

“Marjorie”  
By Dirty Dawg

# -1-

The phone call was not completely unexpected, but it did surprise Dan a little. The voice on the other end was instantly familiar, bringing with it a rush of memories and emotions and feelings.

“Dan?” Still soft, sweet and honeyed with a layer of Deep South. A voice promising so many distant dreams and unfulfilled yearnings. He could immediately picture her on the other end: Sitting on that ridiculous white couch in her living room, one leg curled under her, twisting the phone cord as she talked.

“Marjorie.” He tried not to let her hear the sigh, and instead asked the inevitable: “How’s tricks, kiddo?”

“Not too good, Dan.” As expected. He only heard from her when things were going poorly. What this time? Did she need a loan? A traffic ticket fixed? One of her neighbors giving her troubles? Something that a flash of a cop’s shield in their faces usually cleared up?

“What’s wrong?” Even in his cynicism Dan was concerned. She still had the old pull on him, the same effect.

“It’s my boyfriend...” she started, and Dan felt the sinking feeling begin. She probably wanted Dan to fix a traffic ticket or something.

“...actually,” she continued, “...he’s my ex-boyfriend. Only he doesn’t think so. I’ve told him we’re through, Dan, and he just doesn’t listen. He’s shown up here a few times, drunk and angry. He’s broken a couple of things around the apartment in a drunken rage, and...” She trailed off, obviously reluctant to finish.

“What, Marjorie?” Dan gently prodded.

“Well, the last time he was over here, two nights ago, he was really ripped. I mean, he was blotto. He pounded on the door until I let him in, and then he began ranting and raving, waving his arms around, threatening me physically, telling me that I was a no-good bitch and that he would teach me a lesson. When I asked him to leave, he...he hit me. Across the face. With his fist, Dan, not his hand. I’ve got this awful bruise on my cheek and I’m just so scared Dan, I’m terrified of him!” The last sentence had come out all in a rush, and Dan had a palpable sense of her fear.

“Have you called the police? I mean, besides me.”

“No.”

“Have you contacted an attorney? Tried to get a TRO?”

“What’s a TRO? And no, I haven’t called a lawyer...yet.”

“A TRO is a Temporary Restraining Order. Basically it’s a court document that says that this boyfriend of yours can no longer approach you, talk to you, come over to your apartment, anything. No contact at all. If he does, then he’s in violation of the order, and can be arrested and prosecuted. But I only recommend that as the first step. Most assholes like this don’t even blink at a TRO. They just think that the court is meddling in their business, and just ignore it.”

“What can I do?” Marjorie’s question was almost a wail.

“Well, the first thing to do is change your phone to a non-listed number. Secondly, move. Find a new apartment in a new part of town. You tell me when you’re moving, and I’ll make sure lover

boy is tied up with something else, maybe a traffic stop or a drug search or something. That way, if he's watching your apartment-"

"You think he's watching me?"

"Well, it fits the profile. Let me tell you something about this guy; you tell me if I'm right. He was incredibly possessive when you first started dating, jealous to the point of violence against any guy who looked at you. At first you found this kind of flattering, but then his attempts at controlling you and your actions become oppressive and smothering. When you broke up with him the first time, he laughed at you, then got angry, then got contrite. Promised to change, to do anything you wanted if only you'd take him back. He told you how much you meant to him, how much he wanted to be with you, all that stuff. So you took him back. He behaved himself for a few weeks, and then something set him off again. You smiled at some guy at dinner or in the mall or said some actor on television or in the movies was good looking, and he went off again. He went ballistic. Told you that you belonged to him, that you were basically his property. And when you broke it off this time, he went nuts. Started calling at all hours, either just hanging up or breathing heavy or shouting obscenities into the phone. Threatened you...and then finally, what happened last night."

Marjorie had been silent during Dan's entire speech. When he stopped talking, she was quiet for perhaps thirty seconds more. "Do you know Bobby?" she asked.

"Not specifically, but I know hundreds of dirtbags just like him. Trust me, Marjorie. Move. And tell me where and when so I can take care of it."

"Can't you just go over and have a talk with him? Flash him your badge or something?"

"It's called a shield, Marjorie. And no, I can't. That would be an abuse of power, and I could lose my job. No, Marjorie. If you want me to act in an official capacity then-"

"Please?" Her voice was plaintive and quietly beseeching. And Dan knew deep in his soul that he could never refuse her, would always do whatever she asked.

"Very well. Give me his full name and birthdate."

## -2-

Dan parked the unmarked car and looked up at the address he'd written down. 1439 Bainbridge, Apartment 6A. Well, if this got back to the captain, I'll be walking a beat again in no time. But, Dan also knew that most guys of this type weren't smart enough to figure out what to do.

As he ascended the stairs, Dan wondered for the thousandth time what made these guys act like they did. Why were there so many men that liked to slap women around, to make the live in fear and cower at the sound of their voices?

Arriving at the door, Dan knocked twice, hard.

"Who is it?"

"POLICE!" Dan shouted. "Open the door!" There came the muffled sounds of shuffling from the other side of the door, and then the sound of a lock being turned and the chain being taken off. The door opened to reveal a man obviously fresh from the shower, hair dripping, a towel wrapped around his waist and gripped by one hand. He was tall, but not as tall as Dan, maybe six foot two, with sandy blonde hair, deep blue eyes, and a surfer's build and good looks. Just Marjorie's type, Dan thought.

"What can I do for you, officer?"

"Detective Stone, Atlanta Robbery/Homicide. May I come in?"

“Now’s not a good time, detective. I was in the shower.”

Dan stiff-armed the door open and walked in. “Go turn it off, then. You and I have things to talk about.” The man looked at Dan strangely for a moment, then nodded and turned to walk down the hall and into the bathroom.

In a few moments he returned, dressed in bluejeans and a hastily thrown-on sweatshirt. He was shoeless, and he had combed his hair.

“What’s this all about, Detective? I haven’t murdered or robbed anyone lately, and I’m sure that I don’t know anyone who has?”

“Are you Robert James Walker?”

“I am.”

“May I see some identification, please?”

Walker started to ask a question, and then thought better of it. He walked to a small table in the living room and opened his briefcase, returning with his wallet, holding it out for Dan to take.

Refusing it, he said, “Please take out your driver’s license.”

Visibly impatient, Walker complied, handing the small laminated card to Dan. Dan stared at it, hoping against hope that it was expired.

It was, of course, not expired. Handing it back, Dan took a notebook from his inside jacket pocket and opened it. “What kind of car do you drive, Mr. Walker?”

“A ‘92 Nissan 300ZX. Black. Plate is Georgia 3JM-A34. What is this all about?”

“Just a few more questions, sir, and then I’ll answer any questions you have. Fair enough?”

“Fair enough,” Walker nodded. “Ask away.”

“Where do you work?”

“InfoDyne. I’m a systems analyst.”

“Must make a good living,” Dan offered.

“I do all right.” A look of mixed confusion and wariness had crept across Walker’s features. “Detective, I’m not going to answer any more questions until you tell me what’s going on.”

“Fair enough,” Dan said, snapping the notebook closed and returning it to his jacket pocket. “The entire purpose of this little exercise, Bobby, is to make you understand a few things. First, I know who you are, where you work, and what kind of car you drive. I have you in my little book, see, and if I ever get another single complaint from Marjorie Clark about you, I will be back to pay you a visit. Understand?”

Whatever Dan expected Walker’s reaction to be, the expression of amusement was not it. “Is that what this is about? Detective, I assure you that Marjorie exaggerates a great deal. All we’re having is a small lover’s quarrel. Nothing to trouble yourself about, really-”

Dan took a step forward, grabbing a handful of Walker’s sweatshirt.

“You like to beat up on women, huh? Makes you feel like a big man, slapping women around? All Marjorie has to do is sign a complaint, and I’ll arrest your ass for assault so fast it’ll make your head spin. Maybe I’ll let you pick on someone your own size, someone a little like...me.”

“I’m not going to take a swing at you, Detective. I don’t want to be arrested for assaulting an officer or obstructing justice or something like that. Whatever Marjorie told you is just simply not true. It’s true, we’re having problems right now, but all couples go through this kind of thing-”

“Perhaps I’m not making myself clear, asshole. You and Marjorie are no longer a couple, no longer together. I am an old friend of Marjorie’s and if she tells me you’ve even sent her a postcard, I’m going to come back and-”

“What?” Walker interrupted, an insolent little smile on his face. “What are you going to do? Huh? Come back here and shoot me? Beat the shit out of me? I got two words for you, Detective.

Rodney King. As of now, I'm filing assault charges against you, the Atlanta Police Department and the City of Atlanta. If you ever come near me again, I'll have your badge."

Slowly, Dan released Walker's shirt, then made a smoothing motion with his hand. "You do what you feel you have to, asshole. My warning still stands. You touch, call, or make any effort to contact Marjorie Clark, and I will make your life a living hell."

"Get out, Detective. You will be hearing from my attorney." Walker still had that insolent little smile on his face, and Dan ached to slap it off his puss. He turned and left the apartment.

## -3-

"Hello?"

"Marjorie, it's me. I talked to Walker, but I gotta warn you I don't think it did any good. I want you to come down here and sign a statement that he physically abused you. Then I can arrest him for assault."

"I'd rather not do that, Dan. There would be a trial, and then all sorts of ugly things will come out."

Suddenly, Dan was wary. "Things? What kinds of ugly things, Marjorie? What aren't you telling me?"

There was a long pause. "I'd rather not go into it right--"

"You listen to me, Marjorie Alice Clark. I put my fucking job on the line for you today. If there's something going on here, I have a right to know about it, not only as your friend, but as the guy who risked his ASS for you! Am I making myself clear?" The intensity of Dan's sudden fury stunned Marjorie into silence.

"Yes, it's clear. But not over the phone. Come over, and I'll cook you dinner tonight, kay? Then I'll tell you everything."

"Fine," Dan said and hung up.

Marjorie answered the door wearing jeans and a T-shirt, her long, curly blonde hair in a ponytail. Dan knew that Marjorie knew that he loved her when she looked this way. She had the elfin good looks of the girl next door, and a simmering, seething sensuality that made men turn their heads, and then bang them against brick walls. Deep, ocean blue eyes were all but hidden behind her glasses, which only served to make her beauty a little more obvious, despite her attempts to downplay it.

Her breasts were firm and bouncy, and Dan wondered if she was wearing a bra under the shirt. He tried to force that and all thoughts concerning Marjorie's sexuality and his attraction to her from his mind...and failed miserably. His attraction to her was chemical, spiritual...there was no denying or escaping it.

"Hi," she said. "Come on in!" He followed her down the short hall leading away from her door into the living room. The kitchen branched off to the left, and another short hall led to the only bedroom and bathroom to the right. The ludicrous white couch still dominated the living room, but she had added a glass-topped coffee table and a leather wing chair since the last time Dan had been there, almost six months before. An expensive-looking stereo was housed in a glass-fronted cabinet, and soft jazz filled the small apartment. The scent of a dinner moments away from completion wafted from the kitchen, and Dan felt his stomach rumbling. The last thing he'd eaten was a sugar doughnut that morning.

“What’s for dinner?” he asked.

“Lasagna, garlic bread, salad...a little wine...sound good?”

“Sounds great!”

“It’ll only be a minute,” she said, vanishing into the kitchen. Dan followed her and opened the fridge, looking for a beer. Finding a six-pack, he removed one and twisted the cap off, sending it flying into the garbage can with a snap of his fingers.

“Two points,” Marjorie said, watching it drop into the basket. Dan silently watched her as she prepared the meal, tossing the salad with two wooden forks, setting the bread under the broiler for a few moments, moving around the kitchen with the familiar motions of a practiced cook. From time to time she would sip at Dan’s beer, always without asking, always handing it back silently.

And that’s the way it is with us, Dan thought. Six months apart, and we slip back into these personal rhythms like I left this morning to go to work. I can sense her body language like a trained interpreter, and we fit together so well...the comfortable silence; so many couples felt like they had to fill each moment with conversation, with words and sentences and paragraphs...fill the holes with sound to convince themselves that they weren’t alone.

Studying her motions as she moved around the kitchen, Dan was surprised at how arousing just watching her move was. Marjorie was a very sexual, very sensuous person, even if she pretended not to know it. Just watching her made Dan feel good.

“All done,” she said, handing the salad bowl to Dan. “Put this on the table, will you?” Dan carried it into the tiny dining room and set it on the table, returning to the kitchen only to have Marjorie hand him a breadbasket filled with steaming slices of French bread liberally doused with a butter and garlic mixture. After setting those down, Dan turned to see Marjorie walking in from the kitchen holding a glass pan filled to the brim with warm, gooey lasagna.

He sat down at one end, and she at the other, and they ate for a few moments in silence, catching each other’s eyes from time to time. For the meal, Marjorie had poured herself a glass of red wine. As she tipped the long-stemmed glass back to take a sip, their eyes locked once again, and Dan felt a tugging in his chest. He felt the same tugging every time he saw someone kiss a tall, curly-haired blonde on television or in the movies. It was a gnawing sensation, and he never acknowledged it or tried to do anything about it.

“So tell me,” he finally said. “I need to know everything if I’m going to be able to help you. And I mean everything, Marjorie. We’ve known each other for a lot of years, and I need you to be completely honest with me.”

“Well,” she said. “It’s kind of embarrassing. It’s hard for me to talk about, even though I know it’s basically over.” Marjorie put the glass down on the table with a soft ‘clink’, folded her hands and placed them on the edge of the table and began to speak:

“Bobby and I met...well, that’s not important. What is important is that there was this instant spark between us, and instant physical attraction. We went home together that night and...slept together. I know what that makes me sound like, but Dan, it was something that neither of us could deny, even if we wanted to. And I’m not trying to cause you pain, but he was...wonderful. He was the single best lover I’ve ever had. He was so gentle, so knowing...so understanding. At first. We started seeing a lot of each other, and we even talked about moving in together.”

At the mention of this, Dan’s stomach lurched. He put his fork down, the lasagna forgotten as he leaned forward to listen.

“Then things got kinky. Well, maybe not kinky, but definitely a little strange. He started asking me to do things, things that I had never done before, never even thought of doing before.”

“Like what?” Dan interrupted, not sure that he wanted to know, but curious all the same.

“Well, things like not wearing any underwear underneath a dress when we went out so that he could...touch me. Things like that. Things like going separately to a singles bar, letting him watch me dance with other men, watching me let them feel me up, and then having him step in and whisk me away to his car. We’d drive home and have furious, passionate sex until all hours of the day and night. And then things got a little too intense for me. He wanted me to sleep with another man while he watched. He wanted to take nude pictures of me, wanted to make a videotape of us making love and then send it into one of those places that exchanges amateur porn tapes. Things like that.”

“Really,” was all Dan could muster.

“Then it got totally out of hand. He wanted me to work at a strip club on the weekends, wanted me to pretend like I was a prostitute or something like that in a bar. See if I could get a man to offer me money for sex; then he, in his plan, would step in and ID himself as a cop and ‘arrest’ me for prostitution. Strange things like that. And the sex got more violent, more controlling. He demanded that I do certain...things to him, and when I asked for some attention, some tenderness, he would laugh at me and call me names. Dirty, horrible names that made me feel low and degraded. He made me perform oral sex on him while he was driving the car, holding my face in his crotch by the hair while he screamed down the highway. I was humiliated, seeing that all the truckers knew what was going on; they’d pass us on the highway, honking their horns and then dropping back.

“He’d raise my skirt and leave my rear end exposed, with his fingers inside my...inside me while the truckers stared and honked and hooted and made rude noises and comments as they passed. He said that it got him off, that it excited him to know that all those men, the men in the bars and on the dance floor that I let touch me for his pleasure, all those men...he said that it excited him to know they all wanted me, all wanted to be with me and to touch me and to...fuck me. That’s the word he used, ‘fuck.’”

Dan thoughtfully stroked his chin. It sounded like Marjorie had taken a walk on the other side of the street, and decided that the grass wasn’t greener, and was now regretting it.

“The final straw was when he wanted to tie me up and let all his friends have sex with me. He begged and pleaded and promised me the world if only I’d let him do this to me, only let his friends in between my legs, one after the other, again and again, until they would all be satisfied.

“And that,” Marjorie said, “was it. I’d had it. I told him in no uncertain terms that I didn’t want to be a part of his life anymore. I told him that I was breaking up with him, that I didn’t want to be his slut.

“And then, as you said this afternoon, he changed his tactics. He tried to reconcile. Promised that he would never ask those things of me again, that he only wanted to experiment. That I was all that was important to him, that he wanted to be with me forever, for the rest of our lives.

“I took a chance,” she said sadly. “I believed in him, and I decided to give it another try. For about three weeks, everything was fine. We had conventional, if passionless sex, for a few weeks. Then things started to get weird again. He started being more forceful in bed, more demanding. Gone was the sensitive man I’d wanted, gone was his warmth and compassion when we were making love. Replaced by a rude, crude, aggressive asshole that was only concerned with his own pleasure.

“And then the absolute final straw. We were making love in my bed when a friend of his walked into the bedroom. Bobby had left the door unlocked and told him to ‘surprise’ us, I guess. His friend started to get undressed while I watched in horror. Bobby kept trying to get me to sleep with the both of them.

“I started screaming, shouting, kicking, anything to get Bobby and his friend out of my

bedroom and out of my apartment. They went, but Bobby stopped at the bedroom door and told me that he'd make me pay for embarrassing him like that, making him look bad in front of his friend.

"The next day the threatening phone calls started. Shortly after that he started showing up drunk, shouting and screaming, pounding on the door at all hours of the day and night. The last time I let him in, three days ago, he did...this." She indicated the bruise on her face, covered almost completely by heavy makeup. Normally, Dan didn't like her to wear a lot of makeup, but he thought it better in this instance. If he got a good look at the bruise, Dan knew he might do something to Bobby he would later regret.

"Well, you did the right thing. You knew that you were in over your head, and you called...me. I talked with him, as I told you, but he's a lot smarter than I thought."

"Not smarter than you, though," Marjorie teased. "At least, I hope!"

"No," Dan said, smiling. "There aren't many people smarter than me."

Marjorie laughed.

"Anyway," Dan continued. "I'm serious about your moving. If he knows where you live..."

"But I like it here," Marjorie whined.

"Listen to me. The justice system is not currently able to handle problems of this nature. We can't do anything to him, until he does something to you! The police, me included, aren't your private storm troopers! We can't go off half-cocked every time you get your pretty little tit in a wringer!"

"Do you really think they're pretty?" Marjorie asked coquettishly.

"I'm serious, Marjorie. Being cute isn't going to help matters. Bobby has already shown that he has a violent tendency. He's already hit you. If he decides to come in here and do something worse...there's nothing you or I could do, until after the fact. If that's what you want, then I'll be happy to prosecute him for assault, or rape...or worse. Perhaps I'll arrest him for your murder, Marjorie. Is that what you want?"

Dan saw that his words had the desired effect. The color had drained from Marjorie's face as he spoke.

"Can't you do anything else?"

"Your options are these: 1) Sign a complaint against him. I'll arrest him for assault, and he'll probably get probation. When I ran his record through the computer, he has no other arrests, just a few tickets here and there. He got a citation for drunken fighting a few years ago. He might get counseling. 2) Move. If he doesn't know where you are, he can't do anything to you. And since you basically work out of your house, once you move, it will basically be over. Or, thirdly, you can do nothing. And he might show up again, drunk and angry. And then, there's no predicting what he might do. No predicting at all, Marjorie."

"Oh, very well. Here's what I'll do. I'll come down the day after tomorrow and sign a complaint. Tomorrow I've got some work I have to get finished, and if the police department is like every other bureaucracy, it will probably take all day to take my statement and swear out a complaint."

"Swear out a...have you been watching LA Law again?" Dan teased, glad that Marjorie would be pressing charges.

"Very funny. But I mean this, Dan. I won't be moving unless it's the only other opportunity. Do you understand me?"

"It's your choice," Dan said. I just hope it's the right one, he added silently.

That taken care of, the couple returned to the meal, which had grown lukewarm while Marjorie had been talking and Dan had been listening. They ate in silence, each contemplating their private

thoughts.

When they were done, Dan helped Marjorie clear the table, and then do the dishes and clean the kitchen. They retired to the living room, she with a glass of wine, Dan with a beer, and relaxed on the couch, separated by the width of a single cushion.

They listened to the stereo, which had since changed CD's and was now playing some old Motown tunes. After a few moments, Marjorie swung her legs around until her feet were resting in Dan's laps.

"Rub my feet, please," she asked, "it's been a hell of a day."

Dan removed her shoes and began rubbing her feet. Never having been a foot man, Dan was content to idly rub while his mind ran rampant with fantasies of rubbing other parts of Marjorie's body. He was in the middle of a rather involved scenario involving Marjorie and some hot massage oils when he realized she had spoken.

"Excuse me," he said. "I was thinking. What did you say?"

"I said, 'Penny for your thoughts.' You had the strangest expression on your face. You looked like a kid in a candy store."

A slight blush of embarrassment began to creep up Dan's neck. "Sorry, I was just having a mild sexual fantasy."

"The hot oils one again?" she asked. "We'll have to do that sometime."

Abruptly Dan stopped rubbing her feet. "That's not funny, Marjorie."

"What?"

"It's all right when we tease each other back and forth. You know I'm attracted to you; I've made no secret of that over the years. But you've told me and shown me in more ways than one that you have no desire for a more... personal relationship. Comments like that just serve to remind me of that fact, a fact that I still, unfortunately, find painful." Dan was proud of himself. For the first two years of the relationship, he'd been unable to stand up for his own feelings, and had to settle for the little 'teasers' that Marjorie occasionally tossed his way.

"Keep rubbing," Marjorie complained. After a moment, Dan returned to her feet, stroking her instep softly.

"I was serious, Dan," Marjorie said after a moment. "I know that I've always told you that I didn't want to get...involved. But this business with Bobby has been making me think a lot lately."

Dan felt his heart accelerate.

Continuing, Marjorie said, "Mostly I've been thinking about what I look for in a guy. Or, more to the point, the differences in what I have been looking for, and what I feel I should be looking for.

"In the past, I've always wanted a rich, good-looking sexual gymnast. I mean, what girl wouldn't? But most of the guys that I meet that fit that description are also self-centered, egotistical assholes. In the middle of this mess, I asked myself, 'Where have all the nice guys gone?' And then it hit me. I've had a nice guy in my life for six years, always patiently waiting for me to come to my senses and realize it.

"Well, Dan, I've finally realized it." Marjorie withdrew her feet from Dan's lap and scooted across the cushion separating them. She reached a hand out and gently traced the outline of his face with her fingers, stopping to run her forefinger across his lips.

Dan sat immobile, afraid to move, afraid to do anything that might break the spell. Marjorie's face slowly approached his, and he saw her lips open slightly a moment before she pressed her mouth against his.

Then, finally, gloriously, he was kissing her, tasting her for the first time, reveling in the feeling of her warmth, the taste of her, the scent of her. His hands automatically went around her back,



bringing her closer to him as he explored her mouth with his tongue.

The heat and the passion built until Dan could feel his need pumping and surging inside him, eager to break free of its confinement and burst forth into the room.

Marjorie's breath was in his lungs, in his heart, when she suddenly pulled away and walked out of the living room and down the short hall into the bedroom. She hadn't told him to follow her, and Dan was taking no chances. Too many mixed signals over the years had taught him to let Marjorie take the lead; when she wanted him, if she wanted him to follow her into the bedroom, she would have to tell him.

Dan was surprised a moment later when he heard the shower start. She might expect him to join her in the shower, help her wash the dirt and grime of a day off her body, help make her clean for what was to follow.

Considering his options, Dan thought that if this was, finally, going to happen, then discretion was the better part of valor. Allow this most perfect night, for him, end as it already had, with a single soul-burning kiss that was branded into his memory forever. Even if he never touched her again, Dan knew his remembrance of kissing Marjorie on the couch that night would be replayed in his mind again and again.

He sat there, waiting to see what would happen next. After fifteen minutes, Marjorie appeared in the living room again, her wet hair plastered against her scalp, wearing nothing but a smile...and a bath towel wrapped around her torso, hiding everything and promising nothing.

"I'm sorry," she started, and Dan felt the familiar lurch in his gut again, the same feeling he had every time Marjorie got her signals confused. She was going to give him the Best Friend speech again, the one that she used whenever Dan's attentions grew overeager or over attentive.

"I'm sorry," she said, "for starting something I don't want to finish...tonight. I do want to continue this Dan, but I want to take it slow."

Slow! he thought. You can't GET much slower than six goddamn years! But, he reminded himself, the six years of feelings were all on his part, none except friendship on hers. This was new for her, and although Dan had known the moment he'd laid eyes on her that she was the woman for him, he knew Marjorie was still grappling with these newfound intense emotions.

"That's Ok," he said softly. "I don't want to spoil anything, especially what just happened."

"And what," she asked softly in reply, "did just happen?"

"The most special night of my life," Dan said honestly. "A memory, that even if unconsummated in the future, I will carry with me for the rest of my life as one of my most treasured moments. I will always remember tonight as the first time I ever kissed you. I only wish there was a clock around here somewhere so I could even add the time to my memory."

She smiled at his effortless romanticism, and plopped her wet body into his lap. "When this Bobby mess is over," she said, running her fingers through his hair, "we can talk. And I mean really talk, as a man and a woman should. That's the one thing we've always had between us, Dan, is the ability to truly communicate. I know I've been a bitch to you in the past, but I want to make it up to you, fella. I want to see what we can be like together, as a couple, as a man and a woman."

Dan kissed her softly on the forehead and heaved her body off of his without effort and stood. "Well, I'll see you at the station day after tomorrow. Call first, so if I'm on a case and can break away, I can take your report. I'll walk the paperwork through personally."

She smiled and walked with him to the front door. Standing on the porch, getting ready to take the short flight down to the front walk, Dan heard Marjorie call his name. He glanced over his shoulder and the site shocked him so much he stopped in mid-stride, looking like a comical cartoon character frozen in time.

Marjorie was holding the towel she had been wearing a moment ago, with a secret, elegant smile on her face, her weight placed carefully on one leg to tilt her hips seductively as she slowly shut the door.

The kiss had been one precious memory; now Dan had a companion image to go with that kiss, his first view of Marjorie's nude body. Her breasts had sat high on her chest, seemingly pneumatic in design. Her waist gently flared to wonderful hips, and Dan had caught just a hint of the dark hair between her thighs.

Well, he thought as he got into his car and drove home, what do you know.

She's not a natural blonde.

## -4-

The next night, Dan had come home from a long day. A body had turned up in a warehouse, the death having all the markings of a mob hit. The mob wasn't big in Atlanta, but they were forceful in establishing territory and discipline. Dan had no hope of catching the triggerman; he was probably already on a flight back to wherever he came from. Never use local talent. Rule #1 for a professional hit.

He'd walked in the door, opened the fridge for a beer, taken his Ruger P-85 9mm pistol off of his hip and slid it onto the top of the fridge when the phone rang. Hooking it with two fingers, he raised the receiver to his ear.

"Hello?"

"Dan! Come quickly! He's at the door, and he's going to kill me!" The phone went dead in his ear, and Dan sprang into action. He grabbed his gun again, sheathed in a paddle-holster, and slipped it onto his right hip again. The beer, forgotten, sat on the counter gently spouting foam from its neck as Dan raced out of the apartment.

En-route, he reached under the seat of his late-model Pathfinder and retrieved the revolving red bubble-light, slapping it on the roof at the same time he hit the foot switch for the siren. Traffic parted for him as he sped the three miles to Marjorie's apartment. In the last half-mile, he decided that playtime was over. Reaching into the glove compartment, Dan grabbed the radio handset and raised it to his ears.

"2201 to Central, K." he said.

"Central, go ahead 2201."

"145 in Progress, 887 Spring Creek Lane. Plainclothes officer on scene. Request backup."

"Central, 2201, K."

"Proceed, Central."

"We've got no cars in the immediate vicinity. Be advised that your nearest backup is approximately ten minutes away from Metro West. Copy, 2201?"

"Copy, Central. Also, please roll an ambulance to this location if you don't hear back from me in ten minutes."

"Copy, 2201. Central out."

Dan dropped the microphone on the seat beside him and pressed the accelerator to the floor with one foot, working the siren with the other.

Dan screeched the Pathfinder to a stop and jumped out of the door, grabbing a portable radio in the process. Jamming the radio into his back pocket, he ascended the six stairs leading to Marjorie's front door in a single bound. The door was slightly ajar, and Dan could see marks where Bobby had kicked it in.

Sliding up against the frame, Dan drew his pistol with his right hand and slowly slid the door open with his left. He could hear the argument in the living room clearly.

"Get out!" Marjorie screamed. "I mean it, get out right now-" Her voice was cut short by the sound of an open hand meeting flesh. The next sound was a soft moan, and then a body crumpling to the carpet. The entire symphony of violence cut like a knife through Dan's soul.

He stepped into the apartment and saw nothing. They were over by the stereo, out of sight from the foyer. Dan could go through the kitchen and approach from the left, or down the hall and into the living room, approaching from the right. Being a right-handed shooter, Dan made his decision and went to the right, the Ruger held in two stiff hands in front of him, leading the way like a magic wand.

Three steps down the hall and he had the entire situation. Marjorie was on the floor, holding one hand to her left cheek, crying as she looked up at Bobby Walker standing above her. And then Dan's blood ran cold. Bobby was holding a gun in his left hand, a 2-inch snubby, either a .38 special or a .357 Magnum.

"Call the cops on me, will you? I'll teach your ass a fucking lesson you won't soon forget, bitch!"

His hand slowly raised the gun so that Marjorie could see it. She gasped, and then caught sight of Dan. At that exact moment, the radio in Dan's pocket screeched.

"Central to 2201, K."

Ignoring it, Dan screamed, "POLICE! DROP IT!" Walker, having spun around at the sound of the radio, smiled an evil shark's grin at Dan and leveled the gun at Marjorie's head.

"You drop it, cop, or the fucking bitch gets a third eye!"

"DROP IT!" Dan repeated, taking another step, placing him fully in the living room. A thousand thoughts went through his mind at that instant. Marjorie was safely out of the line of fire. The wall behind Walker bordered the outside wall; there was an empty field behind Marjorie's apartment, for perhaps three hundred yards. If the shot missed, and passed through the wall, it would be slowed enough not to do much damage. Unless someone was walking outside the building right now.

"2201, Central, K." The radio repeated.

"TURN THAT FUCKING THING OFF," Walker screamed. "RIGHT NOW!"

Dan took his left hand off his gun and slowly reached behind himself to retrieve the radio. He raised it to his lips. "Central, 2201. Man with a gun at this address. This is now a 138 hostage situation. I need SWAT and a negotiator, now!"

"2201, Central, 10-4." Far off in the distance, Dan could hear the sounds of sirens as patrol cars raced to the scene.

"You shouldn't have done that, cop. I don't like it when people FUCK with my plans!" His hand was rock steady holding the small revolver, and Dan knew he would have less than a microsecond to decide whether or not to shoot.

All he would need would be the slightest tightening of the finger on his trigger. The Ruger had had a trigger job done on it last month, the gunsmith shaving more than two pounds off the pull. With less effort than it took to blink, Dan could touch the trigger and Walker's brains would go flying.

Every ounce of training in his body screamed at Dan to go for a center mass shot, somewhere in the upper torso. His Ruger was loaded with Glazier safety slugs, and he knew that they were renowned for their one-shot-stopping power; but if in this one case it didn't work, then Marjorie would die. No, it had to be a head shot if there was to be a shot.

Dan had been distracted by the conflicting voices in his head, and Walker took that moment to cock the pistol. The hammer was now back, and the click of the spring engaging seemed to echo in the small apartment's living room.

"I mean it," he said reasonably. "Drop the gun, or I swear, I'll shoot her."

The harsh bark of Dan's P-85 filled the room, and time froze. Later, in his testimony at the inquest, and in recounting the situation to his fellow cops, Dan would swear that he saw the bullet leave the barrel and travel the six feet to Walker, impacting just forward of his left ear. Walker's head jerked with the impact, and a moment later the air behind his head was filled with a fine, pink mist of brain matter, blood and vaporized bone. The right hemisphere of his brain separated itself from the rest and slapped wetly against the wall, leaving a vicious red smear as it slid to the carpet.

Walker crumpled to the carpet, dead, the gun slipping from his hand and landing with a thump on the carpet. The revolver discharged, and Dan felt a stinging pain in his lower leg. With a start, he knew that the wet, warm sensation and coppery smell meant that he had been shot.

The echo from Dan's and Walker's gunshot echoed in the apartment, and the smell of cordite, blood and violence filled Dan's nostrils. A slight ringing sensation in his ear was replaced with Marjorie's screams. She had blood on the front of her shirt, and a large blob of brain matter was in her hair. Her hands were at her face, her nails scratching at her cheeks as she screamed again and again, a high and keening wail that made Dan take the four shuddering steps towards her and collapse into her.

"Help me up," he said to her. "Help me get out of here. I've been shot." Marjorie looped an arm across his shoulders and stooped, Dan and Marjorie made their way out of the living room, down the hall and out the front door in time to greet the first of the Metro West patrol cars screeching to a stop at the curb. Since the RMP's weren't from Dan's district, none of the first cops knew who, or more importantly, what, Dan was. All they saw was a bloody woman helping a bloody man with a gun out of an apartment where they had heard a "man with a gun" call coming from.

"Freeze! Drop the gun!" the first officer screamed. Dan raised his hands above his head and said, "I'm a cop! Don't shoot!" Very slowly, he put the pistol on the front-porch railing and took one clumsy step back. Keeping his right hand high above his head, Dan slowly reached into his jacket and returned with a battered leather badge case, flipping it open to reveal the shield and ID card of an Atlanta Police Detective. "Stone, Robbery/Homicide," he said. Some of the cops relaxed, others holstered their weapons as a sergeant ascended the stairs.

"What happened here?" he demanded.

"Ex-boyfriend went over the top, had a gun to her head, hammer back. I blew his brains all over the wall."

"Wait here, Detective. Homicide and IAD will want to talk to you."

"Yes, sir," Dan said, wondering where the hell he was going to go with a hole in his leg. He sat down on the steps and gingerly lifted his pants leg, then let out a long sigh.

It was a scratch. The bullet had winged him on the left shin, leaving a bloody trench about a quarter-inch deep, about four inches long, traversing his leg from front to back. The wound was pink, meaty, and slowly oozing blood. It looked like it could stand a stitch or two, but Dan hoped the paramedics could just slap a bandage on it. He hated hospitals.

Marjorie was sitting next to Dan, hugging her knees to her chest, shivering, and slowly rocking back and forth. Her eyes were wide open and shiny, staring at the cobblestones leading up to the front stairs. She was moaning unintelligibly.

Dan snaked an arm around her shoulder and she leaned into him, nestling her head on his chest.

They stayed that way for a little while, until a voice brought Dan out of his post-shoot reverie.

“Detective Stone?” Dan looked up into the eyes of a hard-looking IAD officer. “We need to talk.”

## -5-

Four hours later, Dan drove Marjorie from the station to his apartment. She had asked Dan if she could spend the night there, and he’d readily agreed. Her apartment was still being gone over by forensics, the CSU team, and the homicide and IAD detectives. The body had been removed while Dan was being interviewed by IAD at the scene, and he’d seen the mask of horror on Marjorie’s face when the body-bag draped gurney was wheeled out and placed into the M.E.’s van.

The scene interview had lasted only long enough to get the bare details. The longer interview, or interrogation, had taken place at IAD headquarters, and had lasted three hours. The IAD detective agreed that it would most likely be ruled a justified shoot, and that Dan had nothing to worry about, as long as forensics jibed with his account of the events in the apartment.

Leaving the station, Marjorie was silent, and remained that way the entire trip to Dan’s apartment, which took about ten minutes. She went immediately to the shower and emerged half an hour later, wearing only an old oxford shirt of Dan’s she’d found in the closet. It hung past her hips to almost her knees, but one part of Dan’s mind reacted with pleasure at the sight. He’d always loved women using men’s clothes as sleeping attire.

But tonight, that thought was pushed to the back of his head. The last thing she wanted....

Dan had opened the couch and turned it into a bed, taking sheets from the linen closet and making it up. He didn’t want to make assumptions, and he was sure that Marjorie was probably suffering from some kind of post-traumatic stress problem, similar to what she might be feeling after a rape or violent assault.

She sat down on the bed, and Dan turned to leave when she caught his arm in her hand.

“Don’t leave. Lie here with me a while.” Dan laid down next to her and tried to give her the comfort of his warmth. He felt her breathing slow, and then quiet. Thinking she was asleep, Dan tried to disengage himself so he could undress and turn in himself.

Marjorie clutched at the arms encircling her. “Don’t go,” she whispered. “Not yet.” Dan relaxed back into the bed and drew her closer.

“You saved my life tonight,” she whispered.

“You don’t have to whisper,” Dan whispered, and then realizing he was doing to, barely managed to stifle a giggle. Each got the giggles watching the other try and stifle them, and before long the bed was jiggling with laughter. Slowly, they calmed down, and managed only an occasional snort or two.

“I’m serious,” Marjorie said. “You saved my life tonight. What do you say to the person that saved your life?”

“A simple thanks and your firstborn should suffice,” Dan said, trying to keep it light.

"I mean it, Dan. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. If you hadn't been there, he would have...would have...killed me." The realization as to how close she had come to death that night reached Marjorie, and she clutched at Dan, her limbs shaking with fear. He held on to her, wishing there was a way he could feed her his strength.

On his ten years on the force, Dan had shot three people, and this was the second that he'd killed. The first had been awful, but also ruled a justifiable homicide. That hadn't stopped the dreams and night sweats that he knew Marjorie would soon be getting, but they stopped after a while, after the mind performed its magic self-healing process. All he could do until then is wait.

He felt her shift in his arms, and then her lips were pressed against his. For a moment, stunned, he did nothing, and then gently kissed her back. Marjorie's kisses grew more insistent, and he wasn't sure how to respond. His conscious mind finally gave up analyzing it, and he fell into her mouth, losing himself in the moist warmth of her sucking mouth and tongue.

They kissed for a long time, and then Marjorie began to explore his body, tracing the rigid muscles of his chest with her fingers through his shirt. She tugged at his tie, unknotted it and tossed it off the bed, reaching for the buttons.

"Are you sure?" Dan asked.

"Yes. I'm sure. I need you tonight, Dan. I need you more than ever. In every way possible. Make me feel warm, alive and loved, Dan!" Those were the words he'd been waiting to hear for six years. With Marjorie's help, Dan stripped himself in record time, and then began to explore her body.

The buttons on her shirt came open one after the other, and after each one Dan took the time to kiss each piece of skin as it became exposed. He tasted her, smelled her, loved the feeling of her silky skin under his tongue. As he drew the material of her shirt off her breasts, it caught on one nipple and then released, arousing it to a point. He laved his mouth over her left breast, feeling the hard nubbin push against his tongue.

When he sucked it, Marjorie gasped and grabbed his head, fingernails scraping his scalp as she drew his mouth closer to her breast. Dan's left hand gently massaged the plump weight of her right breast, using the material of the shirt to irritate and scratch lazily at her nipple. He could feel it pressing against the palm of his hand as he abandoned her left breast with his mouth and tenderly licked the underside of her left breast.

She was gently undulating her hips against him, and he could feel the liquid warmth of her arousal against his thighs. She was warm and wet for him, and he spent the better part of half an hour tasting every sweet inch of her body for the first time. When he got to the lightly haired vee between her legs, he licked at her center for a few moments while teasing her erotic center with his thumb. Her legs flexed convulsively around his head, and he thrilled to Marjorie's response to his touch.

Raising himself up on her body, he kneed her legs apart and slowly entered her, drowning himself in her mercurial warmth. She was a warm, wet, slick sheath for him and he moved above her, staring at her face in the light. Her eyes were open, and they locked with his, her ocean, sea-foam blue ones boring into his dark brown ones. Marjorie bit her bottom lip as a wave of pleasure crashed over her, and she dug her fingernails into his back.

Suddenly, he swung, riding with her as he ended up on his back, Marjorie astride. He watched the enticing jiggle of her breasts as she slammed herself up and down on his erect member.

"Harder," Marjorie said. Dan began slamming his hips up to meet hers, feeling the pleasure tickling his scrotum, the pressure building for his ultimate release.

"Almost there," Marjorie said. Dan reached his hands between her legs, grabbed the moist pearl

there and tugged its hood gently. Marjorie crashed into an orgasm, her inner muscles gripping him tautly. Dan jerked once, twice, felt himself jerking and filling Marjorie with his seed. She accepted it, gratefully, could feel his creamy warmth filling her to the limit, until the combined secretions of their love seeped out between them.

Marjorie collapsed against Dan's chest, kissing his mouth hungrily. "So good," she whispered, "so, so good." And then they disengaged and Marjorie lay atop him, pressing her full body weight into his.

Playing with the hairs on his chest, Marjorie looked into Dan's eyes and said simply, "I love you."

And the gates to Dan's heart opened and he felt the overpowering emotions he had been bottling up for six years come pouring out. He clutched her to him and knew that it would be all right. No matter what happened next, he knew that it would be all right.