

## Damn Liars

**H**ere I am again. How many seconds, minutes, hours, days have I already passed here, smoking one cigarette after another? Only me and the bench with the perfect view of the bar.

You were almost a part of me, "almost" – a gross understatement. And now I have to see you sitting there, laughing, drinking, kissing ...with ... THOMAS! Thomas was his name. Your "nice" colleague. "Do I have to worry?" – "Oh, come on, don't be childish, we just have to prepare a new project", she had answered as if she had studied this fluent answer days before.

That was the beginning. The beginning of the end of my life as a happy, successful business man who enjoyed the envious glances when I brought her with me to company parties. I am still "successful", even more than before. "Happy" has become a word I have to look up in dictionary. Now I am sitting here like a freak. "Like" – a gross understatement.

Why? Why are you doing this to me, god? Why are you doing this to me, Linda? In the happy days I became angry when you needed two hours in the bathroom, but now I see you with your lipstick, your pretty hair. The lipstick always fitting to your dress. You've read this in your stupid women's magazines, that you were reading on the red couch we had bought together, when I came home from work.

Why do I have to punish myself? I could do so many better things in my spare time. Could I? Meet friends? Not a real alternative. My friends! They told me that after a bottle of whiskey and some other women I would feel better. Neither works. "Time will heal your wounds". Haha, how much time? Isn't a year enough? How funny ...

You are never happy with things you already have. Cheating on her with that stupid girl ...It wasn't worth it. No, it wasn't worth! She was beautiful, that's all.

In my mind I am in the bar again. I am the one you are talking with, you want to kiss *my* lips. Don't you remember? No, she doesn't! Did she forget everything? Doesn't she remember our days in exactly this bar? Sitting there,

drinking coffee, listening to the music. Always the same song. This melody ... Poor Carl, he always had to listen to it while he was serving another coffee. Is he as friendly to this Thomas as to me? No he isn't! I know him. He always liked me. Would he remember my name?

Is she still that beautiful or is it just the image in my head coined by nice memories? The red dress ... salty air ... Italian red wine ... like blood you say. Beautiful enough to make me compare every woman I meet. They always lose. When will I forget you, when will I be free? Do I want to be free? Or would it be the feeling of a prisoner that comes out of jail after several years not knowing what to do? Probably ... When will it be? "In two days you will be fine again, believe me", I still have in my ears as if it was yesterday. Liars, damn liars!

# Father's Despair

**A**nother day was rushing towards its end. Another day over, filled with nothing meaningful. Just the same dull daily routine, like on every day in this yet young year. Epiphany had just passed, the scent of the incense still hanging in the hallways; the songs of young kids, dressed as the Three Kings Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, still ringing in the air. The new year and their initials, written in bold, blood-red letters on my white wooden door-frame: 19 \* C + M + B \* 00. The "millenium" had finally arrived. And I was still sitting here, in my local bar, "Phillies", thinking about what possibly had been the point where all this started.

Maybe the day my wife had left me for good ... But not without taking away my two most beloved children, my car and about one third of my monthly income; "for alimony", as the judge told me. Thruth was, her new husband earned about double my salary, but for some reason my ex-wife thought that was not enough. But despite the fact I was paying almost everything she bought for our children (I gained insight in her montly expenses for the kids, at least one thing this bloody court allowed me), I was not able to see them, not even once or twice a month. In fact I was ordered by law to stay away from them, "at least at a range of 400 meters within sight". Did somebody forget to tell me the day when they introduced anti-father laws? Or was I the only ex-husband who suffered from this strict segregation from his kids?

I sometimes speculate that this was a deliberate attempt of my formerly beloved Mary, to have me cut off from any contact with my youngsters. I am almost sure that this was the case, as one time in a shopping mall, I accidently stumbled across Mary and my kids, buying new shoes (for her, Mary, of course). Eliah, my 2-year old son, did not recognize me at first, but his 13-year old sister Maria did instantly. She ran to me, to her dad, for she had not seen me for what seemed ages to her. She gave me a big hug and almost began to cry in excitement. I still do not know what Mary had told them about my absence, but it was clear that my appearance, healthy and sane, was something that contradicted it. God, she may have told them that I went

insane or had had a incurable disease. Anyway, she was not pleased to see me. She gave me a cold, suspicious look, and tore Maria away from my embrace. Just that very moment, Eliah realized that it was me, his real father, who his sister was hugging. Now he too came to hug me enthusiastically. That was too much for Mary, as she could not prevent both her kids from greeting their dad. So she did the only thing that was reasonable to her: she cried out loud for help. Now we were drawing considerable attention, and soon two police officers appeared. They asked what was going on, and despite my admittedly humble attempts to explain (I was still rushed from seeing my kids so unexpectedly) and my children holding onto me; Eliah clearly stunned from hearing his mum cry in this for him so happy encounter, my wife convinced the officers that I was some stranger who tried to kidnap her "precious little ones". I was torn away from my children and was pulled to my feet. Without further talking, I heard the unmistakable clicking of a pair of handcuffs and suddenly felt a cutting pain in my wrists. While both Maria and Eliah started to cry and tried to run after me, I was pushed through the mall, through the big glass swing doors and out on the street, into the waiting police car.

That was about one year ago. They let me go after a three-hour long interrogation; but soon after this event I got a citation, which ended in this decree that I am not to come near my young ones. Of course I tried to raise objection to the case, but as I could not afford a lawyer to find me some loophole (I had already been paying alimony for one year), the court rejected it right away.

I wake up from my desperate thoughts about Mary, the kids and this whole mistreatment of a father's rights, as the barkeeper bumps me. "Do you want to order another drink? It's almost closing time, so if you want a last one ..." I thank him and order a non-alcoholic drink called "Driver's Delight". The only one without, this evening, though. But I always promise myself that this "Driver's Delight" is a sign that I have not totally given up myself. I look across the counter. There's a young man sitting there, chatting with a neat young woman. I sink into my thoughts again: are they married? Or at least a couple? Or just good friends? Or did they just meet here, unrecognized by me, because I was staring on the wooden counter, nipping on my drink, deep in depressed

thoughts? Now the woman (rather a girl than a woman, I was wondering how she managed to be out this late) is laughing out loud, probably her companion told a joke. I realized they were holding hands, almost shyly, just halfway above the corner of the bar. So rather a couple than friends, I tell myself. But probably not too long together, as they are holding hands only secretly, even though nobody besides me and the barkeeper is around.

I pay my "Driver's Delight" and pour it down my throat (which causes the barkeeper to cast a very disapproving look at me). Unconsciously, my hand rises up to wave the couple a goodbye, but the effect almost makes me laugh: both of them twitch as if caught doing something naughty, and quickly tear their hands apart. Worried that I've spoiled their intimate moment, I quickly look away, a bit ashamed. But on my way out I cast a look back over my shoulder, and what I see saves my day: after they have realized the foolishness of their embarrassment, they are both smiling broadly and wave back at me. I grin back and whizz out of "Phillies", out onto the cold, dark street, wishing the young guy that he would never encounter the same nightmare I have been going through for two years now.

## Lonely Hearts

**I**t was Friday night around twelve o'clock when Tom left his house. But not without banging the door behind him. He was furious. What the hell did Jane think who she was? To treat him like that – unbelievable! Not looking back he strode down the street. At the next corner he automatically turned right. A few minutes later he stood in front of Laura's flat. The windows were dark, no light was burning. He lifted his hand to ring the bell, but then – stopped. Desperately, Tom sat down on the steps in front of the apartment house. How did all this start? Why did this all end? Three years ago, he had gone on trips with Jane every weekend, they had visited old friends and had many things in common. But then, over the years they had lost something. Tom did not know exactly what, but something had gone away. Yes, and then he met Laura at the coffee shop that opened about one year ago. It was weird, but he still remembered the day. It was a sunny Friday afternoon and he came back from work when he noticed the new café. Immediately, he left his car and entered the shop. The first thing that he saw was the very attractive woman that served the guest. And two days later their affair began. It was a new experience for him to have a secret nobody should discover, especially not Laura. It was almost fun to hide it. He felt like a little boy hiding stolen chocolate from his mother. Then the telephone call that evening. Laura called to say that she was leaving New York. Without him, of course. Even if she had offered him to come with her, he would not have come along with her. She was not his real love. Just an alternation of everyday life. But that was not the problem. The thing was that at the time Laura came to his house to give him a few things he had left at her house, Jane came home from work. Of course her female intuition explained nearly immediately the situation to her. And there he was – chucked out of his own house. He had tried to explain everything but Jane had not wanted to listen to him. He understood that she was disappointed and angry, but was it only his fault that their relationship had broken apart? And wasn't it absolutely exaggerated that she wanted to go to a lawyer immediately on Monday? Tom stood up. He went in the direction of "Phillies".

"Phllies" was a somehow odd bar where not many people went to. But the only place in his neighborhood where he could get a beer now. He opened the door and stepped in. There were three people, a man and a woman who were sitting next to each other and the barkeeper. Nobody was talking, just quiet music disturbed the deep silence. Tom ordered a beer and sat down on the opposite side of the couple. He thought that they were a couple although they did not speak or touched each other. He listened to the music and let his thought wander. After half an hour he ordered a second beer. The couple was still there. He was smoking a cigarette and she was inspecting her nails. One hour later nothing had changed. Tom had ordered his next beer, but that was all. He looked more closely at the man and the women. He could not find a wedding ring neither on his hand nor on her hand. The two people stood up, paid their drinks and left the bar. With a grin in the face Tom looked at the barkeeper. "Do they always behave like that when they come here?" – "Yes, they do. They come here every day, both at ten o'clock and stay four hours. They never talk to each other, but he only smokes his cigarettes." – "What a freaky couple!" – They are not a couple. They do not know each other, - I mean they do not really know each other. They just meet here at the bar. Two lonely people!" Tom was shocked. How lonely do you have to be that the only person you know is someone who sits next to you every night but does not speak a word to you? He sighed. How lonely would he be if Jane really left him? Perhaps he would also sit here. He bobbed his head towards the barkeeper, paid his beers and quickly walked out of this weird bar with that sad atmosphere. Tom knew that he had to apologize to Jane and that the next time would not be easy. But he wished to make everything undone that had destroyed their relationship. He did not want to end like these two lonely hearts in the bar.

# Mystery

He was sitting in this bar now and waiting for something to happen. He looked around, but realized that nobody was there. He asked for another gin and let his mind wander. How long had it been, it seemed such a long period of time, but actually he had been involved only since last week, and now what had happened? Just waited for girlfriend then dead why? Who had done that?

He was wakened by the clattering sound of women's shoes. He looked up and there they were. This guy called Mark and the woman, her name was Sarah, he remembered. They sat down, just close enough for him to listen to their conversation as much as he needed. "Do you have it with you?" "Yes, of course". And then she took out a small blue handbag. This is Viola's one, they had not found it when he had to identify her. All this blood, so cruel and her face unrecognisable, but he recognized her. She took a handful of photos from her bag. They looked at them. And finally there was a piece of paper, some note Viola must have written. When he saw that they were going to leave, he paid and got up. He waited at a little distance till they came and then followed.

He was sure to find out the secrets about Viola's death. So he followed Mark and Sarah to a small ruined house near the water. He stayed at a safe distance, but able to hear what they were talking. "It must be here.", he heard strange sounds from the inside like pushing and drawing as if they were turning the house upside down. What were they looking for? Suddenly he felt cold hands around his neck and a heavy pain in his head ...

He was back in time, but did not now where he was and how long he had been unconscious. Mark was sitting in front of him. "So you are Viola's boyfriend?" "Y...yes", he stuttered. "And you were snooping around? You are going a little too far!" "I j...just wanted t...to know why all t...this has h...happened to Viola." Mark just passed the photos. There was this ruined house on it and several black-suited men, on another a small little girl chained and muzzled inside the ruins. Everywhere pills and drugs around. He looked like a question mark. "Viola made these pictures, she was a undercover cop, she freed this

little girl and wanted to betray us to the police. But we got her and now she is dead" "Oh no, but who was this girl?" "She was a little test person for our drugs and we needed her." "Who is we?" "I guess you'll never know." Then Mark took out a knife and pushed it through his ribs. He felt an unbearable ache and warm blood running. Then again a heavy pain when Mark pulled out the knife again. Then he was carried away, he soon lost his consciousness.

A few weeks later the police found a male body in the river, which was, after a long investigation, put to unsolved cases.

# Pirate in the Carribean

I step in the bar called Phillies. With me is Sarah, a girl I met a couple of hours ago in a shoe store. I had invited her for a drink and here we are. She wears a red dress, while I of course have my usual black suit on. I had already checked out the place. There was barely anybody in there. We are chatting a little bit and getting closer. This makes it look like a normal date. Maybe I will even hook up with her later tonight. Why not have some fun?

All the stores are closed. The street is empty, but lit up. This doesn't make it any easier. Three stores, one street, one night. They all sell jewelry only and will bring a huge profit. I don't think too many people have done this before. Well, I did. In Sandusky and Panama City Beach. Same way each time. Check out the area the nights before. In a very casual way, so I don't attract any attention, but that goes without saying. And now I'm here in Perkins with Sarah on a not so regular date. The bartender checks me out and the look in his eyes shows some jealousy, as if he wanted to be Sarah's date.

I order a Bloody Mary and she wants a Manhattan, just like I expected. She is a dentist's assistant and likes to go to a club called "Sweet", where they play 2step. She is a cute little girl. She talks a lot, which makes it easier for me, because I have to concentrate on my surroundings. I haven't seen anyone near the bar but us and one other guest. He seems like a business man who is just in for the day. Nobody I have to worry about. I excuse myself and go to the restroom. Through the window in the restroom I see someone walking along the street. Another guest? Most probably not, since they close in half an hour. He doesn't make me nervous. I have to reckon with a few passerby's.

I walk back to Sarah. It's almost time to leave and she comes closer. She seems to be attracted to me because she touches my hand and has this look in her eyes. I let it happen and stroke her hand. I'm done with "work" for tonight. Now it's time to have some fun before the big night tomorrow. Tomorrow I have to be focused one hundred percent, maybe for the last time ever. After this, I'll retire. Maybe in the Caribbean?