



Ted Bundy isn't
the only serial killer
terrorising Seattle ...

KANIKA
BATRA

HONEY TRAP

If you like James Patterson, Stephen King or Gillian Flynn,
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HONEY TRAP

KANIKA BATRA



NOBLE

CHAPTER ONE

July 14, 1974

Waiting rooms depress me. Waiting rooms in psychiatrists' offices make me want to blow a hole through my left temple.

There is a woman on the seat opposite me arguing with herself, her voice alternating between a high-pitched squeal and a poor imitation of a man's deep rumble. I suspect she's fashioned her clothes out of an old lampshade. The man beside her has his eyes closed; a light sheen of sweat coats his balding head. His hands are stuffed tightly into the front pockets of his pants, and I'm not too sure if he's dying or napping.

The office is sterile and uninteresting, despite strenuous efforts to make the décor lively. Four brown walls are adorned with pictures of flowers and beaches, a nurse station in a darker shade of the brown, and chesterfield armchairs instead of hard-backed chairs. Five-year-old maga-

zines, presumably a cesspool of dirt and bacteria, are stacked on the mahogany table in the center of the small room. The receptionist today is a petite, bored-looking blonde. She greets patients with a mechanical smile and ushers them into a seat while speaking in a monotone. She has a clipped estuary-English accent and a disproportionately large nose. A stocky nurse approaches Lampshade Woman and offers her a round blue pill and a plastic cup of water.

"Mrs. Patton, it's important you take your medication," she says, the smile still smeared across her wan face.

The woman cocks her head, brow furrowed. "Who's Mrs. Patton?"

I cringe and look away as a nurse forces the pill into the woman's mouth. I feel a little nauseated at the sight of the woman's decaying teeth. When the doctor appears in the doorway, I'm thankful. It's not often that psychiatrists will see patients on Sundays, but this clinic makes exceptions for special cases. I've always been a special case.

"Maris." He smiles at me, holding his clear clipboard to his chest. He's attempted to go for the whole "hip doctor, I'm a friend, not a medical professional" look. Instead of a coat and pants ensemble, he's wearing a striped Ralph Lauren shirt, rolled up at the elbows, tucked into a pair of tan, flared corduroys. His shaggy dark hair is combed back, and he's young for a psychiatrist, probably only mid-thirties at the most. I follow him into his office, smoothing my cut-offs down over my thighs. He closes the door behind us and takes his seat. I perch on the edge of the patient couch, and gingerly place my tan lambskin handbag on my lap.

"How've you been, Maris?" he asks.

"I've been well, Dr. Walsh, how've you been?" I ask, crossing my legs. "The new hair colour looks fantastic, by the way."

"Oh, thank you. I appreciate it. The dark hair has been quite a change." He flicks through his file, looking up to

smile at me. “I haven’t seen you in three weeks, what’s been happening?”

“I’ve been enjoying my holidays—exams were a nightmare.”

“How was Europe?”

“I spent a week in Madrid coked out of my fucking mind. I can’t say it wasn’t fun. I had some friends from school with me. We had a couple of weeks in Mom’s villa in Cannes beforehand to rest up. She wasn’t with us for a lot of the time, which was for the best.”

I study his tanned, somewhat leathery complexion. His eyes narrow slightly upon hearing my reference to cocaine. He swallows, his Adam’s apple bobbing. He’s figuring out how to broach the subject without seeming harsh, restrictive, or fatherly. It’s obvious he’s debating which issue he should discuss first, the apparent mother hate or the illicit drug use. Blinding orange light from the (very rare for Seattle) cloudless sky streams in through a gap in the drapes, dousing the brown room in a sickly glow.

“Is there a reason you’ve been using cocaine?” The drugs first. Brilliant.

“I was on a holiday. I was with friends. I was done with exams. What can I say? It seemed like the right thing to do.” I feel the edges of my lips curling into a smile.

“Maris, I hope you understand the damage you can cause to your body with cocaine. I know you’ve experimented with lighter drugs before, but no illegal drug is safe, not even in small quantities.” His brow furrows from the seriousness of it all.

“To be fair, Dr. Walsh, pharmaceutical drugs aren’t exactly safe either. Snorting cocaine can have side effects, but no more than popping a Clonazepam or two. I’m halfway through a medical degree. I may not have all the knowledge you have, but I do know that much.” I meet his eyes and see

colour creeping into his cheeks. "But hey, it's a lot more fun to be out in a club till 7 AM on cocaine than on Prozac or Mommy's little helper, diazepam." "It appears to be self-destructive behavior. Has everything been alright at home?"

"Things are great at home. Millie is back now too. She stayed in Madrid for a while longer since she didn't have to get back to school."

"How is Millie? Is she working now?"

"If by working you mean sunning herself at Lake Sammamish during the day and drinking herself into a stupor at night, then certainly. I don't know what she's planning on doing with her life, but I know it will involve promiscuity. Millie's tastes are... eccentric."

"What happened? I thought she'd enrolled in university?" "She did, for a week."

"She decided it wasn't for her?"

"Yeah, you could say that." I quash a laugh, and instead run the tip of my tongue along the inside of my bottom lip. "Millie is not...uh, the university type. She thought it was far out until it came to handing in her first essay, then she split."

"That's disappointing. What do your parents think about this?"

"Well, as long as she's not helping herself to the contents of their bank accounts or medicine cabinets, I don't think they give a shit. Father doesn't exactly approve of her lack of ambition, but he certainly doesn't care enough to say anything to her."

"They must be proud of you, though."

"You would think so, wouldn't you? After all, who wouldn't want their child to become a doctor and save lives." I grin. "I'm afraid you'd be wrong, though. My parents would prefer me to enter the hotelier business and help them out. Don't get me wrong. They're not upset by any means—they just want at least one child to be involved in the family trade."

A chain-smoking media princess is more appealing than a studious introvert.”

“You’re not an introvert, though, are you?”

“I wouldn’t describe myself as such, no, but exam season generally does cause social isolation. A socialite doesn’t often have to worry about a looming eighty-percent weighted exam and can focus more on furthering brand images.”

“You’re probably right, there.” He chuckles lightly.

His attempts at sycophancy are transparent. It’s both amusing and irritating, and it takes me a few moments to respond. I know he thinks he’s edging on the precipice of my psyche, a single breath away from unraveling my thoughts. He leans forward on his chair, and focuses on his writing pad. He jots a few words down, his mouth lightly pursed. I can’t read what he’s writing, despite shifting closer to him.

“Okay, I know this isn’t what you’d most like to talk about right now, but how’re your eating patterns?”

“That’s a pretty complicated issue. I suppose if you mean to ask whether I’m still hunched over a sink every night throwing up a measly dinner, then no.”

“How many calories are you consuming per day?” He finally addresses the situation matter-of-factly, and it’s not as satisfying as I’d imagined it to be. I feel a nagging sense of annoyance, not particularly invasive, but I’d like him to believe it is. He’s always a bit uneasy asking about this sort of stuff. He struggles to broach the subject, so I’m surprised he’s managed this time around. He usually doesn’t have the stomach for it, pun intended.

“Fifteen hundred,” I say evenly. “My recommendation.” I suppose this is a half-truth. I do consume 1500 calories, but not over one day, usually two.

“No, Maris, you’re five six. Your recommended caloric intake should be nearer to 2000.” He frowns and scribbles on the pad again, his gaze still firmly fixed on me.

"I tend to lose track of these things, especially on holidays. I was far more concerned with being able to find enough ecstasy to get me through a twelve-hour stint at Club 66 in Ibiza." I sigh for effect. "It was harder than imagined in the supposed party capital of the world."

He partially chokes on a sip of water while attempting to maintain a façade of composure. "I'm disappointed. I'd thought we'd made more progress."

"We've made plenty of progress. I have far better things to focus on now than how many bites I've taken of an apple. It's alright, Dr. Walsh. It's hard to get through histology on dream or E, so I won't be continuing that."

"I'm glad. I'm starting to worry, however. At our last appointment, things seemed to be flowing smoothly."

"There's nothing to worry about. I was trying to enjoy my vacation. It's nothing alarming. I'm twenty-three years old; there are worse things I could be doing."

I'm growing tired of the dialogue. It's normally a lot more entertaining to wind him up. He reacts quite easily to most things, especially when I mention them as nonchalantly as possible. Some psychiatrists are more difficult to read; their facial expressions do little in the way of revealing their neuroses and thoughts. Dr. Walsh, however, reminds me of a child: easy to decipher and equally easy to mold. I think he thinks I don't realize when his eyes travel across the length of my legs or when his conservatism colors his interpretation of my drug-related stories. He tries very hard to be that cool, far out dude, but his mannerisms scream of upper-middle class, traditionalist grooming. He probably was sent away to boarding school, boys only, at around five, coming home to visit his parents and younger sister several times a year. His first sexual experience was most likely with a gawky, bespectacled girl lacking the confidence and finesse of a natural beauty. I almost feel sorry for him, his marriage seems

unfulfilling. There's a picture on his desk of his ten-year-old son and his wife—she's not too rough on the eyes, a waifish brunette with clear, pale skin and large, chestnut-colored eyes. Her argyle sweater and lackluster smile suggest repression, and I doubt her presence does much to prevent him from scouring hardcore porn magazines or fantasizing inappropriately about his less deranged patients. I suppose I shouldn't get this much pleasure from messing with him, but I'm sure he could use the excitement in his mundane life. When I first met him, I kind of thought he was a fruit, but his style is unadventurous, and his wandering eye doesn't violate the bodies of men.

"Well, that's certainly not true," he says, his tone disapproving. "I hope you understand how much harm you're doing to yourself. If you continue this way you may end up hospitalized."

If he's good at anything, it's doling out empty threats. He's been talking about hospitalization for a year now. It wasn't worrying back then, and it certainly isn't now. Mother could never face the humiliation of putting her child in a sanatorium. Heavens, how the clients and newspapers would react.

"I know, that would be a true shame." I cast my eyes downward in pseudo regret. "Things are changing now that I'll have exams and assignments to get to in a couple of months."

"You wouldn't want to jeopardize your health or your future career, would you?"

I'm tempted to give him a scathing response, but my next appointment is well over a month away, and I'd rather not necessitate one sooner. I smile and nod. "You're definitely right about that." The insincerity must be palpable. I stop myself from reaching into my purse for a cigarette.

He sits back in his chair, crossing his legs. He places his chin in his palm. He wants to discuss my mother some more.

Maybe he wants to discuss my father, maybe he wants to find out how deep my potential daddy issues may run.

“Are you still living with your parents, Maris?”

“I think you’re aware that I am. I’m too busy with university to find work at the moment.”

“But you don’t really need to find work, do you?” His voice is bitter.

“Are you suggesting I live off my parents for the rest of my life?”

“No, certainly not. I meant it’s not an absolute necessity when your parents are fairly high profile.”

“I’m not sure that’s the kind of thing I’d expect to hear from a psychiatrist, Dr. Walsh. It’s refreshing.”

He reaches for his cup of coffee, now half consumed. I feel like retching at the thought of drinking cold, stale coffee. The idea of coffee, in general, makes me ill; I only drink it out of necessity. He slowly sips, making another note on his pad; at this point, I want to rip it out of his hands.

“I’m glad you think so. How was your father’s trip to Shanghai?”

Is he back now?”

“I’m not actually sure. He possibly is. I haven’t seen him around, though. We run on different schedules.”

“You don’t talk to your father often?” He finds this interesting, although I’m not quite sure why. I know this has been brought up in conversation at least twice on different occasions.

“I probably see him once a week. He likes to arrange a brunch on Sundays if we’re all available. He mainly talks about which new hotels he’s opened up recently, and Millie and I pretend to care. Millie often has the aid of narcotics to get her through, which is more than I can say for myself. I’m unfortunately quite sober during our interactions.”

“You don’t enjoy his company?”

“Would you enjoy hearing someone boast about their business acumen for two hours at a time? It’s not as simple as me deciding whether I like being around him. He has his moments.”

“And your mother?”

“I’d certainly prefer Daddy to her—not by too much, though. I’m more likely to get Cartier from him when I agree to not tell Mother about the plum-colored lipstick on his business shirts that does not belong to her. That colour would do nothing for her skin tone.”

I watch as he digests this, his response less than adequate. I’d hoped to get more of a rise out of him; it seemed like a good thing to get him animated. I’m feeling a wave of irritation. I could use that cigarette about now. I haven’t smoked since Monday. I’m not a heavy smoker, mainly because my appearance is important to me, but I’ll usually smoke a couple of cigarettes a day just to take the edge off.

“Is your mother still involved in the operations of the business?”

“I don’t know. I don’t really care. I can ask her for you if you like.” I glance at my watch. Ten minutes to go. I didn’t expect the session to be this dull. I stifle a yawn.

“I was thinking we could arrange a group session: your mother, Millie, and you.”

“If you can convince them to take an hour out of a busy schedule of self-medicating, that sounds like a plan.”

“I’m thoroughly enjoying your sparkling wit today, Maris.” He smiles at me, looking very disingenuous.

“I’m glad, Dr. Walsh. I try.”

CHAPTER TWO

Once I'm out of the stuffy office, I head to my car and pull out a Camel cigarette from my purse. I hold it gingerly between my lips as I light it, using the engraved lighter my grandmother gave to my mother on her last visit to our house. I'd found it in the den before I left and having misplaced my own, I tossed it into my bag. I take a long drag, drawing my breath deep into my chest and exhale a thick plume of gray-blue smoke. It's unusually warm. Seattle doesn't have very many days of heat or cloying humidity and rarely does the weather elicit the beads of sweat currently trickling down my spine.

I perch on the bonnet of the 1974 Porsche—a pale blue convertible number, brand new and gifted to me by Father out of guilt on my birthday a month ago. Millie received the same in mint green—and consider my options. My boyfriend is at Lake Sam with a couple of our mutual friends, and from what he told me on the phone this morning, they've managed to score a ton of Valium and dream. I live on the western side of the beach, so the positives include me being able

to escape if they're underwhelming company or have lied about the drugs, plus I've already got a bikini on underneath my tie-front blouse. Millie might be at home, so I could hang out with her, but I know Mom wouldn't be too far behind, and I can't imagine anything worse than dealing with her for the rest of the afternoon. There's not much of a debate. I climb into the driver's seat, starting the car as I smoke the last of the cigarette.

The sun hangs low in the sky, beating down on me with merciless intensity. Almost blinded, I reach for my sunglasses and speed out of the parking lot. Traffic is sparse—surprising for this time of the afternoon and I hit the I-90 within minutes. Karen Carpenter's lilting voice sings from the car radio and the wind, cool and mildly salty, whips through my hair.

My happiness wanes when I reach the state park. The entire city seems to have congregated here, buzzing like insects with their loud children and ugly station wagons. I circle the lot multiple times before I find a cramped little space, almost a goddamn mile from the beach.

I strip to my bikini top, stuff my shirt in the dashboard, and light another cigarette as I walk to the usual spot. I see Hunter first, with Susannah, Carol, Dawn, Stephen, and Jack. They're all laid out, melting into the worn picnic blanket.

"Hey, babe," Hunter calls drowsily, pulling me to him. He's already wired from the dope (and I'm guessing with at least two or three Valium pills too—Hunter's mother's stash is almost as vast as my own mother's) and he's smiling, flashing his perfect white teeth. He's one of the most attractive boys in the area. He's lean, and his face has prominent cheekbones, framed by a strong jawline. He's a year younger than I am, and we've been dating since I was barely thirteen. Somehow, I've managed to survive the past decade with him. His conversational skills make me want to saw off his tongue

and force it down his throat. I lean in and kiss him hello, offering him a puff of my cigarette.

"You've started without me?" I gesture toward the stash of pills in the center of the picnic blanket.

"It was hard to wait, but I tried," he says. He gives me the once-over, staring at my chest for a few very noticeable seconds. "Well, I'll have to catch up then. Dawn, honey, where's the coke? Please tell me you have coke." I grin at her, and she hugs me tightly from behind, her skin clammy against mine.

"I always deliver," she tells me, folding a little plastic package into my hand.

"You look foxy today." It's Jack. He squints up at me, shielding his face from the sun with one arm.

"Jack, fuck off," says Hunter, throwing his water bottle at him. I start laughing. "Just today?" I kiss him on the cheek and obligatorily do the same with Stephen and the other girls. "Carol, is this your book?" I ask, grabbing a ratty copy of *The Secret Woman*.

She nods, "Yeah, and yes you can use it for the coke. I'd watch it, though. I've seen the cops about thirty times in the past hour. I think the pigs are having a picnic around here."

"We should stop by and say hello when we're high enough," I say, arranging about a quarter of the cocaine into a neat line. I lean down and tuck my hair behind my ear, using a rolled-up fiver to inhale as much as I can.

"Where were you? We've been waiting for you for hours," says Stephen, who is the only sober one of the bunch. I've never seen him drink or take drugs in public, but I've also seen enough ketamine to kill several horses in his bedroom.

"I had to get some shopping done. What scintillating conversation have I missed out on?"

"Have you been watching the news lately?" asks Susannah, taking my half burned-out cigarette from between my fingers.

“Well, not really, I only got back a week ago. I’m too busy missing the French Riviera. What’s going on?”

“Apparently these girls, around our age, maybe a little younger...I’m not sure. Well, they’ve been disappearing. One disappeared from our university. She lived in the district, on 12th Avenue.” She stutters, her speech mildly garbled, presumably from the beer bottle in her hand. “They think it’s probably the same guy. Honestly, I don’t think I can hitchhike anymore. I haven’t even been going out at all without Stephen.”

“It’s probably no big deal. Things like this happen everywhere. I don’t think we need to be changing our behavior because of one lunatic.” I shrug, taking a sip of her beer. My insides are buzzing from the coke, which travels rapidly and consumes each part of me until I feel almost breathless.

“He’s going after girls like us. I don’t know how, but it’s scaring me too,” chips in Dawn.

I let out a chortle. “What do you mean ‘girls like us’? I think you guys need to chill.”

“If anyone should be worried, it’s you. Slender, beautiful, long dark hair parted in the middle, petite.” She rattles off the characteristics one by one, counting on her fingertips.

“Five six is hardly petite, Dawn. I’m not worried, and you shouldn’t be either. Can we enjoy this for a while? Hearing about dead girls is killing my vibe. You know I’ll protect you if it comes down to it.” I flex my non-existent left bicep and she rolls her eyes in response. My body is tingling, and I’m too high to keep a straight face.

“I didn’t mention them being dead. Nobody knows yet, I hope they all come back. You’re tiny. What are you, ninety pounds? I don’t think you’d be a match for any man, let alone a psychotic criminal,” says Susannah.

“I’m ninety-five pounds.” She’s killing my high and part of me wants to sock her in the mouth to make her stop talking.

“Well look, I’m not going to leave the house without at least one of you with me. I’m not taking any chances anymore. I’m too pretty and young to be dead, alright?” says Carol, propping herself up on her elbows.

“I don’t know if that’ll be safe. Did they specify what this guy looks like? It could be Hunter or Stephen or Jack. It could actually be any of them, and then you’re gonna go out with them, thinking you’re safe, but really, you’ll be screwed.” “It’s you, isn’t it, Jack?” I squeeze his arm.

“Of course it is, look at me, I’m deranged,” he says sardonically.

“It’s easy for you to laugh it off! You’re not going to be the missing girl,” says Dawn, smacking his chest.

“Calm down, neither are you.”

“That sounds like something the killer would say,” her light-hearted tone taking on a paranoid edge. I imagine the reefer is finally frying her mediocre brain. She’s been smoking since we were in middle school and started stealing her mother’s lorazepam a couple of months later. Her memory is about as comprehensive as my grandmother’s was before she died of late-stage Alzheimer’s. She begins nibbling on the edge of one of her long, unmanicured fingernails. I don’t know whether it’s the drugs or the sun that’s making my vision bleary, but from whatever sight I have left, I note the dirt caked inside and shudder. She flips her hair over her right arm, baring the abysmally designed dawning sun tattoo on her bony left shoulder. She’s not wearing a bikini underneath her ankle-length dress. In fact, I don’t think I can see an outline of underwear either. Her parents are very much of the liberal persuasion—well, if I’m to be accurate, I’d say the pink persuasion. I’m surprised no one has reported them to the authorities for being commie sympathizers— they fall only slightly short of the Rosenbergs. Her sisters are named Rain and Chakra. I couldn’t make this shit up if I tried.

"I'm kidding, these little princesses probably couldn't even lift a woman. I don't know how they'd abduct one," I say, rolling down onto the blanket and closing my eyes. "No offense, Hunter." I give him a condescending little tap on his thigh.

"Women's lib has gone way too far already," moans Stephen, lying down next to me. "Now they're trying to have opinions."

"Stephen, sweetheart, didn't you find out your IQ was 95? I think you're a little too slow to be a part of this discussion," I tell him coolly. The other girls snicker at his expense. It's not that they're any smarter than he is if I'm honest. I think they all needed to be held back at least a year or two during high school, but Stephen is a smarmy little bastard that often needs to be put in his place. It's easier to do this with other women around to laugh at him. I don't quite care about gender politics; they don't affect me in the slightest. But male chauvinists can be very entertaining. I like getting into (what Stephen considers to be) debates with him because his innate lack of intelligence is unparalleled. It's like shooting caged animals at short-range.

"Don't get into it with her, Steph, you know she'll fry you," says Hunter. He sits up and removes his shirt, flinging it at the wicker picnic basket.

"I think women's lib needs to go much further. I don't think it's safe to allow men like you to have opinions," says Carol, rolling her eyes.

"See, this is why we need this guy out here keeping the girls in line," says Stephen, tartly. His pale skin blooms with color. "Otherwise, you'll all go crazy with power, like those damn fucking feminists on TV."

"So, you think it's alright that some sicko is going around handpicking girls to abduct because they might oppose one of your views?" she presses, leveling her gaze with his.

Her contempt is far from hidden as she clenches her jaw.

“Dude, you really need to mellow,” says Jack, sliding his sunglasses on. “Leave the girls alone.”

“You’ll get your men’s lib soon, don’t worry,” I tell Stephen, running my fingers through his hair. I reach for the Valium and push the little blue pills toward him. “For now, focus on having fun.”

“Have some of my drink,” says Susannah, handing him a red plastic cup. I’m not quite sure what’s in it, but it sure looks more appetizing than the cheap beer I ingested. It must be out of her little flask. She carries it around with her to class sometimes. I suppose if I had her problematic skin, I’d be drinking at 9 AM too. She tilts his chin up with her index finger and kisses him for far longer than is appropriate in a social setting. I resist a gag and instead grab the flask from underneath her.

“I’m taking some too,” I say, and not seeing any spare cups around, I drink straight from it.

“I don’t know how you deal with him sometimes, Susannah,” Carol sighs. She pulls her glossy blonde hair into a chignon and pins it into place with a small butterfly clip.

Stephen takes a pill, uncharacteristically, and washes it down with Susannah’s sloshy liquor.

I can’t help but stare a little when Jack unbuttons half of his shirt. His chest is slim but defined, without a trace of hair. I suspect he waxes it off, but he’s never admitted as such. He’s one of Hunter’s closest friends and is remarkably similar in nature.

I could argue Hunter is the less bright of the two, but it’s a close competition. He’s a recent implant from California, and Stephen clearly stings from losing his childhood friend to a guy who doesn’t seem to own shoes. Susannah is the only girl who’s paid him any attention, so he’s clung on to her for dear life. Both their Utahan Mormon parents approve.

“Do any of you want to take a dip?” asks Dawn, stretching. She pauses and rubs tanning lotion onto her forearms.

“Yeah, I’m fucking dying out here. I don’t know how it’s this hot in Washington,” I say. I wriggle a little as I pull my Levi’s makeshift shorts off.

“Thank god you sorry losers never lived in Cali. This is like winter to me,” says Jack, particularly smug.

“Then, get in the water, pretty boy,” I say. “We’ll follow.” “You’ve got it.” He tugs his shirt off and heads toward the lake.

“I’ll meet you guys there in two minutes. I’m going to stop by the ladies’ room,” I say, grabbing Hunter’s cigarette. He groans, but I’m up before he can say anything. I drop my sunglasses on his lap.

“We’ll be down there, Maris,” says Carol, stripping to her one-piece. She points to a relatively child-free area. “Here, Dawn, I brought a bikini for you. I know you tend to go comando.” She starts laughing.

“I just think underwear is unnatural, you know?” Dawn’s voice fades behind me.

I walk toward the bathrooms barefoot, wishing I’d had the foresight to bring something to tie up my hair. It falls an inch above my navel and is a nightmare to swim with. I readjust my bikini, for which the top is running obscenely tight. I’m pretty sure it’s Millie’s. She’s only a C-cup.

“Hey, I’m so sorry to bother you, but I was wondering if I could get some help.”

I look up from my bikini strap to see a guy in tennis whites, with his arm in a sling. He’s about six feet and is unnervingly attractive. He grins at me. His eyes are a vibrant blue and his patrician nose culminates in a fine point. He has a light tan, and his chestnut hair is combed into neat, close-cut waves.

I smile back at him. “You’re not bothering me. What kind of help do you need?”

He studies me with a deep concentration, hungry, barely blinking. It's a look I understand very well. A look I know he's straining to control. "I'm having trouble unloading my sailboat," he says, glancing down at his bandaged arm. "I would really appreciate it if I could get your help." His charisma is incisive, albeit shallow by the way he stumbles in between certain words as if second-guessing himself.

"Absolutely, I'll help you...but on one condition." I hold his gaze steadily and put a hand on his uninjured arm.

He's puzzled. I'm sure he was expecting a little more resistance. "What's that condition?"

"You have to give me a ride; I never learned how to sail." "Sure thing, you've got it. My car is down over this way," he says, heading toward the overcrowded lot. "It's so nice of you. I've been somewhat unsuccessful in getting a pretty girl to help." "I wouldn't imagine it to be difficult for you, but I'm more than happy to help. What did you do to your arm?"

"Believe it or not, it's a tennis injury! Sure hurts a hell of a lot, though." He's still watching me, his gaze traveling across the length of my body before squaring in on my face.

"Having played it since I was five, it's definitely believable. The number of sprains I've had over the past eighteen years is astronomical. I didn't get your name, by the way. I'm Maris."

He extends his hand to me. "Oh, that's rude of me. I'm Ted.

It's lovely to meet you, Maris."

His accent seems slightly foreign, British, or Canadian, considering the way he rounds his vowels. There's a lack of authenticity in it, though, and I'm not quite sure whether it's merely a performance or not. He continues walking beside me, falling into step.

The asphalt is blisteringly hot, and I'm regretting not wearing my flip-flops. The din of bustling young families and unattractive couples is distinct in the parking vicinity, so

I move in closer to hear him. His refined manner is reminiscent of another time, steeped in politeness and chivalry. He leads me to a beat-up, tan Volkswagen buggy, possibly the '68 model. I look a little closer and notice the passenger seat is missing, and there's no sign of a sailboat either.

"Wait, where's the boat?" I ask, turning to face him. "This is the car, right?"

He's still watching me, eyes bottomless and focused. He pauses for a moment, allowing himself to blink. His beautiful face betrays a certain anxiety, but he soon amends himself, standing up a little straighter, leaning on his car as he clumsily attempts to propose a justification.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Didn't I mention it's at my parents' place?"

It's, ah, up the hill in Issaquah. It'll only take a minute." "Whereabouts in Issaquah, are they? I ask. "So many of my friends live around there. I'm up in Bellevue." While his persona lends him a certain air of reliability, I know he's lying. He has a nervous twitch in his unaffected arm and his breath quickens briefly before he manages to get it under control, brushing it off with a cool, pleasant smile.

"Ah, it isn't too far up, about a five-minute ride. I promise it'll be worthwhile. You'll love sailing. I'm, uh, sorry I didn't let you know beforehand."

"Where would I ride? You don't seem to have a passenger seat," I ask playfully.

If I weren't attentive, I'd almost miss the colour appearing in his cheeks. It's close to imperceptible, but I do have finely honed instincts. He's been caught out. "Look, Ted, I'd love to help you, but I have to get back to my boyfriend and friends. They'll worry that I've been abducted or something silly like that, you know? I would've enjoyed that sailing lesson. Perhaps if you're here another day. Like I said, I live in Bellevue, so I'm here all the time."

“Oh, right, okay. I’m sorry.”

“Sorry that I have a boyfriend? Or sorry you asked?”

“Sorry that you have a boyfriend, of course,” he says with a nervous laugh. He scratches the bandaged arm.

“Well, don’t go telling him, but I’m pretty flexible with the boyfriend issue. Come say hi if you’re here again.” I hold his gaze for several seconds. “I hope you feel better soon.” I wink at him and then walk backward a few steps, toward the bathrooms. He stands rooted to his position and then waves at me as I turn around. I almost want to hang around and watch as he finds another target, but I’m thirsty and hot as all hell. All I want is some alcohol and a long swim in the lake.

I jog a little, trying not to burn my feet, relieved when I finally hit grass. I drop into the bathroom, fix my bikini strap, and check my hair in the mirror. Women are lining up to wait for one of the two stalls to open. I’m not quite sure how people can bring themselves to use public bathrooms. I, for one, can do without contracting crabs from the unwashed masses. I don’t even share bathrooms with my family. Rosa, the daytime housekeeper, is on a short leash, and I make sure to watch while she cleans.

When I leave the bathroom, I notice Ted’s not around. I stop by the picnic blanket, where only Stephen remains. “Aren’t you coming?” I ask him, grabbing the bottle of SPF 40. I slather it onto my arms, stomach, and legs. I don’t particularly need ghostly red patches of sunburn.

“Nah, I want to read in peace for a little while,” he tells me.

I don’t give a shit, nor do I have the patience to pretend to. I take a long swig from the flask and run toward the water. Hunter, Jack, Susannah, and Dawn are frolicking in the shallow end, only knee-deep. Dawn is splashing Hunter, still wearing her sunglasses. He sees me and pulls me to him by the waist, grinning. I lean into him, pretending to do so to

kiss him, and instead shove him into the lake. He's surprised, so the impact alone is enough to topple him. "Get in the deep end, you fucking losers," I say, diving in.

The water is icy, despite the radiating heat from the sun. I stay under for as long as I can, only resurfacing when my lungs begin to ache. I float on my back, and Hunter swims to me.

"I'm going to get you back for that one." His hands find their way to my hips, yanking me down deeper. He grazes my neck with his lips underwater. I grasp his shoulders and kiss him roughly, before kicking him away.

"Are you telling me you can't wait the hour or so until we get back to my house?" I ask once he emerges.

"I don't know. Have you seen yourself in that bikini?"

"You raise a good point," I say, swimming out further. "But I think you can hold off."

"Guys, don't stop on account of me. I'm definitely happy to watch," Jack calls, wiggling his eyebrows.

"Why don't both of you make out, and I'll be the spectator? I think that's an idea we can all get behind, am I right, Susannah?" I grab her by the arm, using her as a temporary floaty.

"Hunter, I love you and all, but that's something I can't ever do," says Jack.

"But you're from San Francisco, Jack," I push. "You must be used to that sort of thing."

"I'm happy to watch," says Susannah, mimicking his voice. Dawn giggles.

"I'll see you at home, Jack baby," says Hunter. His laughter is forced; I know when he's uncomfortable. He has a rather strong hatred for the queers, which he strives to mask—he's successful in doing so. He's the heir to a candy company, and his public image has to be similar to mine: liberal, but not too liberal, supportive of the queers and blacks and Indians, but

always erring on the side of the whites and straights. Quite frankly, I think he has neither the capacity nor the willingness necessary to cultivate that kind of image. The most he is capable of is speaking from improvised cue cards, being prodded by his cold, shrewd mother. While I recognize his absolute lack of ability to lead a company that large, I know that he'll have a lot of weight behind him, should I ever need it. Also, I never tell him, but Carlyle chocolate annihilates Godiva and Hershey's combined. I make sure to swipe some whenever I'm over at his house. His parents are expecting our families to merge at some point soon, so they're very generous with favors. They've planned a wonderful trip to Aspen for Hunter and me in the winter, allowing us the use of their entire chalet. I feel Vail is more enjoyable as it lacks the aspirational-rich, who douse themselves in new money and ill-fitting designer garb, which Aspen is absolutely rife with, but I'm grateful anyway to get the fuck away from my family.

"Where's Stephen?" asks Jack, presumably to Susannah. "He wanted to get some reading done. I don't know, maybe he's licking his wounds. He actually doesn't know how to swim." She pauses, placing a hand on her mouth. "Oops, I probably shouldn't have said that."

"He doesn't even know how to swim? God, he's really got nothing going for him. The least he could do is learn to swim," says Jack, almost in hysterics.

"Not everyone's as blessed as you, Jack. We can't all have green eyes and picture-perfect bodies," I tell him, partially to get a rise out of Hunter.

"Don't worry. I'm available for you any time, Maris."

"I'm glad to hear that. I saw him on the picnic blanket, though. He was reading, so maybe he does want to read and isn't ashamed of his inability to swim," I say. "I'd probably be pretty ashamed about three-year-olds surpassing me, but we're all different."

“Was Carol with you, Maris?” asks Dawn, shielding her face from the sun with a bent hand. “She said she was going to the bathroom and would walk back with you.”

“No, I didn’t see her. She’s probably chilling with Stephen. Maybe she felt sorry for him and wanted to offer him company,” I say. I dip underwater again.

Dawn shrugs. “Yeah, you’re probably right, she’ll get here soon, I’m sure.”

“Stephen is definitely sparkling company,” Jack says, sarcastic and all, to Susannah’s derision.

“You just need to get to know him, he’s a wonderful person.” Her response is brief but terse, discouraging a continuation.

He mouths “ouch” at me when she can’t see, and I hug him, laughing into the crevice between his neck and shoulder. We swim for half a mile and then laze around in the water until I feel myself coming down from the coke. It’s a lousy feeling, and it makes me really sickly and anxious. It always helps to have Xanax or Valium around when coming down from a coke or ecstasy high. Ketamine is hell, nothing helps, and I rarely touch anything that requires a needle, so heroin and morphine are mostly out. The sun lowers into a peachy-pink sunset over the lake, and the evening chill is somewhat aiding me as the weariness of the comedown takes hold.

“Do you guys want to head back in?” asks Hunter.

“Yes, thank you! I’m fucking freezing over here,” says Dawn, shivering for effect.

“Yeah, I could use a Vallie kicker right about now,” I say. I wade toward the shore, my limbs tender and worn out.

Stephen is splayed out across the picnic blanket in a rather effeminate manner, perched on two of the towels the girls brought. I yank one out from under him, giving him a polite little smile when he shoots me a look of irritation. I

wrap it around myself, but I'm still trembling from the cold. I wipe off as fast as I can and pull my cut-offs on; they do little to nothing to help. I huddle against Hunter, harvesting as much body heat as I can from him.

"You ready to head home, Stephie boy?" he asks. He looks like he's struggling with a substantial amount of guilt for ditching his loser buddy for two hours.

"Yeah, I managed to get through all my book," Stephen says breezily, but his face is tense and hardened.

"Where's Carol? She said she would be joining us for a swim. I thought she might've decided to sit it out with you," says Dawn. She glances down at Carol's untouched suede Chanel purse. The keys to her Camaro poke out.

"She told me she was going to head to the bathroom. I thought she walked a different way to the water because she didn't stop by." Worry trickles into his facial features, slowly consuming them.

"Maybe she went home?" asks Susannah.

"Her purse and keys are still here. She wouldn't leave without telling us, and she definitely does not live close enough to walk home and back to get her car," says Dawn. She paces back and forth in panic.

"I'll check the bathrooms, maybe she's sick or has sun-stroke or something," says Stephen. He jumps to his feet and slips on his flip-flops.

"She wouldn't leave without her purse. I know Carol. She'd never go anywhere without her goddamn purse. She drove me in. I can't drive a stick and my car's still at the mechanic's," says Jack. "Alright, let's not freak yet. I'm sure she's around here somewhere. We all know Carol. She wouldn't leave her stuff and disappear," I say calmly to curb the annoyance in the pit of my stomach. I want to go home, smoke several cigarettes, and knock myself out with some Valium.

“Maris, she said she was going to meet you. Did you not see her?” says Stephen. He’s jittery and confused.

“No, I didn’t see her. I would’ve at least passed her if she was near the bathrooms or on her way in.”

“Where the fuck is she?” asks Hunter, glancing around the park.

The crowd has dispersed considerably, with the families packing their picnics and children into various station wagons and SUVs. Apart from us, I can only see a handful of other groups, spread out thinly across the grass. I can’t imagine she’d have gotten far. She’s not exactly athletic, often winded after walking about half a mile. While intelligent, beautiful, and stylish, she has the fitness of a geriatric woman. I notice a few blondes, but none with the same shade of hair as hers. Hers is quite distinct. She is the only natural blonde I know, and the ones here clearly rely on Clairol for their color.

“Alright, Hunter, you check along the lake. Stephen, you stick to the bathrooms. Dawn, check the car park; maybe she’s near her car. Maris, you and I can scan the crowd, toward Issaquah and Redmond, a mile or two—you go north, and I’ll go south. Susannah, go to the phone booth and call her house phone, maybe she’s home. Meet back here in half an hour,” says Jack, assertive but flustered.

We scatter according to his directions, and I run along the grass, heading Redmond way. Running has always been one of my strong points, but I’m on empty right now. My body resists, and I’m starting to get cranky with the bitch. I don’t know if she’s out here, but I hope she’s not because I sure will rip her a new one if I see her, for making me go through this bullshit when I just want to be in my bed.

There’re barely ten or so small clusters of people left around this side of the park, mostly hippie high school types sharing doobies. It’s dusk when I’ve exhausted my search. I

stand still, glancing in all directions. I call her name several times, in varying tones of irritation. No response. She's got to be nearby. She definitely can't walk back from Redmond. I don't have time for this, and I'm starving. My stomach turns in on itself, the hunger wracking my body entirely. I give up and walk back to the blanket. Dawn is chewing her nasty, dirt-filled nails, sobbing. Susannah is hugging her, wrapping a towel around both of them. Jack's shirt is back on, and Stephen's face is flushed.

Even Hunter looks on edge, pacing back and forth. "Nothing?" His tone is grim.

"I called her house, her mother said she hasn't heard from her, then I called her dad's office because it's nearby and maybe she dropped in to see him or something, but no one's seen her," says Susannah, tears rushing down her face. She starts hiccupping.

"How on earth am I meant to drive her car back to her house without her in it? Her mother is freaking so badly. Her car's brand new too. I don't want to scrape it; she'll be so angry," says Jack, on the verge of tears. I'm tempted to slap them all at this point. If there weren't so few of us, I'd have slipped out by now.

"Do we call the police?" Hunter's the voice of reason, and I'm as surprised as the rest of them.

"Yeah, let's let them handle it," I say. Realizing I sound rather cavalier, I add, "I don't think I can do this. I hope Carol's alright." I cry to cement my concern.

"Okay, ah, shit. Look, Stephen, can you drive the girls home in my car? Jack and I should go to Carol's house in her car, so it would be good if you could meet us there. We can call the police when we get there," says Hunter.

"It's alright, I drove here," I say. Maybe I'll get to leave.

"Jack can go with you, then. I'll drive Carol's car alone.

HONEYTRAP

You're her best friend. Maybe her mother will calm down with you there."

"Yeah, I'll take the girls home," says Stephen.

"No, I want to go to Carol's and be there if she turns up," says Susannah, in between sobs.

"Fine, Stephen, drive the girls to Carol's."

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9781922267443 (Print)

9781922267450 (eBook)

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Book production by Noble Books

Cover design by Xoum Publishing Services

Printed and bound in Australia by Ligare



The paper this book is printed on is in accordance with the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council®. The FSC® promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

What should have been a casual summer day at Lake Sammamish State Park soon became a nationwide manhunt, inducing mass hysteria.

It's the year of 1974 in Seattle, Washington. Young women are vanishing in the city and its surrounds at an alarming rate, and they all bear a striking resemblance to one another. Panic seeps into the community and women fear leaving their homes alone. Pretty coeds are being snatched, but it's seemingly impossible to understand why and how.

It's assumed that only one killer is at work until the bodies of young decapitated males start appearing in ravines and wild bushland, with their hands and feet dismembered. A reign of terror has seized the Pacific Northwest, but those responsible for the gruesome crimes are the least likely suspects – nobody is on their trail.

It's hard to fathom that two killers are hunting on the same grounds, and almost inconceivable that they're soon to strike up a relationship.

Maris Caldwell is a vivacious 23-year-old woman, an heiress to the Caldwell Hotels dynasty, with the world at her fingertips. An exquisite beauty with intelligence and magnetism, on the surface Maris is the perfect daughter with a bright future as a doctor. She ought to fear for her life, but the violence seems so far away from her manse in Bellevue.

Her world rapidly begins to unravel when her closest friend Carol disappears, along with another pretty, young blonde, leaving behind her car and a plethora of unanswered questions. All the police have to go on is a physical description that could mirror half of Seattle's population, and a name: Ted.



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