had never been a fan of fraternities or sororities. I really didn’t see the point. My image of a fraternity was a bunch of rich, spoiled kids who did an unreasonably large amount of cocaine. I asked Noah the positives of being in one, and the only one he could think of was “networking.” I still saw no point in paying that much money and being bullied to ‘network.’ And network with whom? I wasn’t there to network, I was there for one reason – to sharpen my skills.

I tried to be sincere and understanding, but I could only reply with one word because I just wasn’t interested. “Cool,” I said, faking a positive tone.

When we walked in, I did see one positive sign. It was packed to the walls with girls I wanted to meet. There were also a lot of people doing lines of cocaine off a glass table in the basement, solidifying my image of frat boys.

It was Jay and me. This time, I believed that I could be his equal and bring the heat. Noah checked people in at the back door, and Jay



was already hunting. I guess it was just me then. I saw Jay once throughout the next hour, and he was walking down a dark hallway with a girl.

Dancing and stumbling around was a possibly drunk but attractive girl with curly dark-brown hair. She wore jeans with holes all over, and specifically on her behind that showed the crease where her ass met her hamstring. The grey turtleneck she wore made her look business professional at the top, but the jeans made her look like a teasing stripper from the waist down.

When the song ended, she sat down on a black sofa next to a girl who looked pissed off and didn't want to be there. The girl with a touch of annoyance or anger in her look folded her arms, and brushed her blonde hair behind her shoulder. She wore black glasses and reminded me of someone who taught a science class. I needed to win over the entire group of girls in order to get the one I wanted. But I didn't know which one I wanted. They were both cute.

My heart began to race again because opening a girl was still nerve-racking to me. Once I got the conversation going and actually saw them becoming interested was when I tended to relax and make great things happen.

I had to say something. Anything.

The opening line is the first impression, so I tried to figure out what could set me apart.

Something that showed I was socially 'proofed' – the idea that if it's shown that other girls like you then your targets most likely will too. I also needed to apply the idea that I wasn't needy or clingy like most guys. Perhaps I was overthinking it and just needed to say anything.

Maybe the words didn't matter that much, and it was about how I presented myself.

I acted like I was casually walking past the pair.

"No way," I said, backing up and pointing at the two of them. "You two *have* to be twins."

They looked absolutely nothing alike.

“You think so?” the brunette who was dancing earlier said. I had commandeered their attention; now it was time to reel them in. “We actually get that a lot!” she chirped.

She was the talkative, energetic one of the group.

“I can already tell that you and I are going to be great friends,” I said, reciting a disqualifier for the heck of it. “You’re very energetic like I am.”

After a few moments of fluffing, I noticed the blonde was side-eyeing me.

“You know,” I said addressing the blonde, “if you’re going to look at me like that, you should at least talk to me.”

She smirked. I had broken through.

“You know your outfit is pretty cool,” I said, baiting her. “My biology professor literally has the same one.”

Her jaw dropped, and she couldn’t help but start laughing. She kicked me under the table.

“Whoa, my love language is physical touch,” I told her, exercising a line that indirectly said she was coming on to me. “So please try to control yourself.”

The blonde perked up. “I’ve read that book!”

Now I felt I was finally getting somewhere. I’d found out that her love language was words of affirmation, so I told her that she was the cutest biology teacher I had ever seen. She argued back that she wasn’t a biology teacher.

“This is why we could never be together,” I said, conjuring up the disqualifier. But before I could finish the sentence, something caught my eye. I saw the back of a girl who looked exactly like Caitlyn.

“Why couldn’t we work out?” the blonde asked.

“Because, um, never mind.” I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. “Something just came up,” I told the girls. “I’ll be back shortly.”

“You’d better,” the brunette said.

I was in the basement of the fraternity, full of people and loud music. I snaked through, undetected, to the side of this girl who looked

like Caitlyn's twin to see if it was really her. When I could see her face, there wasn't any doubt about it.

I was about to walk up and say hi when a man walked over to her, gave her a drink, they kissed, and started walking upstairs. It was the guy I saw in the pictures when I was in her room.

I followed, and they turned a corner into a dark hallway. When I thought the coast was clear, I was about to turn the corner when Jay ran right into me.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," he said. "Made any progress?"

"Dude," I angrily whispered. "That girl!"

"What? Who?"

"That girl who just walked past you was Caitlyn!"

"Where?"

I took him around the corner, and right in our face, she was making out with this guy. My jaw dropped. They stopped and noticed us.

My eyes and Caitlyn's locked. Then she glanced away.

"Excuse us," I said, walking away.

As we walked back to the party, I looked at Jay. "She told me she was at home taking care of her grandfather tonight."

"I thought you cancelled on her."

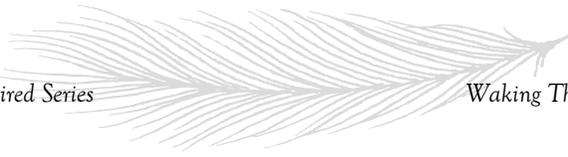
Oh, fuck. That's right. "Yeah, she actually canceled on me," I admitted.

He burst out into laughter, but then he stopped abruptly. "Oh man, she really played you."

I tried to bounce back, but it really got to me. That night, and for the next two days, it reminded me of that one scene in *The Mummy Returns* where the chariot came through and took all of The Mummy's special powers away. Every time I tried to talk to a girl or flirt, I was shot down. I was clearly in a slump that I couldn't figure out how to get out of.

"You got played, man," Jay sympathized. "You got played."

"You think she lied to me about being a virgin too? And everything else?"



“Probably,” he said. “It’s the game. Everyone is trying to win, which means someone has to lose. You’re the loser this time.”

Something that was inspiring to me about Jay was his ability to bounce back from hardship and rejection. When his family moved here as immigrants, they got played by a scammer and lost \$10,000 of hard-earned money. Jay said, “It happened. We have to work even harder and focus on how we can make it back.” He never believed in basking in one’s own misery; he only focused on action.

I remember a story my dad told me about a professional baseball player who was one of the best batters in his time. One season, he went into a slump, becoming one of the worst. Everyone thought his career was over, but the season after that he shot right back up, better than he ever had been before. The press asked him how he did that, and his only answer was, “I just stopped caring.”

I didn’t think that not caring could be my answer, but I searched for one.

I decided to return to Indianapolis the next morning to give myself a mental break from striking out. Jay stayed behind. He was tireless.

Part



Falling

“I think I owe you an explanation,” Caitlyn said on the phone.

She had called me while I was on driving home on the third day of Little 5.

“Mitch and I have been on and off since last October,” she said. “I know it was wrong to lie to you, and I should’ve been honest.”

“I appreciate that,” I replied. I could have been angry, but I was there doing exactly what she was doing to me.

“So, what now?” she asked.

“What’s your choice?” I said.

“Choice?”

“Are we going to continue, or are you getting back with him?”

“Why do I have to make a choice? I still love him, but I want to be friends with you at least.”

I couldn’t be around her and not be able to touch her. Or to flirt with her. Deep down, it brought those feelings back to the surface. It was like life was telling me once again, “You just aren’t good enough.” This time, another man had something that I didn’t to keep Caitlyn, and I was left in second place.

“I can’t be friends with you,” I told her.

“What? Why? That’s so selfish,” she snapped.

“What’s more selfish? Asking me to be something for you that I don’t want to be, or me doing what’s best for me?”

It basically ended on that note. I was fuming after I hung up.

Jay’s words echoed around in my head: “Everyone is trying to win, which means someone has to lose. You’re the loser this time.”

But I was always the loser. Even if I won, I eventually lost.

My father once told me, “Second place is only the first loser.”

I wondered why I cared so much. Perhaps it was because I still had that part of me that wanted marriage, that wanted one woman, while the other part of me wanted results. The unnatural abilities. Maybe it was just because she was the girl I worked my hardest for, only to have her leave me.

Over time, I felt I was being too nice and let myself become attached. After this moment, I realized that it truly is just a game. The strongest make it to the final round. I was only on the first few rounds, and every round had some form of sacrifice or lesson that nearly wiped me out every single time.

I wondered who had made it to the final round. Who were these people? I wondered what they had to sacrifice. I could only imagine how cold they were.

If I was worth it, and if I truly meant something to her, I believe she wouldn't have done that. It wasn't her words but what I saw in her actions. Her actions said that I was a piece worth sacrificing. I was the pawn, and it made me feel so worthless to be so easily tossed to the side.

It reminded me of why I started. I wanted the ability to break hearts. I wanted to feel what it felt like to be obsessed about. I had to put my pride aside and leave my emotions out of it.

I needed to create a style that was virtually impenetrable. A monopoly of seduction. A technique that included a high probability of success and an unnaturally low probability of rejection.

I woke up again. The nice guy in me found his way back to the surface, but I had to kill him off. This game played me when I played it as him. I wanted to be the player, the user, and the favored. I was distracted, but I'd leave my emotions behind, and I would come back colder.

Part



Emotions & Their Meanings

“Never let success get to your head and never let failure get to your heart.” These are the words of Drake – the perfect lesson for people dealing with love.

Remember the lesson, not the disappointment. If it consumes you, it will grow your attachment and you will suffer ever deeper until you stop it.

The struggle with my emotions always felt like it was a part of my life. Depression felt like it was in my life frequently, and the same with stress, anxiety, and other taxing emotions.

I grew colder, but that meant the loving and caring parts of me were extremely warm. I felt that most people experienced the cold, heartless side to me, but one thing that reached me every time and brought real tears to my eyes were those who struggled with severe depression, anxiety, and overwhelming sadness.

On my way back from IU, which was about a one-hour drive, I stopped at a diner that Noah told me about. After I was seated, I saw from the window a semi-truck parked across the street. The back half of it I could see, but the rest was behind a small shop. The half I could see read, “Life will never give you...” I couldn’t read the rest. I thought that it was probably something useless anyway.

When I left, the warmth of the morning sun refreshed me. Maybe this was a good omen; maybe something good was coming. I got in my car, drove off, and got pulled over by a cop.

Maybe not.

I was speeding a little bit. Sixty in a thirty to be exact. I saw the cop; it was too late. The red and blue lights flickered behind me. We went through the typical routine. He told me how fast I was going and

asked for my information. I give it to him, and he walked back to his patrol car to scan it. Then, during the few minutes he was back there, I flipped a coin to see whether I would get a ticket this time. Tails meant ‘ticket,’ heads meant ‘how did I not?’

I flipped it. It landed. Tails it showed.

I looked at my mirror, waiting for him to step out with the ticket.

I stared out the window, and I noticed the drivers watching me as they passed by.

Two lanes over were for the cars turning left. The green arrow lit up, and they all proceeded to turn left. One after another until a semi-truck caught my eye.

It was the one from earlier at the diner.

My eyes widened as I read the rest of the quote: “*Life will never give you more than you can handle.*” It seemed to drive by in slow motion.

In that moment, I realized something. I truly believe that life gives its toughest battles to its strongest soldiers, and the battle with my emotions was one that I struggled with almost my entire life.

Those kids from early in my life always told me that I was useless.

I was treated like I was a germ. When I was younger, I was always picked last for kickball or any sporting thing because nobody wanted me on their team. Caitlyn was the first time I ever felt like I connected with someone deep down. It felt like I was picked first for her kickball team because she wanted me. But when it was taken away from me, even if I was hurt or upset, I never would admit it.

I’m the type of person who bottles up their emotions.

Some of us tend to avoid our negative emotions, some endure them, and others fight them. I was more of the enduring type.

After enduring mine for so long, I came to the conclusion that if you try to run from them, they will give chase. If you try to endure them, they will erode you, and when you try to fight them, they will fight you back.

From what I have found, pain is a tool used to help promote personal growth.

We view pain as negative, but perhaps there are no such things as negative emotions because every emotion we have is really just a message telling us to change something or grow past something.

Life gives you obstacles that you can handle, but it challenges you to find a way through them. Life will throw obstacles in our way to challenge us to grow and to let us see how we react to them.

“Any painful circumstance that you have to endure in life is like a call to attention. Life is pointing out something that you need to learn. Anything that no longer serves you in life – whether it’s a relationship that must end, a friendship that no longer serves you, or a job that runs its course – all these difficult changes need to be understood in that light. Pain is life’s way of telling you that you’re doing something wrong – you’re stuck, and you need to grow past it before the pain goes away. The more you ignore the pain, or try to suck it up – the more life brings it up in front of you to deal with. It’s only when you consciously face up to the truth that you can overcome those things.”
- Corey Wayne, *Mastering Yourself*.

It’s all in our mind’s eye as to how we decide to perceive a situation. Each situation we’re in is neither negative nor positive, but it can turn into a negative or a positive based on how we label it.

Here’s a story I once heard:

A man was riding a bus. Two children ran around inside the bus, causing commotion and bumping into the man every couple of minutes. The man began to get angry. The kids then bumped into him so hard that he spilled some of his drink on his outfit. He turned to the father of the children and spat, “Could you please control your children?” The father looked at him and said with a hurt in his voice, “I’m sorry. Their mother passed away a few nights ago while we were away, and they haven’t been handling it too well.” In an instant, the man’s anger turned to sorrow. “I’m so sorry to hear that. That must be devastating.” At first, he was mad, but in an instant, his anger had

transformed into sorrow. We can change our perspective instantly; we just have to change the way we communicate to ourselves and the way we interpret a situation.

I believe that when we are feeling an emotion like anger or hurt then we aren't seeing the bigger picture. We have incorrectly interpreted the situation that we must change. In order to grow, I needed to let go.

All negative emotions exist either in the past or the future. If one is feeling sad, heartbreak, and depression then they are held up in the past. Anxiety and stress arise within us from thinking about the past or future. In reality, fear, anger, depression, and pain are all messages. Sadness is communicating to you that you are living too much in the past. It is trying to help you to find a way to let go of whatever it is that is weighing you down. Anxiety and stress are communicating to you to let go of worrying about the future.

Pain is life's way of telling us that we need to let go of something.

Dwelling on the past only hurts us more because it's something we can never change, and worrying about the future is harmful because it hasn't happened yet. The only moment that counts is the present moment because that's the only moment we have control over.

Anger, depression, stress, anxiety, etc., are all found in those who feel like they need something in order to be fulfilled and happy. I'm not saying it's wrong to feel these emotions. It's natural. But to let them control you instead of using them to help you grow is a conscious choice. If we use them correctly, they are among our greatest allies, but they can instead be our biggest enemies if we let them take us over and control our actions.

Sit back and listen to why you are angry, hurt, sad, or frustrated. What are you seeking? Why? Do you not feel enough? Significant enough? Are you not fulfilled without the thing you crave? *The emotions we feel are messages that challenge us to grow to a point where we aren't in need of the something that we believe will fulfill us. To find a way to be happy without it.*

“What you are is what you have been. What you will be is what you do now.” – Buddha

Presence is what you experience when you’re completely at peace in this moment. You’re accepting how you feel right now – the good and the bad. We must let emotions be our guides but never decide our actions. It’s all about how we choose to see it. I could sit here and continue to be upset, or I could change my perspective and ask myself:

“What is good from this?”

“How can I use this to become better?”

“What is life trying to tell me by throwing this in my way?”

Our problems and obstacles cause emotions we perceive as being bad, but these emotions are life’s way of challenging you and trying to tell you that there is always a way through it, under it, over it, or around it.

That is the very core of life’s testing is for us to find a way to overcome our problems. Life doesn’t give you obstacles that you can’t handle; life doesn’t want you to run away. It gives you a situation to help you grow and become more than what you currently are. The toughest battles are the ones that we don’t know are going on within us.

Emotions are usually calling us to learn more patience and ask better questions to find a solution to the problems within ourselves.

The battles within are what create battles on the outside.

Negative emotions are a call to action. You’re supposed to do something differently or think a different way than you are now. As Einstein said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

Positive emotions are rewards for taking the proper actions, but pain serves a purpose.

Without our struggles or bad times, we would never know what the word ‘good’ even means or is. It is what has made the current you ‘you.’

Life will throw obstacles at you to see how you respond to them. Especially if you really want something.

If you want a woman or a date, life might take that possibility away to see what your response is. Instead of reacting, realize that life is trying to teach you a lesson. Instead of falling into negativity, challenge yourself to find an answer, and take a different action.

Many people believe that a great life or relationship consists of no bad days, but that is only an illusion. Think of it this way: Every year, winter comes with heavy snow (at least in Indiana). Spring comes with a lot of rain. Summer comes with hot temperatures. There are rarely days where the temperature is perfect, and there are rarely days when everything goes just the way you want it to.

Knowing this, I had to leave my emotions out of my game. I needed to learn how to manage surprises and hone my skills for ‘the comeback.’

Now it was time for me to take action and perfect my technique.

Oh, and I forgot to mention, that cop who pulled me over didn’t give me a ticket.

Part



The Deal

It was the final night of Little 5 when the wildest parties occurred.

Every day, the parties grew in every way: speaker loudness, number of attractive girls, and cocaine, marijuana, and alcohol consumption.

Jay was hired on to promote multiple clubs in Bloomington, and that was how the night started. We roamed the strip of clubs on Walnut Street, but when we took a side detour into BlueBird, the night took a wild turn.

One of the girls who had too much of some substance decided to get up on one of the tables during a song. She proceeded to take off all of her clothing for the whole club. Phones started recording when she had stripped all the way down to her bra and panties. The club cheered her on as the security guards and her boyfriend tried to awkwardly get her down.

“Don’t touch me!” she snapped in a drunken babble. “I’ll call the police.”

“We are the police!” the guards argued back.

She then took off her bra and threw it into the crowd of people.

The crowd went wild as if it was a Lady Gaga concert.

This is when Noah and I witnessed one of Jay’s greatest pickups of all time. He was on fire.

Amy was a typical party girl who liked to dance, get drunk, make out with random people, and then demand to be treated like a princess (not necessarily in that order). Jay won her over in about twelve minutes.

He hit her with push-pulls and disqualifiers one after another, and before she knew it, she was hooked.

He would pull her in by pouring a bottle of tequila in her mouth.

Then he pushed her away. “That’s all you get,” he told her. She slapped his arm.

“Give me some more!” she whined.

“It would never work between us,” he said, exercising a disqualifier. “You’re too demanding.”

“I would make the perfect girlfriend!”

“You’re probably a mediocre kisser anyways,” he said.

“I give the best kisses,” she argued.

“Prove it.”

“No.”

“Bad!” he said while lightly pushing her away with his hand. “Go to timeout!”

She held onto him when he tried to unwrap her arms.

“Alright, here’s some more,” he told her, acting like he was going to give her a drink. When she opened her mouth, he said, “Just kidding!”

He fluttered around like a butterfly, unable to be caught until he wanted to be.

When he looked deep into her eyes, he blamed her for turning him on. “Stop it!” he told her. “I know what you’re trying to get from me, but it’s not going to work.”

Her brain was fried.

Then they kissed, and right before he left with her, he told me – slightly intoxicated – “I have a room a few blocks away at SpringHill Suites.” He tried to enunciate the best he could. “If you can get a girl to the suite by midnight then I think you have what it takes to join our team.”

Without waiting for my response, he turned around and walked out with Amy wrapped around his arm. Jay hated waiting. He stressed consistently that time is a person’s most valuable asset; no amount of begging or money can give back time.

I was left with Noah, who had invited Selena to the club, and I finally got to see him interact with her for the first time.

It was a train wreck. Selena was completely different than how he made her out to be.

She was shy, but I could tell deep down that she liked to let loose and have some fun. She looked similar to Selena Gomez but tended to be unsure about everything she said until she got alcohol in her. She was just a regular girl who wanted to have fun, but it was Noah who didn't.

"Gentlemen don't get drunk in front of a girl," he said, spouting nonsense as usual.

I didn't have time for their awkward relationship, so I practically tore the place apart opening group after group. Attraction was flying, but nothing was sparking. I would grab girls and spin them around.

Eventually, a slightly tipsy Selena walked up to me on the dance floor and stood there staring into my eyes.

I was having fun as Noah stood in the back of the club.

I took her hand and spun her around as well, but it was code to never flirt with, hit on, or date one of the pack's girls – *ever*. Basically, it was an unwritten rule that she has to be dead to you.

Selena wanted to be dated, romanced, and swept off of her feet, but Noah wouldn't do that for her. For a moment, I considered taking her back to the suite so I could win Jay's challenge.

I shook my head. I couldn't do that to Noah. I wasn't going to break the pack's rules, but I had to ask: "You have a wild side to you, don't you?"

"Is that hot to a guy?"

There was no doubt about it. She was interested in me, but luckily Noah pulled her away. Then I awkwardly dismissed myself as I stepped outside to the sidewalk for a last-resort game.

Part



12 A.M. Hustle

She stood by herself, leaning against a telephone pole on the corner of North Walnut Street.

She had the confident body language of Caitlyn and wore a skintight plaid grey dress and high heels. Her blonde hair was held back in a ponytail and she had high cheekbones. For some reason, every girl at IU who I'd talked to had more attitude than the average girl, and this one proved to be no exception when I opened her.

"I was about to head out, but you have a classier look than most girls around here, so I would hate myself for the next fourteen minutes if I didn't at least say hi."

Expecting a laugh, I received the opposite. Sometimes it takes a few attempts to light a fire. I'd witnessed that with her. On the scale, she was in the green section because she was off-put immediately.

"Oh, am I like the last resort?"

I chuckled. "What?"

"The girl you go for when there's no other option."

"Well, there are plenty of girls around here, but none that have overly excited me."

She had up what pickup artists call the 'Bitch Shield,' always ready with a defensive response to shoo away strangers. It didn't mean she was rude. It just meant it would take some ability to slowly break through the barriers to her true self.

"Well, I appreciate the effort, but I'm not available for anything," she said. Her assumption was that I was hitting on her – which I was, but it was a huge assumption.

"Um," I said in a sarcastic tone, "available for what?"

"Well..." She paused.

“Well?” I interrupted, extending my hand. “How about we agree to take things slow, starting with our names, and leave labels out of it for now.”

I casually threw in the frame that she was hitting on me and rushing me.

She giggled, taking my hand.

“I’m Connor,” I told her.

“Paige.”

“I mean, we just met.”

“Yeah, but you met me on your way home, so...”

She was subtly testing me with the fact that I would only talk to her this late at night because I was trying to get into her pants.

I had to flip that emotion into attraction.

“Ah, I see what you mean,” I replied. “If I really wanted to find someone to take home, don’t you think I’d be in there?” I pointed to the clubs.

“I guess you do have a point.”

Finally, I was getting somewhere.

“I’m not from around here,” I told her, “but I can definitely see where you would be closed off. Guys out here are very direct.”

“You’re not from around here?” she asked.

I told her I was from Indianapolis about an hour away, and then she asked what I was doing up there. I told her this was my first time at Little 5, and I was staying in a suite with some of the promoters for the clubs. It implied some sort of social proof.

“What are you up to tonight?” I asked.

“Well, I was about to catch a lift back to campus because my friend left with a guy,” she said. “What are you doing?”

“I was on my way to The Chocolate Moose to get some ice cream...”

“I love that place!” she gasped.

“I’ve never been, but it’s the closest spot for ice cream, so if you’re in the mood, you’re welcome to join me – but on one condition.”

“What’s that?”

It was time to pull out the tease, creating an inside joke from earlier. “If we do eat together, I don’t want you to have any expectations because you keep wanting to label us.”

She started laughing and teasingly pushed me.

“So, if we go to eat together then that determines our label?” she asked.

“Um, we don’t *have* to talk about that,” I emphasized. “We can talk about normal things.”

She laughed again.

I had to implement a technique to make her feel special because I was on a time crunch. The technique had the formula of ‘Most girls are X, but you are Y’.

“Well, most girls around here are sloppy,” I told her. “But you are interesting, and if I eat with you then I’d most likely have a good time.”

“You’re interesting too,” she said.

“Good, we’re perfect for each other.” I held out my hand for her to take. “Wait,” I added, pushing the pull. “Let’s not talk about ‘us’ just yet.”

She giggled and told me to shut up as we walked down the streets to get some ice cream. After forty-five minutes of conversation and fluffing, she told me she had never been in a suite before when I told her where I was headed. (I never had been either, but I didn’t tell her that.)

“I can show you really quick, and we can hang out for thirty minutes or so, but not for too long because I do have some work to do.”

I wanted to make it seem low-pressure, so I threw in some constraints such as ‘really quick’ and ‘not for too long.’ It’s a great way to get someone to commit because an obstacle in someone’s head when invited is, ‘What if it’s weird and I have to find a way to leave?’ By mentioning those constraints, you eliminate the red lights.

I arrived at 11:56, and Jay let us in wearing a white fluffy bathrobe. The suite was decked out with multiple bedrooms, a kitchen



packed with fruits, popcorn, Fiji water bottles, and a balcony that looked over the strip of clubs in the town.

In that moment, I decided that I wanted this lifestyle. I needed to be in this business no matter what.

Jay went back to his room with his party girl, and I was left alone in the kitchen with Paige.

I discovered her wild side when she challenged me to a drinking contest of green apple vodka that Jay left out on the counter.

After six shots, I was well on my way to buzzed and she found her way to the bathroom, throwing up and passing out on the floor.

Part



Jump Start

My tactics would never work on a ‘good’ girl like Selena.

At least, that’s what Noah thought. He was going to go through his own realization soon enough, just as I did, that it not only works but that the impact it has is frightening.

Because Noah let us stay with him on the first night, Jay allowed Selena and him to crash in the suite with us on the final night. I had carried Paige to the bed, wrapping her up in the blanket, and then answered the door to let Noah and Selena in.

She immediately noticed the vodka on the counter, went over, and took a shot of it.

Noah seemed annoyed and told her that she was already too drunk.

He pulled her to the closest bedroom, shut the door, and left me alone. I had a couple of options. I could go back out to the club and keep practicing, or I could just stay in and watch the flat-screen hanging on the wall and sit on the balcony watching the town alone.

I decided to go with the latter. The town’s lights and the sound of the city oddly put me in a trance. I made some popcorn I found in a cabinet, pulled a Fiji bottle out, and stood against the railing listening to the after-hours of the night.

The door behind me slid open, and I assumed that it was Jay coming outside to scold me for drinking his bottle of alcohol.

Without looking, I said, “I know I drank half of your bottle of vodka, but just know that it wasn’t my idea. I’ll get you some more.”

A gentle touch wrapped around my stomach.

“I’m not worried about the alcohol,” Selena whispered. My heart raced. Sure, I was tipsy, and clearly, she was too, but that wouldn’t be a good enough excuse to break the pack’s code. Alcohol is a truth

liquid that brings out what people's secret desires are when they are sober. Right now, it had turned a shy and chaste Christian girl into a direct and horny party girl.

She sat me down on the balcony's couch, straddling me.

"Selena, we can't do this."

"Oh, we can't?" she asked, beginning to kiss down my neck. "I'm sure that we can."

My dick started to bulge through my pants, as Adonis would say.

That's when the door slid open – again.

"What is this?!" Noah steamed.

I pushed her off me. "Dude!" I tried to sympathize. "This is not what it looks like."

While he argued with her on the balcony, I slipped inside and laid on the opposite side of the bed from puke-breath Paige. After fifteen minutes, I peeked through the crack of the door to see Noah stomp across the family room with Selena. He opened the front door, they walked out, and then he slammed it in a bang.

The next morning at 8:00, I woke up to the buzzing of my phone. Noah's angry screeching left my ear ringing. "What the fuck did you do to Selena?"

"I promise you she completely came on to me," I told him. "I told her we can't, and she still escalated on me."

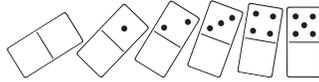
"I'm breaking up with her because of you."

"I'm sorry. I know I look like an asshole, but I hope that we can make things right."

He hung up on me, but within hours he reached out again.

"Clearly, I'm doing something wrong," he texted me. "Let's forget about this whole thing, but I want to start going out with you guys and learning this stuff."

Noah had tasted the sweetness of the possibilities in seduction. It was like the fruit that Eve ate that God told her not to. Seduction was the forbidden fruit, and when he witnessed its potential, he couldn't help but want its power as well. Little did I know, because I consumed the entire thing, that my life was about to change in drastic ways.



Chapter V

Hotwired

Sparks of Attraction

A year later... It was the dead of night.

Driving at 45 miles per hour. The white speed-limit sign reflected my headlights in my pupils. I squinted. The arrow on my dashboard kept slowly growing.

It read 50...75...90...110 miles per hour... The engine purred louder and louder.

I couldn't believe my storm-grey little Mitsubishi Eclipse could be pushed to this extreme. I didn't care if I crashed. Dying seemed better right now anyway. I couldn't believe that this would ever happen to me. We talked about marriage, children, and everything in between. I was blinded by rage. I needed to take my mind off of life, and I took my emotions out on the road at the time.

My headlights lit up far down the road. There's a certain peace about the dead of night. In the distance, a bird poked its head up from the side of the road. It was a mother goose and her babies. They began to cross the road, and my car was coming in hot.

Could I stop in time? Sweat rolled off my jawline and dropped onto my black sport jacket, absorbing into the fabric. I slammed on the brakes. My car began to skid into a halting stop. My head jerked forward, and the smell of burnt rubber filled the car like a hotbox.

I slowly raised my head fearing that I'd see goose remains and feathers scattered all over.

Nothing. I saw nothing.



I opened my door to see if I had hit any of them. My boot clunked onto the asphalt. I could hear the open-door alarm as I walked to the front of my car. Right before I reached the front, I heard the goose honk.

It poked its head up, sideways, and stared me right in the eye.

Then she and her four baby geese scurried to the other side of the road. They stopped and looked back at me.

Another honk. Maybe she was thanking me.

I wanted to make sure I didn't hit any, so I knelt in front of the car and pulled my phone out of my pocket to use it as a light. *Nothing under it and nothing stuck in it*, I thought. I hadn't hit any of them. I stood up, and with all of the adrenaline pulsing through my body, I subconsciously realized there was something on my knee.

I moved my hand mindlessly to wipe it away. But it didn't wipe away. It just stuck to my fingers. *What the hell is this?* I thought, angling my hand in the beam of the headlight. As the light showed my hand, my eyes narrowed. Then I picked up my leg in the angle of the beam. I couldn't believe it. The geese had taken a shit, and I'd knelt in it. I guess it wasn't thanking me earlier, it was laughing at me.

"I should've just run them over," I swore to myself. "All they do is just shit all over the place and attack you." I sat in my car and opened my glove compartment to see if I had any wet wipes to clean myself up with.

I continued to grumble. "Charging at people, flapping their wings, and hissing."

I continued babbling to myself as I pulled out a wipe from its container. I looked out the window. A couple hundred meters from the road, beyond the fireflies, the full moon reflected on a pond. That's where they must be going. I'm guessing their nest must be there. "Unbelievable," I huffed, letting out a noise almost resembling a balloon releasing air.

The goose and her babies had slowly walked off the road and into the tall grass. Just like that, they were gone. This was the perfect metaphor for the position I was in. My life was falling to pieces right

now, but no matter what I was going through, life didn't wait for me. Reality kept cruelly moving forward.

The orange glow of the clock in the dash of my car reflected off my face.

I watched it as it clicked to exactly 12 a.m.

I didn't know what to do, so I sat there and breathed. I raised my hand, adjusting my rearview mirror. I moved it to the point where I was staring into my own eyes.

The orange glow masked my face. Orange is my favorite color.

It cloaked my eyes, my hair, and my skin. Everything was orange.

If I turned off the ignition and let the regular lights turn on then I'd see a completely different image. In the mirror, the orange glow hid my emotion. I couldn't see the color of my eyes, how puffed up they were, or how red my face was.

When you take off the mask you wear, you see what's truly underneath.

I couldn't deny it; I had been crying.

I shifted the gear into 'Drive' and sped off again. "Where should I go now?" I asked myself. I pulled into my former elementary school and sat on the swing set. One blinking light shined on me. I stared at it and watched the bugs cluelessly fly into it.

This place was the first one that came to mind. On the basketball court during the summer, my friends Ace and Adonis would come here and shoot hoops until the lights turned off at midnight. When the lights turned off, they only left one small light illuminating the playground.

It was this light that I was staring at that reminded me of my youth.

The other lights left this one alone to glow all by itself. I felt all alone in this moment.

I needed someone to talk to. I unlocked my phone and searched my contacts. My phone was getting a barrage of texts from her. The newest message popped up at the top of my phone screen: "Connor, I'm so sorry, please just respond to..." I couldn't read the rest without clicking on it. I scrolled up and ignored the message.

I found my dad's contact and began to call him. One ring...two



rings... “He’s not going to pick up,” I told myself. Three rings...

“Hello?” he yawned loudly. “It’s late. Is everything okay?”

“No,” I let out. “Melanie...”

“Yeah?” he questioned. “What about her?”

This has happened to others, and when it did, I couldn’t understand what they were going through. She texted me again, and I went back to read what I didn’t want to be real. Every time I checked, I thought it would change, but it didn’t, and it was cemented.

This was real, and it was happening to me.

I let out a big puff of air. “She’s been cheating on me.”

Prior to this event, a lot had happened. I’ll have to go back to post-Little 5 to explain.

Part



Turning Points

[Hotwired: An English term meaning, “To bypass the ignition system in order to steal it.”]

I received a letter within seven days with a request:

Dear C,

I would like to personally invite you to a private luncheon May 14, 12:30 P.M EDT located in the Marriott Downtown Indianapolis. (The shiny blue one.) If you are interested in preparing some of the best nightclubs in the world and have experience, then you could have what it takes. You will be joining a few other handpicked candidates. Come prepared.

P.S. Keep this letter in absolute secrecy or you will be automatically terminated from the selection.

Best,

Gary

I wrote down the time and place on the letter, burning the rest so that I could erase all of the evidence. I couldn't let this chance be blown by some dumb mistake.

According to Jay, this was going to be my 'in.' If I was truly interested in being involved with this society and becoming a master of my social life, this would be my opportunity.

I knew that Gary was the next person that would take me from natural to unnatural. I had no idea what the stakes would be or who I would be placed with inside the room. The letter stated “handpicked,”

and part of me in my current state wouldn't be able to last against the pros.

However, Noah claimed that he had someone who could help us advance our game by the name of Alexander.

He was around five-foot-ten with a very muscular face. His body shape was awkward as if he had back problems. But probably his biggest characteristic was his mouth. Not the fact that he never really brushed his teeth, but the fact that he was like a mixture of Adonis and Jay. He tended to yell every other sentence like Jay, but the words that came out of his mouth were like the ones Adonis told me in private. The word he used the most, at least once every four sentences, was "top," which was apparently a New York term for 'blowjob.' He was originally from New York before moving to Indianapolis after his mother passed away.

His mother had left him a large inheritance, which he tended to blow on alcohol and bribes to people to let him into parties. He was the type of guy who had all the information on what parties were happening and when.

He somehow made a connection with a girl who lived in a mansion thirty minutes west of the city where high-status people tended to go to party, and he put us all on the guest list that weekend to attend with him.

However, when I asked Jay to join us, he claimed that he knew of Alexander already and wanted nothing to do with him, so I had the original team get back together: Ace, Adonis, and me. It would be a night that we would call 'House Party, Part 1' and what Adonis would label as 'classified information.'

Part



Sun-Kissed Peaks

There was still somebody I wanted to not only learn from but model.

Ace was the definition of a pure natural. We hadn't been to a party together in months because I was so involved in my own journey, but he had developed an even stronger game since I had been out with him last.

When we arrived at the mansion, it was magnificent. It reminded me of the houses my mom would drive by and say to me, "One day, when you graduate college and get a good job, you may be able to buy one of these."

There were multiple Mercedes, Jaguars, and other luxury cars parked in the circular driveway with a fountain in the center. The house was white bricked with ivory posts on the front porch, like the White House. It had a gated entrance, and to me, entering it felt like I was walking into Mt. Olympus (the home of the gods) that I read about when I was younger in Percy Jackson books.

When I first met Alexander, he was doused in the smell of cheap – I think it was Axe – body spray. He wore a loose-fitted grey dress shirt that looked to be a hand-me-down from his dad. Also, khaki pants that led down to untied, worn-down Nike shoes. His style was in desperate need of a makeover.

He scanned me from head to toe. I wore fitted pinstripe pants, Chelsea boots, and a Hugo Boss pinstripe jacket.

"Just make sure you don't get in my way around Stephanie," he said as he rang the doorbell.

"So, she's off-limits?" Adonis asked.

"Yes!" he hissed.

Stephanie answered the door. She was the owner, a big girl with

attitude. Her dad was a business owner who trust-funded her with \$20,000 a month until the day she dies.

Perhaps Alexander was a male version of a gold digger.

Alexander treated Stephanie like a queen. He brought her roses, and he said that she looked beautiful in a robotic and shy voice as if he had been rehearsing it in the mirror. He was at her entire beck and call like a servant. He was trying very hard. She was stuck up and controlling, and took pride in her property, probably because she threw all kinds of parties with high-class models, athletes, and more almost weekly.

“My dad told me that Larry Bird used to own this house.”

“That’s nice,” I replied nonchalantly.

“You bet your ass it’s nice.”

It just took one sentence to understand someone’s way of thinking. I processed things quickly.

Stephanie took pride in her house, and it was her weakness because this house fueled her confidence. If she were without it, she would have no confidence. According to self-help experts, you should never base your inner happiness and confidence on external things such as girls, money, cars, or in her case, a house (and a monthly check). If you lose that source, you lose everything.

Living room ‘A’ was in the shape of an octagon with windows that stretched from floor to ceiling with no wall. Bleach-white carpeting and red sofas were in front of a bar stocked with tiered shelves of alcoholic beverages. One hallway from there led to living room ‘B,’ dominated by a pool table. The other hallway led to a spiral staircase that ascended to Stephanie’s extra-large bedroom. Multiple bedrooms connected to both hallways.

Despite all that luxury, the treasure of the house was outside: a sunken hot tub, a saltwater infinity pool lined with black tile, and pathways that led to a pond that Stephanie’s room balcony overlooked.

The feature I liked best was how secluded it was. It was in one of the only locations around Indianapolis where there was little light pollution. You could see the stars light up the sky like little diamonds.

Noah claimed that Alexander was the best with the girls, but Alexander was also the definition of two-faced. When talking to Stephanie, he was a sweetheart, but when talking to me behind her back, he used his favorite word in every other sentence as he repeatedly talked about how he wanted ‘top’ from her.

“Stephanie is looking so good tonight,” Alex said in private. “I’m going to definitely get her into bed.”

“How are you going to go about doing that?” I asked, trying to sap his style.

He grinned. “Get her a little drunk, give her a little massage, and then start kissing her.”

There’s no way this guy was serious.

“You know,” I said as if I’d just come to a realization, “that could actually work.”

“You think so?” Hope filled his voice.

“Fuck no,” I said.

I believed that he must have been kidding and that it was all an act. I was waiting for the other side of him to come out. The one that was a Casanova. The one that truly could sing the love song of a woman’s heart. I was hovering around him waiting to see what I could steal and copy for my own use. It aroused my curiosity but quickly deflated into amusement and embarrassment.

Ace gasped, “Oh my God,” claspng his hands over his face.

Adonis laughed as if it was a comedy club.

I just sat with my mouth open because I couldn’t believe it.

In living room “B” was the dancing area. The house was packed with people including models and professional athletes. I felt slightly out of place like I didn’t deserve to be there, but I kept my cool. It was Alexander who was out of place.

Stephanie joined two girls moving their hips to the music. One of them was a girl who wore a cowboy hat, and if she was a professional something, I would guess an equestrian trainer. Ace told me that she eyed me when I wasn’t looking at her with her emerald-green eyes.

The other girl was one who Ace had already been with, a shorter

girl with bleach-blonde hair and a skinny body. He said that when she was riding him, she asked him, “Do you love me?”

He responded: “Um, we can talk about that later.”

Alexander watched Stephanie. It was like watching a crocodile stalk its prey. Rarely did it ever catch it, but when it did, it was satisfied for a while.

He swam with his head up in the water, got right behind his target, and decided to put his hand right on her hip. From there, he moved right behind her, putting his crotch on her tailbone.

She was supposed to start grinding on him and dancing, however, she turned around, and with a look of disgust, she yelled, “Ew!” Then she and her friends fled.

In this moment, I realized a few things.

First, I watch too much *Animal Planet* episodes because I use a lot of animal references, but all I saw right then was a gazelle gallop away from the crocodile thrashing itself out of the water with its gaping mouth.

This guy was a woman-repellant, but I had to give credit where it’s due. At least he had the guts to go up there and try. If only he had some social awareness and could calibrate the situation, he could be really good. There are those who come on way too strong and those who come on way too weak. Starting right in the middle, also known as ‘pace and lead,’ it’s best to let the woman tell you through her body language whether you should be more direct or to slow down. This gives you an insight into how much you can risk.

The girls immediately ran over to Ace. Like a flock of geese, they migrated. Lexi, the skinny blonde, clung onto Ace.

“Hi Ace,” she cooed.

Ace was also like Jay except a little more easy-going. He wasn’t a stone-cold wall like Jay. Ace was more of a player while Jay tended to lead, but deep down, I connected with both of them. Ace always had a girl. Even if he walked in with no one, he’d leave with one, but this time he didn’t need to try.

We moved back to living room ‘A’ where Adonis sat to my left at

a circular glass table. Noah was beside him, Ace was to my right, Lexi was standing right next to his chair clinging onto his arm, and Stephanie with her country friend was across from us. Alex quickly sat down next to Stephanie.

I watched Ace. There was something that made girls respect him but also crave his attention. When Lexi would touch his shoulder, he would smack his lip and look at her as if she was disrespecting him by touching him. Then he would take his hand, grab her hand, and take it off his shoulder, which made her want it more. Then he wiped his shoulder off as if her hand was dirty. When she would pout, he would laugh as if he was joking the whole time.

The guy was an M-Fer. (Translation: Master Flirter.)

It was all a playful vibe, though, and I think that's what hooked them. He was authentic and would tease her with perfect timing. He treated these girls as an older brother treats his little sister. If she asked him if he had any gum, he would reply, "Yeah, you need it." She would whine, "Ace!" He wasn't afraid to push her away because he viewed the situation as if he was the prize. She would be back.

Probably the greatest takeaway that I got from observing Ace was something he did that was like the trap card of flirting. It completely put him in the position to win her over. It was simple.

Here's how it went. Lexi was telling a story to him, and her last line was, "Isn't that funny?!" He fake-laughed – "ha-ha" – while simultaneously acting like he was scooting away. "Yeah, that's so funny," he said in a this-is-so-awkward-hopefully-she-leaves-soon kind of tone. He smiled at her, but then turned his head to us and shook his head. He put his hand over his mouth acting like he was talking about her. The purpose was a huge push-pull. She would see him doing this and slap his arm.

"Stop!" she laughed.

I can't even put into words how effective this was. He did it to both guys and girls. You had to watch yourself around him because without knowing it, soon you would be validating your entire existence to him. When the guys did or said something weird, he

would scoot away, making sure they saw, and before you knew it, you were his pet.

His personality was just so unique.

He expected others to be curious about him, and when they asked, he said, “Don’t worry about it.” Which made people even more curious. When Lexi said something that was obvious – for example, “I’m feeling a little tipsy” – he would sarcastically respond, “Clearly” while rolling his eyes and looking away. If somebody tried to tell a joke, he would say, “Cut,” gesturing scissors with his fingers.

Stephanie decided to change the subject to herself. She was talking about guys who wouldn’t stop messaging her and how tired of it she was.

All I was thinking was, “What guy would ever want you?” I once heard a quote by Helena Rubinstein: “There aren’t ugly women, only lazy ones.” Stephanie was one of the lazy ones – borderline obese, acne, and she was too loud. She was like the song that made my ears feel like they were bleeding.

On the scale, I was blue for her but colder than the color when she tried to test me.

As she talked, Adonis tapped my shoulder and leaned in to whisper in my ear, “Bro, that’s one of those 49ers.”

“That team sucks,” I whispered back.

“No,” he insisted. “A girl who is a four-out-of-ten attractive who thinks she’s a nine.” This self-illusion was caused by her association with men who validated her so much from their weak behaviors that she felt entitled to a great man without actually having anything to truly give. I sighed. Sometimes it’s not always the men. When did these girls become so entitled?

She saw us look at her at one point while we whispered. “What are you two whispering about?” she interrupted us. “Are you talking about me?”

“Don’t worry about it,” I chuckled, copying Ace.

She smacked her lips at me. “I’ve heard about you.”

“Heard about me?”

“Yeah.” She took a sip from her red Solo cup. “Your friends say you’re the guy who’s really good with girls.” She let out a laugh. “But I’d never date you.”

I raised my eyebrows and let out a soft laugh.

“That’s interesting.” I looked away, and then I looked right back in her eyes. “But you’re missing one thing,” I pointed out.

“Oh yeah?” she barked. “What’s that?”

“Who said I wanted you?” I smirked at her, holding eye contact for a second.

Alex covered his mouth, and with him, everyone laughed.

She was speechless.

It was carefree, and it came from the fact that I couldn’t care less how I looked to her. Whether I was good-looking to her or not, it didn’t matter because the end result was the same – she’d never have me, and she knew it, but someone had to put her in her place. She could get her way with all these other guys, and her daddy may spoil her rotten, but she wasn’t going to get that treatment from me. She wasn’t going to walk all over me.

I guess university was good for something. In one of my business classes, my professor told us that when we are negotiating salary and the boss asks, “How much do you want?”, usually the opposing side will answer, “Between [this figure] and [that figure].” But if you tell them a minimum, you are going to be given the minimum.

Instead, you tell them one figure. You tell them your desired salary, and you believe in it fully.

They will test you and say, “That’s a lot!” In which case you’re supposed to hold that tension or say the word ‘Yeah’ like it’s not a big deal.

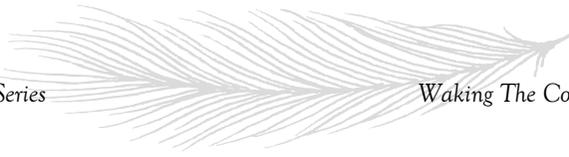
At the end of the semester, I had a D+ in the class. I went into the instructor’s office during the last week and said, “I want an ‘A.’”

“An ‘A?!’” he gasped. “You have a ‘D.’”

“Yeah,” I replied as he taught us to do.

“I’ll see what I can do,” he told me.

I ended the semester with an ‘A.’



It was a lesson on valuing oneself. Alexander would have given in to her tests, but the strong man is willing to walk away. I essentially told Stephanie through my actions and belief in myself that she needed more than her dad's money to win me over. It's a risky move, but you have to risk in order to gain.

Part



Fire & Ice

It was only supposed to be a small kick-back at Stephanie's mansion.

It ended up with two people in the shower, me throwing up on the bed from so much alcohol, naked lap dancing, and worse.

It all started when a guy by the name of Hakan showed up. I never thought that I'd reunite with old friends from high school. I was there when the love of his life broke up with him, and it turned him into a cold womanizer. I witnessed the rise and fall of his character.

His name meant "fire," apparently, but his features reminded me of Jack Frost. His bleached hair was solidly gelled up in the front, he had blue eyes, and a lot of people said we could be brothers. He was known for getting women, and the girl he brought was actually my ex-girlfriend's best friend, Holly, a short brunette with a free spirit and chiseled curves.

She hugged me as if we were best friends. "Hi, Connor." Her breath smelled like hand sanitizer. She was definitely drunk.

He pulled a bottle of Bombay out of Stephanie's bar. "This will make you very horny," he told us.

Drinking had never been my thing. I had certainly tried it before, but I had never been drunk. The girls were quick to seize on the opportunity to consume free alcohol and ran over there like a buffalo stampede with Alex following.

To every negative, there's a positive. When it was awkward or quiet, Alex tended to be the entertainment. He started dancing and was able to let everyone loosen up.

Ace and I took a shot of the Bombay. It smelled like a pine tree and tasted just like I was swallowing one. "This tastes like shit," I told Ace.

He looked at me and changed the subject. “Ava, the girl with the cowboy hat, has been talking to me about how she thinks you’re really cute.” I nodded. I guess it was time to clock in.

Lexi and Ava were sitting on barstools at the kitchen counter. She called Ace over, and I followed. Lexi and Ace began to talk, and I noticed Ava giving me the eyes. We stood awkwardly behind them. I needed to take that seat because with them sitting there, it made Ace and I look like we were chasing them.

“Listen, you guys need to see my new magic trick,” I told them as if it was the coolest thing in the world. “Hold out your hands, and stand up for a second.” I threw in a time constraint for good measure. If your audience thinks that something will only take a second, most people will comply and go along with it.

They stood up. “Now close your eyes,” I smiled. It was as if Ace and I were communicating telepathically because once they closed their eyes, he took Lexi’s seat immediately. “Are you ready?” I asked them. They both agreed simultaneously. I slid onto the barstool. “Now open them.” They turned around to see us in their seats. “Thanks for the seat,” I laughed. Now they were on the outside awkwardly standing over us.

They pestered us, trying to get their seats back.

Lexi and Ace continued to talk. I moved on to the marble countertop with my feet on the seat. I looked at Ava. “How big are your hands?” I asked. I held up my hand as if I was looking for a high five. Our hands gently kissed as she placed it against mine to compare. “Your hand is small.” I mentioned, which could have been either a compliment or an insult. I wrapped my fingers between hers and squeezed as I continued to talk to her, and she wrapped back. This was a sign that she was interested. We were basically holding hands.

I was setting up for a technique that I learned on how to escalate physical touch.

“They say that couples who hold their hands like this with the fingers locked symbolizes a strong connection between two people who seek a stronger bond the more they hold. But couples who hold

their hands like this..." I said, repositioning our hands so they resembled a handshake in which the hands are clasped instead, "these are couples who are secretive, but when they are together, they are very intimate and passionate, and they know each other very well."

"I think I'm more of the hand-clasping kind of girl," she chirped.

When she got excited, as she did right then, she had a country accent that came out. I repeated what she said with an exaggerated country twang. It was a tease, and it was playful. She let go of my hand and slapped my leg.

Ace poured a couple more shots of alcohol.

One shot turned into three, and three shots turned into six.

I discovered that when I get drunk, I lose the feeling in my fingers and lips. Ava poured me my seventh shot, and I already couldn't feel my face.

"You're just getting me drunk so you can take advantage of me," I said, reciting a playful interpretation, "but I'm not that easy, babe."

I forced down the shot.

"How did you know?" she flirted back.

"Because I'm as sharp as a papercut."

Alex came over and took another shot. He made us take another with him. I lost count after that one.

I looked at Alex. "Watch this," I insisted.

I took Ava's hand, placing it on my inner thigh. I was exercising the frame that she was the one coming onto me. "Watch it," I said, removing her hand and looking her in the eyes. "I need trust, comfort, and care before we do those kinds of things." A line I had once heard from Todd Valentine.

She giggled.

I looked at Alex. "Did you just see her try to do that?" She was laughing hysterically, and so was Alex. I etched this technique into my intoxicated cerebral cortex. I had to remember this so I could use it again.

"That was you!" she exclaimed, bumping into me.

I was very drunk.



I didn't know where Hakan was, or Holly. Some guys were sitting with us on the couch who I had never met before. Somewhere in my mind, I came up with an idea.

"Let's go to a private room," I called to Ace and the group.

In the room, I connected to the Bluetooth speakers and laid in the middle of the floor with Ava. I told Ace to lay down next to me, and Alex laid down on the other side of Ace. I put Ava on top of me, and she began to grind on me to the music.

Lexi hopped on Ace, and Stephanie hopped on Alex. We started to make out, and she put my hands on her body so I could feel it. I took her shirt off. I wanted to make it even more interesting. I wanted a rotation going.

I switched the song, and yelled, "Next!" I moved Ava off of me and moved Lexi from Ace onto me. Stephanie moved to Ace, and Ava moved down to Alex. Lexi and I began to make out. Ace kissed Stephanie. Ava wouldn't kiss Alex. This is when I realized that my plan had backfired. The next person up was who I didn't want at all, but my fate was sealed. If I switched the song, Stephanie moved to me. If I waited, eventually the song would end, and she would still move onto me.

I couldn't win. Each second that went by, my fate grew closer.

I don't think Ace wanted Stephanie either, but she was going to town on him. I stalled for time because I didn't want her on me.

However, in my final moments of thinking through the dilemma, Ace interjected. "Switch the song already." I did.

Oh no, I thought as she positioned herself on me. I had to endure this.

I was trying to enjoy it, but even while intoxicated, I was disgusted. She leaned in to kiss me, and I turned my head. I dodged a bullet there. She was on top of me for a total of nine seconds before I yelled, "Switch!" Then I changed the song.

"I missed you," I told Ava as she climbed on top of me. I eventually got up because my head was spinning, and I stumbled to a bed. I needed to lay down.

The last thing I remember is laying on that bed, and when I closed my eyes, it felt like I was floating in outer space. I was spinning around and around. I couldn't help it; I threw up all over the side of the bed.

Then I went to sleep.

I woke up the next day and felt like shit. I rolled myself from the bed and crawled on the floor because when I stood up, I'd felt a throbbing heartbeat in my head. I found Ace in a different bedroom. He woke up when I pulled the blanket off him and curled up on the floor in it.

"What happened last night?" I moaned.

He didn't answer. I think he fell back asleep.

Where were the girls, where is everyone, and, more importantly, where were my pants?

I must have drifted back to sleep because I woke up to Ace saying, "It's four o'clock."

"A.M. or P.M.?" I asked him with my eyes still shut.

It was bad that I was hoping it was the afternoon and not the morning. If it was the morning, that meant I was asleep for a whole 24 hours. Luckily, it was the afternoon. He told me all of what he could remember. He remembered the rotation, and he remembered that he apparently told the girls that he would take them home if they flashed their boobs.

They did, but he realized he was too drunk to drive, so apparently, they either walked or passed out there.

"That walk would take like three-and-a-half hours," I said to him.

He nodded. "At least."

According to him, I sat down next to Ava at some point and she said, "Connor, make out with me right now." Apparently, I turned my head, looked her in the face, and said, "No." Then I got up and walked away. She chased me around the house. Memories in the form of short clips started to comeback.

Then I remembered that Hakan's girlfriend, Holly, and I kissed.

Guilt took over my body as I remembered. I felt awful about it. I remember Holly telling me, "I used to not like you, but you've grown



on me.” The bad part about it was that he was right there when it happened.

Before Ace and I left, I saw Hakan asleep in his bed. I wanted to apologize, but I couldn’t work up the nerve to wake him up and say it.

When I saw Hakan, I remembered one conversation I had with him and Stephanie when we were well into the tipsy range. I overheard them discussing someone by the name of Gary. When I heard about club promoting, I jumped into the conversation.

“You were invited too?” I asked Hakan.

“No way,” Stephanie said. “Have you been chosen by Gary too?”

I tried to drunkenly get intel from them.

“My father used to do business with him,” Stephanie said. “He is big-time, and I know he’s looking for talent. You two are going to be great fits for him.”

I couldn’t believe Hakan was one of the handpicked.

“However,” she paused, “since both of you are meeting with him, act like you do not know each other. He is very secretive. He will probably kick both of you out on the spot because he wants the individuals in this position to have no relation with the others.”

“But why?” I asked.

“For multiple reasons. You will all be his right-hand men. You could easily work together and form a company to take out his business. You guys will be the oxygen of his work.”

“The oxygen?”

“You’ll see.”

Part



Mastermind

May 14, 12:15 p.m. I arrived at the Marriott. I walked into the hotel and already felt out of place. A neon-orange Lamborghini was parked in front of the hotel. The people were dressed in high fashion that went beyond business professional. Even though I wore my fitted pinstripe suit, this was beyond me. I had known nothing but poverty my whole life. I worked in a warehouse making \$13 an hour, and as a university student, I had little to no spending cash.

When I walked in, I was stopped immediately.

“Excuse me,” an older man said who I’m assuming was a butler. “Can I help you?”

I acted like I was high-class and belonged here. “I’m looking for Gary.”

I was taken up an elevator where a shorter man wearing a black suit guarded a conference room.

“What letter are you?” he asked.

“Letter?”

“On your invitation, who were you addressed as?”

“Oh, I’m C.”

I was the third of eight people to arrive. Inside was a long glass table with soft chairs that made a swishing sound when you raised and lowered them. It overlooked the northwest portion of the city. Suited men stood in the corners of the room, and two other individuals sat at the table. The feeling in the room was grim. Not a word was said, so I decided to speak up.

“So, what’s your guys’ name?” I asked the two people seated at the table with me. They were both clearly older than me. They looked to be around 30 and had great style.



One was dressed like a greaser from the book, *The Outsiders*. He had jet-black hair, slicked back with what looked like a gallon of gel. He had a toothpick in his mouth and wore a black leather jacket.

The other man had messy brown hair that was also gelled. He had a warmer feel to him when he gave me an inviting smile. He wore a grey suit, wore a Rolex, and had the top two buttons of his dress shirt unbuttoned to achieve a casual look that showed off part of his tanned chest.

“I’m sorry, but Gary has requested that you are not allowed to share information,” one of the cornermen said. “We ask that you sit silently until everyone has arrived.”

The next to arrive was a shorter man who had muscles that popped out of his grey T-shirt and a cross tattoo on his forearm. It looked like he laser-whitened his teeth and buzzed his hair to the skull as if he was in the military.

The fifth person to walk in was Hakan. We followed Stephanie’s advice and acted like we didn’t know each other. He sat a couple of chairs down from me. Little did we know that she’d really saved our asses.

The sixth person was an energetic guy with red hair and a beard to match. He looked like a ginger version of Ryan Reynolds, wore black jeans with holes in them, a large silver chain wrapped around his neck, and a ring on each finger. He was told to stop talking by one of the cornermen when he began an open conversation with all of us. He gave the cornerman a surprised look when he was told to keep quiet.

The seventh person to enter the room was a guy who had a face that resembled Jesus. He had a slight beard and long brown hair. But what stood out most was that he was six-foot-five with tattoos all the way up his neck and on his hands. He smelled like he had just finished smoking a cigarette when he sat next to me. He wore a long trench coat even though it was hot as fuck outside, but it was his dark-brown eyes that captured people, I realized, when he looked into mine and smiled.

“Everyone except one is here,” one of the cornermen said. “We will call in the boss.”

When I scanned everyone in the room, I realized that I was not only the youngest but the outlier. Some of these guys looked to be in their thirties and had full careers. Even Hakan was older than me by two years at 24.

Everyone in the room gave off the same vibe that Jay did: a ‘don’t fuck with me’ vibe. I wondered if they felt the same vibe from me.

Everyone here thought they were the best. This was the room I needed to be in. They could grow my skills exponentially if I learned from each one.

The eighth and final person walked in, and it was Gary.

I was expecting him to be in a suit and to convey a professional personality. I was expecting a man in his forties or fifties who had to have owned the world based on the dramatic setup he had given us.

Instead, a five-foot-five man walked in wearing flip-flops, pink swim trunks, a white tank top, and a cigar in his mouth that he put out in an ashtray. I only got one of my three guesses right. He was in his forties. He lifted the sunglasses to the top of his shiny bald head. His hazel eyes were bloodshot as if he was either smoking too much or had jetlag.

“Let’s get started!” he beamed as the blinds began to dim the room. “I’m sorry, I am the one called Gary by the way.” He looked around the room. “Is letter-X not here?” he asked one of the guards.

“He didn’t show.”

Gary sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose for a few moments.

I didn’t know who Letter-X was, but he must have been somewhat important.

He signaled the workers to pass out two things to us: a Fiji water bottle and an iPad.

“While they are passing these out,” Gary said, “allow me to share who I am in a sentence or two... I love clubs, and I love money. I graduated from Stanford with a master’s in business. I created this business when I was 24. One of my best friends bought a club with his

parents' trust fund in Ohio, and I was the one who put the people in the club. From there, I blew up in a year taking my business from six figures to nine figures in less than two years. It was because of one simple psychological trick."

He raised his finger.

"I took advantage of the male mind. I hired some of the world's best pickup artists and masters of social situations to get the hottest girls in the club – because what happens when rumors start to spread that one specific club is a hotspot for women? Men tend to fill those clubs. So, I was hired to turn clubs from piss-poor to regional hotspots."

As I listened, I realized that Gary loved to talk. Each time he'd say a sentence or two, it packed the wallop of ten or more sentences. But nobody seemed to mind.

"This is what you guys will be doing if you would unlock your iPads," he said. "By the way, don't try to peek at your neighbor's screen. Each iPad was made with a privacy screen so you won't be able to see a word of your neighbors."

He was right. I looked at my neighbor's screens.

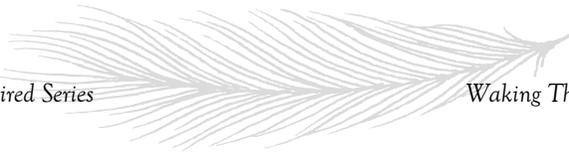
First, the guy who looked like Jesus, and his screen looked black. Then to my left at the man in the grey suit; it was the same.

"On the first page, you see a date, a time, and a location. Everyone's is different. This is your 'tryout,'" he said, using air quotes. "We are not affiliated with these clubs, but someone will be there to watch how you operate in the setting to see if you're a fit for ours."

Mine was May 24 at 10 p.m. EDT at a club called Revel in Indianapolis.

Our tryout was basically to see how well we worked in social settings. Before we even got into the business, he wanted to see how we handled pressure, how we acted inside the club's walls, and how we tended to network with people such as managers, women, and even high-status men.

But what worried me was the tryout he talked about.



“On the second page, you will see a list of requirements,” he told us. The requirements listed were as follows:

1. *The abilities of a pickup artist including taking a girl from street to club, and club to home. Then getting her friends into the club.*
2. *Understand social dynamics, social media, and owning the ability to manipulate human psychology, and have a huge awareness of it.*
3. *Stay in the shadows.*
4. *Know how to network and influence others – specifically those who have power.*

The buzz-cut muscle man cut in. “These requirements are so simple.”

My palms began to sweat. Was this really simple to him?

I could barely get past requirement number two without my heart racing. I kept a poker face, but I was only able to take a girl from club to home on the first night once.

I only witnessed Jay do that twice.

“Business is simple,” Gary responded. “Make people feel like they need something, and then fulfill that need beyond the expectation.”

“What’s in it for us?” Buzz-cut asked.

“Our clients need people to fill their clubs. People are their oxygen. You fill the clubs to max capacity then you will be given multiple things. I realize that some of you live in different cities. Each one of you will be given a hotel suite within walking distance of your tryout location. Food and other necessities as well. You guys are like my children. I will treat you as such because you will bring significant value to my business. If any of you don’t want to do this or aren’t interested, please turn in your iPad and leave.”

Nobody stood up.

“What’s the tryout?” the greaser asked, taking his toothpick out of his mouth.

“I will decide based on multiple things on the day of. Show up, beat the challenge I provide, and you’re in. In the next two weeks, this room will be reduced to half as many people. I’m looking not only for the most talented but the most talented of the talented,” he smiled. “I need the top one percent of social masters.”

I could barely even breathe correctly, I was so nervous.

I looked over to Hakan. I couldn’t read his body language. I couldn’t tell if he, or anyone else, was as nervous as I was. Maybe this was just business to them. I didn’t know how I matched up against anyone in this room.

“One more thing,” Gary said, focusing his gaze on us. He looked in my eyes. “All of you are not to talk to each other. Your identities remain a secret to each other. If you share this with anyone, you will be permanently banned from this opportunity. We will dismiss each of you in one-minute increments so that you remain out of contact with one another.”

I didn’t really see the point of that. I could just wait outside the building for Hakan and then talk to him.

“Don’t try it,” Gary said. “If you’re thinking of meeting up outside of this building with each other, I will know. I have watchers throughout this building who will make sure each of you leaves without a word to each other.”

Fuck. It’s like he could read my mind.

“If you share this information with anyone else in the room, you are out. If I find you at the same place at the same time as the others, then you are out because I’ll assume you exchanged information,” he told us. “Ha-ha-HA-HA-heh-heh,” he laughed as if he was joking. Everyone else laughed, and then he switched to full seriousness in a snap. “I’m only serious.”

We stopped laughing. When it was my turn to leave, the greaser asked him, “Was that your orange Lambo outside?”

“No,” he responded, “I have someone drive me around in my Rolls, my Ferrari, or my McLaren.”

I was in a different world.

Part



Time Under Tension

Time under tension.

Muscle is built by pressure from the weight and by how long you are able to keep the muscle under that pressure. At least that's what Jay shared with me.

I needed to put myself under pressure.

I was once told that to become great, you must take most people's extreme and make it your average. To be prepared, I needed to sharpen my skills and, more specifically, constantly pressure myself. I once heard that a diamond cannot be made without extreme pressure.

I wanted to talk to Hakan about this. I needed to because the tension was killing me. I didn't want to be the first to reach out to him, though, because it was dangerous.

Fortunately, he reached out to me.

"Soooo," he texted. "What's your date?"

We exchanged dates and times and discussed how we felt during the meeting. We agreed to keep our relationship a complete secret but would communicate outside of the events.

His date happened to be the Friday right before mine in Broad Ripple. I made a mental note to attend his to see what the challenge was so I could strategize.

I had exactly ten days to prepare for my big debut. For a week straight, I was in downtown Indianapolis, the Broad Ripple district, or the Keystone mall. These three places were where the most beautiful women tended to spawn in the city.

I must have spent more than five hours each day talking to women for seven days straight. On the second to last day, I probably had a bag as big as Santa's present sack but full of phone numbers.

Two nights before my tryout happened to be a Thursday; downtown calls it “Thirsty Thursdays” with specials usually offered in the clubs.

I invited Noah to come out and develop himself a little more and we found ourselves in the Sky Bar nightclub on Indianapolis’s most popular strip.

We were on a schedule. We took a free shuttle from my university, and the last stop it made, to pick us up, was at 2:30 in the morning.

College kids don’t want to pay for anything, so we had to make that shuttle. We arrived at around 12:30 a.m., and it was packed. It probably had 300 to 400 people in the club, and maybe 150 of them were women.

When I talked to people, Noah stood right behind me, listening awkwardly.

“Dude.” I glared at him. “You have to go talk to someone.”

“I want to watch you do it,” he argued back.

“I’ve noticed,” I said sarcastically, implying that he’d been on me this whole time.

A group of five girls walked by. I noticed one of the girls was a petite blonde. I’m guessing five-foot-two. She had a touch of baby fat, but it was under a skintight avocado-green sparkling dress. It was her peppiness that I found interesting, but also her shyness around her friends as she smiled but stood distant from the other girls. She dressed to be noticed but acted shy. It was like a female example of push-pull.

She and I made eye contact, and I got a feeling that she was interested. She looked down as soon as we made eye contact, and then she darted them back up at my eyes once again, then looked away.

When I wasn’t watching her, I could feel her staring at me, but when I looked, she was looking somewhere else. Either I was imagining things, or she was fast.

When you make eye contact with someone and they look away but then look back at you within the next thirty seconds, then chances are they are interested. I’ve noticed that if you lock eyes with a girl and she looks down and away, then she’s probably a little shy. Shyness

means that she cares about how you perceive her, which means she's attracted to you. The eyes can't lie. They will look at what they desire.

When she and her friends came near us, she stood close to me and danced by herself. When I spun around abruptly, I caught her staring at me. She was hitting all of the checkpoints on the scale for me to open. I was about to make a move when a guy came over and started talking to one of her friends. I knew his face; it was the same guy Caitlyn chose over me. The same guy that I saw in the pictures on her desk that night. It was Mitch.

He put his arms around a different girl in the group. Either he was cheating on Caitlyn, or that didn't work out very well. Either way, I had a new target.

I could see her staring at me again out of the corner of my eye. I chuckled to myself.

I told Noah, "Go up to those two girls, my target and the friend who's with her, and say, 'Holy shit!' Hold your finger out at them, and pause to get their attention. Then ask, 'Are you two twins?' because they kind of look alike."

He grumbled, but he did it and I saw them giving him laughs and signs that they thought he was attractive. He was improving. Then my target in the green looked at me.

There were two guys between me and her. One of them was Mitch, and I'm guessing the other was his friend. His friend tried to dance with my target and pull the moves on her. As Mitch held his new girl, I reached out. These two beta males had to move. Mitch gave me a dirty look as he saw my arm pass in between him and his friend's heads. They were in the way of what I wanted.

I tapped her shoulder and reached out my hand.

She looked at me with a shocked look on her face. A test. I continued to hold out my hand unfazed with strong eye contact. I motioned 'come here' with my fingers.

She pointed to herself and mouthed the word, "Me?"

I nodded, took her hand, and when she started to come to me, the two guys moved aside like a gate. I bumped Mitch hard in his arm with

my elbow on the way back, which was a dick move. “Sorry, man,” I told him, but I’d lied. It was intentional, and I wanted him to feel it.

My opening line was: “I saw you checking me out a few times, so I thought you might as well come and introduce yourself.” She laughed.

I reached out my hand and asked what her name was.

“Laura,” she chimed. “What’s yours?” I tend to keep my name out of the conversation until a girl asks. If she asks, it’s a sign that she’s interested.

“Guess,” I said, smirking. “It starts with the letter ‘C.’” I wanted to be a challenge and be playful.

“Um, is it Connor?”

I shook my head in surprise. “That’s actually my name. How did you know?”

She jumped in excitement. “Is it really?”

“Oh my gosh,” I said, grabbing her hand. “It’s like we were meant for each other.”

“I know.” She smiled ear to ear.

“This is so romantic.” I put my hand over my heart. “I bet I know something about you.”

“What’s that?”

I pointed at her. “You’re a good dancer.”

“I am!” She jumped again. I found it cute that she was so excited. “I’m actually on the dance team for the University of Michigan.”

“Show me,” I said, taking the hand I was holding and gently pulling her away.

She giggled.

While I led her through the crowd of people, I walked past Noah, who was with the girl I told him to talk to. It seemed they were hitting it off.

I wanted them to see us.

I stopped in the middle of the crowd, turning and facing her.

“Don’t worry,” I said. “I promise I won’t be gentle.”

She laughed.

We started dancing together, and we got into it.

She would grab my hands and guide them to feel her hips and her body. I put my hand on her back, and she bent over for me.

She was flexible, and it was hot.

Dancers do this one thing with their hair where they whip their head and all of their hair waves around and covers half of their face. She turned around and did the thing with her hair, then she looked at me with these eyes of desire.

I think I was falling in love...or maybe it was just infatuation.

She wrapped her arms around me and looked me in the eyes. We were so close, and she looked at my lips.

“You probably spent hours practicing that in front of the mirror in your bathroom,” I said, holding her hips. I’ve tried to figure out where I come up with some of the things I say. I think that it’s because everyone is actually very similar. If we all had cameras watching our inner lives, we would see stuff we all do, but if others knew, we would be embarrassed. Like performing in our own private mini-concerts or checking ourselves out in reflections.

The fact is that I’m able to joke about what most people don’t want others to know. I tease others because we all do these things, but most are afraid to admit it. I tease them about things they probably do but never want to admit, and if you call them out on it, it brings a great reaction.

She probably did dance in front of the mirror, and if someone walked in on her, she would be embarrassed, and that’s probably why she laughed melodically when I said that.

“Your friend even told me that you do that,” I joked. Even though I never talked to her friend, it wasn’t really lying but flirting.

“No, she didn’t!” She jumped.

This was just mindless banter before a kiss that was about to happen. I was sweating, and she was sweating. Her hands were on my chest, and mine on her lower back. We stared deeply into each other’s eyes. I couldn’t hear the music.

I forgot about everyone around us. It was just us now.

I couldn't help myself. We started making out right there in the middle of the club.

She pulled back. "You know, I'm like the mother of my group, and I'm supposed to be watching over them," she claimed.

I brought her close and talked in her ear. "I have such a big thing for moms."

She laughed again, and I passed that test. Women like to blow up a situation, making it into a big deal to see how a man handles it. But it's really no big deal, and men need to take what she makes into a big deal and deflate it as if it's nothing at all. We started kissing again.

"Are you in love with me yet?" I asked, smirking.

"No," she chuckled.

We started to kiss again.

"How about now?" I asked.

"Shut up," she said, leaning in to kiss me some more.

These kinds of girls have men left and right hitting on them. Guys spend weeks trying to get a girl like this. They chase but get nowhere.

I had her in less than eight minutes.

Most women over their entire lives feel so judged and constrained by the expectations of society. Our society has been set up to make women feel like sluts if they are having fun with a guy. Some women feel suppressed because they are constantly worrying about what their friends or family will think of them.

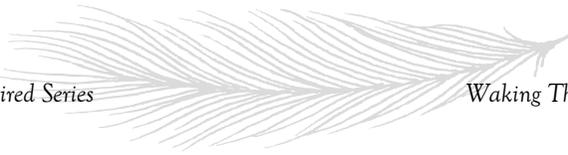
They just want to have fun. They want to feel admired, be touched, and experience sexual tension with a guy – the right guy.

It's rare when they get to express the feminine side of their personality to a guy because either she will be judged or a guy could hurt her.

She takes a risk opening up to men.

The greatest gift you can ever give a woman is letting her feel free to show you who she really is without judgment. The freedom to open up and be vulnerable to you.

After she does, she feels as if the best place in the world is with you in your arms.



During these past eight days of seduction, I was asked a common question.

“What’s your sign?” she asked.

When I was first asked that, I had no idea what that meant. I realized it was about your date of birth – I am a Cancer – but I also realized it was a perfect opportunity to flirt some more.

“If you were to guess, what would you say I am?” I asked her.

“Sagittarius!”

“Oh my God!” I gasped. I held it for a moment. “No.”

She laughed and slapped my chest.

It has been advised never to just give information away but to instead have a girl work for it. If she works for it, not only is she interested, but when someone is working for something then they are subconsciously telling themselves, ‘I’m working for him, so he must be worthwhile.’

Noah ran over by us. “It’s 2:20!” he yelled. “We are going to miss the shuttle!” The bus stop was more than a mile away. We had to get moving.

I saw Laura’s phone was in her front pocket. I reached down and pulled out her phone, handing it to her. I told her to put my number in and text me.

“We’ve run out of time tonight,” I whispered, kissing her one last time. “But text me later, and I might have to come back for you.”

I didn’t come back.

Part



Leveling Up

Choose a technique and model it.

There was Letter-Jay, who had the natural abilities and leadership tactics that tended to make the room want to follow him. His certainty, tonality, body language, and charismatic disqualifiers tended to leave a woman's brain fried.

There was Ace, who had an extreme ability to push-pull anyone in an unnatural programmed way. His teasing remarks were able to get the woman uncontrollably aroused, unknowingly qualifying herself to him so that he only needed to deliver a simple sentence to lead her right into the bedroom: "Come with me really quick."

There was Alexander, who was a driver and heavy hitter. His style wasn't for everyone because it was extremely direct and only worked when the woman was already horny, looking for anyone to fuck. His gorilla-like instinct of physically escalating on a woman usually turned her off, but when it worked, it made her extremely aroused.

Then there was Hakan, who gave me my first-ever experience of witnessing the prowess of a real unnatural with the opposite sex. I felt like everyone had their own particular style or unique ability, but I was still yet to develop my own signature style or move. I was a natural at this point, which was more than I ever dreamed of being with a woman, but after sitting in that room, I knew that everyone had to have some special ability. I didn't know what mine was, but I finally awakened mine while watching Hakan perform.

Hakan had sent me a screenshot of the message he received from Gary. They sent him a picture of a single woman sitting alone at the bar.

The text read:

“A man by the name of Rover will be giving you directions to your hotel room, your suite number, and basic necessities are in the room. Your single challenge is to be able to get this lovely woman from this club to your hotel room (legally).”

He nerfed everything. He said that he couldn't use alcohol or force her to the room in any way, which I didn't think he would, but Gary had probably seen it all at this point. It had to be pure interaction mastery to make her want to come back to the room. Alexander wouldn't have been able to do this.

“This is a test of your social skills,” he texted. “I want you to show me your capability with social awareness. You have from 10-2 A.M. and if you can't then you simply don't advance. What you do from there is up to you. Have fun, good luck! – Gary”

Advance? I thought. I didn't know that there were rounds to this.

This first round was already near impossible for me. I'd only pulled a girl on the same night twice. Once with Jay's help, which doesn't even count, and then again at IU.

I had to see if Hakan could pull this off, but I couldn't be seen by Gary or his squad. If I did, I'd be eliminated.

I had to completely change my appearance.

I swallowed my pride and asked Stephanie if she could put makeup on my face. We had a fiery start at first when we met at her mansion. We butted heads like rams, but when I got to talk to her one on one, she was actually cool.

She agreed to put makeup on me, and I told her that she wasn't allowed to speak of this to anyone. I wore eye shadow and foundation; I looked like a woman. I changed my eye color from blue to black with colored contact lenses. I wore a cowboy hat over a fake wig of dreadlocks and wore baggy jeans, cowboy boots, and a plaid long-sleeve shirt. I had no idea what the fuck you could call this style. It was a mix of Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the cowboy from *Ghost Rider*.

My own mother probably wouldn't have recognized me.

My mind went through multiple scenarios. Like what if she is there with a man? What if there's only a one-percent chance of pulling her home. How do you do that? Unlike me, Hakan was always cool and calm. He probably felt like this would be a breeze.

I arrived in Broad Ripple early around 9:30, and I definitely got some strange looks from the people on the sidewalk. The tryout was in the Red Room. Coincidentally, his girl – the target – was wearing red. She had on a simple red cutoff T-shirt that showed her belly-button piercing and wore her long blonde hair in a ponytail. She wore light-blue jeans, I'm assuming stretchy, that curved around her legs as if they were painted on her. She had to be 24 at least, and she wore a black sparkling choker around her neck.

An idea popped into my head. If I convinced her to leave with me, Hakan would lose, and I'd have less competition.

I didn't go through with it. It would have been too risky because if I got caught, I would be out. Too much was on the table to lose.

That's when Hakan walked into the club.

I stayed far away in the shadows of the club. I hadn't seen Gary or anyone of his sort yet. I was nervous because maybe they were already on to me. That I was already eliminated. Maybe I was just overthinking it. Hakan had already gotten an envelope from one of them though. They were so slick that I didn't even see him take it.

I waited an hour and a half before Hakan made his approach at 11:30, and it didn't even happen in the Red Room. It happened after she left the club. When she left, he caught up to her on the sidewalk and started a conversation. I followed about fifty yards behind. Fortunately for him, it was an easy tryout. She was alone, and he had no obstacles to take out like a friend, or even worse, a boyfriend.

From there, he took her to Insomnia Cookies. About an hour after conversation there, he left with her to the closest hotel, which was about a mile away from Broad Ripple. It seemed to have gone smoothly, but I wanted to know what he did. What happened when he brought her inside the suite, and especially what was his technique – his power.

Part



Hooking the Heart

The following afternoon, Hakan and I met up twenty minutes south of Broad Ripple at a China Buffet so we could stay far away from any of Gary's potential watchmen.

He pulled out his phone, showing me a message. "Well done," Gary texted him. "You are one of the few who are advancing. Stand by and wait for further instruction."

I wanted that same message. The only one I had received today was, "Revel @ 10 o'clock tonight." Saturdays were when clubs were usually the most packed but also the most dangerous.

I was so nervous. It could end any type of way. I could come out on top, or I could fail miserably. Before I asked him about the details, I wanted to see his true colors, and how he got involved with this clubbing business to begin with.

"How did you find this community?" I asked. "How did you even get here?"

"Well, my father left my brother, mom, and me when we were kids. He was an alcoholic, and he agreed to find help but never came back."

He paused and then continued. "I found out years later that he didn't leave for help; he left to marry another woman. I think that he's where I get a lot of my addictions from. I was in the clubs, month after month, talking to girls until I ran into one of Gary's partners; Letter-X. He moved to Chicago and recruited me to take his spot here in Indianapolis."

He showed me a picture of his father and they looked almost identical, but when I said that, he put his phone away and tried to change the subject.

“Did you see someone with dreadlocks last night?” I asked him.

“No,” he replied. “Why?”

“I had Stephanie disguise me so I could watch you perform.”

“You’re an idiot! What if you got caught!”

“Um, then I would have been out.”

“No shit!” he sarcastically intoned. “Well,” he said with a complete change in tone, “I’m probably going to do the same for you tonight.”

“So, what happened?” I asked him.

Here’s what Hakan told me:

She was such a shy girl; I could tell. I love shy girls because I always know what to say to them. The emotional connection that I could create is always the cherry on top.

I don’t remember what I said in the opening. To me, it’s not important.

The interaction is like an art. Stories are my favorite form of art, and the buildup is what makes the ending. Keeping her constantly in a love story by keeping the mystery, the uncertainty, and the challenge.

You can ask questions, but then there’s the man who makes assumptions and statements. For example, instead of asking where she was from because she looked like she was from the West Coast, I could say, “You aren’t from around here, I can tell.” It’s a technique called the ‘cold read’ where people tell you insights about yourself without any prior information, and it captures their attention.

In that moment, she wants to know what makes you think that. It must be something about her looks, her personality, or just the way she walks. She wants to know, and you now have something she wants, so she works for you.

She told me that she was a model from Arizona when we sat down in *Insomnia Cookies*.

I told her a story of other models I was friends with. It was killing two birds with one stone. She would see that I’m social-proofed by telling her indirectly who I hang around, and then I would finish with,

“Most models are all over the place and kind of annoying, but you seem different. I feel like you are focused like you have a goal or an interesting story.”

It made her feel special by gluing together the idea that she was different.

“Tell me,” I said, “what happened in your past to make you motivated like this. Was it a guy who broke your heart? Family? Financial problems?”

It’s almost a trap in a way. If she says she doesn’t have a story then she would call herself uninteresting. Who would want to admit that? It also helps her open up and talk. While she’s talking, and while she’s telling you this, her brain is subconsciously telling itself: “I must like this guy because I’m sharing with him a lot about who I am.”

While she was telling me about her life story, she would pause and turn red. “I don’t know why I’m sharing this with you,” she said, fanning herself. “We just met.”

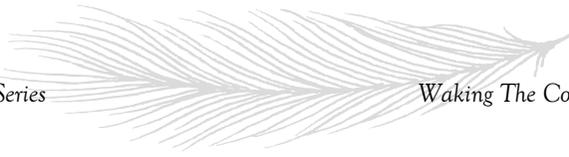
I read in her voice that she truly is shy and slightly insecure. One of the major hooking points with winning her heart is when she reveals some of her biggest insecurities to you. That’s when you know she likes you, but the trick is how you compliment her.

She believes that her flaws are bad, and when they’re shown to someone it would be a negative, but the romance happens when a man is able to find and then compliment her insecurities.

I told her that this insecurity is one of the two or three things I liked about her. I then told her the second thing. When she asked for the third thing, I said, “I like when you...well, never mind. I’ll tell you later. It’s too cute for me to say.”

She bothered me all night to find out the third thing.

I always carry a few cheap hoodies in my bag. Women love wearing a man’s clothes. I’ll spray it with my Versace cologne and tell her to give it back to me the next time she sees me. Usually, she will wear it when she’s not with you, and as soon as she puts it on, she’s thinking about you. It’s dangerous because when she’s thinking about you, her desire for you is growing too.



To push that along, when we were coming down the elevator the next morning, I pinned her to the wall and made out with her aggressively. As soon as the doors opened, I walked out without looking back. This amplified her emotions before I left so she would think about me all day.

Part



Gateways of Desire

After Hakan and I left around 4 o'clock, I realized he was at a different level.

It was like he could hack into her mind and steal her heart. This was the style that I was waiting to perfect.

I learned from Jay that it takes confidence to approach, and I learned from Ace that it takes competence to spark interest and desire.

Part of competency includes the process of pulling her in and pushing her away. This is what sparks attraction and causes it to grow: pulling her in with indirect compliments, interesting tests, stories, and validation.

Every pull must be balanced with a push to keep the mystery including teases, sarcasm, or just turning away. However, these aren't cold, they are flirty because you do them implying the opposite of what you're saying.

Notice how women will do the same thing to men. They will say things and a lot of the times mean the opposite. You say these things to her, and you imply the opposite of what you're saying with a smirk or smile. For example, hugging her and then saying, "Okay that's enough" or "Okay, that will be five dollars."

Or, "You have something in your teeth [or hair]... It's, um, cute, but you might want to get it."

Or, "Get away from me" while you push her away and then add, "You're too cute for me to be around." With a wink.

If she says, "I need to shower," then you say, "Yeah you do" or "I'm glad you noticed too." As you cover your nose, roll your eyes, but smile.

We can compliment her only if it is balanced out with a push. You

give her some validation, but men lose her when they give her all of their validation from the start.

Teasing and pushing her away are risky, so most revert to pulling her in with compliments, questions, and acting like they truly care about her.

It has to balance like a scale or otherwise one side will become heavier and fall. When you pull her in too much, it causes her to become bored and disinterested, and she'll walk away.

Only the men who realize they don't need her are able to tease her, and it shows that you believe you're on her level.

I was so focused on sparking attraction that I had hit a plateau, but the love story was my favorite theme.

I finally learned from Hakan that the true nature of a powerhouse seducer is his ability to create a great love story. It's addicting if done correctly.

This realization came just in time to use that night.

I got ready. I had a few people who would accompany me in the club. Gary never said if we could bring people, he just said to keep it an absolute secret.

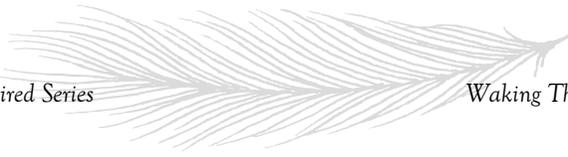
Noah was the first to take me up on my offer. In the past two months, he had dropped out of the IU business program, which I didn't recommend, in order to learn more about the dating life. It was his all-time dream now to become a pickup artist and revolve a business around that.

He also had a friend to join him who came all the way from Dubai in order to get the full nightclub experience.

The next to come was Alexander, who I realized would be a major asset for the night, and finally, Jay decided to come because Gary knew that Jay was the one who recruited me.

I put on my lucky pinstripes and my suede Chelsea boots. Tonight was going to be a big night for me. One of the turning points of my entire life.

When I walked into Revel, a woman greeted me as if it was regular conversation. She was sly and handed me the envelope. Then walked



away without a sound. I saw why I never noticed Hakan receive his envelope.

I opened the envelope to find a note, a key to a suite at the Holiday Inn a few blocks away, and \$425 to cover food, drinks, etc.

The note read:

C,

Wait at the railing of the second floor for further instruction. I will be sending you a message here shortly on what you will be doing for your tryout. If you aren't able to complete the challenge, one of my people will find you and take the envelope back. The money is yours to keep, however.

Best,

Gary

Part



Puppet Master

I've hated the word 'tryout' ever since I was cut from the high school baseball team.

In the past, whenever I was in sports and had to compete with others watching me, I usually choked. I never believed in myself and always tended to drop the easiest passes or flyballs. I let up because I felt like I had no chance.

Now whenever I was in front of others and walked into a club, I felt this charge of power as I pondered who I was going to make out with, dance with, or potentially take home? But it was on this night that I dove deeper into forbidden territory: the power of an emotional connection with a woman.

Tonight was my big debut. The gate that led me from a natural to an unnatural.

I stood at the railing on the top floor per Gary's instruction. As soon as she walked in, I knew what Gary was going to tell me to do.

She was stared at, purred at, and whistled at all night when she stepped foot into the VIP lounge of Revel's nightclub.

"Holy shit," Alex gasped. "That's a platinum blonde."

Her silver hair matched her silver silk skintight dress. It looked as though it compressed her spray-tanned fake breasts so much that one wrong move and they would rip through.

With all of that silver, she reminded me of the antagonist in *Terminator 2* who could turn his entire body into liquid steel. Of all of the women I had met, I failed to realize that 'platinum blonde' meant her hair. I had never heard that term before he said it. I thought the term meant five stars, a well-known supermodel, or something of that caliber. At least that's the description I saw in my head.

I didn't want to say that I was disappointed when I finally made the connection hours later, but I wasn't necessarily impressed.

I watched her as did the entire club.

My phone buzzed.

It included the picture of the platinum blonde sitting down. The challenge was the same as Hakan's – in short, win her heart.

Noah went in for her first, breaking the ice and attempting to tease her on her dress.

"Silver is usually for second place," he said. Before he could finish the line, she turned her back to him and shut him out. Then his friend, Oli, the visiting foreigner from Dubai, opened with an option. She shooed him off like he was a stray cat.

That's when Alex said, "I'm going in."

"Wait," I said, halting him with my hand. "Look."

A six-foot-five musclehead sat next to her at the bar.

No fucking way," Alex said. "That's a linebacker who is considering signing with the Colts." After he finished his beer, he took the can and crushed it into a refined disc. I didn't know who it was, but Alex studied fantasy football, so he knew about every player on every team.

It took every brain cell to create a strategy. This was life or death and would take a flawless seduction to win her not only from him, but for me.

In my head, I plotted three sacrifices that needed to happen to get her.

I began to move into position.

I told the DJ to play a certain mix of dancing songs that brought most of the club to the center-room dancefloor. From there, I had to get myself into 'state.' In pickup-artist lingo, this meant to bring my mental state to a place where I was feeling good and balanced. So, I wrapped myself in the power of social proof by taking the hand of a woman who, when I was 20, I would have given up anime for a year for and spun her around.

I glanced sideways to see if the platinum blonde noticed us as the

center of attention on the dancefloor. She did, and that was all I needed for proof.

My dance partner was only a pawn piece to get to the blonde – my first sacrifice.

The football player left her alone for a few minutes, so that's when I saw the opportunity. I strutted up to her, first talking to a couple sitting next to her at the bar.

What I said was irrelevant. It was really all to get to her. Now was the time; I had to pull out the big guns on her in order to capture her attention.

I turned to the platinum blonde. "What's your problem?" I asked. "Why are you sitting here with all this fun going on but with that look on your face?"

I said it with a smirk, but she didn't take it that way.

She glared at me cold but came back with fire. "Excuse me?" she hissed, looking me hard in the eyes. "Why would you try to embarrass me like that?"

This wasn't playful. She was serious.

I realized that I was playing Russian Roulette with my words except with five bullets in the chamber, not just one. If by chance I pulled the trigger on the wrong words, she would overreact, and the linebacker – who was now on his way back from the bathroom – was going to do to me what he did to his beer can earlier.

My heart was beating. I was on the edge, and it inspired me to clutch up.

I realized that anger is the perfect terrain for my misdirection. If I could turn her anger around, I'd win her heart.

"I can tell you're not having a good time," I admitted. "But would you rather *I* be the friend who walks away and leaves you like this when I can clearly see you're not doing well or the friend who picks you up and wants more for *you*?"

Before she could respond, the hulk came over. "KT, is everything alright over here?" he asked, side-eyeing me.

I stood my ground. This was the moment of truth.

If she told him I was being a problem, I'm assuming he would have started an even bigger one.

"Yes," she said. "I'm just catching up with someone." I guess I had an effect on her, or maybe she just didn't want to start a fight.

He grabbed her hand and pulled her away to the opposite side of the bar. She looked back at me, and it reminded me of a child being pulled away from a candy store by a parent. When you take something away from somebody, they value it more.

It also reminded me of Romeo and Juliet. The parents of the families separated the two of them and said they were never allowed to be together, but it only amplified their love for each other. If the families just let them have sex or do whatever then they probably would've just dated for a few months and then broken up without having to kill themselves. It's simple psychology. Now, I was going to take advantage of Alex's psychology.

When I walked back to the group, Alex asked, "Well, how did it go?"

I told him that the linebacker was controlling, and she's been trying to get away from him all night, but she wants a man who can take her away – who can get rid of him. As I was telling him this, hope filled his chest and his eyes like a gas tank.

"Also," I added, "I think she was checking you out."

It was easy to manipulate Alex.

He only thought about two things: getting top from a girl and getting alcohol to help him get top from a girl who's drunk. So, when I told him a hot girl found him attractive, the beast in him came out. He thought he could be the knight in shining armor and fight this hulk-like figure away.

"Top time," he said as he stood from the seat. I followed him to the bar but hid behind a pillar so they couldn't notice me even though I was close enough to hear the conversation.

"So," he addressed the platinum blonde, "I have to know. Does the carpet match the drapes?"

Perfect, I thought.

“What the fuck is wrong with you,” the blonde seethed.

“What?” Alex responded. “It’s a compliment.”

“You think you’re funny?” the linebacker growled, grabbing him by his shirt collar.

Alexander never took provocation well. He was extremely hotheaded and especially competitive for a woman. He was also big enough to fend for himself for a few moments before he would get ripped apart.

I, on the other hand, wouldn’t last a second, but I didn’t have to.

Alex pushed him off and grabbed a knife from the bar counter.

The linebacker shattered a bottle.

The platinum blonde tried to get them to stop, but they both couldn’t control themselves.

They stared into each other’s eyes holding their weapons.

The entire club seemed to stop and watch this battle. The tension was killing me. I didn’t know if I was going to see someone die in a fight.

“This is why!” Jay hissed into my ear. “This is why I don’t like Alex!”

“This *is* why.” I smiled ear to ear.

Security grabbed both of them, escorting them outside.

I said that I needed three sacrifices to get to the blonde, but I didn’t address the last two – Alex and the linebacker. Yes, I sacrificed him, my friend, for what I wanted.

I pawned the entire club to get to her. With these two gone, I had a fair shot with the platinum blonde now.

She sat back down at the bar, sinking her face into her hands.

I slid next to her, signaling the bartender. “Two shots of tequila, please.”

She lifted her face from her hands and looked at me. After he poured the shots in front of me, I placed one in front of her.

“It looks like you could use this,” I told her.

I normally don’t buy drinks for a girl unless she puts in something of equal value because they tend to lose respect when a man does that.

But this case was the exception because she needed somebody. And I needed her if I wanted to advance in Gary's competition.

I held out my shot for her to clink hers against. "To finding a good man," she said, clinking it against mine and downing it.

After a few moments of adjusting to the burn of the alcohol, I asked her, "How can you find something good when you're searching in all the wrong places?" A line I once heard in an anime, but I believed it.

"That sounds like such a line," she chuckled, testing me.

"If it was a line, I'd ask you if the carpets match the drapes," I responded with a smile.

"Oh my gosh," she laughed, signaling that I passed that test. "Did you hear him say that?"

"Sadly, I did."

I used to hate awkward silences when I was talking to a girl, especially in the moments when I couldn't think of anything to say.

But I realized over countless conversations that it's actually an advantage.

When a girl is interested in you and you decide to randomly go quiet, she will fill that silence with conversation. It was a subtle test to reveal her attraction for me. All I had to do was turn my head away and stare out the window.

"Are you from around here?" she asked.

"I am," I said, "but I can tell that you aren't." I was exercising the cold read.

"How can you tell?"

"You are so different from the people around here." It may have sounded like an autopilot response by me, but over time, I trained myself to stop asking boring questions and instead making short and interesting statements. Guessing instead of asking because the guesser leads the conversation; it's like bait.

"I'm different?" she asked.

"I can tell you've been through a lot and have so much to say," I told her. "But I feel like it's extremely difficult for you to open up to

people.” With every word and every assumption, her eyes dilated more and more, and her face blushed pinker and pinker.

She began to tell me about how she was a former model who moved from California. That the people there weren’t her crowd and that she wanted something more real. I tended to wait until she asked for my name because when she’s interested in you or reaches the point where she’s attracted, she will want more information about you. She called herself KT. I don’t know why it wasn’t ‘Katie,’ but it was the letters ‘K’ and ‘T.’

“You still wind up surrounded by the same people,” I continued. “Tell me, KT, that guy who got escorted out – he doesn’t get you, does he?” I began to go by my script of adding more truisms and reads after another attempt to destroy him while simultaneously showing her that I possessed what he lacked. “I feel like you really like someone at first, but over time you tend to lose interest, and you can never figure out why or when that man will come into your life who will sweep you off your feet and never gets old.”

“Well, I, uh... He is...” she stuttered.

“You already told me everything I need to know,” I said, holding up my hand to stop her. “You don’t have to lie to me; I promise you can be open with me.” I threw in those lines to lower her walls, implying that she wasn’t able to be open with him or anyone else, but that I was different in a way that she could be with me unlike she was with anyone else. It was the ability of a hacker.

“It’s funny the way you’re resisting him but have so much in common,” I added.

“No, we don’t!” she snapped. “How?”

“You both get mad at me when I talk to you.”

She laughed, slapping my shoulder. Touching, to me, was the window to escalate.

“C’mon,” I said, attempting to get her alone, “you have to see this.”

But she resisted. Perhaps because she felt it wouldn’t be right to leave with me when she came here with another man.

My last resort was the false takeaway.

“I like that about you,” I said, nodding approvingly. Then I got up to walk back to my friends. After two steps, she grabbed my wrist.

“We need two shots, please,” she said to the bartender while holding my wrist. I gave her a confused look. She downed one and gave me the other.

“Alright,” she said, “show me.”

I took the shot then grabbed her hand, leading her out of another exit to avoid the crowd. Luckily, the Holiday Inn where Gary had reserved my suite was a few blocks from the strip of nightclubs because he wanted me to be fully equipped. I took her to the very top floor and opened the corridor to the rooftop where we could see the entire city and the dazzling city lights.

For a few minutes, a little girl came out. She danced around and pointed at random buildings that she said she wanted to visit. This was the side to her that I was waiting to see.

Eventually finding her way next to me, we leaned over the railing. She looked into my eyes; her voice lowered to a whisper.

We kissed gently. At 1 a.m. in the suite, we made out and slowly removed our clothing, one at a time. By 1:45, she was blowing me. At 2:30, we took a shower together until our skin pruned. (For Alex: The carpets were red, not matching the drapes.) By 3:30, we fell asleep together, hair still damp.

In the morning when she left, she said to me, “You’re different from the guys I typically date.”

I responded with the line that my former coaches said to me: “I just have something that they don’t.”

I was becoming the cocky asshole. The Jay. The one who could not only talk the game but show it time and time again. The villain who was arrogant but had the credentials to back it up. Eventually, of course, he’d stumble upon the one to take him out.

I was transforming into an unnatural. I just didn’t notice, or maybe I just didn’t want to face, that I was diving deeper into a dark and lonely path, and if I sunk deep enough, I’d never be able to get out.

Purchase the TEAM SK VIP in the AMP Installment in order to get a free PDF to finish the book or Purchase on Amazon.