

THE WHOLE TATTED AFFAIR

by Rick Marcou

1.

Her hip slid down onto the seat, and across the neutral zone into mine. Rushed, accidental, though I would have preferred intentional and playful. The effect was nearly the same – the first touch, bodies brushing against each other.

“Oh, sorry.” She uttered with just a quick glance in my direction, though her head turned only enough to maybe see my leg, certainly not eye contact. She was busy with her bag, trying to wedge it down under the seat in front of her. It was a rucksack-looking thing, brown as a desert, old and tattered but possibly made to look that way. Though the jaguar markings down her left thigh, starting somewhere under her denim shorts and continuing below her knee, told me it could be real. The two forearms wrestling with the bag both showed more art, a mix of hard lines and some soft flowery images. The shock of black hair seemed to complete the picture, a rebellious tatted punk rock chick. The face could be either stunning or a pock-marked mess. I’d believe either right now. The hips were generous, but not fat. I was intrigued.

2.

What’s the right line to start with? Just hi, or maybe something about her tattoos, or her struggle with the bag. It has to seem natural, cool, maybe even a bit indifferent. You’re easily 20 years older than her, maybe 25, don’t allow her to think this is an old desperate lech making a lame play. Say something that makes her want to engage. Want to interact with an older guy.

“I’m curious. Why jaguar?”

“You know your animals. Most people guess leopard.”

“Truth? Not sure I know the difference. I was guessing. Jags just seem cooler than leopards.”

“They are. They’re bigger, but still much faster...like me.”

Her voice said those last two words a little more quietly and with a lilt before she said the second.

3.

“Would you care for a drink hon?”

“Yeah, do you have cranberry, or cranapple?”

“Sure do, either one.”

“Cranberry then. Thanks.”

My neighbor helped pass the full cup to me, then slid off one of her earbuds. “Cranberry huh?”, voice rising a bit on the second word. The look on her face seemed be accusing as much as asking.

“Good stuff. You tried it.”

“Yeah, of course. I remember my dad used to drink it because of his colon, or prostate. I don’t remember which. I assume that’s the only reason people drink it.”

"I think it's prostate, maybe both, who knows. I actually like the flavor."

"Interesting." Again the questioning/accusing tone.

4.

"So, which is home, Seattle or LA?" I asked.

"Seattle, now. Used to be LA. You?"

"Same. Irvine area. Where in LA for you?"

"Venice."

"Nice. You hit the beach all the time?"

"A lot. I pretty much lived at the Skatepark in the summers. And when I cut school."

"Do that a lot?"

"Not a lot. Few times."

"Yeah, you look like a badass. I could see that."

"Why, the tattoos?"

"Yeah, pretty much. My generation thought tattoos were mostly for badasses. Yours, it's kind of a given."

"I agree. Too many people get them, it's kind of lost its distinction. I do it because it's art. Most people today treat it like an advertisement. They're using it to make some sort of statement, but just about themselves, nothing more than that."

"Are you like fully covered?"

"*That's* a personal question."

"Sorry."

"No, that's cool, I'm fucking with you. Yeah, the jaguar continues, and I have some other items too. But you'll have to get to know me better to see those."

About 5 seconds elapsed, which seemed like 500.

"You're kind of speechless on that one." She gave a satisfied grin.

"Yeah, you got me thinking. Kinda like a right cross, but with words."

"Oh good. It worked then. I like shocking people."

"I can tell. I'm not shocked. More intrigued."

5.

A few moments passed silently, then she seemed to take the opportunity to dig down into her bag. Seemed fairly haphazard, like you know you put something in there but have no idea where it is, so you just start attacking. In tight quarters it seems even more desperate. Then a victorious "Hah!", not too loud but obviously intended to show there was a purpose to the fight.

She came up with a book, at the same time kicking her bag further under the seat in front of her like she was mad at it. The bag, not the seat. I looked at the book and immediately could see it was an early Vonnegut one, obvious from the multicolored cover that the current publisher was using for all of his works. I'd read most of them.

"Like Vonnegut?"

"Nosy, aren't we?"

"Yes." I decided to not be apologetic this time, hoping she was baiting me again. I think it caught her off-guard.

"Oh...yeah, I like him a lot." She stuttered a bit there, not expecting my response. I was right. She smiled.

"I've been reading him for the past few months. A client recommended him and I'm so happy she did. Vonnegut's way out there sometimes but I love his creativity. And these read really fast."

"Agreed. I've read most of his books, probably one of my favorite authors for exactly the same reason. His mind just seems to work differently than most. Makes the stories and characters so damn interesting."

"Which is your favorite?"

"Hard to say. *Slaughterhouse Five* is great, of course, but I think I liked *Bluebeard* and *Hocus Pocus* better. More fun and obscure. Which have you read so far?"

"I read *Slaughterhouse* first, that's what she recommended. I also read *Breakfast of Champions*. That was a kick."

She turned the book over to show the cover. "And I've just started this one." It was *Jailbird*, another good one.

"You'll like that, it's funny. Bit preachy, but good."

"Thanks."

"Sure, happy to see someone into him. So, what do you do. You mentioned it was a client who recommended him."

"Well, I'm a masseuse. She's one of my regular customers. Clients."

"Therapeutic massage, or...?"

"Sort of. Not licensed, I'm not a massage therapist or anything like that, but some of my clients come to me because of back issues or things like that."

"Ah. The rest come just for relaxation?"

"Exactly."

"Interesting. Maybe I'll have to give you a call sometime, if that's ok."

"Sure." Then I saw her glance down to my finger. "Wife ok with that?"

I angled my fingers up, as if I needed to show the ring more clearly. "I don't know. Probably not. She's a bit old-fashioned when it comes to that kind of thing. No need to tell her I guess."

"Not my concern. Most of my clients are probably married. That's why they come to me. Their wife doesn't look like me," a long pause, "or do what I do."

"Mm." She let that sink in, and I obviously let it too with just that useless utterance.

6.

"Want some?"

I had been semi-sleeping, which is to say I had my eyes closed, head back and turned to the window, but not sure how much I slept. Probably only 5 or 10 minutes. I turned and opened my eyes.

"Oh, sorry, did I just wake you?"

"No, don't worry, I was just resting my eyes."

"Do you always snore when you rest your eyes?"

"Seriously? Was I snoring?"

"No, I'm fucking with you. But I think you might have been out for a while."

"How long?"

"I don't know, but it was real quiet for the past 20 minutes or so."

"Oh. Guess I needed it."

"So, you want some?", she asked, bring the bag of roasted almonds closer to me.

"Sure, I love these, thanks."

"Were you serious about wanting to get a massage? I can give you my number."

"Sure, that'd be great."

She proceeded to write it down on the airline cocktail napkin, and wrote her name as well. "By the way, my name is Robin."

"I'm Batman," I said, using the overly dramatic intonation common with that announcement. *Was it Michael Keaton who first did it*, I wondered.

"Hi Batman. Believe it or not that's the first time anyone's ever said that to me. Good one."

I laughed. "Actually it's Ken. But I do love Batman, for what it's worth."

"Hi Ken. I think this is the longest I've ever spoken to someone without knowing their name. Not counting the guys who come to see me, who probably give me false names sometimes."

"I could see that. Especially if they're married."

"But you've now given me your name, so you're screwed."

"True."

"Hope that doesn't keep you from calling me."

"Really?"

"Really. I like talking to you. I think we'd have a good time."

"Oh yeah? What could I expect?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, besides the massage, which I'm sure is awesome. Anything else?"

"You know I can't say anything else, that's illegal. But assuming you're not a cop – you're not, are you?"

"No, god no. I'm about the farthest thing from a cop. I'm Jewish, you know. Thought it was obvious."

"Maybe, not too much though. Doesn't mean you can't be a cop. There are Jewish cops."

"Yeah, tons of them. In Israel."

She laughed at that one. "Probably true."

"So, can you tell me then?"

"Sure, I guess. After the massage, you turn over, I massage your front for a while. Legs, chest. Then maybe in between." She let that linger.

I nod my head a bit. "Massage it?"

"Something like that."

"Are you dressed the whole time? What do you wear?"

"I wear something sexy, depending on my mood. And if the client asks for something in particular."

"Like a jaguar print bikini."

"Exactly!"

"Does the outfit ever come off?"

"Sometimes, if you ask nicely."

"And then what?"

"That depends. Sometimes just continue that, sometimes more involved things. Depends on the client. And my mood, of course."

"And the price?"

"I didn't say that, but everything has a price, right?"

"Of course. How far can it go? All the way?"

"The term is full service. And yes, it can."

"Depending on your mood, right?"

"Yes. I see you're paying attention."

"I am. Very much so."

"Oh, getting excited?"

And with that she reached over and brushed her hand over my crotch. My excitement was somewhat visible, but definitely obvious to the touch.

"Oh yes, you definitely are."

"Whoa," I exclaimed, my head and shoulders lifting and shooting back a bit.

"Sorry, was that too forward?"

"No, it's fine," I said, though maybe not convincingly. "Just caught me off guard."

"I like to do that sometimes. Shock people."

"I can tell. That's cool." I then leaned in closer to her and in a loud whisper said "I liked it."

"Good. I did too."

7.

"Can I get you something else to drink hon?"

"Yeah, can I get a red wine? You want one," I asked Robin, "it's on me."

"Sure, thanks."

"Two please."

8.

"That was good, I needed that. Even for airplane wine. Thank you again."
"My pleasure. Yeah, you have to lower your expectations. But it was pretty good."
"I'm gonna hit the little ladies room."
"Ok. Thanks for telling me." I smiled and nodded, sarcasm fully in place.
She leaned in and whispered. "Wanna join me?"
"Seriously?"
"Yeah. Could be fun."
"Is this a free preview?"
"Sure. A girl's gotta have her fun too."

9.

I pulled up my boxers and jeans, zipped and buttoned myself. Not easy in the tight quarters of an airplane bathroom. Robin straightened back up, after leaning forward over the toilet, and put herself back together again as well.

"That was amazing. Been a long time since I had sex like that."
"You mean in an airplane bathroom?"
"Well that's a first, to be honest. But I mean with someone as hot as you, and who enjoys it like you do. Wow."
"Well, you're right, I do enjoy sex. But it takes two you know."
"Thanks, though I think you're just being nice."
"Well, maybe a little, but you got me off too so not really. But there is one other thing."
"What's that?"
"Happy Birthday Ken."
"How did you know it was my birthday?" I asked, all of a sudden very curious, wondering if I mentioned it or if she saw my license or something.
"Because your wife hired me for this. It's kind of your free pass. She's one of my clients."
The mouth-open, look of shock on my face was apparent even to me, and I wasn't looking in the mirror. Robin looked pleased with the reaction.
"And based on the good times we have during our sessions, I wouldn't say she's old-fashioned at all."