

SNIFF

GC Brown

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Prologue

Bank Robbin' Dave

The End!

That's what this looks like.

Some of the worst of the worst type of shit.

I'm sitting in my Aston Martin Vanquish, all the way in the back of a public park in Pompano Beach, Florida, minding my own business. There's a gun on the passenger seat, a needle hanging out of my arm, and a bag of cash on the floorboard, which technically doesn't belong to me.

And cops are closing in from all directions.

Smart money says I'm fucked.

And to think, I thought I got away with it.

The first two banks went off without a hitch. I walked in through the front doors wearin' a ski mask, waving a note around. Both times, I left carrying a sack of cash to the collective tune of \$286,000.

One last job.

I needed \$64,000 more, and I was hangin' up my cleats.

I got the \$64,000...and then some.

The "then some" is the cash on the floorboard. It's about \$40,000. It goes to a guy named Paper. Paper sells China White—the good shit. Because of it, a few weeks back, I was almost dead. Like murdered-dead. I was in a garage, kneeling on a piece of plastic with a gun to my head. If I hadn't confessed to robbing banks, Paper would've had his enforcer, Link, pull the trigger.

I owe Paper \$75,000.

And he wants it...like right off the bat.

I'm still short, but he'll have to be okay with the forty for now.

Thankfully, I stopped off at the house first and dropped off the \$64,000—what I needed to be done robbing banks. It's now stashed with the other cash in a lead-lined bag in the ceiling above my garage, giving me a grand total of \$350,000. Or, as I refer to it: the amount my wife's cancer doctor is blackmailing me for.

This is after already giving him close to two million dollars.

For the record, that money didn't come from robbing banks.

I took it from a Russian gangster named Yakhov. Pronounced *Yak-off*, if you're the guy who took the money. I agreed I would pay it back. I even pinky swore. Starting out, I had good intentions. I made the first couple of weekly vig payments, like four months ago. I've been telling him to "get fucked!" ever since.

This makes Yack-off very angry. He keeps sending guys around to break my legs. I keep sending 'em back. Hasn't helped our relationship. I suppose the heroin addiction hasn't exactly helped either.

If you only knew the whole story....

I used to be somewhat of a big deal.

A professional Money Maker, livin' the dream.

I took my helicopter back 'n' forth to work every day. I dealt with billions of dollars. Movin' and shakin'. It was my grind. And I was lucky enough to do it while living with the love of my life and our son in a Swiss chateau right outside of Zurich.

Things changed.

I lost it all.

It started with an arms deal in Yemen and spiraled into doctors telling me my wife would be dead inside six months. Now, here I am, surrounded by cops. They seem to be pouring in from every direction.

They've moved in closer now, pointing service weapons at me from behind the safety of their open car doors. There's a helicopter circling somewhere above. Someone's screaming at me over a loudspeaker. It's pandemonium.

I need more time.

I grab the gun from the seat and put it to my head.

This gives the cops pause and me time to scroll through the contacts on my phone. I'm calling a retired hooker who used to work for me. She's the only person I know in this world who can help at this point. I find her number, hit dial, and put it on speaker.

The cops are screamin' again to put the weapon down.

The curveball didn't work for long.

It's finally ringing. *C'mon, pick up. Pick up. Please.*

"Hello...."

Part One

Chapter 1

Charge it!

Dubai

Three Years Ago

It's 10:00 a.m.

At least that's what I think the clock says.

One of my arms is still tied to the bed, and I'm trying to focus around a nipple. The nipple belongs to a hooker. To which hooker, I have no earthly idea. I seem to recall several of them hanging around last night.

Fuck, my head hurts.

It takes me a couple of tries, but I get myself untied. I sit up, throw my feet over the side, and step on another hooker passed out on the floor. She doesn't even move. I wish I could tell you the whole story, but I was halfway in on a bender when they showed up. I will tell you this—although I'm super fucking annoyed I'm even stuck here in Dubai, I'm happy to have at

least made it back to my hotel. There have been other occasions where I've come to on the other side of the world.

It's the main reason I rarely do cocaine.

We don't get along, cocaine and me.

The problem is we keep trying to work it out. You know how it is, some days you have to just step over a hooker to start your day, and others, you wake up and just have to figure out where the fuck you are.

Whaddaya gonna do?

I throw on a hotel robe and go off to find my phone. The hotel suite runs right around seventeen grand a night, so the robe is posh. Same with the view. I'm forty-five floors up in the world's only self-proclaimed seven-star hotel, staring out at the Persian Gulf.

I know what some of you are thinking: *What's this jerk-off bitching about?*

Well, for starters, fuck off.

You come over here and deal with these Hezbollahhs.

Plus, I'm hungover as hell, my phone is MIA, there are hookers lying around like wet beach towels, and this place is a fucking mess. I've been holed up here in the Sandbox for the last five days...waiting on a fucking phone call. Not to mention, I've got sand wedged into places my mother's never seen.

To top it all off, I'm *supposed* to be in Greece on a three-week vacation.

Do you have any idea what the hookers are like in Mykonos this time of year?

It's the height of the season there. Hookers from every nook and cranny on the planet. The place is crawling with 'em. Exotic hookers. Crazy hookers. High-class hookers. Low-class

hookers. Hookers with a friend. Hookers I might never see again. It's hookers and hookers and hookers.

Again, whaddaya gonna do?

Before you and I can go any further, we need to get something straight. I don't need to pay for sex...by any stretch of the imagination. I'm six-five, two hundred and thirty pounds, and work out like my life depends on it. My mother's Puerto Rican, like J-Lo. My dad's six-five, Belgian, with dark hair and blue eyes. I have his height and coloring and mom's olive skin. Plus, I read, write, and speak four languages—French, English, Spanish, and Russian.

And if all that's not enough to make you puke or want to punch me, I'm paid.

I mean, like paid-paid.

Honestly, I only pay for sex because I can...and I have a hooker fetish.

I'm not talking about hookers you find on Main Street. I'm talking about *Pretty Woman*-type hookers. Hookers who run two and three thousand dollars a night. Hookers who'll earn you a smack from wifey for trying to cop a second peek. I parade 'em around town. It's dinner. It's dancing. She tells me the lies I wanna hear. Then it's back to my place for anything I like.

Poof! She's gone in the morning.

Simple.

It's my pop's fault. He bought me my first hooker. I was fifteen. Shy. He said it was easier than trying to explain the birds and the bees. Two weeks later, it was a lot harder to explain the rash to my mother. She called her priest back in San Juan while Dad went out of town on business.

Anyway, I finally find my phone under a couch cushion and walk out onto my balcony while it's still almost bearable outside. I've missed several calls and texts from Mikale. He's my

business partner back in Zurich. We've been friends since we were kids. He's at his sister's wedding in Lake Geneva.

I've known Maggie her entire life. I was supposed to attend the wedding. I'm basically part of the family. The problem is, I very recently had a "thing" with Maggie's maid of honor, Kennedy. And Kennedy's married to a dickweed billionaire who runs in their father's inner circle.

Hence, the thing.

Two months back, a glass just missed my head at one of the umpteen social events leading up to Maggie's wedding. That's when their family decided it might be better for everyone if I sat it out. Mikale didn't have the *couilles* to tell me to my face. Instead, he left a first-class ticket to Greece on my desk, with the note: *Sorry, Buddy. Get some R&R. You deserve it. See ya in three weeks.* Color me thrilled.

As I was packing, the phone rang.

Ten minutes later, I was on a video conference with Mikale to Dubai. The landowners were ready to close on our next build site. This was a fairly good size deal. Mikale told them he was unable to make the trip over because of the wedding. This left me. I figured, fuck it, no problem. I'll drop into Dubai for a day or two, schmooze a couple of sheiks, grab the check for two hundred million dollars, then it's hookers here I come.

Shit never works out like that, though.

Ever!

The next day, I flew here. When I arrived, the front desk handed me a note: *Enjoy Dubai. We'll be in contact soon.* And nothing since. I told Mikale they were miffed about him not showing up. He said I was being irrational.

Go figure.

I'm calling his ass right now. He's not picking up, of course. Oh well, I reckon it's as good a time as any to break the news to him. So, at the beep, as instructed, I do leave a message. "Dickface, I put another round of hookers on the credit card. I'm not going to stop until there's a check in my hand."

When I want to get even with Mikale, charging pussy to the business account is my go-to. He catches hell from his wife, Eva, which gives me the warm and fuzzies. Eva and I don't see eye to eye...on anything. She thinks I'm a total dick. I'm not expecting the relationship to get any better any time soon.

Last year, about this time, she went all Sherlock Holmes on our credit card statements and found my sins. The line item didn't exactly say *Pussy for Sale*, but it didn't take a professional dick either.

Truthfully, I couldn't care less if she discovers my indiscretions. I'm not trying to score points with her. However, Mikale thinks she'll eventually spill the beans to one of our investors. It's fucking bullshit. I've never professed to be an altar boy. I agreed to make them money. And make money, we all have.

Mikale and I manage some serious loot.

Wall Street-type loot.

Valtara Enterprises is our company.

We've got a handful of investors with Batman money who've kicked into our fund. All of it goes toward condominium development projects around the world. We've been at it for a few years now. Boca Raton, Florida, was the site of our first project. Dubai's going to be our second...if the fuckers would just call and bring me the check!

I need to get back inside, get rid of the hookers, and get on with this day.

Chapter 2

Fucking Dubai

Exotic Entertainment: \$11,856.00

I told ya it doesn't exactly say *Pussy for Sale*.

I just got an email alert from our business credit card. Means Mikale did too. Wouldn't even surprise me if Eva got one too. Dollars to doughnuts, he brings it up the next time we speak.

Fuck it.

So, today, I'll probably just hang around the hotel, smoke some hashish, do a few laps in the pool, lunch on the veranda, and maybe grab a massage. That's about it, though. I'm still sore from yesterday. I went skiing from like nine in the morning until running into the hookers around four in the afternoon.

The day turned into a marathon from there.

You know about the hookers, so let me tell you about the skiing.

Most would assume, since I'm in the desert next to an ocean, I'm referring to some type of water skiing. Well, no. I went snow skiing...right up the block from my hotel. These people have so much money, they've built a mountain on top of the sand, enclosed it, and made it snow.

I'm not talking about a little hill where you wait your turn to ski down either.

Try some real-life, Aspen-type shit.

And talk about fuckin' you in the drive-thru. They don't even advertise the skiing 'til you get off the plane. After all, how would Burberry, Hermes, Gucci, and Prada sell enough winter

clothes to afford the commercial rent they're paying here in town? It ended up costing me twenty-five grand for the day...just to keep warm.

I said these fuckers had a lot of bread. I didn't say they were stupid. You don't build the most outlandish city in the world with shit for brains. When Mikale and I told our investors we were headed here next and that the same project we'd just built in Boca Raton, Florida, was now going to cost them double, no one batted an eye. Who wouldn't want a condo in Dubai, right?

"You ain't made it 'til you've done it in Dubai!"

I was going to put the slogan on a red hat.

Look what it did for Forty-Five.

Anyway, these guys I'm waiting on are brothers, the Khaleed Brothers. They're rumored to somehow or other be related to the Royal Family in Saudi Arabia. The problem is, everyone over here with a few more camels than his neighbor says the same thing. So, who knows? I don't put stock in any of it.

I will tell you this—these brothers are flush.

Like "rollin' in it" flush.

They own a ton of sand here. They're said to have strong-armed their way into town when it became apparent the place was about to go bananas. Timing is everything. We met them through one of Mikale's contacts, a Jack Hassan.

Jack is old, old money that goes all the way back to the turn of the last century. He's a somebody or other here in the United Arab Emirates. Mikale has all kinds of contacts like this. That's because Mikale's daddy, Mr. Lars Van den Broeck, is a VIP. And VIPs send their kids off to boarding schools.

For his seventh birthday, Daddy sent his little boy off packin' to a school in Switzerland—an all-male boarding school that's been ranked in the top three in the world for the last hundred years. Mikale graduated from there with a Rolodex of *Who's Who*.

Some real silver spoon-type shit.

One night, about a year and a half back, Mikale and I were out celebrating the recent success of our Boca Raton project in my favorite nightclub in Zurich. Naturally, high-class hookers and cocaine were present. For me, anyway. Mikale crushed up a Ritalin and had a glass of wine.

So, we're sittin' there shootin' the shit, and Mikale gets a call from our contact in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Cabo was supposed to be the site of our next development following Boca Raton. Turned out someone stepped in at the last minute and outbid us on the land. At the time, construction in Boca was more than 50 percent complete. In order to keep the investors we worked hard to get happy, we needed to find a new build site and fast.

Mikale immediately began to hyperventilate. He left and went home to hammer the phones. I went to the restroom, did a rail of coke. Figured I'd get to the office late the next day and do what I do, which is close deals.

Things changed.

I woke up four days later at the Four Seasons Hotel in Maui.

By the time I rolled back into Zurich, Mikale had arranged a meeting in Dubai with this Jack Hassan. We brought along our construction plans from Boca and told him we wanted to replicate the condominium development here. Jack took our plans and said he'd see what he could do. He called back a month later to say he had just the guys for us, the Khaleed Brothers.

Seven months later, here we are.

I walk back out onto the balcony to have a smoke. As soon as I pull from the hookah, someone buzzes the door at the front of the suite. *Putain merde! Can't a guy just smoke a little hash in peace?* It's probably just housekeeping. I walk back inside and fling the door open.

Fuck.

It's two Arab mercenary-lookin' dudes...with attitude. *Can they smell the hash?* I shit my pants. The penalty for drug use over here is a firing squad...if you're lucky. A super-speedy trial too.

"Get dressed, Mr. Liecht," one of them says, barging his way in.

Get dressed? What the fuck?

They seem to be looking around like they're making sure I'm alone.

"Care to tell me where we're going?"

"The Khaleed Brothers are prepared to meet with you," the pushy one says.

"*Yalla imshi!*" the other one at the door adds.

That loosely translates to "get the fuck moving!" like I'm the one holding them up.

Mikale is so dead.

Chapter 3

The Middle of Fucking Nowhere

Things seem a tad off.

Can it be the hash?

So, I'd gotten dressed and followed the Khaleed Brothers' henchmen out of my suite and into the service elevators at the far end of my hotel floor. The whole time they appeared to be looking over their shoulders, without trying to appear to be looking over their shoulders.

Seemed a little strange, but I didn't object.

They hustled me through the kitchen and out the back emergency exit of the hotel. Again, not so crazy enough for me to speak up. A white Range Rover was waiting, motor running. Two more flunkies were standing there with the doors open. Before I had the time to express my concerns, I was wedged in the back seat between the Middle East's version of Hobbs and Shaw. Now, it's too late. There are more pressing issues to be concerned about.

Like trying to make it out of this vehicle alive.

If you've never driven in the Middle East...don't.

There are no set rules, only mere suggestions. This guy behind the wheel's got the speedometer pegged, and he's more interested in blabbing away to his buddies than keeping his eyes on the road. The four of them haven't shut up since we left the hotel. The conversation seems normal enough, but Arabic is not one of my four languages, so....

We left the city limits of Dubai a while ago. It's now down to two lanes. Every five or ten kilometers, we pass another hovel with penned-up goats, camels, and sand. Spades in all three.

I've rung Mikale over and over, right up to the point of losing reception. Of course, he didn't pick up. And it's not like I could really speak freely anyway. His text messages are now full of caps and f-bombs. In so many words, if I end up on a milk carton, he'd better hope no one ever finds me.

I told you, Mikale and I have known each other forever. He was my first friend in Brussels. When I was fourteen, my parents sold our home in Yonkers, New York, and we moved there. Mikale's family's estate was a couple of miles up the road. When he'd come home from boarding school for holiday and summer vacation, we'd hang out.

We were total opposites.

Heads and tails.

Still are.

Mikale was born into money. He's stuffy dinner parties, where he consumes no more than two glasses of wine, wearing starched shirts and creased pants. Home and in bed by 10:00 p.m. To work every day, he's Dapper Dan with his custom suits and strait-laced wingtips.

Not me.

I'm at the craps table in Monaco, a hundred grand on the line, blow in my pocket, and a dime on my arm who cost me four racks for the evening. And to work...forget about it. I'm usually late, rushing through the door in sweaty gym clothes or still dressed from the night before.

Mikale says I'm undignified.

He came looking for me, so....

Six years ago, I was bouncing back and forth between Wall Street and the Intercontinental Exchange in London. I'd been working the trade desk for one of these venture capital firms.

Attributable to my work ethic and because I am honest to a fault, I'd made my bones early on in the business and already had a mountain of success and money underneath me.

In walks Mikale with a business proposal.

Now, he's always been a bit shady, but a friend nonetheless, so I listened to his pitch.

At the time, he was Senior Vice President of Development for the Four Seasons Hotel chain. But he wasn't getting along with upper management and wanted to branch out on his own. He needed a wheeler and dealer. Someone slick with the lingo. That's *moi*.

I came with a list of demands—the least of which was that the home office needed to be in Zurich so I could ski. Three months later, with views of the mountains in Uetliberg off in the distance, we were putting together deals.

Been doin' it ever since.

Holy shit, it seems like we've been driving forever.

We're finally exiting the highway in the middle of fucking nowhere. There's a man at the corner of the off-ramp, wearing the Muslim costume. The sheet looks like it's been slept in. The Turban's seen better days. He's leaning against a camel, smoking a cigarette, scrolling through his smartphone. Doesn't even bother to look up.

Fucking guy's probably on TikTok.

I'm basically being held hostage, and I can't get a signal to save my life.

We're now headed in the opposite direction of the paved highway...across sand. Kilometers and kilometers of the shit. Doesn't keep Ali Baba from continuing to drive like a bat out of hell, though. And he's still blabbing away. It's another twenty-five minutes and an end doesn't seem forthcoming.

And just so you know, phone-totting camel jockeys aren't even an anomaly over here.

They're fucking everywhere.

We finally come over the top of another dune, and off in the distance, something's reflecting the sun. This must be where we're headed. Up and down more dunes and we run into four armed men, standing in front of an old Land Cruiser. All of 'em smoking. All of 'em wearing the sheets and turbans. We stop. The windows go down. Turns out they're all buddies.

Hehe-ing and *haha-ing*...for like ten minutes already.

You believe this shit?

I lean forward and smack the back of the driver's arm. "Hey! You think you and Makmood here can talk about blowing something up later? I need to be somewhere this afternoon...back there in civilization." I say, pointing over my shoulder.

I'm not sure how many of them understand English, but everyone goes silent for a second...then pick right back up where they were. Like I'm not even here.

I'm contemplating saying something a little more offensive, but I'm not sure exactly how far I can push the envelope with these types. You think Mikale's going to be mad about the hookers on the credit card, try returning home two hundred million dollars short.

I'd never hear the end of it.

We're moving again.

Two more crests of sand and there's a huge purple-and-gold tent set up in a valley. Think Old Testament, only the tent's much bigger and a helluva lot nicer. I'm positive the biblical camels are close by, but I'm betting the Khaleed Brothers arrived in one of the four Range Rovers parked out front.

We pull to a stop, and everyone gets out.

In this corner of the globe, individuals continue to reside under the control of figures not unlike these brothers. It's still slaves and masters. And I'm sure when the slaves are delivering their captives to their masters, certain protocols are expected to be followed. Like walking the kidnapped through the front doors, possibly even forcing them to their knees to bow to the master.

Not today, fellas.

I'm not following anyone...especially out here!

Plus, I've vowed to only kneel to God and pussy.

I run around the back of the Rovers and come out in front of the tent...unescorted. Like I said, the tent is big. The two panels at the front are being held open with thick burgundy ropes, with two six-foot stone flowerpots flanking each side, probably weighing close to a metric ton each.

It's sheer Muslim audacity.

The good thing is the place looks too nice to behead anyone.

I step out of my loafers and leave them outside in the sand. When I walk through the open panels, it's dim. Doesn't keep me from noticing the two guards right inside. They're wearing matching sheets with expensive jewels in their turbans and in the hilts of the *smictars* on their sides.

Two of my kidnapppers tried following me in but were dismissed in harsh Arabic.

They'll probably lose some fingers and shit shortly.

C'est la vie.

A carpet covers the sand from one end of the tent to the other, and there are a handful of servants moving around. The brothers are at the back, sitting on giant pillows, smoking from

hookahs. They stare me down as I cross the tent, finally standing when I stop in front of their little picnic.

The older of the two, Mohammed, reaches out his hand first. "David," he says, with a slight bow. "We are sorry to have kept you waiting. We hope your stay in Dubai has been pleasant."

"What the fuck, Mohammed? Why the kidnapping?"

"We've had some recent threats. Until they are settled, we are staying outside of the city and taking precautions. Please, let us sit. We have much to discuss."

As Mohammed shouts several commands in his native tongue, Akmed, the other brother, bows and says, "Good afternoon, Mr. Liecht."

From thin air, two extremely gorgeous women appear, dressed as Disney's bad Jasmine. One has a large pillow, which she sets down. The other one is carrying a hookah. Everyone waits for me to sit.

"Hashish, I hope," I say, half joking as I pull from the water bong.

Neither of them responds like they're suddenly the pope.

It's not hash, by the way. It's flavored tobacco. Tastes like bad goat. Hookahs are part of a long tradition over here, so....

Truth be told, hash is the way to go. If you're going. I take one more pull, pretending I give a shit about their customs. Getting down to business is really all I'm interested in. If we hurry, I can still catch the late flight out to Mykonos. A few zzz's on the plane...hit the party runnin'.

"Let me just say, on behalf of both Mikale and me, we are looking forward to a long and prosperous relationship with you here in the Middle East."

"Ah, well...yes, let us talk," Mohammed says, all serious.

Meirda.

Here it comes. It's always something. Can't ever just hand over the fucking check and sit back. They must think I'm going to sit here and listen to some sob story or reassure them they're making the right decision. Not today. These boys have the wrong partner. Mikale stresses over shit like this. Not me. I know from past experience, the deal wagon will come around again tomorrow. They can hand over the check or don't. I don't care. I've been kidnapped, crammed between five hundred pounds of smelly hummus and brought all the way out to the middle of fucking nowhere. I don't have the patience to deal with it today.

"Gentleman, if I may speak frankly," I begin. "I'm not going to sell you on this deal again. It's take it or leave it. I can have a backup for the money by this evening. And we can certainly find another piece of sand to build on. We've only kept the door open for this long as a courtesy to Mikale's contact here."

Mohammed does the slight-bow thing again. "We are most grateful for the opportunity. We are not looking to back out of the deal. In fact, quite the opposite. We have brought the money with us," he says, happily.

There's something more coming, I can see it on Akmed's face.

"Please follow me outside," Mohammed says.

I follow him out the tent and over to the Range Rovers. Mohammed walks around to the driver's side and opens the door. He motions for me to look inside. I do. Stacked on the passenger's seat and floorboard are black duffel bags. He gives me a nudge and says, "Look all the way inside."

I do. It's a wall of bags that goes all the way to the back. "What's in them?" I ask, praying he's not going to say what I think he's going to say.

"Two hundred and thirty million dollars."

Thought so.

“Can’t be mine. This is not what we discussed. The funds need to be wired to our business account in Switzerland. Plus, there’s an extra thirty million here.”

“The extra thirty is for your troubles, David. You can figure out how to get it wherever you need,” Mohammed says. There’s something in his voice, like I don’t have a choice in the matter.

“Maybe before 9/11, but not today. It’d be easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle.”

“It is possible. My contacts tell me you and Mikale are the guys to get it done. The thirty million dollars is a great incentive.”

I can't spend it from a jail cell, you daft cunt!

By now, some of the brothers’ muscle have moved in closer, and Akmed’s whispering to their two private guards at the entrance to the tent.

Alright, alright, I get the point. Everyone just keep their hands where I can see 'em.

I take another second to consider my options. Fine! Yes, I can probably get it done. And the extra thirty million dollars does help.

“I will do my best to make it work,” I tell Mohammed.

“*Inshallah,*” he says. “God willing.”

Yeah, suddenly, there’s no undercurrent threat, and he’s Allah’s man again. It’s a fucking racket.

So much for Greece.

Chapter 4

Talk about Ridin' Dirty

I feel like I'm in a low-budget hip-hop video.

No drugs. No guns. No homies.

It's all about the Benjamins, baby....

Two hundred and thirty million dollars' worth. Plus the Range Rover, which the Khaleed Brothers told me to keep, before pointing me in the right direction. I've been driving for forty minutes, and I'm still in the fucking sand. The GPS shows 6.4 kilometers more until I hit pavement.

I can't wait to get Mikale on the fucking phone.

His ass, I gotta hear about this wedding bullshit. Who the fuck throws a wedding for ten days anyway? This cock-sucking phone—how is it I still have no reception? I've passed two separate caravans of bedouins on camelback, and most of them were on their phones, blabbin' away.

Fucking third-world bullshit.

It takes me another twenty minutes, but I finally get a signal. I can't dial Mikale's phone fast enough. It's just fucking ringing and ringing, though. No answer. This ass-lick dickface! This is the shit I'm talking about, and he's worried about me showing up to the office in sweaty gym clothes and charging pussy to the credit card...fuck him.

He's left me no choice.

I dial Kennedy, Maggie's maid of honor. We haven't spoken since she decided to stay with her husband.

She answers. "I thought you might never speak to me again," she says, almost in a whisper.

"How's vanilla?"

She laughs. "Boring."

"Want me to record a few of my best moves? I can send them to his phone...like a dick pic."

Another laugh.

That laugh. I still hear it all the time. "How's he treating you?"

"You know, we're trying to do the counseling thing."

"Remember what I told you about a turd."

"Hard to polish."

"Bingo. Listen, as much as I love keeping you from him, I need to speak with Mikale. It's kind of an emergency, and he's not picking up."

"He hasn't left his daddy's side for the past three days. I'll go find him and tell him to call you right back."

"I'm here in the Sandbox again. So reception is super shitty. Tell him to keep trying."

"I thought you were in Greece."

"Yeah, no."

"Okay, let me go find him. I miss you," she hurries and says, then disconnects. Like she had to say it but didn't want to chance me not saying it back.

I would have. Not that I wanted to, but I would have.

The "thing" I was telling you about with Kennedy, it went on for over a year. No one knew. Not Mikale. Not even Maggie, and Kennedy and she have been best friends their entire lives.

They met when they were in diapers. Mikale and I are more than a decade older than them. Maggie was an accident. By the time they were running off to their first day of school, Mikale was studying International Business at Oxford, and I was at NYU in the United States, studying finance.

After graduating, I started rippin' and runnin'. I'd seen Kennedy a handful of times over the years, but it had been at least seven or eight before we both ended up at one of these "My Dad's Bigger Than Your Dad" parties. This particular one was being thrown by Mikale's father.

Kennedy showed up married.

In my defense, she didn't actually bring this up right away. In fact, she never said anything about it until my hand was already in the cookie jar. And some things you just can't take back. If I'm being totally honest, I'd heard she'd married a few years earlier, but....

I didn't have intentions of attending the party. In fact, I purposively planned not to attend. It was in Brussels for one. And, two, I've always hated this type of crowd. My plan was to get out of Zurich for the weekend and head to my flat in London for a few days, reacquaint myself with the Queen's hookers. Mikale wouldn't let the fucking thing go, though. Kept insisting I attend, whining, "There'll be more than a hundred billion dollars in the room."

"So fucking what," I'd said.

Mikale doesn't get it, never has, never will.

Biggie said it best: "*Mo money, mo problems.*"

I'm pulling in six-eight million dollars a year. In my sleep. Living this thing they call the American Dream...but overseas. I'm not trying to grow the business any bigger than a forty-sometimes fifty-hour workweek. That's it. Mikale's trying to land in *Forbes'* Foreign Billionaires next to his old man.

Anyway, I eventually let Mikale talk me into going to the party with one caveat—that I do it baked. Two hours in, I was bored out of my mind. If I had to listen to another “on my yacht in the South of France,” or “at my Swiss Chalet” story, I was going to blow a fucking gasket.

I snuck out back.

Fired up a spliff.

Twenty minutes into imagining myself anywhere but there, Kennedy plopped down next to me and invited herself to the other half of the joint. She took a big pull. Held it like a man. “If I ever throw one of these lame-ass parties, punch me in the vag,” she said, exhaling.

“Deal.”

We locked it in with a fist bump.

“Let’s get out of here,” she said.

I figured, what the hell...run it up the flagpole. See what happens.

Well, I ended up falling. Hard. Head over heels. I even stopped hookers, cold turkey. She kept telling me she was going to leave her billionaire husband—they weren’t shaggin’. Then she ended up pregnant. It was his. She broke the news to me a few weeks before one of Maggie’s many wedding shindigs.

“We’re going to try and work things out.”

She told him she’d been having an affair, but never told him with who.

Fast-forward to the party. *Hor d’oeuvres*. I’d been drinking. Heavily. “Toast! I’ve got a toast,” I slurred. Even clinked a champagne glass a couple of times with a spoon. Got everyone’s attention.

Dead silence.

After two minutes of slobbering, there were no secrets left in the room. I finished with, “And Kennedy says you’re a boring fuck. Vanilla.”

Mic drop.

Her husband was the one who threw the glass at my head.

I lied, telling myself I was starting to crave hookers again anyway.

It’s taken fifteen minutes, but Mikale’s calling now. I answer. Before I can unload on him, he says, “*Enculer!*” (It’s French. Literally translates to *ass-fuck*. Slang for jerk off, shit head, ass-munch, dickface—names you’d call your buddies.)

“Asshole. I’ve been calling you all day.”

“I sent you a text telling you I’d be unavailable. It’s Mother. She makes Father and I hand over our phones every morning. We don’t get them back until the end of the day’s festivities. I just had to go explain to her that it was an emergency. She’s been planning this wedding since Maggie turned four.”

“How do you manage to swing from Mommy’s nipple to polishing Daddy’s knob so seamlessly?”

“Lots of practice. Now, what’s the emergency?”

“Have you bothered to even check your texts or voicemail?”

“Not yet.”

“I’ve got the money. I’m driving it back to the hotel now.”

“What do you mean?”

“It means your terrorist buddies paid in cash.”

“Cash? The whole two hundred million?”

“No, they gave me five twenty-dollar bills and the rest in food vouchers. What the fuck do you think?”

“I think you’re a dick. How are you going to get that much cash into the bank?”

“No idea. They gave us an extra thirty million to help figure it out.”

“That’s something. Money has to get to the contractors in London though. There’s zero chance they’ll take cash. Means you’ll have to be very careful cleaning it. You won’t make a good prison bitch.”

“Why do you assume it would be me going to jail?”

“Mommy’s nipple, Daddy’s knob.”

Good point.

“I’m going to get the money up to the hotel room. We’ll go from there.”

“Do you think that’s safe?”

“Well, I’m not going to advertise it. Got any better ideas?”

“Not at the moment. I’ll pull Father aside, see what he thinks we should do.”

“I’ll be back at the hotel in about an hour. Call me back, Mikale. I fucking mean it,” I say and disconnect.

Before I get to the hotel, I get a text from him saying we need to talk about the hookers.

Did he miss the part about the Rover stuffed with dough?

The End! ...or is it?

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