

## EXPLAINING IT BACKWARDS

April 2020

How did it happen? Not how you would expect. So innocently really. I never would have expected anything to come of it. It was like this:

I was walking along Penfield, you know, close to home, finishing off a 6km walk during the COVID-19 panic, getting exercise, walking alone, respecting social distance, etc, etc, etc. Just being a nice guy. There were hardly any other people out walking and even fewer cars. Because it was so quiet, I walked on the edge of the road, where the bike lane would be, because it is flatter than the sidewalk. Then from out of nowhere this van drives toward me and it doesn't seem to notice me even though there is no one else anywhere around, no walkers, no bikes, no cars. She has the whole road and still drives so close that I have to step up onto the curb. She passes, I don't even know that she is a she at this point, and I step back off the curb and keep walking. But I was a little annoyed, so I glanced over my shoulder as if to say, what was that? I guess she saw the look I gave her and she stopped and turned around and drove back toward me.

There's a moment when everything tingles and you know something is wrong. I took my cell phone from my pocket and called 911 because I'm expecting a confrontation. She pulls right up a few feet away and starts yelling at me above this music she's playing, saying I should be on the sidewalk and how dare I give her a look when it's me that's the asshole walking illegally. Her face was just so hard, so tense. But I didn't want to judge her, everyone is so out of character during the pandemic lockdown. And I was patient, I waited for her to finish her yelling and cursing and to turn down her music before I even tried to speak. I realized this wasn't about me, that there was something terribly wrong in her world.

Finally, I asked her if she was okay. If there was something that had happened to her today that was making her angry. I asked her if I could help.

Now that things were quieter, and before she could respond, I could hear the 911 operator speaking loudly from my phone, calling to me. I quickly told the 911 operator that everything was okay, but she insisted that she needed to know what had happened and why I had phoned in an emergency. I told her to call me back in 10 minutes and I hung up. I looked back to the van. Her face was soft, beautiful, exhausted. I couldn't take my eyes from her. I asked her again if she was okay. She cried.

This being physical distancing and everything, I stayed 6 feet away, but her tears may as well have been running down my shoulder. She told me everything, all that had happened, how she was feeling, what was missing in her life. There was nothing to do but listen and be understanding. When she finished I

said I know, I know. That's how I feel too. She said she needed to talk to me again and I gave her my number. I needed to hear her again. We said goodbye for now.

As she drove away the 911 operator called me back. She demanded to know what was going on, was I in danger, was I at risk? I told her about the confrontation turned sweet. The operator complimented me on what a great guy I am.

She called. It started. I'm truly sorry, I didn't mean to be unfaithful, but I was so nice, and it was *her* that called me.

Fuck. That won't work. Not a fucking chance. Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck. She'll never believe that's what happened

Okay, let's start again.

Sometimes someone just comes into your life and you can't explain it. She's just there and it clicks, it fits, and you can't even begin to look the other way. There is no accounting for it, or for the timing. Bad timing, that's all.

Of course I wanted it to happen. This didn't come from out of nowhere. I was smitten from the first time I saw her, on skates in fact, skating among the boys, realizing that she was a she. Every time we talked as the friendship deepened. Every time she flattered me, confirmed my importance, challenged my intellect and threw it back twice as fast.

She wanted it to happen. The persuasion started with a kiss in the GRC parking lot. Everything was right. When she hesitated, I kissed her again and she let go. She wanted it to happen.

She sacrificed every Wednesday morning to me, when she should have been at her office. She sacrificed for me. If it wasn't at the house during the day then it was at her house when he was away, or a borrowed house downtown when we could, or the Park'N Ride which is so empty at night. Or a memorable night in the Canadian Tire parking lot. Or slipping out of town for a couple of days, now that took some planning and some luck. Our lives so interwoven.

What? Of course we did. And it was so full, so full. Just a little she'd say. So much of me. So soft of her on my shoulder. Every time. Sweet lord, every time.

It disturbed everything. She compelled everything from me. Precious everything. It filled every thought from my dreams to my nightmares to the songs she brought me. Every awareness. The e-mails, the conversations, the laughter. She almost passed tea through her nose! The comfort, I relied on her for everything. I couldn't live without her.

I didn't tell her.

She told me everything I wanted to hear. She invested in me, exalted me with just a touch, immortalized me with just a kiss. I was in step with her flattery. She convinced me that I am a good man with a few carefully timed phrases. I thought it was true.

It's not true. It never was, even if she thought so. I know that I'm an asshole. I'm judgemental, impatient and selfish. I struggle to change. And many other awful things. Unfaithful too but I didn't want to change that. I still don't. She treated me better than I am.

She told me nothing that I needed to hear. How she really felt. The things she hinted were there that I didn't look for, wasn't in a hurry about, thought there was all the time in the world, our world. I stepped out of the way to avoid knowing all that she might have told me. What would I have thought then?

There's a moment when everything tingles and you know something is wrong.

She is an all in or all out kind of love. She needed me to fill everything she needed. I didn't. She was exhausted. She was out. I was abandoned, flailing, lost. I didn't take it well, I gave her every insight into who I really am, every ounce of selfish indignance. It's been years and I'm still grieving. Aching. It kills me to tell you about what I've done, not because I feel guilty but because of how painful it is, still. I don't care, it doesn't matter that you know, so I'm telling you right here and now what I've done. I'm an asshole and I'll be unfaithful again.

No fucking way.

I was walking along Penfield, you know, close to home, finishing off a 6 km walk, minding my own business when suddenly from out of nowhere there were these bright lights in the sky. I was standing ~~all alone so no one else was there to see it~~ right in the middle of the road and it was coming right toward me. I froze, I couldn't move. I didn't want to move. It was metallic, there was beautiful music, and I saw her standing in the doorway of the ship. I felt a tractor beam grab hold of my shoulder and everything tingled. Before I knew it, it was lifting me tow ar d s