

LIKE A DRUG

By

David C. Velasco

1

A droning silence from the living room and bedroom beyond mocked her. It reminded Megan of what awaited her once she returned. Reaching for the doorknob, she paused. Turning back, the memory of each empty night seeped into her chest, ounce by ounce, weighing upon her heart. But the evening was young. That puckish feeling knowing he'd soon be near gave her hope. Hope the astute furniture would accommodate more than one. Someday. If everything went her way. A dalliance before she closed the bedroom door behind them. Or should she leave it open?

With that thought, doubt flared up. Trotting back to the bedroom, she gave her simple outfit one last glance. In the full-length mirror adjacent the door she eyed the close fitting blouse and snug low-rise jeans. The shirt covered the pound or two she tried purging with each visit to the gym. The denim amplified the curves below, distracting his eyes from the unattractive bulge above. Her smirk of anticipation glared back from the mirror. The outfit would make a good impression.

Pleased, she sauntered out and back through the loft. Past the simple furnishings: a futon, two cushioned chairs for company, spartan multimedia center, coffee table, scanty desk, table for two in the meager kitchen. With her salary, she couldn't afford much more and live close to work. Located upon the second floor of an eighty-year-old building. It faced a typical downtown street. Like others, it sat above various stores, offices, coffee shops, restaurants and art galleries

dotting the downtown. Only the hardwood floors and original brick walls remained. Remnants of the small title and loan office once there decades ago. The appliances, lights, phone, cable, internet and central air shoehorned therein gave the octogenarian loft modern comforts.

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Across the street, in his own second story loft, Russell tore off his company-mandated polo. A plain blue tee shirt replaced it. The jeans donned in the morning stayed on. No reason to change those. Like any working stiff he looked forward to weekends. Away from the job as assistant manager of a small multi-use building a few blocks away. And Friday happy hour was the kick off. Not that the day of the week prevented a trip to his fave or other nearby saloon. No particular reason needed.

In the bathroom, he ran a comb through the short dark hair atop his square face. A splash of inexpensive cologne slapped onto each cheek ended the grooming session. The effort took two minutes. Three tops. Knowing he'd get to spend some extra time near her tonight, his face got an extra close shave that morning. It cut down the evening prep time.

With a determined stride, he jaunted to the plain sofa amid the glorified studio apartment with two rooms: the mid-sized bathroom and everything else. The vaulted ceiling gave it a cavernous feel. A corner loft within the old building, large windows on both walls faced the streets. His full-size bed sat next to a small closet shoehorned into the apartment. A waist-high wall and breakfast bar separated the kitchen from the rest of the room. A small flat screen television and coffee table used more as an ottoman and dinner table than anything else sat near the sofa. He had no other furnishing. When needed he plopped his laptop onto the breakfast bar and stood. So roomy was the place he let a friend host a dinner party here. Their own would have been too small for such a gathering.

Donning the light maroon jacket draped over the sofa, he moved to the front door. The fact the emptiness of the loft awaited his return didn't bother him. A few drinks drowned out coming event. He had a plan. He'd just hang in there. Bide his time.

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The drab, cramped storeroom in back doubled as a makeshift locker room. Renee had no purse to sit next to those piled already onto the small table, awaiting more. An ID and the little cash she managed to have on hand fit into the back pocket. Her much needed cell found a safe home next to the register once she went on the clock. Between two stacks of unopened boxes hung a mirror erected by the employees. The unadorned cartons held pint-sized glasses. All waiting to replace those stolen or broken by patrons, bartenders and wait staff. Drunk or sober. Before the pale reflection, she double-checked her simple make. That and her straight, shoulder length hair. She should use the restroom. But even this early, the two sinks and mirrors therein would find a girl or two or three crowded in front, touching up their already enhanced looks.

A step back. The short-sleeved shirt exposed her midsection. Low rise jeans encased her legs and hips. Glancing them over for perfection was useless. They worked and were comfortable. It didn't matter. She'd get ogled and hit on no matter what. The phone numbers passed to her or pathetic notes found their way into the trash, not the faded pockets.

Enough cynicism. She headed to the door, eyeing Tammy's oversized, frayed, faux leather purse, holding god knows what. A great gal. She'd end up asking about Jason and her. Attempts to keep her hormones focused elsewhere failed. Oft times she got the impression Tammy lived vicariously through her.

Speaking of life, rent came to mind. Due in a couple of weeks and the other roommate moved out last month. The cost of the three-bedroom loft required one job paying a lot or three

or more each paying a little. Students attending the nearby university would get together and lease such a place for their time in college. Chloe and she avoided such an environment, but economics might cause both to bend. So... the tips best be good tonight. And tomorrow. And the next day. Then again, Jason planned on stopping by. Maybe Bill might let her go early tonight. A night with Jason or rent. Tough call.

With a reluctant stride, she headed out and to the server station. So begins her shift.

#

The crowd waxed and waned as early evening wore on, but never died. The Pub wasn't a spectacular place and made no attempt to be one. No hip, multi-colored lights or large dance floor. No scantily dressed wait staff. No bikini clad women dancing in cages, gawked at by men acting as if they had never seen a woman before. The simple décor attracted all kinds: businesspersons in dress suits, bohemians in faded jeans and knit caps, college fraternity and sorority types, the assorted passerby. Listed in various colors on the chalkboard behind the bar were beers from all over the country and world. The current price per glass above. Nozzles atop each tap ranged from the simple to the ornate. Mundane to the bombastic. The chairs were made of wood. So too the tables. These bore the scars of bored or drunk patrons who, possessing any sharp object, etched various words, phrases and symbols into them. The owners didn't frown upon such actions. It added to the ambiance. But the staff remaining vigilant lest legitimate phone numbers or any unsavory opinions appeared. Like many renovated buildings in the area, the original brick and mortar made up the walls. The Pub possessed a charm all on its own. The simplicity of the décor gave it an unpretentious atmosphere. Its greatest strength.

Megan's coworkers Olivia and Martin joined them, sharing in well-deserved relaxation. As drinks filled the table, so too conversation about the past week. Their laughter and voices

added to the din within the room. Megan looked on as Russell relayed the idiot of the week story. He rocked back, arm and foot on the chair adjacent, positioned so no one could sit in, or commandeer, the chair. Just in case his jacket slung there proved an ineffective deterrent.

“So this guy is sitting in his car, right, probably staring at the ticket spitter,” he began. Megan shot a glance at the front door as he went on. In this instance, an individual attempted access to the underground parking garage of the building. She watched a group of college kids ambling in, but not the heavy wooden door closing behind them. Back to Russell. “...finally, he pushes the call button. He said ‘There’s no ticket coming out.’ I said back ‘Did you press the green button?’ He says no. Then I could hear him press it and the chi-clunk of ticket come out. What I wanted to say was ‘Did you press the green button for a ticket, dumbass? The one with the words ‘Press Button for a Ticket’ above it?’”

Everyone laughed. People lacking common sense were always a source of amusement.

“Was he drunk already?” Olivia asked.

“I hope not... it was only ten am!” Martin spat out.

“Downtown here... you never know!” Russell added. Another round of laughs.

Megan spat out a staccato giggle when the main door swung open again. Her eyes darted over and zeroed in on the figure emerging from the daylight. She froze dead still, drawing a quick sip of air. Enough to keep her heart going.

Richard walked in. His straight hair never wavered out of place as he scanned boisterous room. A five-o’clock shadow clenched his square jaw. She glanced down, unable to stop her mind from removing the two-piece work suit still hugging his trim frame. His pose—a hand on each hip, power tie dangling onto his chest—and knowing he’d soon be next to her drowned out one other fact: Coleen stood next him.

“Hey guys!” Megan shouted, reaching high with a waving hand.

She stood, watching the duo approach. Coleen moved with a catwalk meander, one foot set with perfection in front the other. She stood out. At work or here. On the street. A dark alley if she chose to walk through one. Business attire of a one-button jacket, short matching skirt and heels amplified her slender build. All topped off with green eyes and short wavy hair requiring no long hours of labor to make up. Dark-rimmed glasses gave her a sophisticated look. A billboard advertising the fact she was smart and good looking. A ringless finger no doubt added to her allure.

Now Russell stood. Once there, the men exchanged handshakes. One step behind, Coleen gave Megan a smile. “Hey there!”

“Hey,” she said in return, lunging at Rick and a hug from him.

“If you guys been any later, we might a forgotten ‘bout you,” Olivia joked, drawing a small laugh from Coleen.

Hearing neither, Megan savored Rick’s embrace. A warm sensation in her chest met the cold beer in her stomach. The mesh sent a tingling vibe down into her hips she indented prolonging without the appearance of desperation. Done, she stepped back, keeping an arm around his waist. Coleen got a passing glance. “How did your week end up?” she asked.

The question not directed at her, Coleen let out a sigh anyway. Her eyes rolled. “I’ll let Rick fill you in.”

“The Jamison account,” he chimed. Megan hung onto every word. Her eyes drank up his face set above broad shoulders with eyes still full of life after a long day.

They all worked at the same firm. One of the many relocated establishments taking advantage of new developments, tax incentives and modern housing popping up in the

downtown area. Rick was an up-and-coming money manager and a few years older. She herself an entry-level accountant at her first full time job after college. Regardless of their lot at work, they saw a lot of each other. Or she made sure of it.

Russell took in the exchange without a word. His job was done. Chairs for this Rick and his girl held ready. “Hey, I need to talk some shop of my own with some others,” he said, leaning over and retrieving his drink. “You guys can have my seat. I’ll be gone a while.”

“You sure?” Coleen asked.

“Yeah, yeah, go ahead.”

“Thanks, Russ,” Rick said. He and Coleen situated themselves, exchanging greetings with others. Russell grabbed his coat. Megan cast him a smile. He shot back a wink then headed away.

He gravitated towards the bar. The voices of those left behind catching up on workplace revelations faded, drowned by the other conversations radiating around him. He had little interest in such financial dealings, even if he intended staying there.

He glanced up and down the bar. His eyes then fixed onto an empty seat. During happy hour? Better yet, one next to the server station. Most of the time regulars filled these. An undeclared caste system existed among those frequenting The Pub. They sat near the end where the servers and bartenders came and went with their orders, or the kitchen staff came out to escape their duties. The more of a regular one was, or perceived to be, the more often one found them in such a position. If a patron of less stature took these, regulars waited until the commoner left, then claimed their place of honor. An honor gained through the copious consumption of beer and alcohol and time spent at The Pub.

He focused on the young woman standing adjacent, her back towards him. It was Renee. Her full, straight, light brown hair stopped a couple of inches above her shoulders. A short, tight tee shirt revealed her lower back. Low-rise jeans showed off every sublime contour nature gave her. His eyes stopped on her rear, where the denim wore a tad more white, forming around the bottom half of each cheek. For a few blissful moments, he took in the unspoiled sight. The hint of shame this produced within didn't stop him from admiring what he saw. Hell. Who wouldn't. Exhibiting some self-control, he made no immediate dash towards her or the empty seat. The two drinks already in him helped keep his heart and emotions in check. He ambled up as she positioned a serving tray for a drink order. "Hey, Renee."

Turning, she greeted by him with a mile-wide grin. "Hey you," she spouted. "Megan sent you for refills."

"Ah... no." He took in her radiant smile and perfect teeth. The little make up she wore suited him just fine. Too much lipstick and too much blush weren't to his liking on any woman. Once, by chance, he came to The Pub and saw her there just hanging around on her day off. Wearing what appeared to be no makeup on at all, she looked even better. "Wanted to belly up here for a while." He swiveled away. "This taken?"

A middle-aged man sat next to the empty barstool, a good amount of girth protruding from his paunch. He waved towards the front door. "Nah. He had a take off."

"Thanks." Again, the coat marked his territory. He then sat.

"You still good on that drink, Russ?" the bartender asked.

"I'll take another, Bill. This one's getting low."

William and his wife owned The Pub. Older than most of his patrons, he possessed a full head of salt and pepper hair. A stocky frame gave the impression he was a bit overweight. As a few unruly customers discovered, plenty of muscle and the will to use it lay beneath.

Back to Renee, staring her straight in the eyes. “Let me guess?” he said. “You’re busier than a one-legged waitress during Oktoberfest.”

She let out a sigh, letting her hips and shoulders collapse along with her lips. “Hell yeah. But...” Her face tilted back to life. “Glad to see you’re being funny, instead of asking an obvious, dumbass question like ‘Busy night?’” She went behind him, placed both hands on his shoulders, putting all but her full weight onto them. “Least you realize we get busy here. Mind if I lean on you and rest my feet for a bit?”

Objecting never crossed his mind. A soft, gentle voice answered. “Of course you can.”

Her warm breath hit the back of his neck. The essence of some unknown body spray mingled with her perfume. Each soaked his senses as the warmth of her hands sent an ever so pleasing sensation throughout his body. Placing a hand upon her own, he gave it a gentle pat, about as intimate he could get with her at work. A few blissful moments ticked by.

“Got some strong shoulders myself.”

Renee and he glanced over at the man adjacent. His broad smile a sign he had nothing better to do but eyeball them the whole time. Renee didn’t loosen her grip. She grinned and leaned in. A gentle whisper into his ear. “Scuse a me a moment.” She moved to the man and put her arms around him from behind. “For you I have a great big hug!”

A gruff laugh and pat on her clasped hands. “You know how to make a fella feel good!”

Annoyed, Russell said nothing. Tempering his displeasure was the fact Renee was friendly towards everyone. Yet another endearing trait, if not one evoking jealousy. The embrace didn't last long.

"Hey, Renee." Another male voice boomed from behind. Appearing at the bar, Russell recognized the thin man, but didn't know his name.

"Sup?" she responded, leaning an arm upon the shoulder of the older man, propping herself up.

"You talked to Jason?"

"Nope. Hoping to see him here tonight. Why?"

"Wanted me to call him. Now the prick won't answer. His last text said somethin' bout an after-hours party. And on top of that, said he'd help me fix up my bike this weekend."

Russell stayed silent. He didn't know this guy and wanted kept that way.

"You guys still haven't got that piece of shit up and running yet?" Renee asked.

"Perfection takes time, and it's not that shitty," the man answered. He gave Russell a look and mouthed a simple 'Hey.' Russell nodded and let out a slight 'Hey' as well. The typical guy greeting between two men who didn't know each other.

The young man went back to Renee. "Well, if I don't see him tonight, tell him I better see him tomorrow and be like... ready to work."

"I'll be sure not to wear him out tonight." Russell noticed the seductive wink she gave as he drifted away. A sullen knife into his chest followed. Hoisting a refilled drink, the alcohol would keep his mind off her planned activities with Jason later on.

"Renee," Bill bellowed from behind the bar. "Tray's ready."

She trudged back to the station, running her hand along Russell's back, giving his shoulder a pat. He then caught the wide grin of the man sitting next to him, his eyes fixed on Renee. A crusty voice held his opinion. "She's quite a gal. I'll 'member that hug all night!"

Russell cocked a smile and went back to his drink. Not a word in response. It might result in a conversation. The thought this old man might be thinking of 'that hug' while bathing unnerved him.

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Back at the table, the group enjoyed their second or third round of drinks. Megan worked on another pint of her favorite beer: an amber colored ale brewed right here downtown. One of the many microbreweries popping up in the area nearer their customers. They too converting abandoned buildings into alcohol factories. Rick went on about the Jamison saga consuming the office. Done, he turned to her, placing an arm over the back of her chair. She leaned back, resting upon his limb.

"And I want to thank you too, Megan," he said. "Those analysis you worked on really helped us out."

The words of gratitude punctuated the brilliant expression radiating from his face. Megan soaked it up, along with the warmth pouring from his arm. She smiled back, staring deep into his eyes. Those mesmerizing eyes. "I'm... always there to help!"

"I'm glad you are. Aren't we, honey?" Rick spun around, leaning back so both women saw the other.

"Yes. You're such a great little helper," Coleen said.

Megan shot her a stare. Her cocked smile kept other thoughts at bay. "Thanks," she muttered.

Why you... Little helper. How demeaning. Perhaps she didn't really mean to sound so insulting. Besides, the compliment from Rick more than compensated for any slight. Unintended or otherwise.

Coleen went on, addressing everyone. "You all've been a great help. Wish you all could come to Florida with me and Rick next week."

Megan froze. Words of surprise sprang from Olivia and Martin, he adding a 'Can I come too?' plea. She straightened up, tightening her grip around the glass. A small, lead weight formed in her stomach. Growing as the revelation set in, the only word she could muster stumbled out from behind a fractured smile. "What?"

Coleen's hand found its way to Rick's leg. She continued. "The firms graciously allowed us some time off, and Rick here told me he's never been. *Soooo*.... I thought it best make the upcoming three-day weekend into a four-day vaykay."

"Yes ma'am!" he said, turning from Megan, putting his other arm around Coleen. "A six-hour layover in Orlando doesn't count as a Florida vacation. And she's told me so much about it..."

Mired in a restless quiet, Megan sat without a word. She listened as they talked about sandy beaches. About clear skies. Looking forward to sipping strawberry daiquiris with way too much rum in them. All next to a sun-warmed pool. Taking in an extra-long drink, she glimpsed Coleen's hand caressing Rick's leg. His hand crept towards hers, clasping as they met.

"Oh... and I am like, so unprepared. We must get to the mall this weekend. There are about a dozen things we'll need," Coleen concluded.

"Okay, honey." Rick shifted back to Megan. "Hey. Why don't you join us? Then we all can have lunch at that one place there. What's it called—"

“Great idea, Rick. And Megan can help me pick out a new bikini.”

The sincere, unexpected request sent a shock through Megan. More so than the news about the trip. Another long drink. The beer and request went begrudgingly down her throat. Done, the unanticipated reflex gave her time to think of an answer.

“Well? I...” A pause to catch her breath. “Would have to check to see if I am free.” An exalted form of female bonding, shopping for beachwear with Coleen wasn’t high on her list.

“Come on Megs,” Rick pleaded, using her pet name. “I need help too. Besides Coleen here, you’re the only other person whose fashion judgment I trust.”

“So, you didn’t like the tie the office got for you last Christmas?” Olivia asked.

“Have you seen me wear it?”

Everyone laughed, Megan more for show than joining the levity of the moment. “You know,” she then cut in. “There are a lot of things to do around town. Maybe a day trip?”

“Wouldn’t beat a beach!” Martin shouted out.

Rick let out a laugh. “Oh Megs. I’m sure you and this city will survive without me—”

“Without us!” Coleen added. His arm tightened around her. He then delivered a peck on her cheek.

Megan sat numb, mind fumbling for an appropriate response. Or an additional excuse. Looking away, Renee appeared.

“Hey, can I get you guys anyth—”

“Yes!” Megan spouted. “I’ll take one more.”

“A... honey,” Coleen quipped in a low tone, glancing at her watch then at Rick.

“Oh. Yes.” To Renee. “No more for us. Thanks. Just the check.”

Megan said nothing. Maybe they’ll leave without a response to his request.

“So, are we on for shopping?” he asked.

No such luck. Her mouth opened. Pausing, thoughts flashed by. “Well?” Enough courage to lie came through. “Tell you what. Ah... call me when you know when you are going and I’ll let you know. I just remembered Russell said something about the Farmers Market this weekend, and ... ah.... just can’t remember if I told him I would tag along!” Maybe her painted smile would cap off the ruse.

“Okay.” Rick grinned, unaware of the politely phrased deception.

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Russell felt pretty damn good. And it wasn't the alcohol alone. The man sitting next to him left without attempting conversation. Renee, in her brief moments of rest, would say something nice. Give him a smile or a gentle pat on the shoulder as she passed by. Other than that, he remained quiet, mindful of the fact while he enjoyed happy hour she was at work. Their brief words and interactions made it a great evening. Sipping his fourth bourbon and cola, he glanced around people watching.

“Hey Russ.” Megan sat herself next to him.

“Megan...” Startled, he turned. Their once crowded table now occupied with strangers before the seats grew cold. He swiveled back. “Early night for the group?”

“Not early enough.” Megan took down the last from her glass in one gulp.

Her tone and gulping answered the question. He asked anyway. “We okay?”

She wiped her mouth. “Yeah. But I might have overdone it a bit. This is my third.”
Sitting there, she held a glass and smile. Both empty. He drew a breath, but she spoke first, staring into the glass. “They’re going to Florida next week.”

“Rick and Coleen.” A statement more than a question.

She rendered a half-felt nod. No sadness punctuated her face. Only a grim, twisted mouth accompanied her heavy eyes focused on nothing.

“Going on vacation... together... a big step for Rick. He’s never done with the other’s he dated... you know,” she added.

Not that you’re keeping track. He kept the observation to himself.

She gave him a spurring glance. “I’m sure they’ll have a good time. I mean... I’m sure.” A chuckle, then stare off into the distance. “Coleen asked for help picking out a bikini for the trip. Bet she’s quite the sight strutting down the beach...”

She lurched into silence with sullen eyes. Megan wasn’t unattractive. From time to time she had a fair share of men desiring her attention. Among other things. He wasn’t blind. Her full cheeks and brown eyes gave her oval face a simple charm. Maybe, like so many others, she felt overwhelmed and outgunned. More so in a world where the standard of female attractiveness appeared to be size zero or less. Whatever the hell size zero means.

“I’m sure too.” Time to go. A wave of his hand caught Bill’s attention. “Hey. Gonna tab out.”

Bill nodded. “How ‘bout you Megan?”

Megan shuffled in the seat, staring into the empty glass. Renee strode up, empty serving tray in hand, eyeing them both. “You guys aren’t leaving me are you? Who’ll keep me company?”

Russell tuned. The angelic glow he so loved radiated from her face. Her warm touch and conversation drowned out her planned activities with Jason. The urge for more reared up. Looking at Megan, he relented. “Long week. And there’s always the rest of the weekend!”

Buzzed, Megan had put two and two together. “No Russ. Stay. Someone has to keep this girl out of trouble.”

Renee and he let out a small laugh.

“Nah,” Russell said. “Renee’s a big girl. She can handle herself.”

“You bet Russ. You and Meg take it easy ‘til we see you again, okay?” She watched as Renee gave him a pat on the shoulder then returned to her section.

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Drifting out and away from The Pub, neither spoke. Meandering down the sidewalk, Megan tussled through the haze in her head.

One brought on by the more than usual amount of beer that evening. Through the alcoholic fog, she saw Rick and Coleen strolling down a beach at sunset, hand in hand. What a wonderful thing to do. So romantic...

“Can I ask you something?” She looked up at Russell.

“You may,” he answered with a thin smile.

Hesitant, the extra beer pushed the question out. “You’re... you’re crushing on Renee, right?”

He came to a dead stop. She did the same. For a moment, his smile grew bigger. He then let out a short laugh, staring back as though waiting for one from her. None came. “Me?” He looked away. “Nah. I mean... why’d you ask?”

A shrug. “Just... you know... dealing with... you seem to want her attention.”

His evasive answer whirled around her. “Doesn’t mean I’m... well, she’s a really nice person to talk to... like you! And I’m sure a lot of guys got a crush on her. I mean... look at her.”

Turning back towards The Pub, he stared at the building. He then spoke as though Renee were in plain sight through the solid walls. “It’s not hard to see why they would. I mean... you know... she has that just so smile. Always nice. Friendly with everyone. Perfect face. And great...”

“Body!” Megan finished, punctuating the jab with a slight chuckle.

He swung back. “Wasn’t gonna say that!” Shamefaced, he looked away.

“She does.” Looking back, as if also possessing a supernatural ability to see through solid objects, Renee had everything she herself didn’t. The comparison rambled through her mind’s eye: She didn’t have to deal with a petite five-foot four figure. Flat, all but straight hair requiring countless products, time, and effort to make fuller. Hips that were a bit big. That slight bulge on her stomach. Bit of extra flesh below her chin. Not like Coleen, strutting down the beach in some skimpy bikini with Rick hand in hand—

“I’d show of my mid-section more too if I looked like that...” Her voice faded off into the night. She shook off such thoughts. Enough self-criticism for one night. Her empty loft awaited. His too. Not the only one going home alone tonight.

No words passed between them, each engrossed in silent contemplation. Pressing the issue was pointless. The right words to describe what she felt defied her. And he was no doubt just as guilty of such a crime.

“You know.” She broke the silence. “Don’t know if I ever thanked you for what you do for me and... well... when it comes to Rick.”

They shared a comforting glance. Megan turned and began the journey to her loft. Russell followed and began his own.

Walking, he whispered. “You don’t have to.”

Megan put her hands in her pockets. “I could... you know... help you the same way. I could put in a few good words for you with Renee, you know, girl to girl—”

“No!” he spat out as if the thought mortified him. “I mean, I appreciate the offer but... I’m not really looking right now, you know. I want to enjoy myself, you know. Play the field. And... you do know she’s seeing someone right now.”

Better leave it at that. His own beguiling logic spoke for him. He wasn’t dating, seeing or doing anything with another woman, save her, on or off any type of field. With her love life being no better, what good was she.

“And could you do me a favor?” he asked, nearing the end of the block.

“Sure.”

“Could you keep this between us? I mean... I know you’re not gonna post it on the internet, but...”

She said nothing. Yet, a bit of friendly banter was in order with her best male friend. Ease the awkwardness of their close to intimate conversation. “Okay. But if you ever need me to, I’ll find out what her favorite color is so... you know... you can buy her some underwear for her birthday or Christmas—”

“Megan,” Russell bellowed. "Come on."

“You’re right. Bet she doesn’t wear any.”

“Megan!”