

Can't Buy Me Love

Tommy was a happy man. Tall, athletic and with surfer looks, the sophomore was breezing through college in the carefree San Diego lifestyle. He thought he had it all, until he met Hannah. Hannah was gorgeous, perhaps the woman of his dreams, except for one fact. Hannah didn't like the Beatles.

Tommy remembered when he first met Hannah. After a long walk on Mission Beach, he wandered over to a café to get an ice tea. It was crowded and the only seat available was at a table for six.

"May I take this seat?" The group was friendly. "Sure, come join us." Three women and two men, all around Tommy's age, dressed in athletic wear and chatting. The group introduced themselves. Tommy reciprocated.

Tommy listened to the others but had a hard time not focusing on Hannah. She was tall, athletic and blond, with a model's face and perfect teeth.

"So, Tommy, what do you do?"

"I'm a sophomore at San Diego State, studying fine arts." The group nodded approval.

"That's wonderful. We need more artists. Hannah here is an artist, a painter." Tommy tried to reckon her age.

"Are you in school?"

"Yes, at the University of San Diego."

Tommy thought to himself, probably comes from wealth. USD is private and very expensive. Resisting the urge to pursue this lovely in front of her friends, he chatted with the others, to hide his infatuation with Hannah. The others went to USD too, even though they weren't pretentious about it.

After a while, Hannah excused herself. “Got to go guys, see you later.” She got on her bike and coasted off.

“Tommy, we’re all friends here and we like you, so we know what you’re thinking.”

“You do?”

“Yes, you like Hannah. Every guy does. Want some advice?”

Tommy realized he hadn’t been as subtle as he thought. “Sure.”

“We have both dated her and know a dozen other guys who have. She’s great, basically the perfect girl.”

“But?”

“But she has one flaw. She doesn’t like the Beatles.”

“None of their songs?”

“Not a one. That’s why she’s still available, no boyfriend. Every time she gets serious, the guy messes up and lets on that he likes their music, and poof, she’s gone.”

“Seems very unusual. I never met anyone who didn’t like at least some Beatles music.”

“We’ve never been able to figure out why. She guards that secret like an ancient treasure, or her virginity.”

Tommy got nervous. Surely this beauty wasn’t a virgin? The others noticed his expression and they laughed.

“No, she’s not a virgin. Quite spectacular in bed actually.” Everyone nodded.

Tommy looked at the other two women. Their smiles told him something.

“Listen, Tommy, we like you. We’re having a party at USD tonight. Let me text you the address. It will be fun watching you and Hannah.”

“All right, I’d like that. But how did you know I was interested in her?”

“Every guy is Tommy, and most girls too.”

Tommy wanted to play it cool, not give away too much information about himself. Although he wasn’t poor, his family wasn’t wealthy, like most of the group he just met from USD. He knew the type, in college for the contacts, the socializing, not worrying about post grad issues or loans. Many would go to med school or law school. They were the fortunate few. He felt honored to be accepted so soon in their circle. So, he showed up at the party, with a bottle of wine, fashionably late.

“Tommy, good to see you.” One of the guys he met earlier took the wine. “Thanks for bringing this. Go on inside and mingle.”

There were about twenty people there. They accepted Tommy as if he was a fellow at their college and didn’t pry into his background. Friendly and welcoming.

After a while, Tommy saw Hannah, coming down the stairway in a cornflower blue summer dress, with little white birds and clouds. Hannah’s friends were used to this reaction and secretly watched Tommy approach her, after a tension filled fifteen minutes of her chatting with others.

“Hi Hannah, nice to see you again.”

“Oh, Tommy.” She gave him a hug and kiss on the cheek. “Nice to see you too. You’re studying fine arts, yes?” Tommy hoped his smile was just right, not too eager and not too laid back.

“Yes, I’d like to teach music composition and performance.”

Hannah was engaged. “Wonderful. I may be able to help you with an internship. My father teaches at Berklee College of Music, in Boston.”

“So, you’re from Boston?”

“Yes, I go back for two weeks in July, but prefer to live here in the sunshine.”

“I love San Diego. I’m from Los Angeles.”

“Oh, the big city. We go up there for concerts and to the museums. I’m a painter.” Hannah smiled warmly at Tommy. Tommy fell for her at that moment.

“Maybe we could go up to a museum someday. What do you think?”

Hannah touched Tommy’s hand. “I’d like that. Here, give me your phone and I’ll give you my contact info.”

Hannah picked up Tommy on Saturday morning in her BMW convertible.

“I love driving the PCH on a sunny day. The sound and smell of the ocean, birds and lots of sunshine.”

As they drove casually North, another car passed them blaring *Help*, loud enough for Hannah to hear. Tommy braced himself, hoping she would ignore it. Nope.

“That noise. Can you believe people play that so loud?”

Tommy checked his expression, not knowing how to respond. “Hmm” he said nonchalantly. Hannah took his expression as agreement.

“I don’t understand why people think they were so great, do you?”

“It’s a mystery, for sure.”

Hannah turned up her radio, chamber music. “Ah, that’s better.”

“Very nice Hannah. I love Mozart.” Bonding with his love of classical music only enamored him to her even more.

A video billboard flashed an ad for *Love*, the Beatles show in Las Vegas. Tommy hoped that Hannah didn’t see it. Sorry.

“Can you imagine an entire show of Beatles music? Torture.”

“Unbelievable.” The restraint was becoming torture for him.

Tommy had to decide whether he could keep up his disdain for a band he considered the greatest of all time, in order to capture the heart and body of this angel. He was fighting his own integrity and instincts; but he was too far gone. Hannah had taken his soul and he was helpless to do anything about it, nor did he want to.

They wandered through the museum and the rooms with impressionist paintings, something close to Hannah’s heart.

“Aren’t they beautiful Tommy?”

“Yes, many genius painters working during that period. In music too.”

A small bug scampered out from under a bench. Hannah quickly squashed it.

“Ugh! Must have been a beetle.”

“I think it was a cockroach.”

They stopped by the gift shop. Tommy bought Hannah some candles and a poster reprint by Monet. Hannah bought Tommy a small replica of an antique flute.

“Let’s go to the beach dear.”

Tommy smiled and touched Hannah’s hand.

They walked the beach in the hot California sun. Seagulls squawked above them and the waves made that whooshing sound going in and out. The smell of salt water was intoxicating.

Hannah took Tommy’s hand and playfully jogged toward the water. It was warmer than usual today, not the usual biting cold. They stood with the water up to their knees, the waves splashing against their legs. Hannah turned to Tommy.

“Isn’t it just the best place in the world?”

“Yes, I love the ocean.”

Hannah was in her element. She seemed more like a California girl than a Boston preppy.

“What popular music do you like Tommy?”

“Oh, a lot of stuff from the 60s and 70s.”

“The Doors?”

“Of course.”

“The Byrds?”

“Oh, yes, very much and the Turtles.”

Suddenly a flock of seagulls flew above them making an awful racket. And the waves crashed against their legs.

“The Beatles?” Tommy heard her, but pretended not to.

“The Beach Boys. Yes, one of my favorites.” He quickly interjected.

“How about you?”

“I’m partial to the Woodstock generation. Music from the hippies and the songwriters like Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell and Carole King.”

“That was a golden era of music, no doubt. I wish I could have lived back then. What else does the ocean do for you?”

“It’s like a dream Tommy. I dream about the ocean, about swimming with the dolphins. I’ve even painted some pictures like that. How about you?”

“The ocean reminds me of chamber music, the rhythms of Gabrieli and Debussy.”

“Oh, yes, Debussy. When I’m here, I think of renaissance painters, like Cezanne and Pissarro. I saw some originals in France last year. Have you been to Europe?”

“No, sadly. I would love to go to Vienna and visit the museums of the great composers.”

“Maybe we should go together some day.” Then Hannah put her arms around Tommy. The kiss lasted forever. It was the best kiss he had ever had. When they finally opened their eyes, Hannah gave him a look that men long for. She smiled and made a sweet suggestion.

“Let’s stay overnight. We can get a room at that cottage motel.”

Tommy could only nod in agreement, not wanting to ruin the moment.

They had seafood dinner on the boardwalk, then took a final walk on the beach before retiring to their room. Hannah sent Tommy out to buy some champagne while she lit the

candles. When he returned, he saw her, dressed in a lemon colored chemise with matching panties, which only highlighted her blond hair.

Finally, the moment Tommy had dreamed about. Their gentle caresses and long kisses gave way to more passionate explorations. When Hannah was ready, she held Tommy's face and gazed into his eyes.

“Before we do this, I have one question. Do you renounce the Beatles and all their music?”

Tommy was shocked back into reality. “What? You mean all their music?”

“Yes. I need a commitment.”

This was the moment all men face. To choose between two loves. His perfect woman or the music that fed his soul. He was hesitant, perhaps a mistake, and then said the words that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

“What about the early love songs?”

And poof, Hannah was gone.