

Brandon Gets His Big Break

Chapter Three

By

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Brandon awoke with a start. It was an intense dream. While it was human nature to try to assign a narrative to a powerful dream, this one was just images that were intercut: a photo montage of his 3 polyam partners: Amy, Jane, and Jim.

Brandon stared up towards the ceiling. He knew instantly that he had an epiphany: he just didn't know what it was. This was not uncommon: he did his best thinking when he was unconscious. Time after time, he would go to sleep with something vexing him. When he awoke, the answer was there – like the killer in a slasher movie – staring at him. Sometimes the answer was not clear. But he knew that he had hit on it while sleeping. It would quickly come into focus. This epiphany was that sort. He had just had an amazing fucking insight. He just didn't know what it was yet. Initially, the room was pitch but his eyes quickly adjusted. He could make out the outlines of the darkened room.

The four of them slept in a single bed. It was the largest bed that they could find: an *Alaskan King Size*. At 9 feet by 9 feet, it slept the four of them comfortably. Overtime, the four had settled into a configuration. Amy and Jane were on the outer edges of the human construction. While left unsaid – or even thought – this was a conceit to their womanhood. If someone did mention it, the result would have been a row. Chivalry wasn't dead: but it did hide from itself.

Brandon, along with Jim, had mastered the art of getting out of bed. Since he could not simply roll off the side, he had to exit the end of the bed. He pressed his palms into the oversoft mattress and pushed his body downward and slid off. He did not disturb his partners, a skill that came with practice.

He was naked. Grabbing a pair of comfy gym shorts, emblazoned with some corporate logo that he never committed to memory, he put them on and cinched the drawstring.

He walked into the living room. And sat on the overstuffed leather sofa that was one of Jim's contributions to the household.

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Brandon Speaking

As I sat on the leather couch, my head started to clear. I located the baggie of Indica strain pot on the coffee table. There were two strains of pot: [Indica and Sativa](#). Beyond that, there were hybrid strains that were either Sativa or Indica dominant. Sativas tend to induce a more cerebral or head high, while Indicas are more likely to produce a heavy body experience. Personally, I simply preferred Indica: the shit made you melt into the couch. And I did better 'stoned thinking' on Indica: that was a topic of some

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controversy. Indica did knock you out making Sativa the choice for day or party smoking. I wanted to crash and Indica was better than Nyquil.

I grabbed the decorative bowl with the Renaissance Tapestry design and placed it in front of me. After crushing several especially pretty flower tops and letting the crushed weed cascade into the receptacle, I grabbed the bong with one hand and filled the pipe's bowl with pot. I then picked up the butane torch. I smoked the contents.

"Hi.", It was Amy.

"Did I wake you?"

"No...no. I rolled over and you were missing. I guess I give you a little squeeze now and again."

She was wearing an oversized sleep shirt that was cut like a mini dress. The sentence *I love you but LET ME SLEEP* was emblazoned across the front. There was a cartoon of a heart with an expression that was simultaneously annoyed and sleepy.

"Insomnia?", she asked.

"No. A wild dream. No plot...just all this wild and crazy imagery."

"Oh...fuck...I hate that shit."

While she was talking, I filled the bowl. I extended the bong with one hand and the torch with the other. I made a nearly imperceptible head bob that acted as a sort of invitation. After taking the paraphernalia, she smoked her hit.

"Can I ask you something serious?", I asked. "I mean...I've been having some 'meaning of life' thoughts lately and...it's weird...the characters in this *Friends* reimagining got me thinking about life."

"So...about the show?"

"No...um, no...about life. I wanted to ask you something heavy about your life. But you just fucking woke up. I don't want to sandbag you."

"It's cool. You're my life partner...one of them."

"Seriously...I don't want to..."

Amy rolled her eyes with comedic exaggeration:

"Oh...for fuck's sake...emotionally eviscerate me, already."

"'Emotionally eviscerate' ...not bad. I mean you're half asleep and...well...not bad."

"I'm fucking smart...you know that. Okay...hit me."

"Did your mom really abuse you as much as you said...because of your sexual orientation?"

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“Um...yeah. Ah...is there something specific about it that you want to discuss?”

“No...You did change so much after you joined us. Your personality...I mean. You used to be...well...so intense and gruff. Then...you changed so much. You are so open and loving.”

Amy wiped away a tear:

“I think I get where you’re going. Yeah...I never knew love until you guys. I mean...except for Linda and mom fucked that up. That’s the reality, isn’t it? People keep you from being who you are. Then I had my thing with Roz. But that wasn’t romance but more of a mother-daughter energy...[a Dominant/submissive deal...a D/s thing](#). My mom – Doris – gave me this synthetic pre-packaged love. And it turned so quickly...and was based on this nonsensical lie. Roz was my mom. With me and Linda...everything was so...so...so...furtive. Just trying to keep shit on the downlow. You know...we didn’t want the shit that ultimately happened to happen.”

“Couldn’t be your authentic self.”

“Yeah.”

I started to speak but she gently put her hand over my lips.

“Take another hit...yeah. I had my first love in 2008. I was a fucking kid. But it was real. Most people die without finding someone like Linda. She was the wisest person that I ever knew. Don’t care that she was barely through puberty. Yeah...I would have grown old and died with her. I know that in the same way that I know the sky is blue. And then I was exclusive with Roz for a long time, Very different...ah...friends with benefits and things got pretty kinky.”

By this time, Amy was leaning forward and resting her elbows on her upper legs. She was staring straight ahead. She seemed to have forgotten about me. She spoke with strained deliberation. Tears were running down her face, but her voice never wavered. I listened.

“Linda was torn away from me because...fuck it...we all know why. And I died...emotionally. I was too dead to bother with killing myself. I didn’t think that I’d ever love again and...honestly...just didn’t care. Jane came along. And the bitch broadsided me.”

She went to wipe her face with the palm of her hand. There were some clean McDonald’s paper napkins on the coffee table. I grabbed them up and tapped Amy on her shoulder with the hand that was clutching them. She looked over and took them.

“Thanks...”, she muttered.

She turned away from me. She wiped away the tears, her face now flushed. She blew her nose. I sat there.

After composing herself, she turned towards me.

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"I didn't experience love, romantic love, again until I got with you guys. That's when I reconnected with my authentic self...not just sexually but emotionally and spiritually. I was only able to embrace God after I became one with you."

She exhaled and continued:

"As long as we're talking about this, the only reason why I love you and Jim is because ...", she stopped and consciously considered how to continue. She pressed on and her eyes betrayed that she was unhappy with the phrasing. "...I only love you and Jim because you guys are an extension of Jane. I can't believe that I'm sexually attracted to a couple of guys but I am. It's situational...I suppose. I can't call myself 'bi' so...pansexual."

I nodded, unable to speak. I always understood this...sort of. When she articulated it, I really got it. It hit me with epiphany-level clarity.

"Does that bother you?", she asked.

"No.", I said honestly. "I'm so sorry to dredge this up..."

"Oh, shut the fuck up.", She said with a curious mix of frustration and affection. "We're adults in an adult relationship who are having an adult conversation about it. Jesus, I have to clean up." She got up and walked towards the foyer: I knew that she was headed to the adjacent half-bath.

When she came back, she looked better. Or, at least, closer to normal. Her face was still flushed and her eyes red. She sat down next to me.

At that moment, Jane appeared. She was wearing a Victoria's Secret bra and panties matched set. While Amy had boyish good looks – an Elliot Page with tits – Jane could have been a supermodel. She was a ringer for [Gal Gadot](#). Honestly, she could have easily upgraded to a hotter polyam clan.

The moment that she sat down, she noticed Amy's face. She looked squarely at me and said angrily (well, what would pass for anger with her. Jane's composure was her defining trait.):

"What the fuck have you been saying?"

"No, it's all good.", Amy said as he gave Jane's shoulder a squeeze. "We were having a 'meaning of life' conversation. It was valuable and cathartic. And now it's over."

"Yeah.", I concurred.

"Well...I'm in no mood for anything heavy. I just woke up for Christ's sake. Bong me."

I leaned over Amy and handed Jane the loaded bong and the torch.

We talked about *The 2023 Frogtown Art Walk* and my upcoming first week in the writer's room of Ilana Glazer's project.

Amy looked at Jane and said:

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“Wanna fool around? Let’s go to the pit.”

“I’m not up to it...both literally and figuratively.”, I said.

“Oh, sweetie...”, Amy said with patronizing affection. “This is a girls’ thing.”

“Well...have fun.”, I said.

Amy took Jane’s hand and led her to the bedroom that had the modular sectional, the pit. I retired to the other bedroom to sleep.

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A profound child trauma, the death of her parents, made it a constant challenge for Jane to process and enjoy emotions. Ultimately, she did. But it required constant personal discipline. Mastery of self was the central focus of her life. Malevolent forces from the past – not only in her lifetime but going back centuries – constrained her. She had been working with a therapist for years. Furthermore, she incorporated a regimen of activities that were designed to give her internal structure: such as mindfulness meditation and yoga. The violent death of her parents, which she witnessed at the age of six, made it a conscious struggle to deal with both an ongoing fear of abandonment and a sense of survivor’s guilt. She had to work to keep the memories at bay.

The malevolent forces from the past left her with more than survivor’s guilt but a generalized fear for her safety.

It was 2019 and she had just entered a relationship with Jim (this was before the involvement of Amy and me) . Her therapist was encouraging her to communicate openly and honestly with him about her fears. While she understood that, she had been concerned about how honesty would taint the relationship. She felt that it was best to just maintain that she had a naturally aloof personality. Yet she knew that was making everything more difficult. And it was selling Jim short.

A heightened personal discipline – that was needed to live life – made her a better professional. She was an agent who represented mostly B-listers, many right on the cusp. Her typical client was a solid character actor who would do a steady stream of one-offs in cop procedurals and sci-fi. Among her clients, she had a reputation for honesty and candor.

This led one of her clients – Andrew – to arrange a meeting between her and his friend Amy.

Amy’s very religious mom, who was a single parent, became extremely abusive in 2008. At that time, Amy’s mom realized that her 13-year-old daughter was a lesbian. She feared that Amy had a girlfriend: that was completely unacceptable to her. This resulted in an episode of intense abuse that resulted in the end of her daughter’s relationship. In 2008, there was a climatic beating where Amy was almost killed. After that, there was a brief period, when her mom joined *The Elysian Valley Arts Collective*, where her mom dramatically mellowed. Amy prayed – to the god that she had come to believe in – that her mom’s change was permanent. It was not. Soon the verbal abuse – along with hitting and spitting – returned. This was ongoing for the approximately the next five years. In 2013, the mother – who was

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morbidly obese – died of a heart attack. The mother did not have a will as she believed the government was Satanic and minimized her dealings with it as much as possible. She steered clear of contracts. Her estate was modest. When all the bills were paid, Amy received 75 thousand. Most of that inheritance came from the home that the mother owned free-and-clear.

Amy had not had another relationship since 2008 save for a non-romantic FWB with a girl named Roz. While her relationship with Roz was not romantic, it was very emotionally profound. Subsequent to Roz, she contented herself with casual sex. At eighteen, she had a nice chunk of change but was too smart to blow it. At the same time, she had no focus. She was bright-eyed and ambitious as a kid. But, besides destroying her ability to love, her mom's abuse drained her of her ability to care about her future. She did have some solid job skills: touch typist, comfortable with office systems and had a nice professional demeanor. Her greatest professional deficit was her masculine nature. She had short hair and refused to wear a dress, opting for a suit. But she was very good at what she did. And when she took an assignment, she was loyal and dependable. Usually, that won out but there were several exceptions that left her defensive on that point. For five years, she traveled around the country. She would take a gig and stick with it for a year. She had a good, but not great, resume. But she could walk into a temp agency and get placed on the spot.

Her childhood left her angry and bitter and unable to form a romantic relationship. Since her mom's death in 2013, her travels focused on enlightenment. She would get involved with various Buddhist groups. Meditation suited the solitary nature that was foisted on her by her abusive mother and reactionary church. But, when she lost interest in a given group, she would move on. She would often find herself thinking about Christianity. While her mom's church was simply evil, she found a simple beauty in the concept of a loving god. But, while she never renounced it, she mentally placed it on the back burner at this time.

She ended up getting into the [Kadampa Meditation Center](#) in LA. The Buddhist meditation center offered meditation retreats and nature walks. It was there that she met Andrew. She had been in LA for a couple months and needed to get a job. Her modus operandi was to go to a temp agency and snag a gig. But she had developed a fairly close relationship with Andrew. He was a sweet and unpretentious guy. She was fascinated with his acting career. She had lived in the area as a kid but was just returning to it. Normally she would just get a receptionist or secretarial job: the nature of the business did not matter to her. She thought it would be fun to work in show business, a studio perhaps.

After a sitting, she asked Andrew if he wanted to grab a Starbucks.

Soon enough, the conversation turned to the topic. After outlining her skills and job history, she said:

"I'm thinking that it would be cool to work in entertainment for a while. Any thoughts?"

"Yeah...I think that I do have something. My agent is looking."

"No, shit. What's she like?"

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“She’s a cool cucumber. Doesn’t have a sense of humor. But...I swear to god...she’s honest and trustworthy. With an agent, that’s like finding a unicorn on Hollywood & Vine.”

“Can you get me in to see her?”

He pulled out his cell and sent a text.

“Let’s see what happens.”, he said as he placed his phone on the table.

By the time that they were finished with their coffee, she had an interview.

When she met Jane the next morning, she was blown away to realize how close in age they were. She was in her mid-twenties and Jane was only a few years older.

After a typing test and a conversation, Jane said:

“Can you start Monday?”

“Okay...thank you. But this is how I like to dress...”, Amy said as she indicated her tailored Ralph Lauren, a powdered blue suit and shirt with a pink tie.

“Ralph Lauren is a bit much. If you like to wear slacks and a shirt, that’s fine.”, Jane deadpanned.

“Okay...thank you. Is it okay if I wear a tie?”

“Sure. No cartoon characters. No Mickey...no Donald. I may as well run through my spiel. I normally would hold off until Monday. This is a business run by a woman. The reality is that there are a lot of people who want to diminish us...take us down. For that reason, we want to project a certain conservatism. Not political...god no. But organizational. When a potential client comes to us, we want that person to know that we are solid. I’ve built a track record that proves that. We’re nowhere close to a behemoth like a [Creative Artists Agency](#) or a [William Morris Endeavor](#). But I break my butt for my people and the acting community knows it. They know that I’m honest. Most of all they know that I’m stable. You...have a signature look. I like it both for my business and personally. I understand that you are expressing your fundamental nature and am fully behind you. But you are redlining. No green hair...no nose ring. No goth or punk. I like this look, however, and support it.”

“Okay...I appreciate that...thank you.”. Amy said. She was grateful for Jane’s unsolicited statement of support. At the same time, she was somewhat taken aback by her new boss’ deadpan – nearly robotic – delivery. She flashed on a 1960’s TV show that she saw once: *Dragnet*. She flashed on the character Joe Friday and his intense and confrontational manner. While Jane was being supportive, she had an accusatory energy.

Amy thought with bemusement:

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For a moment there, I was tempted to ask for a lawyer.

Amy swept a hand in front of her. "So...this is...my look...we're good?"

"We're good. I'm businesslike. I have an intensity about me. I know that. But I am a supportive person. You'll realize that about me and, I hope, you'll come to appreciate it. Monday at 8 AM."

"Yes. Ms. ..."

"...Call me Jane." Jane said with a warmth that popped against her normally staid demeanor.

"Jane. I'm psyched."

Jane stood up and rounded her desk. She extended her hand. Amy got up from her seat. They shook.

"I believe that you'll like it here."

"I think so too.", Amy said honestly.

And she left.

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