



# THE GAME

PENETRE NA SOCIEDADE SECRETA  
DOS MESTRES DO ENGATE

Neil Strauss

A Sedução é um Jogo.  
Que tal Dominar as Regras?

 EDITORIAL PRESENÇA



ALSO BY NEIL STRAUSS

*The Long Hard Road Out of Hell*

**THE GAME**

WITH MARILYN MANSON

**PENETRATING THE SECRET**

*The Dirt*

**SOCIETY OF PICKUP ARTISTS**

WITH MOTLEY CRUE

*How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*

WITH JENNA JAMESON

*Don't Try This at Home*

WITH DAVE NAVARRO

Neil Strauss

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In order to protect the identity of some women and members of the community,

the names and identifying characteristics of a small number of incidental

characters in this book have been changed, and three minor characters are composites.

## THE GAME

Dedicated to the thousands of people I talked to in

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bars, clubs, malls, airports, grocery stores, subways,  
and elevators over the last two years.

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.....  
“I COULD NOT BECOME ANYTHING:  
NEITHER BAD NOR GOOD, NEITHER  
A SCOUNDREL NOR AN HONEST MAN,  
NEITHER A HERO NOR AN INSECT.  
AND NOW I AM EKING OUT MY DAYS  
IN MY CORNER, TAUNTING MYSELF  
WITH THE BITTER AND ENTIRELY  
USELESS CONSOLATION THAT AN  
INTELLIGENT MAN CANNOT SERIOUSLY  
BECOME ANYTHING; THAT ONLY  
A FOOL CAN BECOME SOMETHING.”

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY,

*Notes from Underground*

THE

FOLLOWING

*Those who have read early drafts of this book*

*have all asked the same questions:*

IS A TRUE

IS THIS TRUE?

STORY.

DID IT REALLY HAPPEN ?

IT REALLY HAPPENED.

ARE THESE GUYS

***Men will deny it,***

FOR REAL?

***Women will doubt it.***

***But I present it to you here,***

*Naked, vulnerable, and  
disturbingly real.*

*Thus, I find it necessary to employ*

*I beg you for your forgiveness in advance.*

*an old literary device ...*

DON'T HATE THE PLAYER ...

HATE THE GAME.

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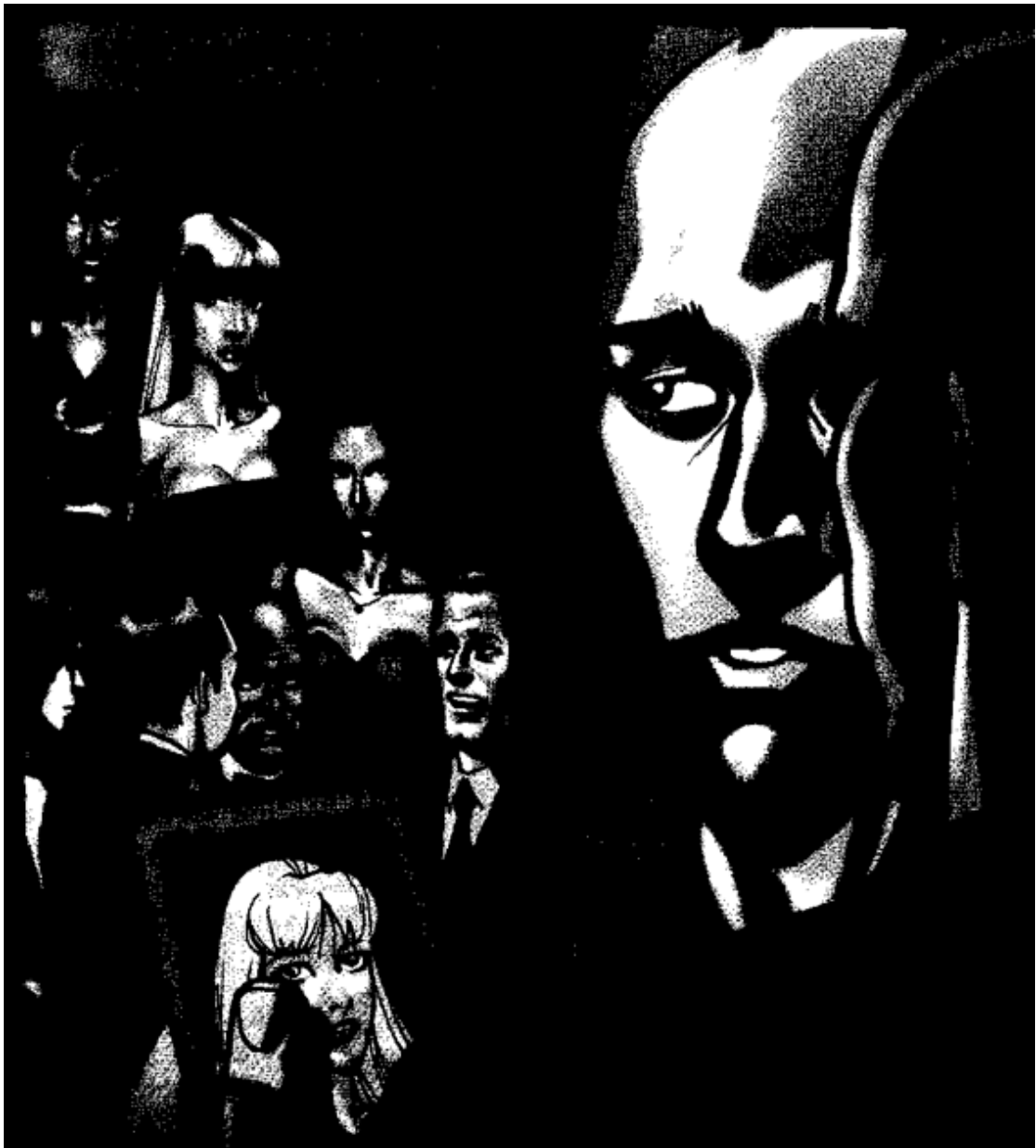
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STEP 1

SELECT

A TARGET



MEET MYSTERY

MEN WEREN'T REALLY THE ENEMY—

The house was a disaster.

Doors were split and smashed off their hinges; walls were dented in the

THEY WERE FELLOW VICTIMS

shape of fists, phones, and flowerpots; Herbal was hiding in a hotel room

scared for his life; and Mystery was collapsed on the living room carpet cry—

SUFFERING FROM AN OUTMODED

ing. He'd been crying for two days straight.

This wasn't a normal kind of crying. Ordinary tears are understand—

MASCULINE MYSTIQUE THAT MADE

able. But Mystery was beyond understanding. He was out of control. For a

week, he'd been vacillating between periods of extreme anger and violence,

THEM FEEL UNNECESSARILY

and jags of fitful, cathartic sobbing. And now he was threatening to kill

himself.

INADEQUATE WHEN THERE WERE



There were five of us living in the house: Herbal, Mystery,  
Papa, Play-

boy, and me. Boys and men came from every corner of the  
globe to shake

our hands, take photos with us, learn from us, be us. They called  
me Style. It

NO BEARS TO KILL.

was a name I had earned.

We never used our real names—only our aliases. Even our  
mansion, like

the others we had spawned everywhere from San Francisco to  
Sydney, had

a nickname. It was Project Hollywood. And Project Hollywood  
was in

shambles.

— BETTY FRIEDAN

The sofas and dozens of throw pillows lining the floor of the  
sunken

*The Feminine Mystique*

living room were fetid and discolored with the sweat of men and  
the juices

of women. The white carpet had gone gray from the constant  
traffic of

young, perfumed humanity herded in off Sunset Boulevard  
every night.

Cigarette butts and used condoms floated grimly in the Jacuzzi.  
And Mys-

tery's rampage during the last few days had left the rest of the  
place totaled

and the residents petrified. He was six foot five and hysterical.

"I can't tell you what this feels like," he choked out between  
sobs. His

whole body spasmed. “I don’t know what I’m going to do, but it will not be rational.”

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5

He reached up from the floor and punched the stained red upholstery

tiny front seat. Every now and then, I’d see a tremor of anger flash across his

of the sofa as the siren-wail of his despondency grew louder, filling the

face or tears roll out of his eyes. I hoped he’d remain calm long enough for

room with the sound of a grown male who has lost every characteristic that

me to help him.

separates man from infant from animal.

“I want to learn martial arts,” he said docilely, “so when I want to kill

He wore a gold silk robe that was several sizes too small, exposing his

someone, I can do something about it.”

scabbed knees. The ends of the sash just barely met to form a knot and the

I stepped on the accelerator.

curtains of the robe hung half a foot apart, revealing a pale, hairless chest

Our destination was the Hollywood Mental Health Center on Vine

and, below it, saggy gray Calvin Klein boxer shorts. The only other item of

Street. It was an ugly slab of concrete surrounded day and night by home-

clothing on his trembling body was a winter cap pulled tight over his skull.

less men who screamed at lampposts, transvestites who lived out of shop-

It was June in Los Angeles.

ping carts, and other remaindered human beings who set up camp where

“This living thing.” He was speaking again. “It’s so pointless.”

free social services could be found.

He turned and looked at me through wet, red eyes. “It’s Tic Tac Toe.

Mystery, I realized, was one of them. He just happened to have

There’s no way you can win. So the best thing to do is not to play it.”

charisma and talent, which drew others to him and prevented him from

There was no one else in the house. I would have to deal with this. He

ever being left alone in the world. He possessed two traits I’d noticed in

needed to be sedated before he snapped out of tears and back into anger.

nearly every rock star I’d ever interviewed: a crazy, driven gleam in his eyes

Each cycle of emotions grew worse, and this time I was afraid he’d do some-

and an absolute inability to do anything for himself.

thing that couldn’t be undone.

I brought him into the lobby, signed him in, and together we waited for

I couldn’t let Mystery die on my watch. He was more than just a friend;

a turn with one of the counselors. He sat in a cheap black plastic chair, star-

he was a mentor. He'd changed my life, as he had the lives of thousands of

ing catatonically at the institutional blue walls.

others just like me. I needed to get him Valium, Xanax, Vicodin, anything. I

An hour passed. He began to fidget.

grabbed my phone book and scanned the pages for people most likely to

Two hours passed. His brow furrowed; his face clouded.

have pills—people like guys in rock bands, women who'd just had plastic

Three hours passed. The tears started.

surgery, former child actors. But everyone I called wasn't home, didn't have

Four hours passed. He bolted out of his chair and ran out of the wait-

any drugs, or claimed not to have any drugs because they didn't want to

ing room and through the front door of the building.

share.

He walked briskly, like a man who knew where he was going, although

There was only one person left to call: the woman who had triggered

Project Hollywood was three miles away. I chased him across the street and

Mystery's downward spiral. She was a party girl; she must have something.

caught up to him outside a mini-mall. I took his arm and turned him

Katya, a petite Russian blonde with a Smurfette voice and the energy of

around, baby talking him back into the waiting room.

a Pomeranian puppy, was at the front door in ten minutes with a Xanax and

Five minutes. Ten minutes. Twenty minutes. Thirty. He was up and out

a worried look on her face.

again.

“Do not come in,” I warned her. “He’ll probably kill you.” Not that she

I ran after him. Two social workers stood uselessly in the lobby. didn’t entirely deserve it, of course. Or so I thought at the time.

“Stop him!” I yelled.

I gave Mystery the pill and a glass of water, and waited until the sobs

“We can’t,” one of them said. “He’s left the premises.”

slowed to a sniffle. Then I helped him into a pair of black boots, jeans, and

“So you’re just going to let a suicidal man walk out of here?” I couldn’t

a gray T-shirt. He was docile now, like a big baby.

waste time arguing. “Just have a therapist ready to see him if I get him back

“I’m taking you to get some help,” I told him.

here.”

I walked him outside to my old rusty Corvette and stuffed him into the

I ran out the door and looked to my right. He wasn’t there. I looked

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proclaimed best in the previous two years, and Mystery could out-game

left. Nothing. I ran north to Fountain Avenue, spotted him around the cor-

ner, and dragged him back again.

ner, and dragged him back again.

There was only one person alive who could possibly compete with him.

When we arrived, the social workers led him down a long, dark hallway

And that man was sitting in front of her also. From a formless lump of

and into a claustrophobic cubicle with a sheet-vinyl floor. The therapist sat

nerd, Mystery had molded me into a superstar. Together, we had ruled the

behind a desk, running a finger through a black tangle in her hair. She was

world of seduction. We had pulled off spectacular pickups before the disbe-

a slim Asian woman in her late twenties, with high cheekbones, dark red lip-

lieving eyes of our students and disciples in Los Angeles, New York, Mon-

stick, and a pinstriped pantsuit.

treal, London, Melbourne, Belgrade, Odessa, and beyond.

Mystery slumped in a chair across from her.

And now we were in a madhouse.

“So how are you feeling today?” she asked, forcing a smile.

“I’m feeling,” Mystery said, “like there’s no point to anything.”

He burst

into tears.

“I’m listening,” she said, scrawling a note on her pad. The case was

probably *already* closed for her.

“So I’m removing myself from the gene pool,” he sobbed.

She looked at him with feigned sympathy as he continued. To her, he

was just one of a dozen nutjobs she saw a day. All she needed to figure out

was whether he required medication or institutionalization.

“I can’t go on,” Mystery went on. “It’s futile.”

With a rote gesture, she reached into a drawer, pulled out a small pack—

age of tissues, and handed it to him. As Mystery reached for the package, he

looked up and met her eyes for the first time. He froze and stared at her

silently. She was surprisingly cute for a clinic like this.

A flicker of animation flashed across Mystery’s face, then died.

“If I had

met you in another time and another place,” he said, crumpling a tissue in

his hands, “things would have been different.”

His body, normally proud and erect, curved like soggy macaroni in his

chair. He stared glumly at the floor as he spoke. “I know exactly what to say

and what to do to make you attracted to me,” he continued. “It’s all in my

head. Every rule. Every step. Every word. I just c a n ‘ t ... do it right now.”

She nodded mechanically.

“You should see me when I’m not like this,” he continued slowly, sniff—

fling. "I've dated some of the most beautiful women in the world. Another place, another time, and I would have made you mine."  
"Yes," she said, patronizing him. "I'm sure you would have."  
She didn't know. How could she? But this sobbing giant with the crumpled tissue in his hands was the greatest pickup artist in the world.  
That was not a matter of opinion, but fact. I'd met scores of the self-



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the layguide, short for *The How-to-Lay-Girls Guide*. Compressed into 150 sizing pages, he said, was the collected wisdom of dozens of pickup artists who have been exchanging their knowledge in newsgroups for nearly a decade, secretly working to turn the art of seduction into an exact science. The information needed to be rewritten and organized into a coherent how-to book, and he thought I was the man to do it.

MEET STYLE

I wasn't so sure. I want to write literature, not give advice to horny adolescents.



lescents. But, of course, I told him it wouldn't hurt to take a look at it.

The moment I started reading, my life changed. More than any other

I am far from attractive. My nose is too large for my face and, while not

book or document—be it the Bible, *Crime and Punishment*, or *The Joy of*

hooked, has a bump in the ridge. Though I am not bald, to say that my hair

*Cooking*— the layguide opened my eyes. And not necessarily because of the

is thinning would be an understatement. There are just wispy Rogaine-

information in it, but because of the path it sent me hurtling down.

enhanced growths covering the top of my head like tumbleweeds. In my

When I look back on my teenage years, I have one major regret, and it

opinion, my eyes are small and beady, though they do have a lively glimmer,

has nothing to do with not studying hard enough, not being nice to my

which is doomed to remain my secret because no one can see it behind my

mother, or crashing my father's car into a public bus. It is simply that I

glasses. I have indentations on either side of my forehead, which I like and

didn't fool around with enough girls. I am a deep man—I reread James

believe add character to my face, though I've never actually been compli-

Joyce's *Ulysses* every three years for fun. I consider myself reasonably intuitive. I am at the core a good person, and I try to avoid hurting others. But I am shorter than I'd like to be and so skinny that I look malnourished can't seem to evolve to the next state of being because I spend far too much time thinking about women. slouched body, I wonder why any woman would want to sleep next to it, let And I know I'm not alone. When I first met Hugh Hefner, he alone embrace it. So, for me, meeting girls takes work. I'm not the kind of seventy-three. He had slept with over a thousand of the most beautiful guy women giggle over at a bar or want to take home when they're feeling women in the world, by his own account, but all he wanted to talk about drunk and crazy. I can't offer them a piece of my fame and bragging rights were his three girlfriends—Mandy, Brandy, and Sandy. And how, thanks to like a rock star or cocaine and a mansion like so many other men in Los Angeles. All I have is my mind, and nobody can see that.

fied them enough). If he ever wanted to sleep with somebody else, he said,

You may notice that I haven't mentioned my personality. This is be-

the rule was that they'd all do it together. So what I gathered from the con-

cause my personality has completely changed. Or, to put it more accurately,

versation was that here was a guy who's had all the sex he wanted his whole

I completely changed my personality. I invented Style, my alter ego. And in

life and, at seventy-three, he's still chasing tail. When does it stop? If Hugh

the course of two years, Style became more popular than I ever was—

Hefner isn't over it yet, when am I going to be?

especially with women.

If the layguide had never crossed my path, I, like most men, would never

It was never my intention to change my personality or walk through the

have evolved in my thinking about the opposite sex. In fact, I probably started

world under an assumed identity. In fact, I was happy with myself and my

off worse than most men. In my preteen years, there were no games of doctor,

life. That is, until an innocent phone call (it always starts with an innocent

no girls who charged a dollar to look up their skirts, no tickling classmates in

phone call) led me on a journey into one of the oddest and most exciting un-

places I wasn't supposed to touch. I spent most of teenage life grounded, so

derground communities that, in more than a dozen years of journalism, I

when my sole adolescent sexual opportunity arose—a drunken freshman girl

have ever come across. The call was from Jeremie Ruby-Strauss (no relation),

called and offered me a blow job—I was forced to decline, or else suffer my

a book editor who had stumbled across a document on the Internet called

mother's wrath. In college I began to find myself: the things I was interested

**10**

**11**

in, the personality I'd always been too shy to express, the group of friends who

at age eleven, when the fifteen-year-old daughter of a neighbor used him as

would expand my mind with drugs and conversation (in that order). But I

a sexual experiment, and he had been fucking nonstop since. One night, I

never became comfortable around women: They intimidated me. In four

took him to a party on a boat anchored in New York's Hudson River. When

years of college, I did not sleep with a single woman on campus.

a sultry brown-haired, doe-eyed girl walked by, he turned to me and said,

After school I took a job at the *New York Times* as a cultural reporter,

“She’s just your type.”

where I began to build confidence in myself and my opinions. Eventually, I

I denied it and stared at the floor, as usual. I was afraid he’d try to make

gained access to a privileged world where no rules applied: I went on the

me talk to her, which he soon did.

road with Marilyn Manson and Motley Crue to write books with them. In

When she walked past again, he asked her, “Do you know Neil?”

all that time, with all those backstage passes, I didn’t get so much as a single

It was a stupid icebreaker, but it didn’t matter now that the ice was bro-

kiss from anyone except Tommy Lee. After that, I pretty much gave up

ken. I stammered out a few words, until Dustin took over and rescued me.

hope. Some guys had it; other guys didn’t. I clearly didn’t.

We met her and her boyfriend at a bar afterward. They had just moved in to-

The problem wasn’t that I’d never been laid. It was that the few times I

gether. Her boyfriend was taking their dog for a walk. After a few drinks, he

did get lucky, I’d turn a one-night stand into a two-year stand because I

took the dog home, leaving the girl, Paula, with us.

didn't know when it was going to happen again. The layguide had an

Dustin suggested going back to my place to cook a late-night snack, so

acronym for people like me: AFC—average frustrated chump. I was an AFC.

we walked to my tiny East Village apartment and, instead, collapsed on the

Not like Dustin.

bed, with Dustin on one side of Paula and me on the other. When Dustin

I met Dustin the year I graduated from college. He was friends with a

started kissing her left cheek, he signaled me to do the same on her right

classmate of mine named Marko, a faux-aristocratic Serbian who had been

cheek. Then, in synchronicity, we moved down her body to her neck and her

my companion in girllessness since nursery school, thanks largely to his

breasts. Though I was surprised by Paula's quiet compliance, for Dustin

head, which was shaped like a watermelon. Dustin wasn't any taller, richer,

this seemed to be business as usual. He turned to me and asked if I had a

more famous, or better looking than either of us. But he did possess one

condom. I found one for him. He pulled off her pants and moved into her

quality we didn't: He attracted women.

while I continued lapping uselessly at her right breast.

When Marko first introduced me to him, I was unimpressed. He was

That was Dustin's gift, his power: giving women the fantasy they never

short and swarthy with long curly brown hair and a cheesy button-down

thought they'd experience. Afterward, Paula called me constantly. She

gigolo shirt with too many buttons undone. That night, we went to a

wanted to talk about the experience all the time, to rationalize it, because

Chicago club called Drink. As we checked our coats, Dustin asked, "Do you

she couldn't believe what she had done. That's how it always worked with

know if there are any dark corners in here?"

Dustin: He got the girl; I got the guilt.

I asked him what he needed dark corners for, and he replied that they

I chalked this up to a simple difference of personality. Dustin had a

were good places to take girls. I raised my eyebrows skeptically. Minutes af-

natural charm and animal instinct that I just didn't. Or at least that's what

ter entering the bar, however, he made eye contact with a shy-looking girl

I thought, until I read the layguide and explored the newsgroups and web-

who was talking with a friend. Without a word, Dustin walked away. The

sites it recommended. What I discovered was an entire community filled

girl followed him—straight to a dark corner. When they finished kissing

with Dustins—men who claimed to have found the combination to unlock

and groping, they parted wordlessly, without an obligatory exchange of

a woman's heart and legs—along with thousands of others like myself, try-

phone numbers or even a sheepish see-you-later.

ing to learn their secrets. The difference was that these men had broken

Dustin repeated this seemingly miraculous feat four times that night.

down their methods to a specific set of rules that anybody could apply. And

A new world opened up before my eyes.

each self-proclaimed pickup artist had his own set of rules.

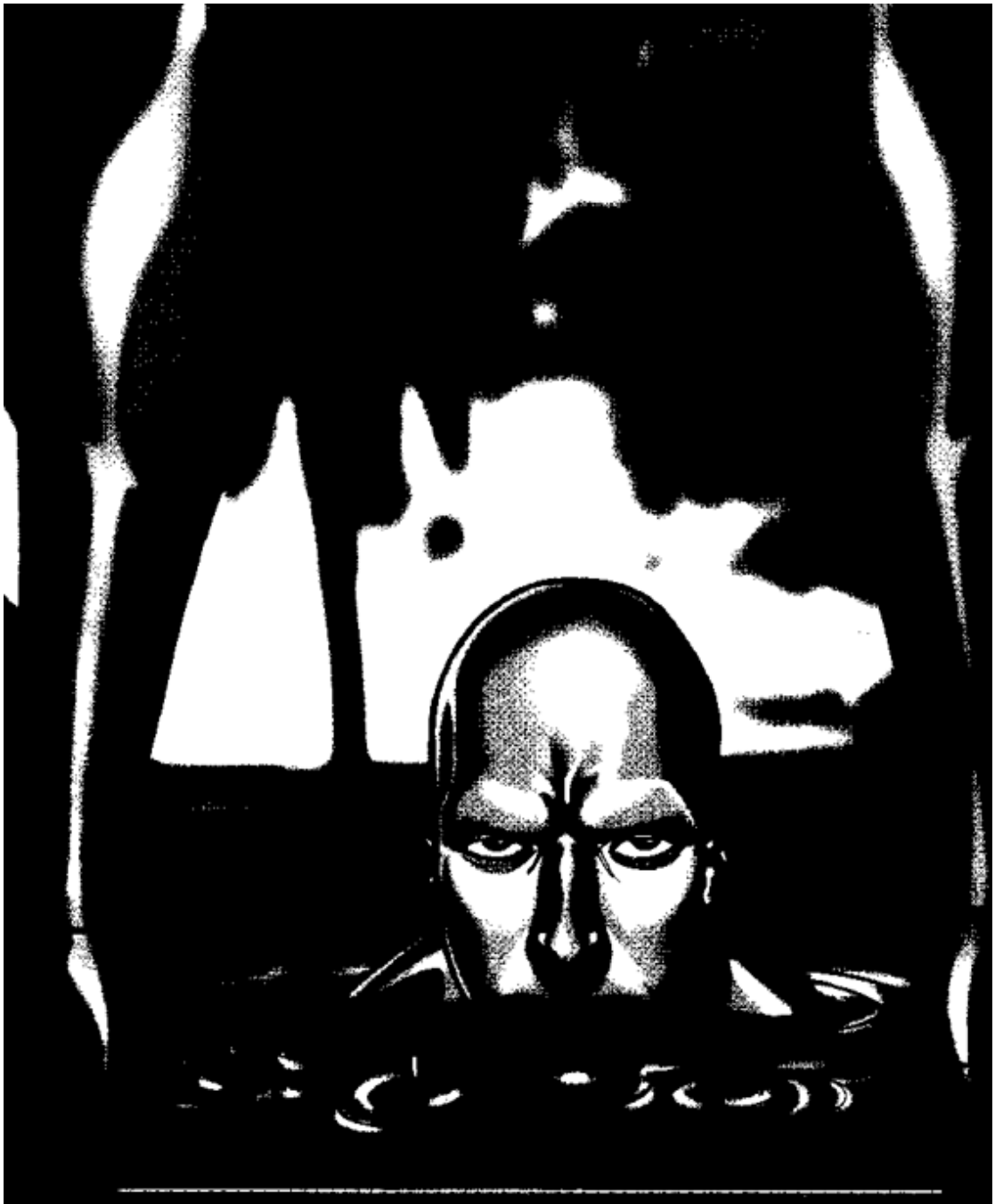
I grilled him for hours, trying to determine what sort of magical powers

There was Mystery, a magician; Ross Jeffries, a hypnotist; Rick H., a mil-

he possessed. Dustin was what they call a natural. He had lost his virginity

lionaire entrepreneur; David DeAngelo, a real estate agent; Juggler, a stand-





---

STEP 2

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up comedian; David X, a construction worker; and Steve P., a seductionist so

powerful that women actually pay to learn how to give him better head. Put

APPROACH

them on South Beach in Miami and any number of better-looking, muscle-bound bullies will be kicking sand in their pale, emaciated faces. But put

them in a Starbucks or Whiskey Bar, and they'll be taking turns making out

AND OPEN

with that bully's girlfriend as soon as his back is turned.

Once I discovered their world, the first thing that changed was my vocabulary.

Terms like AFC, PUA (pickup artist), sarging (picking up women),

and HB (hot babe) entered my permanent lexicon. Then my daily rituals

changed as I became addicted to the online locker room these pickup artists

had created. Whenever I returned home from meeting or going out with a

woman, I sat down at my computer and posted my questions of the night

on the newsgroups. "What do I do if she says she has a boyfriend?"; "If she

eats garlic during dinner, does it mean she isn't planning on kissing me?";

"Is it a good or a bad sign when a girl puts on lipstick in front of me?"

And online characters like Candor, Gunwitch, and Formhandle began

replying to my questions. (The answers, in order: use a boyfriend-destroyer

pattern; you're overanalyzing this; neither.) Soon I realized this was not just

an Internet phenomenon but a way of life. There were cults of wanna-be seductionists in dozens of cities—from Los Angeles to London to Zagreb to Bombay—who met weekly in what they called lairs to discuss tactics and strategies before going out en masse to meet women.

In the guise of Jeremie Ruby-Strauss and the Internet, God had given

me a second chance. It wasn't too late to be Dustin, to become what every

woman wants—not what she says she wants, but what she really wants,

deep inside, beyond her social programming, where her fantasies and day-

dreams lie.

But I couldn't do it on my own. Talking to guys online was not going to

be enough to change a lifetime of failure. I had to meet the faces behind the

screen names, watch them in the field, find out who they were and what

made them tick. I made it my mission—my full-time job and obsession—to

hunt down the greatest pickup artists in the world and beg for shelter un-

der their wings.

And so began the strangest two years of my life.

1 A glossary has been provided on page 439 with detailed explanations of these and other terms

used by the seduction community.

## *Chapter*



I withdrew five hundred dollars from the bank, stuffed it into a white envelope,

and wrote Mystery on the front. It was not the proudest moment of

my life.

But I had dedicated the last four days to getting ready for it anyway—

buying two hundred dollars worth of clothing at Fred Segal, spending an

afternoon shopping for the perfect cologne, and dropping seventy-five

bucks on a Hollywood haircut. I wanted to look my best; this would be my

THE FIRST PROBLEM FOR ALL OF US,

first time hanging out with a real pickup artist.

His name, or at least the name he used online, was Mystery. He was

MEN AND WOMEN, IS NOT TO LEARN,

the most worshipped pickup artist in the community, a powerhouse who

spit out long, detailed posts that read like algorithms of how to manipulate

BUT TO UNLEARN.

late social situations to meet and attract women. His nights out seducing

models and strippers in his hometown of Toronto were chronicled in intimate

detail online, the writing filled with jargon of his own invention:

sniper negs, shotgun negs, group theory, indicators of interest, pawning—

all of which had become an integral part of the pickup artist lexicon. For

— GLORIA STEINEM,

four years, he had been offering free advice in seduction newsgroups.

Then, in October, he decided to put a price on himself and posted the following:

*commencement speech, Vassar (College*

*following:*

*Mystery is now producing Basic Training workshops in several cities around*

*the world, due to numerous requests. The first workshop will be in Los Angeles*

*from Wednesday evening, October 10, through Saturday night. The fee is*

*\$500 (U.S.). This includes club entry, limo for four evenings (sweet huh?),*

*an hour lecture in the limo each evening with a thirty-minute debriefing at*

*the end of the night, and finally three-and-a-half hours per night in the field*

*(broken up into two clubs per night) with Mystery. By the end of Basic*

*Training, you will have approached close to fifty women.*

It is no easy feat to sign up for a workshop dedicated to picking up

women. To do so is to acknowledge defeat, inferiority, and inadequacy. It is



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to finally admit to yourself that after all these years of being sexually active

(or at least sexually cognizant), you have not grown up and figured it out.

Those who ask for help are often those who have failed to do something for

themselves. So if drug addicts go to rehab and the violent go to anger man-

agement class, then social retards go to pickup school.

Clicking send on my e-mail to Mystery was one of the hardest things

I'd ever done. If anyone—friends, family, colleagues, and especially my lone

A week after sending the e-mail, I walked into the lobby of the Hollywood

ex-girlfriend in Los Angeles—found out I was paying for live in-field lessons

Roosevelt Hotel. I wore a blue wool sweater that was so soft and thin it

on picking up women, the mockery and recrimination would be instant

looked like cotton, black pants with laces running up the sides, and shoes

and merciless. So I kept my intentions secret, dodging social plans by that gave me a couple extra inches in height. My pockets bulged with the telling people that I was going to be showing an old friend around town all supplies Mystery had instructed every student to bring: a pen, a notepad, a weekend. pack of gum, and condoms. I would have to keep these two worlds separate. I spotted Mystery instantly. He was seated regally in a Victorian armchair. In my e-mail to Mystery, I didn't tell him my last name or my occupation. He sat in the chair, with a smug, I-just-bench-pressed-the-world smile on his face. He was a writer. If pressed, I planned to just say I was a writer and leave it at that. I wore a casual, loose-fitting blue-black suit; a small, pointed labret piercing. He wanted to move through this subculture anonymously, without either an advantage or extra pressure because of my credentials. He was necessarily attractive, but he was charismatic—tall and thin, with long chestnut hair, high cheekbones, and a bloodless pallor. He looked like a

away, the most pathetic thing I'd ever done in my life. And unfortunately—

computer geek who'd been bitten by a vampire and was midway through

as opposed to, say, masturbating in the shower—it wasn't something I could

his transformation.

do alone. Mystery and the other students would be there to bear witness to

Next to him was a shorter, intense-looking character who introduced

my shame, my secret, my inadequacy.

himself as Mystery's wing, Sin. He wore a form-fitting black crew neck shirt,

A man has two primary drives in early adulthood: one toward power,

and his hair was pitch black and gelled straight back. He had the complex—

success, and accomplishment; the other toward love, companionship, and

ion, however, of a man whose natural hair color is red.

sex. Half of life then was out of order. To go before them was to stand up as

I was the first student to arrive.

a man and admit that I was only half a man.

“What's your top score?” Sin leaned in and asked as I sat down. They

were already assessing me, trying to figure out if I was in possession of a

thing *called game*.

“My top score?”

“Yeah, how many girls have you been with?”



“Um, somewhere around seven,” I told them.

“Somewhere *around* seven?” Sin pressed.

“Six,” I confessed.

Sin ranked in the sixties, Mystery in the hundreds. I looked at them in

wonder: These were the pickup artists whose exploits I’d been following so

avidly online for months. They were another class of being: They had the

magic pill, the solution to the inertia and frustration that has plagued the

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“And then there was Carolina, my sweet Carolina,” he said, a dreamy

great literary protagonists I’d related to all my life—be it Leopold Bloom,

smile spreading across his face. “We were a couple for one day. I remember

Alex Portnoy, or Piglet from *Winnie the Pooh*.

her walking over to my house the next afternoon with her friend. I saw her

As we waited for the other students, Mystery threw a manila envelope

across the street, and I was excited to see her. When I got closer, she yelled,

full of photographs in my lap.

‘I’m dumping you.’”

“These are some of the women I’ve dated,” he said.

All of these relationships apparently took place in sixth grade.

Extra-

In the folder was a spectacular array of beautiful women: a headshot of

mask shook his head sadly. It was hard to tell whether he was consciously

a sultry Japanese actress; an autographed publicity still of a brunette who

being funny or not.

bore an uncanny resemblance to Liv Tyler; a glossy picture of a *Penthouse* Pet

of the Year; a snapshot of a tan, curvy stripper in a negligee who Mystery

The next arrival was a tanned, balding man in his forties who'd flown in

said was his girlfriend, Patricia; and a photo of a brunette with large silicone

from Australia just to attend the workshop. He had a ten-thousand-dollar

breasts, which were being suckled by Mystery in the middle of a nightclub.

Rolex, a charming accent, and one of the ugliest sweaters I'd ever seen—a

These were his credentials.

thick cable-knit monstrosity with multi-colored zigzags that looked like

the aftermath of a finger-painting mishap. He reeked of money and confi-

“I was able to do that by not paying attention to her breasts all night,”

dence. Yet the moment he opened his mouth to give Sin his score (five), he

he explained when I asked about the last shot. “A pickup artist must be the

betrayed himself. His voice trembled; he couldn't look anyone in the eye;

exception to the rule. You must not do what everyone else does. Ever.”

and there was something pathetic and childlike about him. His appearance,

I listened carefully. I wanted to make sure every word etched itself on

like his sweater, was just an accident that spoke nothing of his nature.

my cerebral cortex. I was attending a significant event; the only other credi-

ble pickup artist teaching courses was Ross Jeffries, who had basically

He was new to the community and reluctant to share even his first

founded the community in the late 1980s. But today marked the first time

name, so Mystery christened him Sweater.

seduction students would be removed from the safe environs of the semi-

The three of us were the only students in the workshop.

nar room and let loose in clubs to be critiqued as they ran game on unsus-

“Okay, we've got a lot to talk about,” Mystery said, clapping his expecting women.

hands together. He leaned in close, so the other guests in the hotel

couldn't hear.

A second student arrived, introducing himself as Extramask. He was a

tall, gangly, impish twenty-six-year-old with a bowl cut, overly baggy cloth-

“My job here is to get you into the game,” he continued, making pierc-

ing, and a handsomely chiseled face. With the right haircut and outfit, he

ing eye contact with each of us. “I need to get what’s in my head into yours.

would easily have been a good-looking guy.

Think of tonight as a video game. It is not real. Every time you do an ap-

proach, you are playing this game.”

When Sin asked him what his count was, Extramask scratched his head

uncomfortably. “I have virtually zero experience with girls,” he explained.

My heart began pounding violently. The thought of trying to start a

“I’ve never kissed a girl before.”

conversation with a woman I didn’t know petrified me, especially with these

“You’re kidding,” Sin said.

guys watching and judging me. Bungee jumping and parachuting were a

Cakewalk compared to this.

“I’ve never even held a girl’s hand. I grew up pretty sheltered. My par-

ents were really strict Catholics, so I always had a lot of guilt about girls. But

“All your emotions are going to try to fuck you up,” Mystery continued.

I’ve had three girlfriends.”

“They are there to try to confuse you, so know right now that they cannot

He looked at the floor and rubbed his knees in nervous circles as he

be trusted at all. You will feel shy sometimes, and self-conscious, and you

listed his girlfriends, though no one had asked for the particulars. There

must deal with it like you deal with a pebble in your shoe. It's uncomfortable

was Mitzelle, who broke up with him after seven days. There was Claire,

able, but you ignore *it*. It's not part of the equation."

who told him after two days that she'd made a mistake when she agreed to

I looked around; Extramask and Sweater seemed just as nervous as I

go out with him.

was. "I need to teach you, in four days, the whole equation—the sequence of

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moves you need to win," Mystery went on. "And you will have to play the

a woman's self esteem while actively displaying a lack of interest in her—by

game over and over to learn how to win. So get ready to fail."

telling her she has lipstick on her teeth, for example, or offering her a piece

Mystery paused to order a Sprite with five slices of lemon on the side,

of gum after she speaks.

then told us his story. He spoke in a loud, clear voice—modeled, he said, on

“I don’t alienate ugly girls; I don’t alienate guys. I only alienate the girls

the motivational speaker Anthony Robbins. Everything about him seemed

I want to fuck,” Mystery lectured, eyes blazing with the conviction of his

to be a conscious, rehearsed invention.

aphorisms. “If you don’t believe me, you will see it tonight.

Tonight is the

Since the age of eleven, when he beat the secret to a card trick out of a

night of experiments. First, I am going to prove myself. You are going to

classmate, Mystery’s goal in life was to become a celebrity magician, like

watch me and then we are going to push you to try a few sets.

Tomorrow, if

David Copperfield. He spent years studying and practicing, and managed

you do what I say, you will be able to make out with a girl within fifteen

to parlay his talents into birthday parties, corporate gigs, and even a couple

minutes.”

of talk shows. In the process, however, his social life suffered.

At the age of

He looked at Extramask. “Name the five characteristics of an alpha

twenty-one, when he was still a virgin, he decided to do something about it.

male.”

“One of the world’s greatest mysteries is the mind of a woman,” he told

“Confidence?”

us grandiosely. “So I set out to solve it.”

“Right. What else?”

He took a half hour bus ride into Toronto every day, going to bars,

“Strength?”

clothing stores, restaurants, and coffee shops. He wasn’t aware of the online

“No.”

community or any other pickup artists, so he was forced to work alone, rely

“Body odor?”

ing on the one skill he did know: magic. It took him dozens of trips to the

He turned to Sweater and me. We were also clueless.

city before he even worked up the guts to talk to a stranger.

From there, he

“The number one characteristic of an alpha male is the smile,” he said,

tolerated failure, rejection, and embarrassment day and night until, piece by

beaming an artificial beam. “Smile when you enter a room. As soon as you

piece, he put together the puzzle that is social dynamics and discovered

walk in a club, the game is on. And by smiling, you look like you’re together,

what he believed to be the patterns underlying all male-female relationships.

you’re fun, and you’re somebody.”

“It took me ten years to discover this,” he said. “The basic format is

He gestured to Sweater. “When you came in, you didn’t smile when you  
FMAC—find, meet, attract, close. Believe it or not, the game is linear. A lot  
talked to us.”  
of people don’t know that.”  
“That’s just not me,” Sweater said. “I look silly when I smile.”  
For the next half hour, Mystery told us about what he called group the  
“If you keep doing what you’ve always done, you’ll keep getting what  
ory. “I have done this specific set of events a bazillion times,” he said. “You  
you’ve always gotten. It’s called the Mystery Method because I’m Mystery  
do not walk up to a girl who’s all by herself. That is not the perfect seduc  
and it’s my method. So what I’m going to ask is that you indulge in some of  
tion. Women of beauty are rarely found alone.”  
my suggestions and try new things over the next four days. You are going to  
After approaching the group, he continued, the key is to ignore the  
see a difference.”  
woman you desire while winning over her friends—especially the men and  
Besides confidence and a smile, we learned, the other characteristics of  
anyone else likely to cockblock. If the target is attractive and used to men  
an alpha male were being well-groomed, possessing a sense of humor, con



fawning all over her, the pickup artist must intrigue her by pretending to be

necting with people, and being seen as the social center of a room. No one

unaffected by her charm. This is accomplished through the use of what he

bothered to tell Mystery that those were actually six characteristics.

called a neg.

As Mystery dissected the alpha male further, I realized something: The

Neither compliment nor insult, a neg is something in between—an ac-

reason I was here—the reason Sweater and Extramask were also here—was

cidental insult or backhanded compliment. The purpose of a neg is to lower

that our parents and our friends had failed us. They had never given us the

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tools we needed to become fully effective social beings. Now, decades later,

“Once she’s attracted to you, it won’t matter whether you said you were

it was time to acquire them.

gay or not.”

Mystery went around the table and looked at each of us. “What kind of

“But isn’t that lying?”

girls do you want?” he asked Sweater.

“It’s not lying,” he replied. “It’s flirting.”

Sweater pulled a piece of neatly folded notebook paper out of his

To the group, he offered other examples of openers: innocent but in-

pocket. "Last night I wrote down a list of goals for myself," he said, unfold-

triguing questions like "Do you think magic spells work?" or "Oh my god,

ing the page, which was filled with four columns of numbered items. "And

did you see those two girls fighting outside?" Sure, they weren't that spec-

one of the things I'm looking for is a wife. She needs to be smart enough to

tacular or sophisticated, but all they are meant to do is get two strangers

hold up her end of any conversation and have enough style and beauty to

talking.

turn heads when she walks into a room."

The point of Mystery Method, he explained, is to come in under the

"Well, look at you," Mystery said. "You look average. People think if

radar. Don't approach a woman with a sexual come-on. Learn about her

they look generic, then they can seduce a wide array of women. Not true.

first and let her earn the right to be hit on.

You have to specialize. If you look average, you're going to get average girls.

"An amateur hits on a woman right away," he decreed as he rose to

Your khaki pants are for the office. They're not for clubs. And your  
leave the hotel. "A pro waits eight to ten minutes."  
sweater—burn it. You need to be bigger than life. I'm talking  
over the top. If  
Armed with our negs, group theory, and camouflage openers,  
we were  
you want to get the 10s, you need to learn peacock theory."  
ready to hit the clubs.  
Mystery loved theories. Peacock theory is the idea that in order  
to attract  
tract the most desirable female of the species, it's necessary to  
stand out in  
a flashy and colorful way. For humans, he told us, the equivalent  
of the  
fanned peacock tail is a shiny shirt, a garish hat, and jewelry that  
lights up  
in the dark—basically, everything I'd dismissed my whole life  
as cheesy.  
When it came time for my personal critique, Mystery had a  
laundry list  
of fixes: get rid of the glasses, shape the overgrown goatee,  
shave the expen-  
sively trimmed tumbleweeds on my head, dress more  
outrageously, wear a  
conversation piece, get some jewelry, get a life.  
I wrote down every word of advice. This was a guy who thought  
about  
seduction nonstop, like a mad scientist working on a formula to  
turn  
peanuts into gasoline. The archive of his Internet messages was  
3,000 posts

long—more than 2,500 pages—all dedicated to cracking the code that is

woman.

“I have an opener for you to use,” he said to me. An opener is a prepared

script used to start a conversation with a group of strangers; it’s the first

thing anyone who wants to meet women must be armed with.

“Say this

when you see a group with a girl you like. ‘Hey, it looks like the party’s over

here.’ Then turn to the girl you want and add, ‘If I wasn’t gay, you’d be *so*

mine.’”

A flash of crimson burned up my face. “Really?” I asked. “How is that

going to help?”

## *Chapter*



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We were witnessing group theory in action. The more Mystery per-

formed for the guys, the more the blonde clamored for attention. And every

time, he pushed her away and continued talking with his two new friends.

“I don’t usually go out,” Baio was telling Mystery. “I’m over it, and I’m

too old.”

After a few more minutes, Mystery finally acknowledged the blonde. He

We piled into the limo and drove to the Standard Lounge, a velvet-rope-

held his arms out. She placed her hands in his, and he began giving her a

guarded hotel hotspot. It was here that Mystery shattered my model of real-

psychic reading. He was employing a technique I’d heard about called cold

ity. Limits I had once imposed on human interaction were extended far

reading: the art of telling people truisms about themselves without any

beyond what I ever thought possible. The man was a machine.

prior knowledge of their personality or background. In the field, all

The Standard was dead when we walked in. We were too early. There

knowledge—however esoteric—is power.

were just two groups of people in the room: a couple near the entrance and

With each accurate sentence Mystery spoke, the blonde’s jaw dropped

two couples in the corner.

further open, until she started asking him about his job and his psychic

I was ready to leave. But then I saw Mystery approach the people in the

abilities. Every response Mystery gave was intended to accentuate his youth

corner. They were sitting on opposite couches across a glass table. The men

and enthusiasm for the good life Baio said he had outgrown.

were on one side. One of them was Scott Baio, the actor best known for

“I feel so old,” Mystery said, baiting her.

playing Chachi on *Happy Days*. Across from him were two women, a

“How old are you?” she asked.

brunette and a bleached blonde who looked like she’d stepped out of the

“Twenty-seven.”

pages of *Maxim*. Her cut-off white T-shirt was suspended so high into the

“That’s not old. That’s perfect.”

air by fake breasts that the bottom of it just hovered, flapping in the air

He was in.

above a belly tightened by fastidious exercise. This woman was Baio’s date.

Mystery called me over and whispered in my ear. He wanted me to talk

She was also, I gathered, Mystery’s target.

to Baio and his friend, to keep them occupied while he hit on the girl. This

His intentions were clear because he wasn’t talking to her.

Instead, he

was my first experience as a wing—a term Mystery had taken from *Top Gun*,

had his back turned to her and was showing something to Scott Baio and

along with words like target and obstacle.

his friend, a well-dressed, well-tanned thirty-something who looked as if he

I struggled to make small talk with them. But Baio, looking nervously

smelled strongly of aftershave. I moved in closer.

at Mystery and his date, cut me off. “Tell me this is all an illusion,” he said,

“Be careful with that,” Baio was saying. “It cost forty-thousand dollars.”

“and he’s not actually stealing my girlfriend.”

Mystery had Baio’s watch in his hands. He placed it carefully on the

Ten long minutes later, Mystery stood up, put his arm around me, and

table. “Now watch this,” he commanded. “I tense my stomach muscles, in-

we left the club. Outside, he pulled a cocktail napkin from his jacket pocket.

creasing the flow of oxygen to my brain, and....”

It contained her phone number. “Did you get a good look at her?” Mystery

As Mystery waved his hands over the watch, the second hand stopped

asked. “That is what I’m in the game for. Everything I’ve learned I used to-

ticking. He waited fifteen seconds, then waved his hands again, and slowly

night. It’s all led up to this moment. And it worked.” He beamed with self-

the watch sputtered back to life—along with Baio’s heart. Mystery’s audi-

satisfaction. “How’s that for a demonstration?”

ence of four burst into applause.

That was all it took. Stealing a girl right from under a celebrity's  
n o s e -

“Do something else!” the blonde pleaded.

has-been or not—was a feat even Dustin couldn't have  
accomplished. Mys-

Mystery brushed her off with a neg. “Wow, she's so  
demanding,” he

tery was the real deal.

said, turning to Baio. “Is she always like this?”

As we took the limo to the Key Club, Mystery told us the first  
command-

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ment of pickup: the three-second rule. A man has three seconds  
after spotting

“What's kino?” I asked.

a woman to speak to her, he said. If he takes any longer, then not  
only is the

“Kino?” the girl replied.

girl likely to think he's a creep who's been staring at her for too  
long, but he

Sin reached behind me, picked up my arm, and placed it on her  
shoul-

will start overthinking the approach, get nervous, and probably  
blow it.

der. “Kino is when you touch a girl,” he whispered. I felt the  
heat of her

The moment we walked into the Key Club, Mystery put the  
three-

body and was reminded of how much I love human contact. Pets  
like to be

second rule into action. Striding up to a group of women, he  
held out his



petted. It isn't sexual when a dog or a cat begs for physical affection. People

hands and asked, "What's your first impression of these? Not the big hands,

are the same way: We need touch. But we're so sexually screwed up and ob-

the black nails."

essed that we get nervous and uncomfortable whenever another person

As the girls gathered around him, Sin pulled me aside and suggested

touches us. And, unfortunately, I am no exception. As I spoke to her, my

wandering the club and attempting my first approach. A group of women

hand felt wrong on her shoulder. It was just resting there like some disem-

walked by and I tried to say something. But the word "hi" just barely

bodied limb, and I imagined her wondering what exactly it was doing there

squeaked out of my throat, not even loud enough for them to hear. As they

and how she could gracefully extricate herself from under it. So I did her

continued past, I followed and grabbed one of the girls on the shoulder

the favor of removing it myself.

from behind. She turned around, startled, and gave me the withering what-

"Isolate her," Sin said.

a-creep look that was the whole reason I was too scared to talk to women in

I suggested sitting down, and we walked to a bench. Sin followed and the first place.

sat behind us. As I'd been taught, I asked her to tell me the qualities she

"Never," Sin admonished me in his adenoidal voice, "approach a

finds attractive in guys. She said humor and ass.

woman from behind. Always come in from the front, but at a slight angle so

Fortunately, I have one of those qualities.

it's not too direct and confrontational. You should speak to her over your

Suddenly, I felt Sin's breath on my ear. "Sniff her hair," he was instruct-

shoulder, so it looks like you might walk away at any minute. Ever see

ing.

Robert Redford in *The Horse Whisperer*? It's kind of like that."

I smelled her hair, although I wasn't exactly sure what the point was. I

A few minutes later, I spotted a young, tipsy-looking woman with long,

figured Sin wanted me to neg her. So I said, "It smells like smoke."

tangled blonde curls and a puffy pink vest standing alone. I decided that

"Nooooo!" Sin hissed in my ear. I guess I wasn't supposed to neg.

approaching her would be an easy way to redeem myself. I circled around

She seemed offended. So, to recover, I took another whiff. "But under-

until I was in the ten o'clock position in front of her and walked in, imagin-

neath that, there's a very intoxicating smell."

ing myself approaching a horse I didn't want to frighten.

She cocked her head to one side, furrowed her brow ever so slightly,

"Oh my God," I said to her. "Did you see those two girls fighting out-

scanned me up and down, and said, "You're weird." I was blowing it.

side?"

Fortunately, Mystery soon arrived.

"No," she said. "What happened?"

"This place is dead," he said. "We're going somewhere more target-

She was interested. She was talking to me. It was working.

rich." To Mystery and Sin, these clubs didn't seem to be reality. They had no

"Um, two girls were fighting over this little guy who was half their size.

problem whispering in students' ears while they were talking to women,

It was pretty brutal. He was just standing there laughing as the police came

dropping pickup terminology in front of strangers, and even interrupting a

and arrested the girls."

student during a set and explaining, in front of his group, what he was do-

She giggled. We started talking about the club and the band playing

ing wrong. They were so confident and their talk was so full of incompre-

there. She was very friendly and actually seemed grateful for the conversation.

intelligible jargon that the women rarely even raised an eyebrow, let alone

me. I had no idea that approaching a woman could be this easy. I suspected they were being used to train wanna-be ladies' men.

Sin sidled up to me and whispered in my ear, "Go kino."

I bid my new friend good-bye as Sin had taught me, pointing to my

## *Chapter*



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cheek and saying, "Kiss good-bye." She actually pecked me. I felt very alpha.

On the way out, as I stopped to use the bathroom, I found Extramask

standing there, twirling an unwashed lock of hair in his fingers.

"Are you

waiting for the toilet?" I asked.

"Sort of," he replied nervously. "Go ahead."

I gave him a quizzical look. "Can I tell you something?" he asked.

"Sure."

I was in high spirits in the limo to the next bar. "Do you think I could have

"I have a lot of trouble peeing beside guys in urinals. When there's an

kissed her?" I asked Mystery.

other guy standing there, I can't fucking pee. Even if I'm peeing already and

"If you think you could have, then you could have," he said.

"As soon as

a guy walks up, I stop. And then I just stand there all nervous and shit."

you ask yourself whether you should or shouldn't, that means you should.

"No one's judging you."

And what you do is, you phase-shift. Imagine a giant gear thudding down

"Yeah," he said. "I remember about a year ago, a guy and I were trying

in your head, and then go for it. Start hitting on her. Tell her you just no-

to piss in these urinals that were right next to each other, but we both just

ticed she has beautiful skin, and start massaging her shoulders."

ended up standing there. We stood there for around two minutes, recog-

"But how do you know it's okay?"

nizing each other's pee-shyness, until I zipped up and went to another

"What I do is, I look for IOIs. An IOI is an indicator of interest. If she

bathroom."

asks you what your name is, that's an IOI. If she asks you if you're single,

He paused. "The guy never thanked me for changing bathrooms that

that's an IOI. If you take her hands and *squeeze* them, and she squeezes

day.”

back, that’s an IOI. And as soon as I get three IOIs, I phase-shift. I don’t

I nodded, walked to the urinal, and discharged my duties with a dis-

even think about it. It’s like a computer program.”

tinct lack of self-consciousness. Compared to Extramask, I was going to be

“But how do you kiss her?” Sweater asked.

an easy student.

“I just say, ‘Would you like to kiss me?’”

As I left the bathroom, he was still standing there. “I always liked urinal

“And then what happens?”

dividers,” he said. “But you only seem to find them at the classy places.”

“One of three things,” Mystery said. “If she says, ‘Yes,’ which is very

rare, you kiss her. If she says, ‘Maybe,’ or hesitates, then you say, ‘Let’s find

out,’ and kiss her. And if she says, ‘No,’ you say, ‘I didn’t say you could. It

just looked like you had something on your mind.’”

“You see,” he grinned triumphantly. “You have nothing to lose. Every

contingency is planned for. It’s foolproof. That is the Mystery kiss-close.”

I furiously scribbled every word of the kiss-close in my notebook. No

one had ever told me how to kiss a girl before. It was just one of those

things men were supposed to know on their own, like shaving and car re-

pair.

Sitting in the limo with a notebook on my lap, listening to  
Mystery

talk, I asked myself why I was really there. Taking a course in  
picking up

women wasn't the kind of thing normal people did. Even more  
disturbing,

I wondered why it was so important to me, why I'd become so  
quickly ob-

essed with the online community and its leading pseudonyms.

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Perhaps it was because attracting the opposite sex was the only  
area of

*When your own hand becomes your best lover,*

my life in which I felt like a complete failure. Every time I  
walked down the

*When your life-giving fertilizer is wasted*

street or into a bar, I saw my own failure staring me back in the  
face with red

*In a Kleenex and flushed down the toilet*

lipstick and black mascara. The combination of desire and  
paralysis was

*You wonder when you are going to stop*

deadly.

*Thinking about what could have happened*

After the workshop that night, I opened my file cabinet and dug

*That night when you almost got somewhere.*

through my papers. There was something I wanted to find,  
something I

hadn't looked at in years. After a half hour, I found it: a folder  
labeled "High

*There is the coy one who smiles*

School Writing.” I pulled out a piece of lined notebook paper covered from

*And looks like she wants to meet you,*

top to bottom with my chicken scratching. It was the only poem I’ve ever at

*But you can’t work up the nerve to talk.*

tempted in my life. It was written in eleventh grade, and I never showed it to

*So instead she will become one of your nighttime*

anyone. However, it was the answer to my question.

*Fantasies, where you could have but didn’t.*

*Your hand will be substituted for hers.*

## **SEXUAL FRUSTRATION**

*When you neglect work and meaningful activities,*

BY NEIL STRAUSS

*When you neglect the ones who really love you,*

*The only reason you go out,*

*For a shot at a target that you rarely hit.*

*The only objective in mind,*

*Does everyone get lucky with women but you,*

*A glimpse of a familiar pair*

*Or do females just not want it as bad as you do?*

*Of legs on a busy street or*

*A squeeze from a female who*

In the decade since I’d written that poem, nothing had changed. I still

*You can only call your friend.*

couldn’t write poetry. And, more important, I still felt the same way. Per



haps signing up for Mystery's workshop had been an intelligent decision.

*A scoreless night fosters hostility.*

After all, I was doing something proactive about my lameness.

*A scoreless weekend breeds animosity.*

Even the wise man dwells in the fool's paradise.

*Through red eyes all the world is seen,*

*Angry at friends and family for no*

*Reason that they can perceive.*

*Only you know why you are so mad.*

*There is the 'justfriends' one who you've*

*Known for so long, who respects you*

*So much that you can't do what you want.*

*And she no longer bothers to put on her*

*False personality and flirt because she thinks*

*You like her for who she is when what you*

*Liked about her was her flirtatiousness.*

*Chapter*



33

"I just met them," she said. "My name is Elonova." She curtsyed

clumsily.

I took that as an IOI.

I showed Elonova an ESP trick Mystery had taught me earlier that evening,

in which I guessed a number she was thinking between one and ten

(hint: it's almost always seven), and she clapped her hands together gleefully.

On the last night of the workshop, Mystery and Sin took us to a bar called

fully. The guys, in the presence of my superior game, wandered off.

the Saddle Ranch, a country-themed meat market on the Sunset Strip. I'd

When the bar closed, Elonova and I moved outside. Every AFC we

been there before—not to pick up women, but to ride the mechanical bull.

walked past gave me the thumbs up and said, “She’s hot” or “You lucky bastard.”

One of my goals in Los Angeles was to master the machine at its fastest setting.

What idiots. They were fucking up my game—that is, if I could figure

it out. But not today. After three consecutive nights of going out until 2:00

out a way to tell Elonova I was straight. Hopefully, she'd figured it out on

A.M. and then breaking down approaches with Mystery and the other students

on her own by now.

Students far beyond the allotted half-hour, I was wiped out.

I remembered Sin telling me to kino, so I put my arm around her. This

Within minutes, however, our tireless professor of pickup was at the

time, however, she backed away. That was definitely not an IOI. As I took a

bar, making out with a loud, tipsy girl who kept trying to steal his scarf.

step toward her to try again, one of the guys she'd been with in the bar ar-

Watching Mystery work, I noticed that he used the exact same openers, rou-

rived. She flirted with him as I stood there stupidly. When she turned back

tines, and lines—and got a phone number or a tonguedown nearly every

to me a few minutes later, I told her we should hang out sometime. She

time, even if the woman was with a boyfriend. I'd never seen anything like

agreed, and we exchanged numbers.

it. Sometimes a woman he was talking to was even moved to tears.

Mystery, Sin, and the boys were all in the limo, watching the whole ex-

As I walked toward the mechanical bull ring, feeling foolish in a red

change go down. I climbed inside, thinking I was hot shit for number-

cowboy hat Mystery had insisted I wear, I saw a girl with long black hair, a

closing in front of them all. But Mystery wasn't impressed.

formfitting sweater, and tan legs sticking out of a ruffled skirt. She was talk-

“You got that number-close,” he said, “because you forced yourself on

ing animatedly to two guys, bouncing around them like a cartoon character.

her. You let her play with you.”

One second. Two seconds. Three.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Hey, looks like the party’s over here.” I spoke to the guys, then turned

“Have I ever told you about cat string theory?”

to face the girl. I stuttered for a moment. I knew the next line—Mystery had

“No.”

been pushing it on me all weekend—but I’d been dreading using it.

“Listen. Have you ever seen a cat play with a string? Well, when the

“If... if I wasn’t gay, you’d be so mine.”

string is dangling above its head, just out of reach, the cat goes crazy trying

A huge smile spread across her face. “I like your hat,” she screeched,

to get it. It leaps in the air, dances around, and chases it all over the room.

grabbing the brim.

But as soon as you let go of the string and it drops right between the cat’s

I guess peacocking did work. “Hey, now,” I told her, repeating a line I

paws, it just looks at the string for a second and then walks away. It’s bored.

had heard Mystery use earlier. “Hands off the merchandise.”

It doesn't want it anymore."

She responded by throwing her arms around me and telling me I was

"So ..."

fun. Every ounce of fear evaporated with her *acceptance*. The secret to meet-

"So that girl moved away from you when you put your arm around her.

ing women, I realized, is simply knowing what to say, and when and how to

And you ran right back to her like a puppy dog. You should have punished

say it.

her—turned away and talked to someone else. Let her work to get your at-

"How do you all know each other?" I asked.

tention back. After that, she made you wait while she talked to that dork."

## Chapter



34

"What should I have done?"

"You should have said, 'Til let you two be alone,' and started to walk

away, as if you were giving her to him—even though you knew she liked you

more. You have to act like you are the prize."

I smiled. I think I really understood.

“Yeah,” he said. “Be the dancing string.”

I grew silent and thought about it, kicking my legs up against the bar

MSN GROUP: Mystery’s Lounge

counter of the limousine and slouching into the seat. Mystery turned to

SUBJECT: Sex Magic

Sin, and they talked amongst themselves for several minutes. It felt like

AUTHOR: Mystery

they were discussing me.

I tried not to make eye contact with them. I wondered if they were go-

My Mystery Method workshop in Los Angeles kicked ass. I’ve decided to

ing to tell me that I’d held the workshop up, that I wasn’t yet ready for it,

teach several impressive ways to demonstrate mind power through magic at

that I should study for another six months and then take it again.

my next workshop. After all, some of you need *something* with which to convey

Suddenly, Mystery and Sin ended their huddle. Mystery broke into a

your charming personalities. If you are going in without an edge—like if you

wide smile and looked straight at me.

say, “Hi, I’m an accountant”—you will not capture your target’s attention and

“You’re one of us,” he said. “You’re going to be a superstar.”

curiosity.

So, since the workshop, I've retired the FMAC model and broken down

the approach to thirteen detailed steps. Here is the basic format to all

approaches:

1. Smile when you walk into a room. See the group with the target and follow

the three-second rule. Do not hesitate—approach instantly.

2. Recite a memorized opener, if not two or three in a row.

3. The opener should open the group, not just the target. When talking, ignore

the target for the most part. If there are men in the group, focus your attention

on the men.

4. Neg the target with one of the slew of negs we've come up with. Tell her,

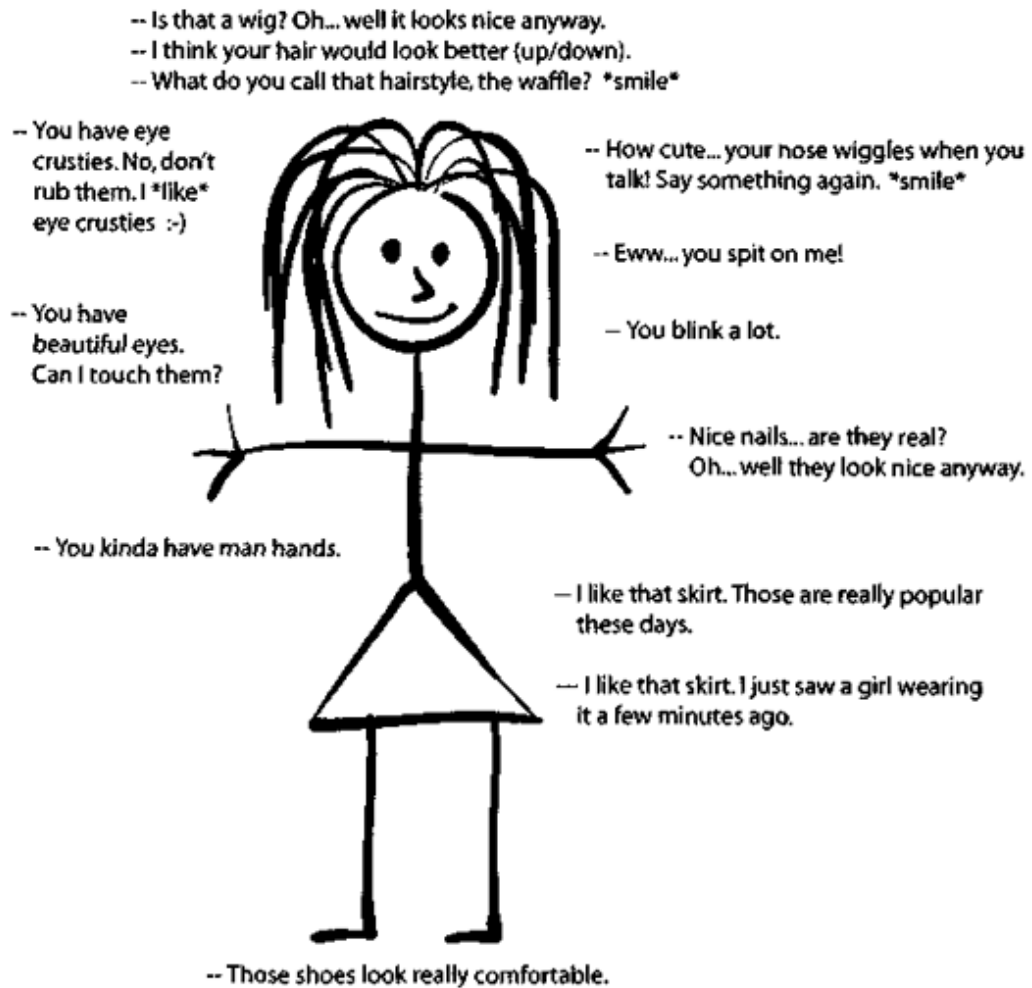
“It's so cute. Your nose wiggles when you laugh.” Then get her friends to notice

and laugh about it.

5. Convey personality to the entire group. Do this by using stories, magic, an-

ecdotes, and humor. Pay particular attention to the men and the less attractive

women. During this time, the target will notice that you are the center of atten-



### The Mystery Method course handout

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Hon. You may perform various memorized pieces like the photo routine,<sup>2</sup> but

13. Kiss close. Say, out of the blue, "Would you like to kiss me?" If the setting

only for the obstacles.

or circumstances aren't conducive to physical intimacy, then give yourself a

time constraint by saying, "I have to go, but we should continue this." Then get



6. Neg the target again if appropriate. If she wants to look at the pictures, for

her number and leave.

example, say, “Oh my god, she’s so grabby. How do you roll with her?”

—Mystery

7. Ask the group, “So, how does everyone know each other?” If the target is

with one of the guys, find out how long they’ve been together. If it’s a serious

relationship, eject politely by saying, “Pleasure meeting you.”

8. If she is not spoken for, say to the group, “I’ve sort of been alienating your

friend. Is it all right if I speak to her for a couple of minutes?”

They always say,

“Uh, sure. If it’s okay with her.” If you’ve executed the preceding steps correctly,

she will agree.

9. Isolate her from the group by telling her you want to show her something

cool. Take her to sit with you nearby. As you lead her through the crowd, do a

kino test by holding her hand. If she squeezes back, it’s on. Start looking for

other IOIs.

10. Sit with her and perform a rune reading, an ESP test, or any other demon-

stration that will fascinate and intrigue her.

11. Tell her, “Beauty is common but what’s rare is a great energy and outlook

on life. Tell me, what do you have inside that would make me want to know

you as more than a mere face in the crowd?” If she begins to list qualities, this

is a positive IOI.

12. Stop talking. Does she reinitiate the chat with a question that begins with

the word “So?” If she does, you’ve now seen three IOIs and can ...

2 The photo routine involves carrying *an* envelope of photos in a jacket pocket, as if they’ve just

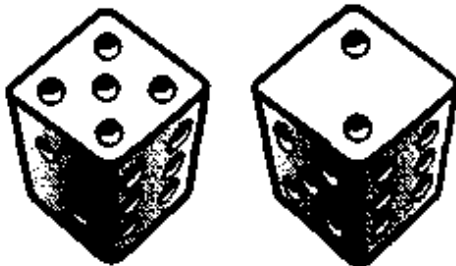
been developed. Each photo, however, is pre-selected to convey a different aspect of the PUA’s

personality, such as images of the PUA with beautiful women, with children, with pets, with

celebrities, goofing off with friends, and doing something active like roller-blading or skydiving.

The PUA should also have a short, witty story to accompany each photo.

## *Chapter*



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At the end of my review, I issued a call for wings in Los Angeles, asking

only that they be somewhat confident, intelligent, and socially comfortable.

I knew that in order to become a pickup artist myself, I would somehow

have to internalize everything I had seen Mystery do. This would happen

only through practice—through hitting the bars and clubs every night until

I became a natural like Dustin, or even an unnatural like Mystery.

Sure, there is Ovid, the Roman poet who wrote *The Art of Love*; Don Juan, the

The day my report on the workshop hit the Internet, I received an

mythical womanizer based on the exploits of various Spanish noblemen;

e-mail from someone in Encino nicknamed Grimble, who identified him—

the Duke de Lauzun, the legendary French rake who died on the guillotine;

self as a Ross Jeffries student. He wanted to “sarge” with me, as he put it.

and Casanova, who detailed his hundred-plus conquests in four thousand

Sarging is pickup artist jargon for going out to meet women; the term evi—

pages of memoirs. But the undisputed father of modern seduction is Ross

dently has its origin in the name of one of Ross Jeffries’s cats, Sargy.

Jeffries, a tall, skinny, porous-faced self-proclaimed nerd from Marina Del

An hour after I sent him my phone number, Grimble called. More than

Rey, California. Guru, cult leader, and social gadfly, he commands an army

Mystery, it was Grimble who would initiate me into what could only be de—

sixty thousand horny men strong, including top government officials, in—

scribed as a secret society.

telligence officers, and cryptographers.

“Hey, man,” he said, in a conspiratorial hiss. “So what do you think of

His weapon is his voice. After years of studying everyone from master

Mystery’s game?”

hypnotists to Hawaiian Kahunas, he claims to have found the technology—

I gave him my assessment.

and make no mistake about it, that’s what it is—that will turn any responsive

“Wow, I like it,” he said. “But you have to hang out with Twotimer and

woman into a libidinous puddle. Jeffries, who claims to be the inspiration

me some time. We’ve been sarging with Ross Jeffries a lot.”

for Tom Cruise’s character in *Magnolia*, calls it Speed Seduction.

“Really? I’d love to meet him.”

Jeffries developed Speed Seduction in 1988, after ending a five-year

“Listen. Can you keep a secret?”

streak of sexlessness with the help of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP),

“Sure.”

a controversial fusion of hypnosis and psychology that emerged from the

“How much technology do you use in your sarges?”

personal development boom of the 1970s and led to the rise of self-help gu-

“Technology?”

rus like Anthony Robbins. The fundamental precept of NLP is that one's

“You know, how much is technique and how much is just talking?”

thoughts, feelings, and behavior—and the thoughts, feelings, and behavior

“I guess fifty-fifty,” I said.

of others—can be manipulated through words, suggestions, and physical

“I'm up to 90 percent.”

gestures designed to influence the subconscious. The potential of NLP to

“What?”

revolutionize the art of seduction was obvious to Jeffries.

“Yeah, I use a canned opener, then I elicit her values and find out her

Over the years, Jeffries has either outlasted, sued, or crushed any com-

trance words. And then I go into one of the secret patterns. Do you know

petitor in the field of pickup to make his school, Speed Seduction, the dom-

the October Man sequence?”

inant model for getting a woman's lips to touch a man's—that is, until

“Never heard of it, unless Arnold Schwarzenegger was in it.”

Mystery came along and started teaching workshops.

“Oh, man. I had a girl over here last week, and I gave her a whole new

Thus, the clamor online for an eyewitness account of Mystery's first

identity. I did a sexual value elicitation, and then changed her whole time-

workshop was overwhelming. Mystery's admirers wanted to know if the class

line and internal reality. Then I brushed my finger along her face, telling her

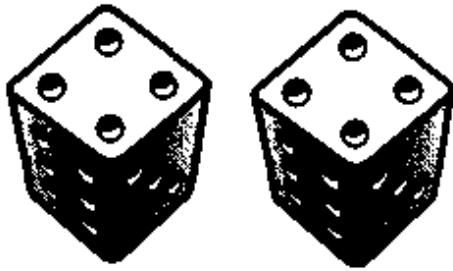
was worthwhile; his enemies, particularly Jeffries and his disciples, wanted to

to notice"—and here he switched to a slow, hypnotic voice —“how wherever I

tear him apart. So I obliged, posting a detailed description of my experiences.

touch ... it leaves a trail of energy moving through you ... and wherever

### *Chapter*



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**40**

you can feel this energy spreading ... the deeper you want to allow your

self. .. to feel these sensations ... becoming even more ... intense.”

“And then what?”

“I brushed my finger along her lips, and she started sucking it,” he ex

claimed triumphantly. “Full-close!”

“Wow,” I said.

I had no idea what he was talking about. But I wanted this technology.

I drove to Grimble's house in Encino the following night to go sarging. This

I thought back to all the times I'd taken women to my house, sat on the bed

would be my first time in the field since Mystery's workshop. It would also

next to them, leaned in for the kiss, and been deflected with the "let's just be

be my first time hanging out one-on-one with a stranger I'd met online. All

friends" speech. In fact, this rejection is such a universal experience that

I really knew about him was that he was a college student and he liked girls.

Ross Jeffries invented not just an acronym for it, LJBF, but a litany of re-

When I pulled up, Grimble strode outside and flashed a big smile that I

sponses as well.<sup>3</sup>

didn't quite trust. He didn't seem dangerous or mean. He just seemed slip-

I talked to Grimble for two hours. He seemed to know everybody—

pery, like a politician or a salesman or, I suppose, a seducer. He had the

from legends like Steve P., who supposedly had a cult of women paying cash

complexion of barley tea, though he was actually German. In fact, he

for the privilege of sexually servicing him, to guys like Rick H., Ross's most

claimed to be a descendent of Otto von Bismarck. He wore a brown leather

famous student, thanks to an incident that involved him, a hot tub, and five

jacket over a silver floral-print shirt, which was unbuttoned to reveal an

women.

eerily hairless chest thrust out further than his nose. In his hands was a

Grimble would make a perfect wing.

plastic bag full of videotapes, which he dumped into the back of my car. He

reminded me of a mongoose.

“These are some of Ross’s seminars,” he said. “You’ll really like the DC

seminar, because he gets into synesthesia there. The other tapes are from

Kim and Tom”—Ross’s ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend.

“It’s their New

York seminar, ‘Advanced Anchoring and Other Sneaky Stuff’”

“What’s anchoring?” I asked.

“My wing Twotimer will show you when you meet him. Ever experi-

enced condiment anchoring before?”

I had so much to learn. Men generally don’t communicate to one an-

other with the same level of emotional depth and intimate detail as most

women. Women discuss everything. When a man sees his friends after get-

ting laid, they ask, “How’d it go?” And in return, he gives them either a

thumbs up or a thumbs down. That’s how it’s done. To discuss the experi-



ence in detail would mean giving your friends mental images they don't re-

ally want to have. It is a taboo among men to picture their best friends

naked or having sex, because then they might find themselves aroused—and

we all know what that means.

3 One such response from Jeffries is, "I don't promise any such thing. Friends don't put each

So, ever since I'd first started harboring lustful thoughts in sixth grade,

other into boxes like that. The only thing I'll promise is never to do anything unless you and I

both feel totally comfortable, willing, and ready."

I'd assumed that sex was something that just happened to guys if they went

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out a lot and exposed themselves to chance—after all, that's why they called

conversation wane into small talk, he was already leading her somewhere

it getting lucky. The only tool they had in their belt was persistence. Of

sexual.

course, there were some men who were sexually comfortable around

"I am," she protested.

women, who would tease them mercilessly until they had them eating out

"Then prove it to me," he said, smiling. "Let's try a little exercise. It's

of their hands. But that wasn't me. It took all of my courage to simply ask a  
called synesthesia." He took a step closer to her. "Have you ever heard of  
woman for the time or where Melrose Avenue was. I didn't know anything  
synesthesia? It will enable you to find all kinds of resources to accomplish  
about anchoring, eliciting values, rinding trance words, or these other  
and feel the things you want in life."  
things Grimble kept talking about.  
Synesthesia is the nerve gas in the arsenal of the speed seducer.  
Liter-  
How did I ever get laid without all this technology?  
ally, it is an overlapping of the senses. In the context of seduction, however,  
It was a quiet Tuesday night in the Valley, and the only place Grimble  
synesthesia refers to a type of waking hypnosis in which a woman is put  
knew to go was the local T.G.I. Friday's. In the car, we warmed up—listening  
into a heightened state of awareness and told to imagine pleasurable im-  
to cassette tapes of sarges by Rick H., practicing openers, faking smiles, and  
ages and sensations growing in intensity. The goal: to make her uncontrol-  
dancing in our seats to get energetic. It was one of the most ridiculous  
lably aroused.

things I'd ever done, but I was entering a new world now, with its own rules

She agreed and closed her eyes. I was finally going to get to hear one of

of behavior.

Ross's secret patterns. But as soon as Grimble began, a stocky, red-faced

We walked in the door of the restaurant—confident, smiling, alpha. Un-

jock wearing a pocket undershirt marched up to him.

fortunately, no one noticed. There were two guys at the bar watching a base-

“What are you doing?” he asked Grimble.

ball game on television, a group of businesspeople at a corner table, and a

“I was showing her a self-improvement exercise called synesthesia.”

mostly male bar staff. We strutted to the balcony. As we pushed the door

“Well, that's my wife.”

open, a woman appeared. Time to put what I'd learned to the test.

I had forgotten to check for a wedding ring, though I doubted minor

“Hey,” I said to her. “Let me get your opinion on something.”

inconveniences like marriage mattered to Grimble.

She stopped and listened. She was about four foot ten, with short,

“Go disarm the guy,” Grimble turned to me and hissed, “while I work

frizzy hair and a marshmallow body, but she had a nice smile; she would be

on the girl.”

good practice. I decided to use the Maury Povich opener.

I had no idea how to disarm him. He didn't seem quite as laid-back as

"My friend Grimble there just got a call today from the Maury Povich

Scott Baio. "He can show you the exercise, too," I said wanly.

"It's really

show," I began. "And it seems they're doing a segment on secret admirers.

cool."

Evidently, someone has a little crush on him. Do you think he should go on

"I don't know what the fuck you're talking about," the guy said.

"What

the show or not?"

is this thing supposed to do to me?" He took a step closer and leaned his

"Sure," she answered. "Why not?"

face into mine. He smelled like whiskey and onion rings.

"But what if his secret admirer is a man?" I asked. "Talk shows always

"It tells you whether... whether..." I stammered. "Never mind."

need to put an unexpected twist on everything. Or what if it's a relative?"

The guy lifted his hands and pushed me backward. Though I tell girls

It's not lying; it's flirting.

I'm five feet and eight inches, I'm actually five foot six. The top of my head

She laughed. Perfect. "Would you do the show?" I asked.

just reached his shoulders.

"Probably not," she answered.

“Stop it,” his wife, our former sarge, said. She turned to us.

“He’s

Suddenly, Grimble stepped in. “So you would make me go on the show,

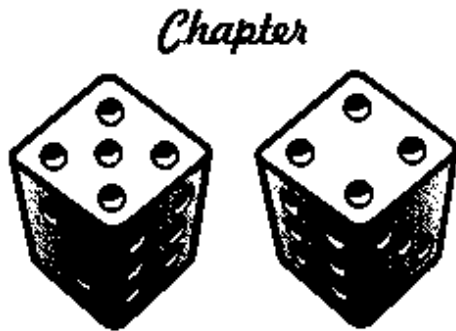
drunk. He gets like this.”

but you wouldn’t do it yourself,” he teased her. “You’re not adventurous at

“Like what?” I asked. “Violent?”

all, are you?” It was great to watch him work. Where I would have let the

She smiled sadly.



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“You seem like a great couple,” I said. My attempt to disarm him had

clearly failed, because he was about to disarm me. His red drunken face was

two inches from mine and yelling about ripping something.

“Pleasure meeting you both,” I squeaked, slowly backing away.

“Remind me,” Grimble said as we retreated to the car, “to teach you

how to handle the AMOG.”

“The AMOG?”

Four days later, as I sat at home alone on a Saturday afternoon watching

“Yes, the alpha male of the group.”

the videos Grimble had given me, he called with good news. He and his

Oh, I see.

wing, Twotimer, were going to meet Ross Jeffries at California Pizza

Kitchen for an expedition to the Getty Museum, and I was invited.

I arrived fifteen minutes early, selected a booth, and read through

printouts of seduction board posts until Ross, Grimble, and Twotimer ar-

rived. Twotimer had black hair gelled to the texture of a licorice vine, a

matching leather jacket, and a snake-like quality. With his round, babyish

face, he looked like a Grimble clone who'd been inflated by a bicycle pump.

As I stood up to introduce myself, Ross cut me off. He was not the most

polite person I'd ever met. He wore a long wool overcoat, which flowed

loosely around his legs when he walked. He was thin and gawky with gray

stubble and greasy skin. His hairline was a receding mop of short, unkempt,

ash-colored curls, and the hook in his nose was so pronounced he could

have hung his overcoat on it.

"So what did you learn from Mystery?" Ross asked with a sneer.

"A lot," I told him.

"Like what?"

"Well, one of my sticking points was knowing when a girl was attracted

to me. Now I know.”

“And how do you know?” he asked.

“When I get three indicators of interest.”

“Name them.”

“Let’s see. When she asks you what your name is.”

“That’s one.”

“When you take her hands in yours and squeeze them, and she squeezes back.”

“That’s two.”

“And, uh, I can’t remember the rest right now.”

“Aha.” He leapt to his feet. “Then he’s not a very good teacher, is he?”

“No, he was a great teacher,” I protested.

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“Then name the third indicator of interest.”

“Well, we broke up,” she said. “But it took a while. We were friends

“I can’t think of it right now.” I felt like an animal backed into a corner.

first.”

“Case closed,” he said. He was good.

“Isn’t it so much better, though, when you just feel that sense of  
A short waitress with blue nails, a touch of baby fat, and sandy brown

attraction”—he moved his hand up like an elevator and her eyes began to

hair arrived to take our order. Ross looked at her, and then winked at me.

glaze again—“right away for someone.” He pointed to himself, which I as—

“These are my students,” he told her. “I’m their guru.”

sumed was another NLP trick to make her think he was that someone. “It’s

“Really?” she asked, feigning interest.

incredible, isn’t it?”

“What would you say if I told you that I teach people how to use mind

“Yes,” she agreed, completely oblivious to her other tables.

control to attract any person they desire?”

“What was wrong with your boyfriend?”

“Get out of here.”

“He was too immature.”

“Yes, it’s true. I could make you fall in love with any person at this

Ross seized the opportunity. “Well, you should date more mature men.”

table.”

“I was just thinking that, about you, as we were talking.” She giggled.

“And how’s that? With mind control?” She was skeptical, but bordering

“I bet that when you first came to the table, I was the last person you

on curious.

thought you’d be attracted to.”

“Let me ask you something. When you’re really attracted to somebody,

“It’s strange,” she said, “because you’re not my usual type.”

how do you know? In other words, what signals do you get from yourself,

Ross suggested they get together for coffee when she wasn’t working,



inside, that allow you to realize”—and here he lowered his voice, slowly pro-

and she jumped at the opportunity to give him her phone number. His tech-

nouncing each word—“you’re ... really... attracted... to ... this guy?”

nique was so different than Mystery’s, but he seemed to be the real deal too.

The purpose of the question, I would find out later, was to make the

Ross let out a loud, victorious laugh. “Well, your other customers are

waitress feel the emotion of attraction in his presence, and thus associate

probably getting angry. But before you go, I’ll tell you what. Why don’t we

those feelings with his face.

take all those good feelings you’re having right now”—raising his hands

She thought about it for a moment. “Well, I guess I get a funny feeling

again—“and put them into this pack of sugar”—he picked up a sugar pack

in my stomach, like butterflies.”

and rubbed his raised hand on it—“so that you can carry them around with

Ross put his hand, palm up, in front of his stomach. “Yes, and I bet that

you all day.”

the more attracted you become, the more those butterflies rise up from

He handed her the sugar pack. She put it in her apron and walked away,

your stomach”—he began slowly raising his hand to the level of his heart—

still beet red.

“until your face begins to flush ... like it is right now.”

“That,” Twotimer hissed, “is condiment anchoring. After he’s gone, the

Twotimer leaned over and whispered: “That’s anchoring. It’s when you

sugar pack will remind her of the positive emotions she felt with him.”

associate a feeling—like attraction—with a touch or a gesture. Now, every

As we left the restaurant, Ross ran the exact same routine on the host—

time Ross raises his hand like that, she gets attracted to him.”

ess and collected her number. Both women were in their twenties; Ross was

After a few more minutes of Ross’s flirtatious hypnospeak, the wait—

in his forties. I was floored.

ress’s eyes began to glaze over. Ross seized the opportunity to toy with her

We pressed into Ross’s Saab and headed to the Getty. “Anything you

mercilessly. He raised his hands like an elevator from his stomach to his face

want from a woman—attraction, lust, fascination—is just an internal pro—

every few seconds, smiling as it made her blush every time. The dishes she

cess that she runs through her body and her brain,” he explained as he

was carrying were forgotten, balancing precariously on her weakening arm.

drove. “And all you need to evoke that process are questions that make her

“With your boyfriend,” Ross continued, “were you attracted right

go into her body and brain and actually experience it in order to answer

away?” He snapped, freeing her from her trance. “Or did it take time?”

you. Then she will link those feelings of attraction to you.”

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Sitting in the back seat with me, Twotimer scanned my face for a reac-

We lurked through the galleries, gazing at the people *gazing* at paint-

tion. “What do you think?” he asked.

ings. I watched as Grimble and Twotimer talked to various women. But I

“Amazing,” I said.

was far too scared to approach in front of Ross: It felt like trying to play the

“Evil,” he corrected, letting a thin smile creep over his lips.

cello in front of Yo-Yo Ma. I was afraid he’d criticize everything I did or get

When we arrived at the Getty, Twotimer turned his attention to Ross. “I

upset that I wasn’t using enough of his technology. On the other hand, this

wanted to ask you about the October Man sequence,” he prodded. “I’ve

was a guy who advised students to get over their fear of approaching by

been switching around a few of the steps.”

walking up to random women and saying, “Hi, I’m Manny the Martian.

Ross turned to him. “You understand that these things are very bad?”

What’s your favorite flavor of bowling ball?” So I really didn’t have to worry

As he spoke, Ross wagged a finger at Twotimer’s chest, over his heart. He

about looking foolish in front of him. He created fools.

was anchoring again, trying to associate the notion of badness with the for-

At the end of the day, Ross had three numbers. Twotimer and Grimble

bidden pattern. “There’s a reason I don’t teach them at my seminars.”

had two each. And I had nothing.

“Why is that?” Twotimer asked.

As we took the train downhill to the museum parking lot, Ross slid

“Because,” Ross answered, “it’s like giving dynamite to children.”

into the seat next to me. “Listen,” he said. “I have a seminar coming up in a

Twotimer smiled again. I could tell exactly what he was thinking—

few months. And I will let you sit in and take it for free.”

because, in my mind, the word *evil* was anchored to that smile.

“Thanks,” I said.

“Darwin talked about survival of the fittest,” Twotimer explained to

“I am going to be your guru. Not Mystery. You’ll see that what I am

me as we walked through the museum’s collection of pre-twentieth century

teaching is a hundred times more powerful.”

art. “In earlier times, this meant that the strong survived. But strength

I wasn’t sure how to respond. They were competing over me—an AFC.

doesn’t help one get ahead in society today. Women breed with seducers,

“And one more thing,” Ross said. “In exchange, I want you to take me

who understand how to trigger, through words and touch, the fantasy

to five—no, six—Hollywood parties, with super-hot babes. I need to widen

parts of the female brain.” There was something artificial and rehearsed

my horizons.”

about the way he spoke, the way he moved, the way he looked at me. It felt

He smiled and asked, “Do we have a deal?” as he rubbed his thumb on

as if he were sucking my soul into his eyes. “So the whole idea of survival of

his chin. I was sure he was anchoring me.

the fittest is an anachronism. As players, we stand at the gate of a new era:

the survival of the smoothest.”

I liked the idea, though unfortunately I was no smoother than I was

strong. My voice was fast and choppy, my movements *effete*, my body lan-

guage awkward. For me, survival was going to take work.

“Casanova was one of us,” Twotimer went on. “But we live a better lifestyle.”

“Well, it probably took a lot more work to seduce a woman back then

because of the morals of the day,” I said, trying to contribute something

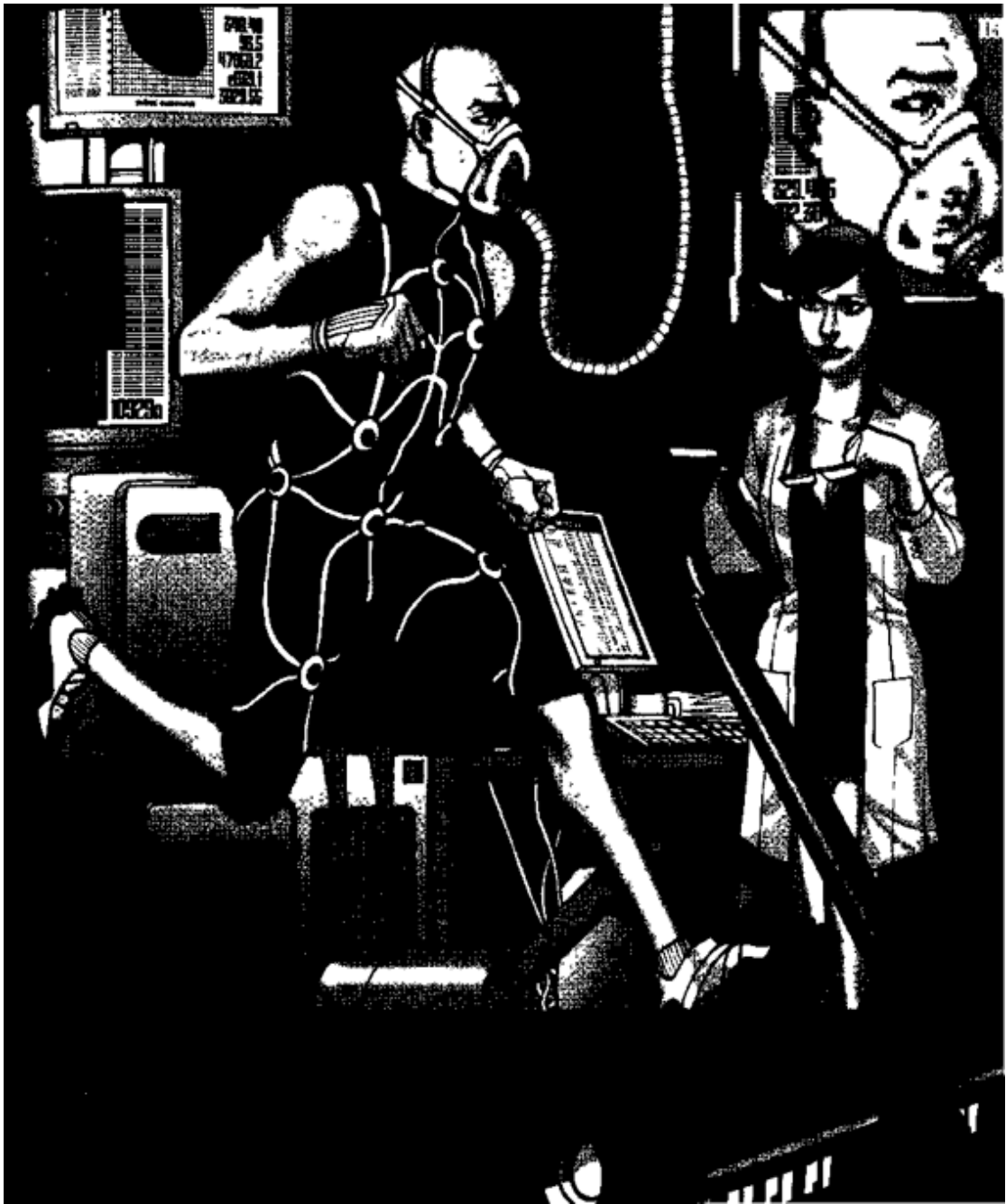
useful.

“And we have the technology.”

“You mean NLP?”

“Not just that. He had to work alone.” He grinned as his gaze bore

deeper into my eyes. “We have each other.”



STEP 3  
DEMONSTRATE  
VALUE



## Chapter



The best predators don't lie on the jungle floor with their teeth bared and

claws out. The prey is going to avoid them. They approach the prey slowly

MY MAN IS SMOOTH LIKE BARRY,

and harmlessly, win its trust, and then attack.

At least, that's what Sin told me. He facetiously called it Sin Method.

AND HIS VOICE GOT BASS.

Though Mystery had flown back to Toronto after the workshop, I

stayed in touch with Sin. I'd watch as a woman came over to his house for

A BODY LIKE ARNOLD WITH A

the first time and he'd throw her against the wall by her neck, then release

her just before he kissed her, shooting her adrenaline level through the roof

with equal parts fear and arousal. Then he'd cook her dinner and never

DENZEL FACE ...

speak a word about it until dessert, when he'd stare at her like a tiger eying

its prey and say, in a tone of restrained lust, "You don't even want to know

HE ALWAYS HAS HEAVY



the things I'm thinking of doing to you right now." That was generally the

point when I'd excuse myself to go home.

CONVERSATION FOR THE MIND,

Along with the sneakier Grimble, the more predatory Sin became a

faithful wing. But our friendship didn't last long. One afternoon, after a

W H I C H MEANS A LOT TO ME, 'CAUSE

sarging session at the Beverly Center mall, Sin informed me that he'd en-

rolled in the Air Force as an officer.

GOOD MEN ARE HARD TO FIND.

"The military is a steady paycheck," he explained as we sat in a mall

cafe. "And I can live wherever I want. I've been an unemployed computer

programmer for too long."

I tried to talk him out of it. Sin was into astral projection, goth rock, S

and M, and pickup. He would have to hide all that if he joined the military.

—SALT-N-PEPA,

But his mind was made up. "I was talking to Mystery about you," he said,

leaning low over the metal latticework of the table. His tone, as always, was

*"Whatta Man"*

deadly serious. "He wants to schedule his next workshop in December.

Since I'm not going to be around to wing him, he wants you to do it."

As I thought of another weekend with Mystery and all his secrets, like the triple-stacked patterns he used to move girls to tears, I tried to control the excitement in my voice. “I think I’ll be free,” I said. Out of all the potential pickup artists in the world, I couldn’t believe that Mystery was choosing me. He must not know that many people.

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There was just one small problem: I wasn’t going to be free in December. “Move to L.A.,” I urged. “This is where all the peacocky girls you like live.” I’d booked a flight to Belgrade to visit Marko, the schoolmate who had introduced me to Dustin and his natural ways. It was too late to cancel on Marko, but there was no way I was going to miss the opportunity to wing a bunch of workshops. I’ve got people interested in Miami, Chicago, and Mystery either. New York.” There had to be a solution. “How about Belgrade?” That night, I called Mystery in Toronto, where he was living with his

“What? Isn’t there a war going on there?”

parents, his two nieces, his sister, and her husband.

“No, the war’s over. And I have to visit an old friend. He said it’s safe.

“Hey, buddy,” Mystery said when he answered. “I’m bored out of my

We can stay with him for free, and Slavic women are supposed to be the

mind here.”

most beautiful in the world.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

He hesitated.

“Well, it’s raining and I want to go out. But I have no one to go out with

“And I have a free companion ticket.”

and no clue where to go.” He paused to tell his nieces to shut up.

“I’ll prob-

Silence. He was considering it.

ably just get some sushi alone.”

I pushed further. “What the hell. It’s an adventure. At the very worst,

I’d assumed that the great Mystery would have girls lined up every

you’ll have a new picture for your photo routine.”

night of the week and a wait-list of sargers eager to take him out clubbing.

Mystery thought like a flowchart. And if he agreed to something, his as-

Instead, he was stagnating at home. His father was sick. His mother was

sent was given instantly and always with the same word, which he spoke

overburdened. And his sister was separating from her husband.

next: “Done.”

“Can’t you go out with Patricia?” I asked. Patricia was Mystery’s girl—

“Great,” I said. “I’ll e-mail you the flight times.” I couldn’t wait for the

friend, the one pictured in her negligee in his pickup resume.

six hour plane ride. I wanted to vacuum every piece of knowledge—every

“She’s mad at me,” he said. Mystery had met Patricia four years ago,

magic trick, every pickup line, every story—out of his head. I wanted to

when she was fresh off the boat from Romania. He tried to mold her into

mimic exactly what I’d seen him do, word for word, trick for trick, simply

his ideal girl—he talked her into getting a boob job, giving him blow jobs

because it worked.

(which she’d never done before), and taking a job as a stripper—but she

“But wait,” he said. “There’s something else.”

drew the line at bisexuality. For Mystery, this was a dealbreaker.

“What?”

Everyone has their own reason for getting into the game. Some, like Ex-

“If you’re going to be my wing, you can’t be Neil Strauss,” he said with

tramask, are virgins who want to experience what it’s like to be with a

the same air of finality with which he had spoken the word *done*. “It’s time

woman. Others, like Grimble and Twotimer, desire new girls every night.

for you to change, to just snap and become someone else. Think about it:

And a few, like Sweater, are searching for the perfect wife. Mystery had his

Neil Strauss, writer. That isn't cool. Nobody wants to sleep with a writer.

own specific goal.

They're at the bottom of the social ladder. You must be a superstar. And not

"I want to be loved by two women," he said. "I want a blonde 10 and an

just with women. You are an artist in need of an art. And I think your art is

Asian 10, who will love each other as much as they love me. And Patricia's

actually the social skills you're learning. I watched you in the field; you

heterosexuality is affecting my sex life with her, because unless I imagine

adapted quickly. That's why Sin and I picked you. Hold on a minute."

another girl there, I can't always keep my boner." He moved the phone to

I heard him rustling through some papers. "Listen," he said. "These are

another room because his sister and her husband were arguing, and contin-

my personal development goals. I want to raise the money for a touring il-

ued, "I'd just break up with Patricia, but there aren't any 10s in Toronto. No

lusion show. I want to live in posh hotels. I want a limo to and from shows.

outrageous glitter girls. It's all 7s, at best."

I want specials on TV with big illusions. I want to levitate over Niagara

## Chapter



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Falls. I want to travel to England and Australia. I want jewelry, games, a

model airplane, a personal assistant, a stylist. And I want to act in *Jesus*

*Christ Superstar*—as Jesus."

At least he knew what he wanted in life. "What I'm really after," he fir-

nally said, "is for people to be envious of me, for women to want me and

men to want to be me."

"You never got much love as a child, did you?"

One of my teenage heroes was Harry Crosby. He was a poet from the 1920s,

"No," he replied sheepishly.

and, frankly, his poetry sucked. But his lifestyle was legendary. The nephew

At the end of the conversation, he said he was going to e-mail me the

and godson of J. P. Morgan, he hobnobbed with Ernest Hemingway and

password to a secret online community called Mystery's Lounge. He had

D. H. Lawrence, was the first person to publish parts of Joyce's *Ulysses*, and

created Mystery's Lounge two years before, after an enterprising bartender

became a decadent symbol of the lost generation. He lived a fast, opium-

he'd slept with in Los Angeles found an Internet post he'd written about her

enhanced life, and swore he would be dead by the age of thirty. When he was

on a public seduction newsgroup. After spending a weekend poring

twenty-two, he married Polly Peabody, the inventor of the strapless bra, and

through the rest of his online archive, she e-mailed Mystery's girlfriend, Pa-

persuaded her to change her name to Caresse. For their honeymoon, they

tricia, and told her about her boyfriend's extracurricular activities. The fall-

locked themselves in a bedroom in Paris with stacks of books and just read.

out nearly destroyed his relationship, and in the process taught him that

At the age of thirty-one, when he realized that his lifestyle hadn't killed him

there was a downside to being a pickup artist: getting caught.

yet, Crosby shot himself.

Unlike the other seduction boards I had been reading, where hundreds

I didn't have a Caresse to lock up with me, but I shut myself in the

of newbies were constantly begging for advice from just a few experts, Mys-

house for a week Harry Crosby-style, reading books, listening to tapes,

tery had cherry-picked the best pickup artists in the community for his pri-

watching videos, and studying the posts in Mystery's Lounge. I immersed

vate forum. Here they not only shared their secrets, stories, and techniques,

myself in seduction theory. I needed to shed Neil Strauss and rewire myself

but also posted pictures of themselves and their women—even, on occasion,

to become Style. I wanted to live up to Mystery and Sin's faith in me.

video and audio recordings of their exploits in the field.

To do so, I'd have to change not just the things I said to women, but the

“But remember,” Mystery said sternly. “You are no longer Neil Strauss.

way I acted around them. I needed to become confident, to become inter-

When I see you in there, I want you to be someone else. You need a seduc-

esting, to become decisive, to become graceful, to become the alpha male I

tion name/' He paused and reflected: “Styles?”



was never raised to be. I had a lot of lost *time to* make up for—  
and six weeks

“How about Style?” That was one thing I prided myself on: I  
may never

to do it in.

have been socially comfortable, but at least I knew how to dress  
better than

I bought books on body language, flirting, and sexual technique.  
I read

those who were.

anthologies of women’s sexual fantasies, like Nancy Friday’s  
*My Secret Garden*

“Style *it* is. Mystery and Style.”

*den*, in order to internalize the idea that women actually want  
sex as much

Yes, it was Mystery and Style giving a workshop. It had a nice  
ring to it.

as—if not more than—men; they just don’t want to be  
pressured, lied to, or

Style the pickup artist—teaching lovable losers how to meet the  
women of

made to feel like a slut.

their dreams.

I ordered books on marketing, like Robert Cialdini’s seminal  
*Influence*,

But as soon as I hung up, I realized something: First, Style  
needed to

from which I learned several key principles that guide the  
majority of peo

teach himself. After all, it had only been a month since my  
workshop with

ple’s decisions. The most important of these is social proof,  
which is the no

Mystery. I still had a long way to go.

tion that if everyone else is doing something, then it must be good. So if

It was time for a motherfucking change.

you are in a bar with a beautiful female friend on your arm (a pivot, as they

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call *it* in the community), it's much easier to meet women than if you're

I took notes on everything I studied, developing routines and stories to

hanging out alone.

test in the field. I neglected my work, my friends, and my family. I was on an

I watched the videos Grumble had given me and took notes on each,

eighteen-hour-a-day mission.

memorizing affirmations (“if a woman enters my world, it will be the best

When I finally crammed as much information in my brain as it could

thing that can ever happen to her”) and patterns. There is a difference be-

hold, I started working on body language. I signed up for lessons in swing

tween a line and a pattern. A line is basically any prepared comment made

and salsa dancing. I rented *Rebel Without A Cause* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

to a woman. A pattern is a more elaborate script, specifically designed to

to practice the looks and poses of James Dean and Marlon Brando. I stud-

arouse her.

ied Pierce Brosnan in the remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair*,  
Brad Pitt in

Men and women think and respond differently. Show a man the  
cover

*Meet Joe Black*, Mickey Rourke in *Wild Orchid*, Jack Nicholson  
in *The Witches of*

of *Playboy*, and he's ready to go. In fact, show him a pitted  
avocado and he's

*Eastwick*, and Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*.

ready to go. Women, according to the speed seducers, aren't  
persuaded as

I looked at every aspect of my physical behavior. Were my arms  
swing-

easily by direct images and talk. They respond better to  
metaphor and sug-

ing when I walked? Did they bow out a little, as if trying to get  
around mas-

gestion.

sive pectorals? Did I walk with a confident swagger? Could I  
stick my chest

One of Ross Jeffries's most famous patterns uses a Discovery  
Channel

out further? Hold my head up higher? Swing my legs out  
further, as if try-

show about roller coaster design as a metaphor for the  
attraction, trust, and

ing to get around massive genitalia?

excitement that are often necessary preconditions for sex. The  
pattern de-

After correcting what I could on my own, I signed up for a  
course on

scribes the “perfect attraction,” which provides a feeling of excitement as

Alexander Technique to improve my posture and rid myself of the round-

the roller coaster rises to a summit and then whooshes down in a rush; then

shouldered curse I’d inherited from my father’s side of the family. And be-

it offers a feeling of safety, because it was designed to allow you to have this

cause no one ever understands a word I say—my voice is too fast, quiet, and

experience in a comfortable, safe environment; finally, as soon as the ride is

mumbly—I started taking weekly private lessons in speech and singing.

over, you want to climb back on and ride it again and again. Even if it seems

I wore stylish jackets with bright shirts and accessorized as much as I

unlikely that a pattern like this will turn a girl on, at least it’s better than

could. I bought rings, a necklace, and fake piercings. I experimented with

talking about work.

cowboy hats, feather boas, light-up necklaces, and even sunglasses at night

It wasn’t enough, though, for me just to study Ross Jeffries. A lot of his

to see which received the most attention from women. In my heart, I knew

ideas are simply applications of neuro-linguistic programming. So I went to

most of these gaudy accouterments were tacky, but Mystery's peacock the

the source and bought books by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, the

ory worked. When I wore at least one item that stood out, women who were

University of California professors who developed and popularized this

interested in meeting me had an easy way to start a conversation.

fringe school of hypnopsychology in the 1970s.

I went out with Grimble, Twotimer, and Ross Jeffries nearly every night

After NLP, it was time to learn some of Mystery's tricks. I spent one

and, chunk by chunk, learned a new way to interact. Women are sick of

hundred and fifty dollars at magic stores, buying videos and books on levi-

generic guys asking the same generic questions: "So where are you from?...

tation, metal bending, and mind reading. I'd learned from Mystery that one

What do you do for work?" With our patterns, gimmicks, and routines, we

of the most important things to do with an attractive woman was to

were barroom heroes, saving the female of the species from certain ennui.

demonstrate value. In other words, what makes me any different from the

Not all women appreciated our efforts, of course. Though I was never

last twenty guys who approached her? Well, if I can bend her  
fork by looking

hit, yelled at, or doused with a drink, stories of spectacular  
failures circled

at it or guess her name before even speaking to her, that's a little  
different.

constantly in the back of my mind. There was the story of  
Jonah, a twenty-

To further demonstrate value, I bought books on handwriting  
*analy*

three-year-old virgin in the seduction community who was hit in  
the back

*sis*, rune reading, and tarot cards. After all, everyone's favorite  
subject is

of the head—twice—by a drunk girl who took his negs the  
wrong way. And

themselves.

there was Little Big Dick, a sarger from Alaska, who was sitting  
at a table

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talking to a girl when her boyfriend came up from behind,  
yanked him out

and hosted a show on TNN. The longer we talked, the more she  
seemed to

of his seat, threw him to the ground, and kicked him in the head  
for two

enjoy the conversation. But as I noticed the material working, I  
became ner

minutes straight, fracturing his left eye socket and leaving boot  
marks on

vous. I couldn't believe that a woman who looked like this was  
into me.

his face.

Everyone in Office Depot was staring at us. I couldn't go on.

But they were the exceptions, I hoped.

"I'm late for an appointment," I told her. My hands were shaking from

These beat-downs were foremost in my mind as I drove my car to West-

nerves. "But what steps can we take to continue this conversation?"

wood, home to UCLA, for my first attempt at sarging during the daytime.

This was Mystery's number-close routine. A pickup artist never gives a

Despite the cheat sheet of my favorite openers and routines in the back

girl his phone number, because she might not call. A PUA must make a

pocket of my jeans, I was petrified as I roamed the streets, trying to select

woman comfortable enough to give him her number. He must also avoid

someone for my first approach.

asking for it directly, because she could always say no, and instead lead her

As I walked past an Office Depot, I saw a woman with brown glasses

to suggest the idea herself.

and short blonde hair that danced on her shoulders. She was thin, with

"I could give you my number," she offered.

smooth, gentle curves, jeans that were just tight enough, and a beautiful

She wrote down her name, followed by her number and e-mail address.

complexion, like burned butter. She looked like the undiscovered treasure

I couldn't believe it.

of the campus.

"I don't go out much, though," she warned, as an afterthought. Maybe

She walked into the store, and I decided to move on. But then I saw her

she was already having regrets.

again through the window. She looked like a cool intellectual whose inner

When I returned home, I pulled the scrap of paper out of my pocket

bombshell hadn't blossomed yet, someone I could talk with about

and placed it in front of the computer. Since she was supposedly a model, I

Tarkovsky movies and then take to a monster truck rally. Maybe this would

wanted to look for a picture of her online. She had only given me her first

be my Caresse. I knew that if I didn't approach her, I'd chastise myself af-

name, Dalene, but fortunately her e-mail address contained her last name,

terward and feel like a failure. So I decided to attempt my first daytime

Kurtis. I typed the words into Google, and nearly a hundred thousand re-

pickup. Besides, I told myself, she probably wasn't that good-looking up



sults came up.

close anyway.

I had just number-closed the reigning Playmate of the Year.

I walked into the store and found her in an aisle looking at mailing

envelopes.

“Hey, maybe you can help me settle a debate I’m having,” I told her. As

I recited the Maury Povich opener, I noticed that she was even more beauti-

ful at close range. I had stumbled across a genuine 10. And I had to follow

protocol and neg her.

“I know this is wrong to say,” I blurted, “but I grew up on Bugs Bunny

cartoons as a child, and you have the most adorable Bugs Bunny overbite.”

I was worried I’d gone too far. I’d made the neg up on the spot and was

probably about to get slapped. But she actually grinned. “After all those

years of braces, my mom’s going to be mad,” she replied. She was flirting

back with me.

I performed the ESP routine, and fortunately she picked seven. She was

*amazed*. I asked her what she did for work, and she said she was a model

## *Chapter*



63

“Okay. I beat off, clean up, and then pull up my underwear, right?” He

walked inside and flopped onto my couch.

“I guess I follow.”

“But what I didn’t realize until yesterday was that I still had cum in my

penis hole. So I’d go to sleep, and the cum would harden in my cockhole.

Then I’d wake up in the morning and take a pee, but the pee wouldn’t come

I sat in front of my phone and stared at Dalene Kurtis’s number every eve-

out.” He put a hand on his crotch and wiggled it to illustrate the point. “So

ning. But I couldn’t bring myself to call. I wasn’t confident and good-

I’d push harder and a chunk of jizz would fly out of my penis and smash

looking enough for this perfect specimen of femininity. I mean, what was I

into the wall or some shit.”

going to do on a date with her?

“You’re out of your mind.” I’d never experienced or even heard of

I remember meeting a girl named Elisa for lunch at a summer job when  
this phenomenon before. Extramask was the strange result of a repres-  
I was seventeen. I was so nervous, I couldn't stop my hands from shaking or  
sive Catholic education and an expansive stand-up comedy ambition. I  
my voice from quavering. And the more awkward I became, the more un-  
could never tell if he was experiencing serious angst or just trying to en-  
comfortable she grew. By the time the food arrived, I was too self-conscious  
tertain me.  
even to chew in front of her. It was a disaster—and it wasn't even a date. So  
“It hurt like a fucker,” he continued. “It was so bad I even stopped jerk-  
what hope did I have with the Playmate of the Year?  
ing off for a week because I didn't want the pain. But last night I squeezed  
There's a word for this: unworthiness. I felt unworthy.  
that shit right out of the cock as soon as I blew a load.”  
So I waited three days to call, then put it off to the next day, and then  
“And now you can masturbate to your heart's delight?”  
decided that calling on the weekend would sound like I had no social life, so  
“Exactly,” he said. “And I haven't even told you the good news yet.”  
I figured I'd call her Monday. And by then a week had passed. She'd proba-

“I thought that was the good news.”

bly forgotten about me. We’d talked for ten minutes at most, and it had

He raised his voice excitedly. “I can pee beside people now! It’s all about

been, admittedly, a soft close. I was just some weird, interesting guy she had

confidence. So the stuff I learned in Mystery’s workshop isn’t just for chicks

met in an office-supply store. There was no reason this woman, who could

after all.”

have her choice of any man in the hemisphere, would want to see me again.

“That’s true.”

So I never called.

“It’s used for pissing too.”

I was my own worst enemy.

We drove to La Salsa for burritos. At a table nearby, there was an attrac-

My first legitimate success didn’t come until a week later.

Extramask,

tive but slightly unkempt woman stuffing receipts into a bulging Filofax.

from Mystery’s workshop, dropped by my apartment in Santa Monica

She had long, curly brown hair; tiny ferret-like features; and immense

unannounced one Monday night. He was very excited because he’d just

breasts that refused to be concealed by her sweatshirt. I broke the three-

made a fascinating discovery.

second rule by about two hundred and fifty seconds but finally worked up

“I always used to think jerking off and pain came hand in hand,” he announced

the confidence to approach. I didn’t want to look like an AFC in front of

announced the moment I opened the door.

Extramask.

Extramask looked different. He had dyed and spiked his hair, pierced

“I’ve been taking a course in handwriting analysis,” I told her. “While

his ears, and bought rings, a necklace, and punk-looking clothes. He actually

we’re waiting for our food, do you mind if I practice on you?” She looked at

ally appeared cool. In his hands, he had an Anthony Robbins book, *Unlimited*

me skeptically but then decided I was harmless and consented. I handed her

*ited Power*. We were clearly on the same path.

my notebook and told her to write a sentence in it.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“Interesting,” I said. “Your handwriting has no slant. It’s straight up

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and down, which means you’re a self-sufficient person and don’t always

“What is that?” she asked.

need to be around others to feel good about yourself.”

“It’s a visualization exercise. A friend taught it to me. I don’t know it by

I made sure she was nodding in agreement, and then continued. This

heart, but I can read it to you.”

was a technique I had learned from a book on cold-reading that exposed the

She wanted to hear it.

truisms and body-language-reading techniques that sham psychics use.

“Good.” I said, as I unfolded the paper with the pattern on it and began

“You don’t have a great organizational system to your writing, which means

reading. “Maybe you can try to remember the last time you felt happiness or

that in general you’re not good at keeping yourself organized and sticking

pleasure. As you feel it now, where in your body are those feelings?”

to a schedule.”

She pointed to the center of her chest.

With each tidbit I told her, she leaned in closer and nodded her head

“And how good does it feel on a scale of one to ten?”

more vigorously. She had a wonderful smile and was easy to talk to. She’d

“Seven.”

just finished a comedy class nearby, she said, and offered to read me some

“Okay, now, as you focus in on this feeling right here, notice that you

jokes from her notebook.

can begin now to see a color flowing from this feeling. What is the color?”

“I open my shows with this one,” she said after my analysis. “I just got

“Purple,” she said, as she closed her eyes.

back from the gym, and boy are my arms tired.” This was her opener. She

“Good, now what would it be like if you were to allow all of the purple

had it on a cheat sheet that she kept in her back pocket. Picking up women,

flowing from that spot to fill with warmth and intensity? With each breath

I realized, was a lot like stand-up comedy or any other performing art. They

that you take, I want you to let the purple grow just a little bit brighter.”

each require openers, routines, and a memorable close, plus the ability to

Her body began to relax; I could see her chest rise and fall through her

make it all seem new every time.

sweater. I was doing it now—evoking a response like the one I had seen Ross

She said she was spending the night at a hotel in town, so I offered to

Jeffries get at California Pizza Kitchen. I continued with the pattern more

drive her there. As I dropped her off, I pointed to my cheek and said, “Kiss

confidently, making the color expand and grow in intensity inside her as

goodbye.” She kissed my cheek. Extramask kicked the back of my seat excit-

she fell deeper into trance. I imagined Twotimer mouthing the word *evil* in

edly. Then I told her I had work to do, but that I’d call her for a drink when

the background.

I was finished.

“How do you feel now, on a scale of one to ten?” I asked.

“Do you want to go out clubbing with Vision and me tonight?”  
Extra-

“Ten,” she said. I guess it was working.

mask asked after she left.

Then I had her shrink the color to a tiny purple pea that contained all

“No, I should see this girl.”

the power and intensity of the pleasure she was feeling. I had her place the

“Well, I’m going out anyway,” he said. “But when I get home afterward,

imaginary pea in my hand. Then I traced my hand all along her body, first at

I’m going to pound out the biggest batch thinking about that girl who just

a distance and then lightly touching it.

kissed you.”

“Notice how my touch can become like a paintbrush, transferring

Before leaving to pick her up that night, I printed one of the forbidden

those colors and that sensation up your wrist, through your arm, and to the



Ross Jeffries patterns Grimble had e-mailed me. I was determined to make surface of the face.”

up for my recent mistake.

To be honest, I had no idea whether this was turning her on or not. She

We went to a dive bar and had a drink. She had changed into a frayed

was listening, and she seemed to be enjoying it, but she didn't start sucking

blue sweater and saggy jeans, which made her look somewhat dumpy.

my fingers like the girl in Grimble's story. In fact, I felt not only a little stu-

Nonetheless, I was happy to be on an actual date with a woman I'd picked up.

pid but also lecherous using the pretext of hypnosis to touch her. I didn't

Finally, I had an opportunity to experiment with more advanced material.

like these forbidden patterns. I got into the game to learn confidence, not

“There's a way,” I told her, “that you can bring better focus to your

mind control.

goals and your life.” I felt like Grimble in T.G.I. Friday's.

I stopped and asked her what she thought. “It felt good,” she said, and

## Chapter



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smiled her ferret smile. I couldn't tell whether she was humoring me or not,

but I suppose most people are willing to try something new if it seems safe.

I folded the piece of paper, put it in my pocket, and drove her back to

her hotel. But instead of dropping her off, I pulled into the garage. We

climbed out of the car, and I followed her to her room. I was too scared to

say a word, afraid she might suddenly turn on me and ask, "Why are you

following me?" But she seemed to have mentally consented: It looked like

*Every night after outings and dates, seduction students and masters post online*

we were going to have sex tonight. I couldn't believe my luck. After all that

*breakdowns of their experiences, called field reports. The goals in chronicling their*

practice, I was finally getting results.

*adventures vary: Some want help with mistakes, others want to share new techniques,*

According to Mystery, it takes roughly seven hours for a woman to be

*and a few just want to brag.*

comfortably led from meet to sex. These seven hours can take place all in

*The day after my misadventure with the stinky-footed comedian, Extramask*

one night, or over several days: approaching and talking for an hour; speak

*posted afield report online. Evidently, he had experienced his own odd adventure*

ing on the phone for an hour; meeting for drinks for two hours; talking on

*that same night. His time in the seduction community had already paid off. He*

the phone for another hour; and then, on the next meeting, hanging out for

*could pee in toilet stalls next to other men; he could masturbate without hurting*

two more hours before going to bed together.

*himself; and, now, at the age of twenty-six, he had finally lost his virginity—*

Waiting seven hours or more is what Mystery calls solid game. But oc

*though not in the way he expected.*

asionally a woman either goes out with the specific intention of taking

someone home, or can be easily led to sex in a shorter amount of time. Mys

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

tery calls this fool's mate. I had spent an hour with this girl at La Salsa and

SUBJECT: Field Report—I F-closed a Girl!

two hours at the bar. I was about to experience my first fool's mate.

AUTHOR: Extramask

She put the card key in the lock of her room and the green light appeared—an omen, I felt, of the night of passion to come. She opened the

I, Extramask, have f-closed a girl for the first time—eliminating my virgin status

door, and I followed her inside. She sat on the foot of the bed—just like in

(even though I didn't blow my load). I'll start from the beginning.

the movies—and pulled her shoes off. First the left, then the right. She was

On Monday, I went sarging with Vision. We went to this three-story club

wearing white socks, which I found rather endearing. She flexed the toes of

that had about fifteen rooms, each with its own individual bar. We pretty much

both feet upward, then curled them downward as she collapsed backward

sarged the whole place.

on the bed.

Overall for the night, I was feeling out of state, and it was reflecting in my

I took a step toward her, prepared to fall on her in an embrace. But sud-

sarges. I wasn't doing as well as I normally do. I went to the second floor and

denly the foulest smell I have ever encountered assailed my nostrils. It liter-

found Vision. Some girl was wearing his scarf and he couldn't find her. So I

ally pushed me backward. It was the exact rancid-cheese smell that

was talking to him about this, and then this girl, WideFace, walked by and

homeless alcoholics on New York subways have. The kind that clears the

gave me serious eye contact. She said, “Hi.”

whole subway car. No matter how many steps back I took, the intensity of

Chicks rarely open me, so I said to her, “Hey, have you seen this guy’s

the smell did not diminish. It filled the entire room, every available space.

scarf?”

I looked at her, lying back on the bed, wanton, oblivious. It was her feet.

I just talked bullshit. I knew it didn’t matter what I said by the look on her

Her feet were stinking up the room.

wide face.

I had to get out of there.

After scarf chat:

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**WIDEFACE:** You are very beautiful [*spoken with a quarter Chinese/quarter*

Conveniently, WideFace forgot about the pizza and accidentally passed by

*English/quarter rich Chinese/quarter Zsa Zsa Gabor accent]*

the store We dropped her friend off, and I moved to the front seat I was

**EXTRAMASK:** Is that rights Thank you

looking at her mediocre body thinking, “This is cool I’m gonna get to touch all

**WIDEFACE:** So, when did you get here?  
of that shit”

Again, the conversation in the car wasn’t about sex It was lame chitchat

As you can see, the conversation was lame, but I knew it was on I knew if I

When I previously asked her what course she was taking in school, she said,

ran my routines on her, then I’d be going backward in the sarge  
“I’ll tell you later” I asked her this about three times, and each time she got

We talked about standard shit work, what we did tonight, brief history

more frustrated with me I didn’t care It fucking bugged me that this was the

of ourselves, etc We moved to a location that wasn’t as crowded (She

only thing she wouldn’t tell me

requested the move ) As we stood around chatting, Vision gave me social

She ended up telling me when we were alone in her car It was some

proof by occasionally walking by and patting me on the shoulder and shit like

lamo general college course It was a nonissue Then she told me her “dream

that It all helps

job ” I asked her about it, even though I didn’t give a shit

**WIDEFACE:** What are you looking for tonight

**WIDEFACE:** I want to be a police officer

**EXTRAMASK:** (*Thinking Holy Shit—I think I'm gonna get laid*)

**EXTRAMASK:** (*Thinking You'd be the worst police officer on the planet*)

**EXTRAMASK:** I don't know What are you looking for?  
You'll never be a police officer)

**WIDEFACE:** I am looking for excitement

**EXTRAMASK:** Why don't you pursue your dream?

**WIDEFACE:** Blah blah blah, drivel drivel drivel, jibber jabber  
jibber jabber

**EXTRAMASK:** Yeah, I'm looking for excitement too (*spoken casually*)

**WIDEFACE:** Would you like to come with my friend and me?

**EXTRAMASK:** Sure, just let me tell my friend that I'm leaving  
We got to her place She lives in the penthouse of this big  
fucking condo with

**WIDEFACE:** Okay, I'll be right over there

a roommate Her room was fucking huge She had this big  
Trinitron TV in it

She told me to choose some music, because she was going to  
the bathroom

I went looking for Vision

for a bit I put on some hip hop channel since she said she liked  
that kind of

stuff earlier

**EXTRAMASK:** Dude, it's on I think I'm gonna get laid

She came out in her pajamas I pinned her to the ground and  
bukked

**VISION:** Go, go Get out of here

her! No, seriously she came out in her pajamas and told me I  
could

go use the bathroom I didn't need to, but I figured this was part of the

Okay, so I found WideFace and her Serbian girlfriend We held hands and

whole sex thing, so I went Remember, brothers, I was virgin at this point—

walked to her car, which was about fifteen minutes away I was pretty nervous

I had no clue So I went to the bathroom and just kinda stood there I didn't

about the whole thing Then I calmed the fuck down

wash my cock or anything The only thing I thought of doing was calling

What did we talk about on the way to her car? Nothing much, just lame

Vision to tell him that I was about to fuck her, but I thought that would be

talk about how cold it was, what I do, and other general chitchat It was so

lame

implied that this was a one-night stand We got to her car and her friend said

So, I was thinking, should I walk out totally nude? Hmm I decided to walk

she wanted pizza Here's what Extramask was thinking

out the same way I went in, which was wearing everything except for my dress

shirt Imagine if I walked out totally nude with a throbbing boner just pulsating

**EXTRAMASK: FUCK PIZZA, YOU STUPID BITCH I'M A VIRGIN AND I**

in the air?



WANT TO GET LAID FUCKING N O W GO TAKE YOUR O  
W N

The lights were off She was lying on the bed I walked over and  
started

CAR AND GET YOUR O W N FUCKING PIZZA

making out with her I kissed her neck and her earlobes Then she  
took my

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hand and put it on her right boobie! So I started rubbing that  
while kissing her.

I was sitting there pumping this girl missionary style for fifteen  
minutes

Then somehow I started rubbing her vagina (over her pajamas).  
She was

getting no feeling.

moaning and shit. So I took my pants off, but I left my  
underwear on.

She was all moaning and shit, and I'm just pumping away like a  
tool. So I

I bet you fuckers didn't think I'd be writing this much detail, did  
you?

decided to move her around and try some positions—just like in  
the porno

So I was kissing her and rubbing her poon down. This was  
pretty hard. I

movies!

couldn't concentrate on kissing her and rubbing her at the same  
time. I was

I had her on top. I had always fantasized about this. So she was  
on top of

doing my best though.

me and I was thinking, “Holy shit, this fucking hurts. My cock is gonna fucking

She started rubbing my cock, and it felt pretty cool. LOL.

snap off.”

After about two minutes, I changed positions because it hurt so much. I got

WIDEFACE: Fuck me Extramask.

her into doggy-style position. I thought this would be interesting. So I had her

EXTRAMASK: Okay.

from behind and I was trying to find the slot, but I couldn’t. I was sitting there

fishing around her ass and upper legs looking for the entry. It was horrible, just

So I tore off my fucking underwear. I kneeled there on her bed with my

like the sex. I couldn’t find the hole. She started to whine because of the long

rock-hard boner pulsating, throbbing—you know it.

delay. I was thinking, “You’re whining? Calm it down, China—seriously.” I

wasn’t getting any arousal out of this deal.

WIDEFACE: Put on a condom. I have one.

I got it in for two strokes, then it popped out. Then she started whining

EXTRAMASK: I have one of my own.

again. So I switched positions and, for some reason, I went to the her-on-top

position again. Dumb move, Extramask. I feared my cock would break right the

I didn’t want to use hers. I was freaked out about it for some reason, like she

fuck off. After about four minutes of that, we went back to missionary, and I

would sabotage it or some shit.

slammed her hard.

Hey, she said she wanted it.

WIDEFACE: What brand?

I was saying shit like:

EXTRAMASK: Sheik.

“You like that?”

“Say my name!”

Again, I was a virgin at this point and I didn’t know how to properly put a

“You like it hard?”

condom on.

Keep in mind, I was bored out of my mind during this whole experience. I

was pretty disappointed. LOL.

EXTRAMASK: Put the condom on, it turns me on.

After thirty minutes:

WIDEFACE: Okay.

WIDEFACE: Change your condom.

She couldn’t get the condom on, so she went to get hers. As she went and got

**EXTRAMASK:** *(Thinking:* I guess this is something you do after a half hour of

hers, I ended up getting my own on. Then I fucked her!

sex. But overall I was pissed that the sex wasn’t over.)

I fucked her and fucked her and fucked her and fucked her and fucked her

and fucked her.

So I took my condom off and opened a new one.

About fifteen minutes into the whole thing, I was thinking,  
“This fucking

sucks. This is fucking sex? I hate this. I want to leave.” I  
legitimately wanted to

WIDEFACE: What are you doing?

leave. I was thinking, “I busted my fucking balls for months for  
this?”

EXTRAMASK: I’m putting on another condom.

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**WIDEFACE: W h y ?**

1. I didn’t want to fuck her again.

EXT RAM ASK: I thought you said you wanted me to?

**WIDEFACE: N o .**

Z. It was obvious this was a one-night stand.

I didn’t care. I was happy with that.

Just to be on the safe side, I made sure I wrote down her exact  
address

So then we just lay naked together and kissed a bit. She wanted  
to

when I left—just in case I forgot shit there. I would rather have  
it than not have it.

cuddle. I didn’t really want to, but I did.

So that’s it. I stuck my junk in a chick. I lost my virginity. The  
sex was

This was a mistake on my part. After sex I should have ripped  
my condom

horrible. I felt a bit dirty and used after the act.

off, sat on her bed, and jerked off until completion. I should  
have wacked my

Overall, I don't feel any different compared to when I was a virgin.

load all over the place, her face, and her Trinitron TV set.

However, I believe this will help me subconsciously in my sarges. I mean, I've

had sex now. I know this. So from here on in, any girl I chat with, I'll be even

WIDEFACE: Lie down and rest for five minutes. Then I will call a cab.

more like, "Who gives a fuck? I don't need what you got."

EXTRAMASK: What? Five minutes? Why are you trying to rush me out of

here?

—Extramask

WIDEFACE: No, I didn't mean it like that. It's just good to rest after sex for

five minutes.

EXTRAMASK: What's with the five minutes thing?

WIDEFACE: No. Just relax.

EXTRAMASK: But why five minutes?

Five minutes later she called a cab. She was on hold with the cab company,

and she started getting all frustrated because she had to wait, which was

annoying. So I got ready to leave.

I chatted with her a bit more. She said she noticed in the club that I had

lots of energy. She liked it.

WIDEFACE: What are you going to do now? [*It was 3:30 A.M.*]

EXTRAMASK: I'm going to another club to hook up with my friends. [*I got*

*even more energetic. I jumped around.)*

She totally didn't like that I said I was going out again. And I really wasn't. I

just lied to her. I did it because I was pissed that she was trying to get rid of

me so quickly. Overall, I wanted to leave her place immediately—I just wanted

to leave on my terms.

So the cab arrived and I left her place. We kissed about three times

before my exit.

I didn't get her number because:

*Chapter*



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club or several hours at our next meeting), I was too scared to break the rap-

port and trust I had built. Unless she gave me a clear indication that she was

sexually interested in me, I felt like trying to kiss her would disappoint her

and she'd think I was just like all the other guys.

It was such stupid AFC thinking. There was still a nice guy lurking in

my head that I had to get rid of. But, unfortunately, there wasn't going to be

How do you kiss a girl?

time to do so before Belgrade.

The distance between you and her is just three inches. It's not a long

stretch, by any standard. You barely even have to move your body to bridge

the gap. Yet it is the most difficult three inches a man has to move in his life.

It is the moment when the male must concede all the privileges that are his

birthright; put his pride, ego, esteem, and hard work aside; and just hope-

hope that she doesn't deflect it with her cheek or, even worse, the let's-just-

be-friends speech.

As I went out every night training to wing Mystery's workshop, I soon

developed a routine that worked—at least to a point. Rejection wasn't an

option. I knew how to open a group, respond to most contingencies, and

leave with a phone number and a plan to meet again.

Every time I went home, I reviewed the events of the night, looking for

parts of a sarge that I could have done better. If the approach didn't work, I

thought of ways to improve it—angles of advance, backturns, takeaways,

time constraints. If I didn't get the phone number, I didn't blame it on the

girl for being cold or bitchy, as so many other sargers did. I blamed myself

and analyzed every word, gesture, and reaction until I pinpointed a tactical

error.

I had read in a book called *Introducing NLP* that there is no such thing

as failure, only learning lessons. I wanted the learning lessons to take place

in my head, so that in the field I was flawless. I would have to prove myself

to Mystery's students, just as Sin had proven himself to me. And one public

failure would discredit everything. The students would post reviews saying

that Style was an imposter, a joke.

But there was still one problem I couldn't work through.

Though an

opener, a neg, and a demonstration of higher value were enough to get any

one's phone number, I had no idea what to do next. No one had taught me.

I mean, I technically knew the words of the Mystery kiss-close: "Would

you like to kiss me?" But I was too petrified to actually speak them. After

spending so much time bonding with a girl (whether for a half hour in a





you why your head is shaved, tell them, ‘I used to have it down past my ass,

but then I realized I was covering up my best feature.’” He laughed. “Or you

could say, ‘Well, most Greco-Roman wrestlers shave their heads.’” I made a

mental note to add both replies to my cheat sheet.

When the barber finished, I looked in the mirror and saw a chemo pa-

tient staring back at me.

I’d learned several sleights of hand, a principle of magic called equivoque,

“It looks good,” Mystery said. “Let’s see if there’s a tanning salon

the fundamentals of rune reading, and a way to make lit cigarettes disap-

around here. We’ll have you looking like a thug in no time.”

pear. It had been the most productive plane trip of my life. And now Mystery

“Okay. But I’m not getting Lasik in Serbia.”

and I were in Belgrade at probably the worst time of the year. Ice and slush

My first thought once I was shaven-headed and tan was: What took me

lay heavy on the street as Marko drove us to his apartment in a silver 1987

so long? I looked much better. I had transformed from a 5 to a 6.5 on the at-

Mercedes that had a habit of stalling every time he put it into second gear.

tractiveness scale. This trip was turning out to be a good idea.

Mystery, hair unwashed and held back in a greasy ponytail, fumbled

Marko looked as if he could use a makeover himself. A big-boned six foot three, he was much stockier than most Serbians, with an olive complexion and the out-of-proportion head of a Peanuts character. He wore an overcoat that was one size too big, a thick gray Brooks Brothers sweater sance fair. Mystery had made his ring himself, too, painting an eyeball on with flecks of white, and a cream-colored turtleneck that actually made him look like a turtle. His greatest illusion was transforming himself into a good-looking player every night he went out. Marko had been unable to live his dream of being a high-society cialite after graduating from college in America, so he'd moved to a smaller pond, Serbia, where his father was a well-known artist. "You're going to have to shave your head," he said as he looked at me. "No thanks. What if I have a strange-shaped skull, or weird marks on

He drove us to his one-bedroom apartment, which contained only a cot

my head like my dad?"

and a twin bed. Because there was no sleeping bag or even a couch, we

"Look at you. You're wearing glasses because your vision sucks. You

agreed to take turns sharing the larger bed.

have a hat on to cover a huge bald spot. You're ghostly white. And you look

While Mystery showered, Marko pulled me aside.

like you haven't seen the inside of a gym since grade school. You're doing

"What are you doing with this guy?"

well because you're smart and you're a fast learner. But looks count too.

"What do you mean?"

You're Style, so start being Style. Just snap: shave your head, get Lasik, join

"I mean, he's totally superficial. We went to the Latin School of a gym."

Chicago. We went to Vassar College. This is not the kind of guy who can fit

He was a very persuasive geek.

in at these places. He's not one of us."

He turned to Marko: "Is there a barbershop around here?"

"I know. I know. You're right. But trust me, this guy will change your

Unfortunately, there was. Marko pulled in front of a small building,

life."

and we walked inside to find an elderly Serbian man presiding over an

“Well,” Marko said. “We’ll see. I met a girl last month who’s different

empty shop. Mystery sat me in a chair, told Marko to instruct the barber to

than all the rest, and I want to do it right. So make sure Mystery doesn’t

remove my tumbleweeds, and then supervised the procedure to make sure

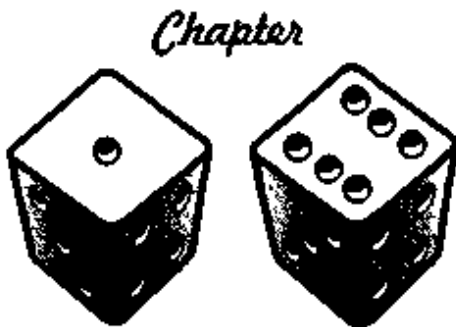
ruin it with all his pickup tricks and embarrass me.”

the barber shaved down to the skull.

Marko hadn’t dated a single woman since he’d moved to Belgrade. But

“Balding is not a choice, but bald *is* a choice,” he said. “If anyone asks

a few months ago, through friend of his, he’d met a girl named Goca, and



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he was sure she was the one. He took her out on dates, bought her flowers,

treated her to dinner, and dropped her off at home afterward, like a perfect

gentleman.

“Have you slept with her yet?” I asked him.

“No. I haven’t even kissed her.”

“Dude, you’re behaving like a total AFC. One day a guy is going to walk

up to her in a club, say, ‘Do you think magic spells work?’ and take her

The prop bag I wore to the Belgrade workshop was black, Armani, and the

home. She wants an adventure. She wants to have sex. All girls do.”

size of a hardcover novel, with a single shoulder strap so that it could be

“Well,” Marko said, “she’s different from all those girls. People have

slung artfully across my torso. With so many magic tricks, gimmicks, and

more class here than they do in L.A.”

other tools of the trade necessary to use in the field, it was impossible to fit

The PUAs have a name for this: They call it one-itis. It’s a disease AFCs

everything into just four pants pockets. So nearly every PUA in the game

get: They become obsessed with a girl they’re neither dating nor sleeping

had a prop bag. The contents of mine were as follows:

with, and then start acting so needy and nervous around her that they

end up driving her away. The cure for one-itis, PUAs like to say, is to go out

and have sex with a dozen other girls-and then see if this flower is still so

**1 PACK OF GUM, WRIGLEY’S BIG RED**

special.

No matter how good your game is, you're not going to get a kiss-

close if your breath reeks.

### **1 PACK OF CONDOMS, TROJAN, LUBRICATED**

Necessary not only in case you have sex but also for the psycho-

logical boost of knowing you're prepared to.

### **1 PENCIL, 1 PEN**

For writing down phone numbers, taking notes, performing magic tricks, and analyzing handwriting.

### **1 PIECE OF DRYER LINT**

For the lint opener: Walk up to a woman, stop, wordlessly remove

lint (hidden in the palm of your hand) from her clothing, ask, "How long has that been there?," then hand her the piece of lint.

### **1 ENVELOPE OF PRESELECTED PHOTOS**

For Mystery's photo routine.

### **1 DIGITAL CAMERA**

For Mystery's digital photo routine: First take a photo of yourself

and a girl smiling, then another one striking a serious pose, and,

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finally, one kissing (on the cheek or lips). Afterward, look through

### **2 SPARE CHEAP NECKLACES, 2 SPARE THUMB RINGS**

the photos with her. At the final photo, say, "We make a good cou-

To give to girls as gifts after a number-close. Ask, "You're not a ple, don't we?" If she agrees, you're in.

thief, are you?" Then slowly remove your necklace or thumb ring,

put it on her, kiss her, and say, "This is still mine. It's something

### **1 BOX OF TIC TAGS**

to remember me by. I want it back next time I see you." After she

For the Tic Tac routine: Put two Tic Tacs in your hand. Eat one leaves, replace your jewelry with a spare from the bag.

very slowly. Then feed the second one to her. If she accepts it, say,

"There's something I forgot to tell you. I'm an Indian giver. I want

### **1 SMALL BLACKLIGHT**

my Tic Tac back." Then kiss her.

For pointing out lint and dandruff on girls' clothing—a neg.

### **LIP BALM, COVERUP, EYELINER, BLOTTING PAPER**

### **4 SAMPLE BOTTLES OF DIFFERENT COLOGNES**

Optional male makeup.

For smelling good. And for the cologne opener: Spritz a different

cologne on each wrist. Then have a girl smell your wrists and

### **CHEAT SHEET, THREE PAGES**

choose a favorite. Afterward, mark her choice on the appropriate

One page of favorite routines for quick reference. Two pages of wrist with a pen. Tally the results at the end of the night to find new routines and lines to practice.

the best scent for yourself.

### **1 SET OF WOODEN RUNES IN CLOTH BAG**

### **VARIOUS MAGIC TRICKS**

For rune readings.

For bending forks, making cigarettes vanish, and levitating beer bottles.

## **1 NOTEBOOK**

For phone numbers, notes, magic tricks, and Ross Jeffries's crappy

Yes, I was bringing out the big guns. It was an important night—my

sketch artist opener, in which you very seriously draw a portrait of

first workshop as a wing—and I needed to prove myself.

a girl, tell her “your beauty has inspired me to high art,” and then

I had neglected to tell Mystery that his standard workshop fee was half

show her a stick figure with a title like, “Semipretty Girl in Coffee

the annual salary of the average Serbian, so most of our students were from

Shop, 2005.”

out of the country. They met us at Ben Akiba, a lounge just off the central

square in Belgrade. Exoticoption was an American who had taken a train

## **1 KRYPTOLIGHT NECKLACE**

from Florence, Italy, where he was going to school; Jerry was a ski instructor

Glow in the dark necklace, for peacocking.

from Munich, Germany; and Sasha was a local who had been studying in

Austria.

## **2 SETS OF FAKE EAR AND LIP PIERCINGS**



Strangers size each other up in seconds: a hundred tiny details, from

Optional body adornment.

dress to body language, combine to create a first impression.

Mystery's

task—and now mine—was to fine-tune the details and make PUAs out of

## **1 SMALL DIGITAL RECORDER**

these three.

For surreptitiously recording sarges to play back and critique

Exoticoption was cool; in fact, he was trying so hard to be cool that it

afterward.

was going to work against him. Jerry had a great sense of humor but came

off on first impression as boring. And Sasha—well, he was badly in need of

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repair. Just socializing was going to be a challenge for him: He looked like a

Sasha did the worst. He fumbled through his openers, stared at his

big baby goose with acne.

shoes, and lacked even a modicum of confidence. Girls listened to him only

This time, it was my turn to go around the table and ask, “What’s your

out of politeness.

score?” and “What are your sticking points?” and “How many girls would

At the bar, I noticed a delicate black-haired girl and a tall blonde with a

you like to sleep with?”

perfect fake tan, deep dimples, and hair in Bo Derek braids.

They radiated en-

Exoticoption, who was twenty, had been with two women. “I have the

ergy and confidence. This was not going to be an easy set. So I gave it to Sasha.

balls to approach, and I did pull some hons in the past,” he began, draping

“Go into the two-set over there,” I instructed him. It didn’t take any

his left arm casually over a neighboring seat. “But my sticking point is the at-

game to send guys into sets. “Tell them you’re showing some friends from

tract phase. Even when I get vibes that I attract them, I still don’t close.”

America around and want suggestions for good clubs to take them to.”

Jerry, who was thirty-three, had been with three women. “I can work

It was a crash-and-burn mission. Sasha meekly approached them from

coffee shops and most other low-noise environments, but I’m uncomfort-

behind and tried several times to get them to notice him. Once he had their

able in clubs.”

attention, it was a struggle for him to keep it. Like many guys, he didn’t

And Sasha, who was twenty-two, said he had been with one woman,  
communicate with energy. All those years of insecurity and social ostracism  
though we suspected he was exaggerating by one. “I’m into the game be-  
had chased his spirit and joy of life deep within his body. Whenever he  
cause it’s like Dungeons and Dragons. When I learn a neg or a routine, it’s  
opened his mouth, there was no need for anyone to strain to make out his  
like getting a new spell or a staff that I can’t wait to use.”  
faint mumblings. The message was clear: “I was built to be ignored.”  
One by one, they placed their fears, and their voice recorders, on the  
“Go in,” Mystery said to me as he watched Sasha flounder with the Bo  
table. My job was to get them into the game. I needed to get what was in my  
Derek blonde.  
head into theirs.  
“What?”  
The teaching portion of the workshop was easy. All I had to do was  
“Go in. Help him out. Show the boys how it’s done.”  
keep Mystery on track—he loved the sound of his own voice—and give them  
Fear seizes hold in your chest first. It clamps gently to the top of the  
material. The challenge was going to be the demonstration part.

heart, like a *vice* made of rubber. Then you really feel it. Your stomach

As we spoke, we sent the boys on missions to various tables. We had

churns. Your throat closes. And you swallow, desperately trying to avoid the

them open sets,

dryness and hoping that when you open your mouth, a confident, clear

4 watched their body language and the responses of the women, then gave them feedback:

voice will emerge. Even after all my training, I was terrified.

Women, by and large, are much more perceptive than men. They can

*“You were leaning into the set, which showed neediness. Stand up straight*

instantly spot insincerity and bullshit. So a great pickup artist must either

*and rock on your back foot as if you might walk away at any moment.”*

be congruent with his material—and really believe it—or be a great actor.

Anyone talking to a woman while simultaneously worrying about what she

thinks of him is going to fail. Anyone caught thinking about getting into a

*“You were making them uncomfortable by hovering over them for so long.*

woman’s pants before she starts thinking about what’s in his pants is going

*You should have sat down and given yourself a time constraint. Say, ‘I can*

to fail. And most men fall into this category. Sasha does. I do.  
We can't help

*only stay for a couple minutes because I have to rejoin my  
friends soon.' This*

it: It's our nature.

*way they won't worry that you're going to sit there all night."*

Mystery calls it dynamic social homeostasis. We are constantly  
buffeted

about by, on one hand, our overwhelming desire to have sex  
with a girl and,

on the other, the need to protect ourselves when approaching.

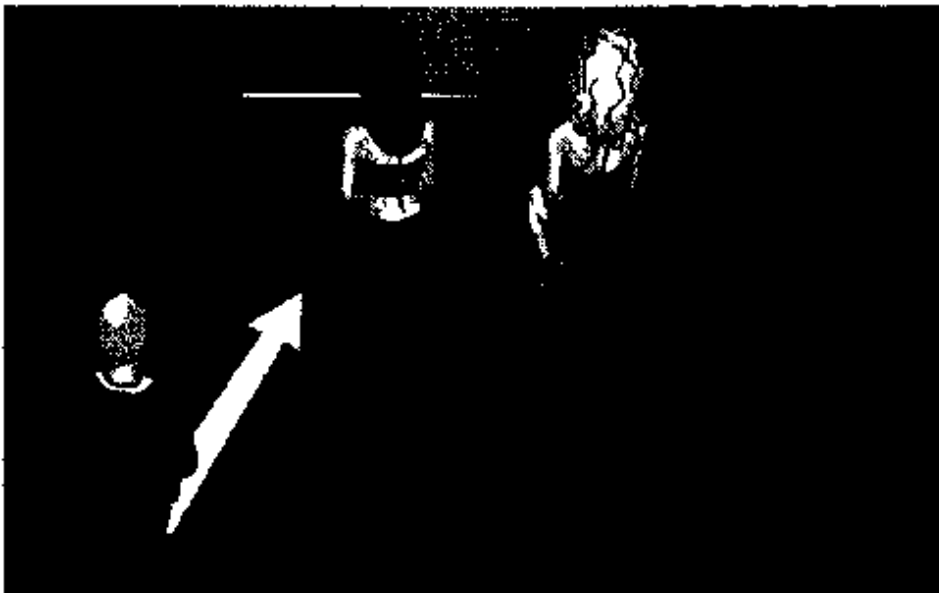
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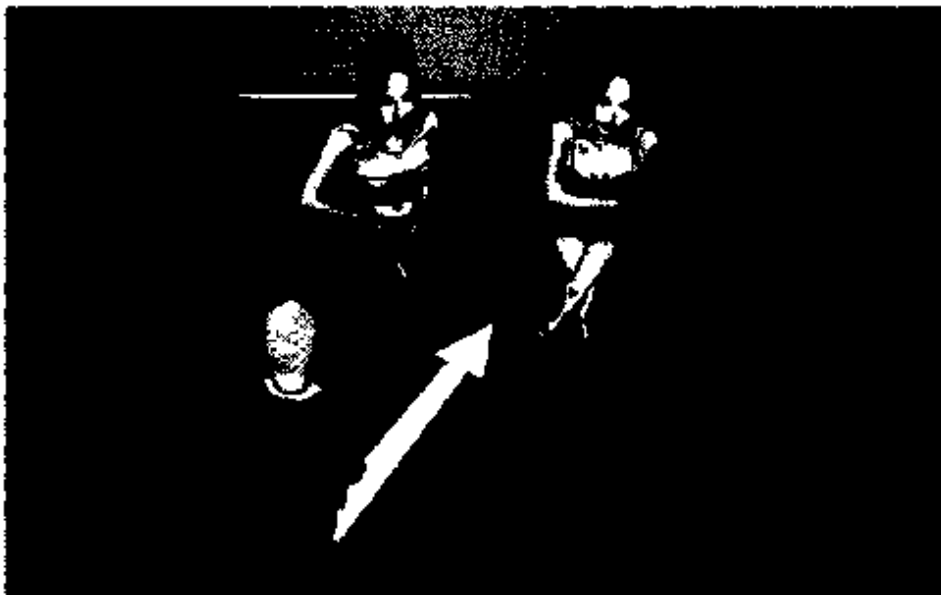
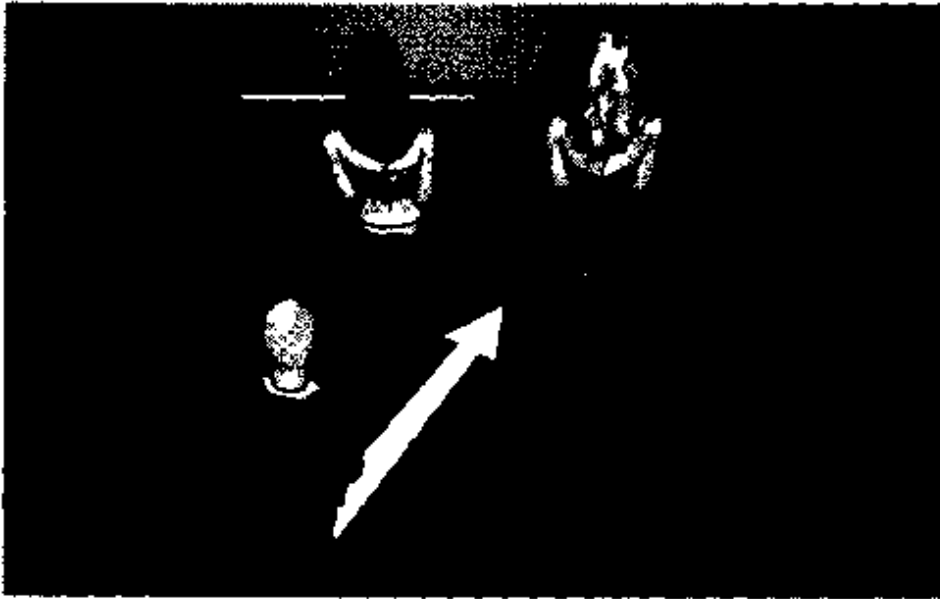
this fear exists, he says, is because we are wired evolutionarily  
for a tribal ex-

4 A set is a group of people in a public place. A two-set is a  
group of two people; a three-set is

istence, where everyone in the community knows when a man is  
rejected by

three people, and so on.





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a woman. He is then ostracized and his genes, as Mystery puts it, are un-

apologetically weeded out of existence.

As I approached, I tried to push the fear out of my chest and rationally

assess the situation. Sasha's problem was his body position. Both women

were facing the bar, and he had approached from behind. So they had to

turn around to respond.

“Hi,” I rasped. I cleared my throat. “I’m the friend Sasha was telling you

about. So what clubs did you recommend?”

I could sense a silent sigh of relief from all parties that someone had

come in to make things less awkward.

“Well, Reka is a fun place for dinner,” the black-haired girl said.

“And

along the waterfront there are some great boats, like Lukas, Kruz, and Exil.

Underground and Ra are fun too, though they’re not the kinds of places I

go to.”

But if they wanted to get rid of him, all they had to do was to turn back

“Hey, as long as we’re talking, I want to get your opinion on some

toward the bar, and he’d be shut out.

thing.” I was on familiar ground now. “Do you think spells work?”

By now, I was getting used to telling the spells opener—a story about a

friend who fell in love with a woman after she surreptitiously cast an attrac

tion spell on him. So while my mouth moved, my brain thought strategy. I

needed to reposition myself next to the Bo Derek blonde. Yes, I was going to

steal my student’s girl. It’s not like he had a chance with her anyway.

When I finished, I said, “I’m asking because I never believed in that

stuff before, but I had an amazing experience recently. Here”—I addressed

the blonde—“let me show you something.”

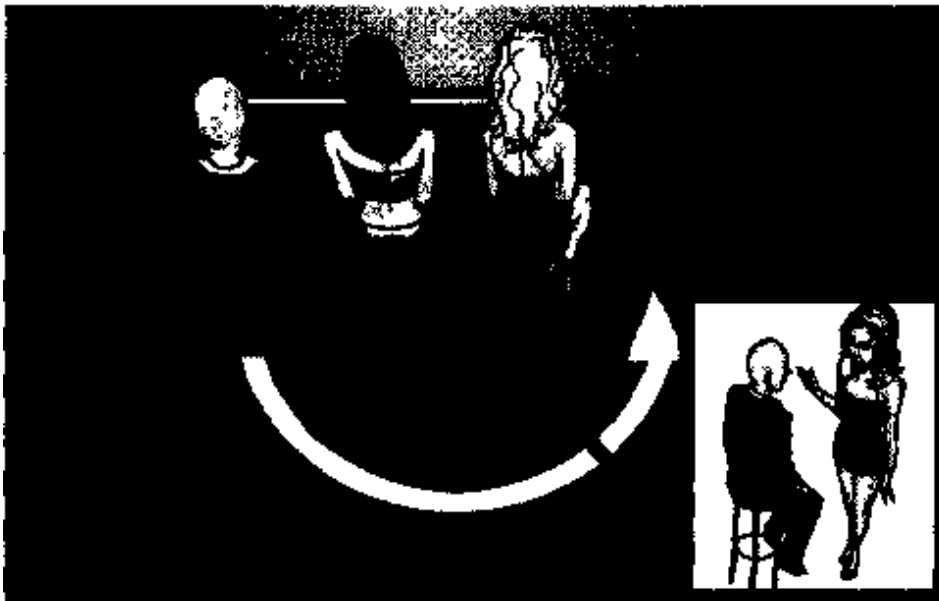
I maneuvered myself around *to* the other side of their stools, so that I

was next to my target.

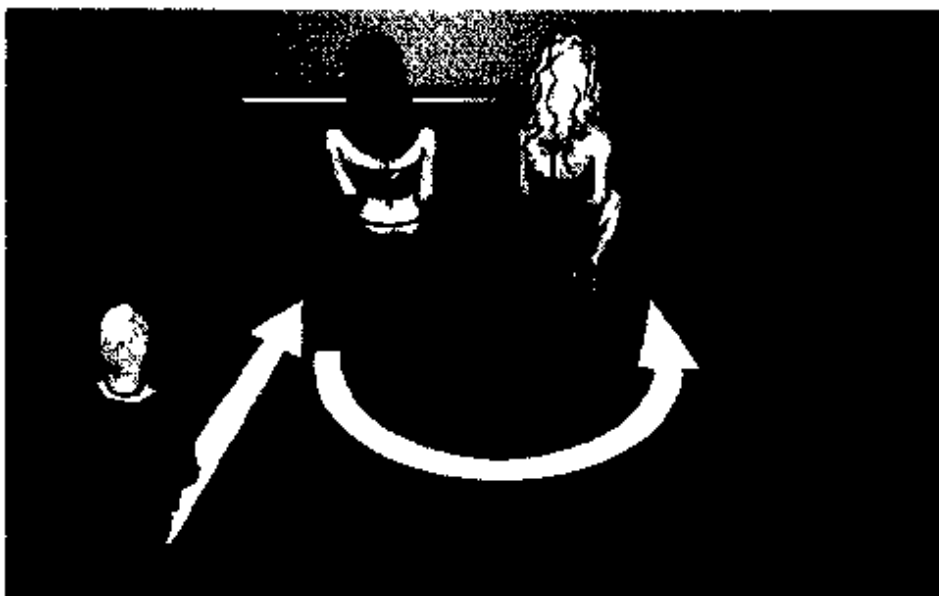
I looked back. Mystery and the other two students were watching me as

I approached. I had to work the angles right. So I came in from the left side

of the bar, next to the black-haired girl—the obstacle, as Mystery would say.







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him to keep the black-haired woman occupied so she wouldn't pull my tail

get away.

Marko was right: The girls were gorgeous here. They were also extremely

bright and, much to my relief, spoke better English than I did. I truly en-

joyed listening to this girl; she was captivating, well-read, and had an MBA.

When it came time to leave, I told her it would be great to see her again

before I left. She pulled a pen from her purse and gave me her phone num-

ber. I could feel Mystery's approval—and the students' acceptance. Style was

the real deal.

Sasha was still talking to the black-haired girl, so I whispered in his ear,

“Tell her we have to go, and ask for her e-mail.” He did and, lo and behold,

she gave it to him.

Now that I was one-on-one with her, I still needed to sit down; other-

We rejoined the group and left the cafe. Sasha was a *new* man. Flushed

wise she'd eventually get uncomfortable with me lurking over her. However,

with excitement, he skipped down the street like a little boy, singing in Ser-

there weren't any open stools, so I'd have to improvise.

bian. He was being, in his own awkward way, himself. He'd never gotten a

"Give me your hands," I told her, "and stand up for a moment." girl's e-mail address before.

As soon as she stood, I wheeled around behind her and slid into her

"I'm so happy," Sasha raved. "This is probably the best day of my life."

seat. Now I was finally in the set, and she was lurking awkwardly on the out-

As anyone who regularly reads newspapers or true-crime books knows,

side. This was the science of approaching perfectly executed, like a good

a significant percentage of violent crime, from kidnappings to shooting

game of chess.

sprees, is the result of the frustrated sexual impulses and desires of males.

By socializing guys like Sasha, Mystery and I were making the world a safer

place.

Mystery threw his arm around my neck and pulled my face into his wizard's overcoat.

"You've done me proud," he said. "It's not just about getting

the girl. It's about the students seeing it happen and believing it can be

done."

It was then that I *realized* the downside to this whole venture. A gulf

was opening between men and women in my mind. I was beginning to see

women solely as measuring instruments to give me feedback on how I was

progressing as a pickup artist. They were my crash-test dummies, identifiable

only by hair colors and numbers—a blonde 7, a brunette 10. Even when

I was having a deep conversation, learning about a woman's dreams and

"I just stole your chair," I laughed.

point of view, in my mind I was just ticking off a box in my routine marked

She smiled and punched me teasingly in the arm. The game had begun.

rapport. In bonding with men, I was developing an unhealthy attitude toward

"I'm just kidding," I continued. "Stay close. We'll try an ESP experiment.

toward the opposite sex. And the most troubling thing about this new mind

But I can only stay for a moment. Then you can have your chair back."

set was that it seemed to be making me more successful with women.

Even though I guessed her number wrong (it was ten), she still enjoyed

Marko drove us to Ra, an Egyptian-themed nightclub guarded by two

the process. As we talked afterward, Mystery walked up to Sasha and told

concrete statues of Anubis. Inside, it was nearly empty. There were just se-

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**B9**

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curity guards, bartenders, and a group of nine noisy Serbians clustered on

The two finally exchanged numbers—"I can't promise you anything

barstools around a small circular table.

other than good conversation," Mystery instructed Marko to tell her—and

We were about to leave when Mystery spied, among the group of Ser-

we collected the students to leave the club. However, on our way out, an

bians, a lone girl. She was young and slender with long black hair and a

AMOG from the table blocked Mystery's path. He wore a tight black

red dress that showed off a set of perfectly tapered legs. It was an impossi-

T-shirt, exposing a physique that made Mystery's doughy body look femi-

ble set: She was surrounded by stocky guys with crewcuts.  
These were men

nine in comparison.

who had clearly been in the military during the war, men who  
had proba-

“So you like Natalija, magic man?” he asked.

bly killed before, maybe even with their bare hands. And  
Mystery was go-

“Natalija? We’re going to be seeing each other. Is that okay with  
you?”

ing in.

“She’s my girlfriend,” the AMOG said. “I want you to stay  
away from

The pickup artist is the exception to the rule.

her.”

“Here,” he told me. “Clasp your hands together. And when I say  
so, act

“That’s up to her,” Mystery replied, taking a step closer to the  
AMOG.

as if you can’t open them.”

Mystery wasn’t backing down. He was an idiot.

He pretended, through the art of illusion, to seal my hands  
together. I

I looked at the AMOG’s hands and wondered how many  
Croatian

pretended to be amazed.

necks he had snapped in his day.

The commotion attracted the attention of the bouncers in the  
club,

The AMOG lifted his waistband, exposing the black handle of a  
pistol.

who asked him to try the feat with their hammy fists. Instead, Mystery per-

“So, magic man, can you bend this?” This was no invitation; it was a threat.

formed his watch-stopping illusion for them. Soon, the club manager was

Marko turned to me, panicked. “He’s going to get us killed,” he said.

giving him free drinks and the table of Serbians had halted their conversa-

“Most of the guys at these clubs are ex-soldiers and mobsters. Killing some-

tion and were gawking at him, including his target.

one over a girl is nothing for them.”

“If you can make a girl envy you,” Mystery told the students, “you can

Mystery waved his hand over the AMOG’s forehead. “You saw me move

make a girl sleep with you.”

that beer bottle without touching it,” he said. “It weighs eight hundred

Two principles were at work. First, he was generating social proof by

grams. Now imagine what I could do to one tiny brain cell in your head.” He

earning the attention and approval of the club staff. And, second, he was

snapped his fingers to indicate the pop of a brain cell.

pawning—in other words, he was using one group to work his way into an-

The AMOG looked Mystery in the eyes to see if he was bluffing. Mys-

other, less approachable group nearby.

tery held his eye contact. One second passed. Two seconds. Three. Four.

For his coup de grace, Mystery told the club manager he would levitate

Five. It was killing me. Eight. Nine. Ten. The AMOG lowered his shirt back

a beer bottle. He approached the table of Serbians, asked to borrow an

over the gun.

empty bottle, and made it float in the air in front of him for a few seconds.

Mystery had the advantage here: No one in Belgrade had ever seen a

Now he was in his target's group. He performed a few illusions for the guys

magician perform live before. They'd only been exposed to magic on televi-

and ignored the girl for the requisite five minutes. Then he relented, started

sion. So when Mystery disproved in an instant the belief that magic was just

talking to her, and isolated her to a couch nearby. He had pawned the entire

camera tricks, an older belief replaced it: the superstition that just maybe

club just to meet her.

magic is real.

Since the girl spoke only a little English, Mystery used Marko as a

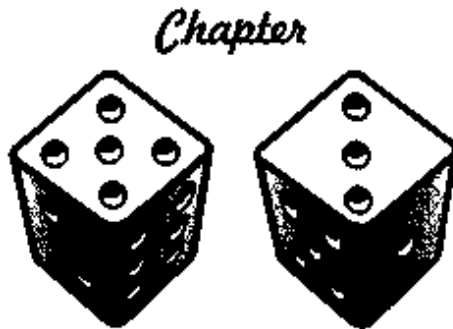
The AMOG stood there, silent, as Mystery walked out unscathed.

translator. It was a longer set than usual, because Mystery needed to con-

vince her that he wasn't practicing any form of witchcraft or black magic.

"Everything you've seen tonight is fake," Mystery finally told her, via

Marko. "I created all this to meet you. It's a social illusion."



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In college, he began taking steps toward relations with the opposite

sex. He purchased a leather jacket, invented an aristocratic background for

himself, put Terence Trent D'Arby braids in his hair, and bought his first

Mercedes-Benz. The effort earned him some attention, even a few female

friends. But it wasn't until junior year that he was finally comfortable

enough around women to start removing clothes with them, thanks largely

Some girls are different.

to a younger student he befriended: Dustin. The taste of those first small

That's what Marko thought. After everything he'd seen during Mys-

victories was so sweet that Marko stayed in college for three more years,



tery's workshop, he was in no way a convert. Goca wasn't like those other

basking in his hard-won popularity.

girls, he insisted. She came from a good family, she was well-educated, and

One of Marko's more peculiar habits is that he takes hour-long show-

she had morals, unlike that materialistic club trash.

ers every night. No one has ever come up with a plausible explanation of

I'd heard it all before from dozens of guys. And I'd heard just as many

what he does in there, because nothing makes sense—masturbating, for ex-

intelligent women say, "That wouldn't work on me," when I told them

ample, doesn't take *that* long. If you have any theories, please send them to:

about the community. Yet minutes or hours later, I'd see them exchanging

ManOfStyle@gmail.com.

phone numbers—or saliva—with one of the boys. The smarter a girl is, the

After watching Marko sit uselessly next to Goca for an hour, I cracked.

better it works. Party girls with attention deficit disorder generally don't

I grabbed my camera and ran Mystery's digital photo routine on the pair. I

stick around to hear the routines. A more perceptive, worldly, or educated

asked them to take a picture smiling, then one looking serious, and finally a

girl will listen and think, and soon find herself ensnared.  
passionate picture—kissing, for example. Marko stuck his neck  
out toward  
And so it was that Mystery and I found ourselves out on New  
Year's Eve  
her, chicken-like, and pecked.  
with Marko and his one-itis, Goca. Marko put on a gray suit,  
picked her up  
“No, a real kiss,” I insisted, concluding the routine as the two  
would-  
at 8:00 P.M., ran around and opened the car door for her, and  
handed her a  
be betrothed's lips bumped in what was the clumsiest first kiss I  
had ever  
dozen roses. She seemed like a bright, successful, well-bred girl.  
She was  
witnessed.  
short with long chestnut hair, gentle eyes, and a smile that arced  
just a little  
After dinner, Mystery and I terrorized the two-room restaurant,  
danc-  
wider on one side. Marko was right: She did look like the  
marrying kind.  
ing with the old men, performing magic tricks for the waiters,  
and flirting  
The restaurant was traditional Serbian fare, heavy on the red  
peppers  
indiscriminately with the married women. When we returned to  
the table  
and red meat. And the music was pure anarchy: Four brass  
bands wandered  
glowing, Goca's eyes met mine; for a moment they seemed to  
sparkle, as if

the rooms, blaring a cacophony of overlapping parade marches.  
I watched

searching for something in my gaze. I could swear it was an IOI.

Marko and Goca carefully all night, curious to see if this whole  
dating thing

That night, I was awoken by a warm body climbing under the  
covers. It

worked.

was my turn to share the bed with Marko, but this wasn't  
Marko. It was a

They sat next to each other awkwardly. Their interaction  
consisted only

woman's body. I felt a pair of warm hands caress my newly  
shaven skull.

of the necessary formalities of the evening: the menu, the  
service, the at-

"Goca?!"

mosphere. "Ha ha, wasn't that funny when the waiter gave you  
my steak?"

"Shh," she said, and sucked my upper lip into her mouth.

The tension was killing me.

I pulled loose. "But what about Marko?"

It wasn't as if Marko was a natural. In grade school he'd never  
been that

"He's in the shower," she said.

popular, largely on account of being foreign, having the  
nickname Pump-

"Did you and he ... ?"

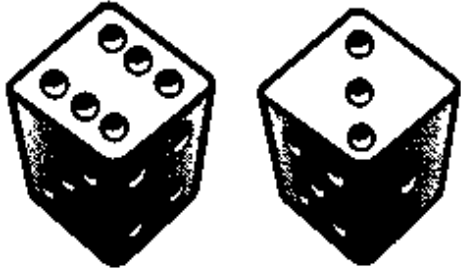
kinhead, and joining the Young Republican Club. By the time he  
had grad-

"No," she said with a contempt that surprised me.

uated, he was probably worse off than I was: At least I'd kissed a girl.

Goca and I had hit it off that night; so had Goca and Mystery. She had

## *Chapter*



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made a pass at Mystery earlier, and he'd pretended not to notice. But it was

harder not to notice her when she was in my bed, in my nostrils, in my

mouth. Sure, she'd had a few drinks, but alcohol has never caused anyone

to do something they didn't want to. It only enables them to do what

they've always wanted but repressed. And right now it looked like Goca

wanted to be with a man who possessed all six of the five characteristics of

an alpha male.

I couldn't bridge the fucking gap. There she was, my Bo Derek blonde with

Logically, it's easy to say that it's wrong to sleep with a girl your friend

an MBA, sitting next to me on a couch at a cafe. Her thigh was grazing

is pursuing. But when her body is pressed against yours so submissively,

mine. She was playing with her hair. And I was wussing out.  
and you can smell the conditioner in her hair (strawberry), and  
that storm

The great Style, the apprentice PUA whose magnetism was so  
strong

cloud of passion created by her desire has begun gathering  
around the two

that it made Marko look like an AFC to his own true love, was  
still too

of you, try saying no. It's just too ... right there.

scared to kiss a girl.

I ran my hands beneath her hair and slowly dragged my  
fingernails up

I had great opening game, but no follow through. I should have  
taken

ward along her scalp. A shiver of pleasure ran through her body.  
Our lips

care of the problem before Belgrade. But it was too late. I was  
blowing it. I

met, our tongues met, our chests met.

was scared of rejection, and of feeling uncomfortable afterward.

I couldn't do this. "I can't do this."

Mystery, in the meantime, was getting along just fine with  
Natalija,

"Why?"

who was thirteen years his junior. They had nothing in common,  
not even a

"Because of Marko."

language. But there they were, sitting together. His legs were  
crossed and he

"Marko?" she asked, as if she'd never heard the name before.

"He's

was leaning back, letting her work to get his attention. She was leaning into

sweet, but he's just a friend."

him, with her hand on his knee.

"Listen," I said. "You should go. Marko will probably be out of the

I walked my date back to her house after coffee. Her parents weren't

shower soon."

even home. All I had to say was, "Can I use the bathroom?," and I could have

Fifty minutes later, Marko was out of the shower. I heard him and Goca

been upstairs. But my mouth wouldn't speak the words.

Countless success—

arguing in Serbian in the hallway. A door slammed.

ful approaches had helped reduce my fear of social rejection and made me

Marko walked wearily into the room and collapsed onto his half of

seem like a promising pickup artist to others, but inside I knew I was just an

the bed.

approach artist. To become a PUA, there was a far-more-devastating mental

"Well?" I asked. He was never one to show much emotion.

obstacle I still needed to overcome: my fear of sexual rejection.

"Well, I want to take Mystery's next workshop."

In the course of my seduction research, I'd read *Madame Bovary* by Gus-

tave Flaubert. And I remembered how much work and persistence it had

taken the aristocratic dandy Rodolphe Boulanger de la Huchette to get just

a kiss from the unhappily married Madame Bovary. But once he persuaded

her to submit the first time, it was all over. She was obsessed.

One of the tragedies of modern life is that women as a whole do not

hold a lot of power in society, despite all the advances made in the last cen-

tury. Sexual choice, however, is one of the only areas where women are in-

disputably in control. It's not until they've made a choice, and submitted to

it, that the relationship is inverted—and the man is generally back in a posi-

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**95**

tion of power over her. Perhaps that is why women, to the frustration of

of and there's not a bloody revolution in progress there, I'm game. Life is

men everywhere, are so cautious about saying yes.

short and the world is large.

In order to excel at anything, there are always hurdles, obstacles, or

Between us, we didn't know a single person who'd ever been to challenges one must get past. It's what bodybuilders call the pain period.

Moldova or could even pronounce the name of its capital, Chisinau. So I

Those who push themselves, and are willing to face pain, exhaustion, hu-

couldn't think of a better reason to drive there. I like the idea of filling in a

miliation, rejection, or worse, are the ones who become champions. The rest

colored shape on a map with real fact, feeling, and experience. And traveling

are left on the sidelines. To seduce a woman successfully, to inspire her to

with Mystery would be a perk. We would have adventures everywhere, the

take the risk of saying yes, I would have to grow some balls and be willing to

kind I'd always dreamed about.

leave my comfort zone. And it was by watching Mystery win over Natalija

that I learned this lesson.

"I just got a haircut," he told her as they left the cafe. "I have itchy hairs

on my neck. I want to take a bath. Come wash me."

Natalija, predictably, said that seemed like a bad idea. "Oh, okay," he

told her. "I gotta get going, because I need to take a bath. Bye."

As he walked away, her face fell. The thought that she might never see

him again seemed to flash through her mind. This is what Mystery calls a

false takeaway. He wasn't really leaving; he was just letting her think he was.

Mystery took five steps—counting as he went—then turned around and

said, "I've been living in a shitty apartment for the past week. I'm going to



get a hotel room right there and take a bath.” He pointed to the Hotel

Moskva down the street. “You can come with me or just get an e-mail from

me in two weeks when I return to Canada.”

Natalija hesitated for a moment, then followed him.

And that’s when I realized the mistake I’d been making my whole life:

to get a woman, you have to be willing to risk losing her.

When I returned to the house, Marko was packing.

“I’m in shock,” Marko said. “I tried to do everything right. Goca was my

last hope for all women.”

“So what are you doing? Moving to a monastery?”

“No, I’m driving to Moldova.”

“Moldova?”

“Yeah, all the most beautiful girls in Eastern Europe come from Moldova.”

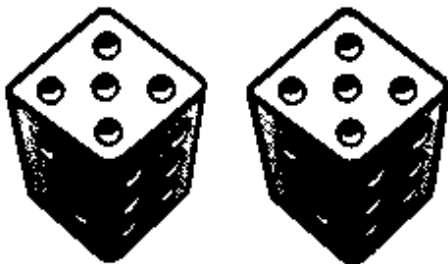
“Where’s that?”

“It’s a tiny country that used to be part of Russia. Everything there is

dirt-cheap. Just being American is enough to get you laid.”

My philosophy is, if someone wants to go to a country I’ve never heard

## *Chapter*



tallized ice and frozen wine groves running along the hilly landscape. The

car reeked of Marlboro smoke and McDonald's grease; every time it stalled,

it became trickier to restart.

But soon, all of that was the least of our problems. What looked on the

map like a forty-five-minute trip to Odessa ended up taking nearly ten

hours.

There are few moments in life as shot through with potential as that of hav-

The first sign that something unusual was afoot came when we reached

ing a car, a full tank of gas, a map of an entire continent spread out in front

a bridge over the Dniester River and found a military checkpoint complete

of you, and the best pickup artist in the world in your back seat. You feel

with several army and police vehicles, camouflaged bunkers on either side

like you can go anywhere you want. What are borders, after all, but check-

of the road, and an immense tank with its barrel pointing in the direction

points letting you know that you've reached a new stage in your adventure?

of oncoming traffic. We stopped in a line of ten cars, but a military officer

Well, all this may be true most of the time, but let's say you're working

directed us around the queue and waved us through the checkpoint. Why?

at Rand McNally, finishing the latest edition of your map of Eastern Europe

We will never know.

rope. And let's say there's a tiny country bordering Moldova—perhaps a

Mystery wrapped himself tighter in his blanket in the back seat. "I have

renegade Communist state—but no other government recognizes this

a version of the knife-through-body illusion I want to do. Style, do you

country diplomatically, or in pretty much any other way. What do you do?

think you can dress up as a clown and heckle me from the audience? Then

Do you include the country on your map or not?

I'm going to bring you onstage and push you into a chair. I'll play 'Stuck In

A magician, a faux aristocrat, and I were driving across Eastern Europe

the Middle With You' from *Reservoir Dogs* while I put my fist straight

when we quite accidentally discovered the answer to this question. It had

through your stomach. I'll wiggle my fingers when they reach the other side.

been a fruitless drive so far. Mystery was slumped in the back seat under

Then I'm going to lift you straight up, out of the chair, impaled on my arm.

neath a blanket, unable to conjure his way out of a fever.  
Oblivious to the

I need you to do that with me.”

dramatic snowy Romanian landscape that passed by each day,  
he covered

The second sign that something was not quite right came when  
we

his eyes with his hat and complained. Every so often, he'd leap  
to alertness

stopped by a gas station to stock up on snack food. When we  
offered them

and disgorge the contents of his mind. And every time the  
contents of his

Moldovan lei, they told us they didn't accept that currency. We  
paid in

mind were another map of sorts.

American dollars, and they gave us change in what they said  
were rubles.

“My plan is to tour North America and promote my shows in  
strip

When we examined the coins, we noticed that each had a large  
hammer-

clubs,” he said. “I just need to come up with a good illusion for  
strippers.

and-sickle on the back. Even stranger, they had been minted in  
2000: nine

You can be my assistant, Style. Imagine that: You and I touring  
strip clubs

years after the Soviet Union had supposedly collapsed.

and taking all the girls to the show the next day.”

Mystery pulled his hat down to just above his mouth, which was  
mov-

After a couple of uneventful days in Chisinau—where the only beauti-

ing with the grandiosity of a carnival barker. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he an-

ful women we saw were on magazine covers and billboards—we figured,

nounced from the back seat as Marko worked to start the car, “he levitated

“Why stop there?” Odessa was so close. Maybe the adventure we were seek-

over the Niagara Falls, he jumped off the Space Needle and survived... pre-

ing lay further ahead.

senting superstar daredevil illusionist, Mystery!”

So we left Chisinau on a cold, snowy Friday and drove northeast to the

I guess his fever was breaking.

Ukrainian border. The snow-blanketed roads out of the city were recogniz-

As we drove on, Marko and I began to see Lenin statues and commu-

able only by icy tire tracks stretching into the horizon. The vista looked like

nist posters through the car window. One billboard depicted a tiny sliver of

a scene from an epic Russian romance, with tree branches coated with crys-

land with a Russian flag on its left and, on its right, a red and green flag

**98**

**99**

with a slogan beneath. Marko, who spoke some Russian, translated it as a

But when there's a border guard pressing a pistol into your waist, well, suddenly Pridnestrovskaia seems very real.

"Imagine this: Mystery the superhero." Mystery wiped his nose with a shredded tissue. "I'll do a science experiment where I transport a lab technician over the Internet. Then the finale will be a bank heist and cage vanish. So I need a book, an action figure, and a feature film." Suddenly, a police officer (or at least someone dressed as one) stepped into the road in front of the car with a radar detector in his hand. We'd been Marko gave the guard his entire pack of Marlboros and started arguing driving ninety kilometers an hour, he told us—ten over the speed limit. After a long exchange, after twenty minutes and a two-dollar bribe, he let us go. We slowed down to Marko yelled something and thrust out his hands as if asking to be hand-seventy-five, but a few minutes later we were pulled over again. This officer

cuffed. Instead, the guard turned and disappeared into an office.  
When

also told us we were speeding. Though there were no signs, he  
claimed that

Marko returned to the car, I asked him what he had said.  
the speed limit had changed half a kilometer back.

“I said, ‘Listen, just arrest me. I’m not going back.’”

Ten minutes and two dollars later, we were on our way again,  
crawling

This was getting ugly.

at fifty-five just to be safe. In short order, we were pulled over  
and told we

Mystery thrust his head over the seat partition. “Imagine this. A  
poster

were driving *below* the minimum speed. Wherever we were, it  
was the most

of just my hands, with black nails, and the word *Mystery* at the  
bottom. How

corrupt country on earth.

amazing would that be?”

“I need to figure out my ninety-minute show. It will begin with  
a raven

For the first time, I lost it with him. “Dude, this is not the  
fucking time.

flying into the audience and landing on the stage. Then—boom  
—it will turn

Open your eyes.”

into me.”

“Don’t tell me what to do,” he snapped.

When we finally reached the border, two armed soldiers asked  
for our

“We’re about to get thrown in jail. No one wants to hear your  
shit right  
papers. We showed our Moldovan visas, and that was when we  
were told  
now. Does nothing exist except for you and your fucking magic  
show?”  
that we were no longer in Moldova. They showed us the local  
passport—an  
“Listen, if you want to go at it, I’ll go at it,” he thundered. “I’ll  
take you  
old Soviet document—and yelled something in Russian. Marko  
translated:  
down right now. Just step out of the fucking car, and I’ll deal  
with you.”  
They wanted us to drive back to the military checkpoint on the  
bridge we  
The guy was a foot taller than me, and the border crossing was  
full of  
had crossed three police bribes ago and obtain the proper  
documents.  
armed soldiers. There was no way I was going to tangle with  
him. But I was  
“I will dress as Mystery, with platform boots and the works. I  
won’t  
angry enough to consider it. Mystery had been dead weight this  
entire trip.  
wear suits anymore. I will be goth and club cool. I will tell the  
audience how  
Maybe Marko was right: Mystery wasn’t one of us. He hadn’t  
gone to the  
as a child I’d play with my brother in the attic and dream about  
being a ma-  
Latin School of Chicago.



gician. Then I'll go back in time and turn into a child."

I took a deep breath and stared straight ahead, trying to contain my

When Marko told a border guard there was no way we were going back

rage. The guy was a narcissist. He was a flower that bloomed with attention-

to the bridge, he pulled out his gun and pointed it at Marko. Then he asked

be it positive or negative—and wilted when ignored. Peacock theory wasn't

for cigarettes.

just to attract girls. It existed first and foremost to attract attention. Even

"Where are we?" Marko asked.

picking a fight with me was just another plea for attention, because I'd been

With pride, the guard answered back, "Pridnestrovskaja." ignoring him for the past hundred miles.

If you've never heard of Pridnestrovskaja (or Trans-Dniester, in

When I glanced at the rearview mirror and saw him pouting in the back

English), don't worry: neither had we. Trans-Dniester is neither recognized

seat with his hat pulled over his eyes, however, I actually began to feel bad

diplomatically nor mentioned in any of the guide books or maps we carried.

for him. "I didn't mean to snap at you," I told him.

**100**

**101**

“I don’t like it when someone tells me what to do. My dad used to tell

“Why?” he asked.

me what to do. And I hate him.”

“Because they don’t have jails there.”

“Well, I’m not your dad,” I said.

“Then what would they have done with us?”

“Thank God for that. He ruined my life and my mom’s life.” He pulled

She shaped her fingers into a gun, pointed them at Marko, and said,

his hat up. Tears lay over his eyes like contact lenses, unable to escape on

“Pow.”

their own. “I used to lie in bed at night, thinking of ways to kill my dad.

When we returned to Belgrade, driving some five hundred miles out of

When I got really depressed, I’d imagine going to his bedroom with a

our way to avoid Trans-Dniester, Marko’s voice mail was full. Mystery’s

shovel, smashing his head in, and then killing myself.”

seventeen-year-old, Natalija, had left a dozen messages.

Mystery phoned her

He paused and wiped his eyes with the back of his gloved hand.

“When

back, but the call was intercepted by her mother, who cussed him out for hi-

I think of my father, I think of violence,” he continued. “I remember seeing

jacking her daughter’s mind.

him punch people in the face when I was really young. When we had to kill

Natalija continued to call Marko after Mystery and I flew home, asking

our dog, he took a gun out and blew its head off right in front of me.”

when he was going to come back for her. Finally, Marko put her out of her

The border guard emerged from an office and motioned for Marko to

misery. “He was a wizard,” he told her. “He put a spell on you. Get some

step out of the car. They spoke for several minutes; then Marko handed him

help and stop calling me.”

several bills. While we waited to see if our bribe of forty dollars—the equiva-

Marko e-mailed me constantly in the months that followed, asking for

lent of one month’s salary in Trans-Dniester—was effective, Mystery opened

a password to Mystery’s Lounge. He had tasted the forbidden fruit and

up to me.

wanted more. But I never let him in. At the time, I thought it was because I

His father, he said, was an alcoholic German immigrant who verbally

wanted to keep my new identity separate from my past. But the truth was

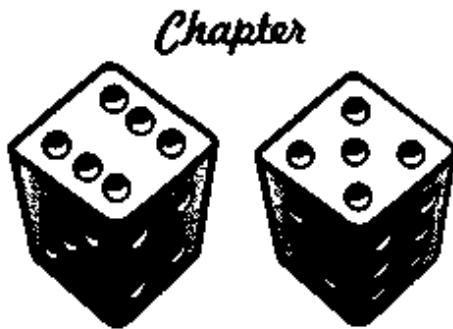
and physically abused him. His brother, who was fourteen years older than

that, despite all my rationalizations, I still felt embarrassed by what I was  
him, was gay. And his mother blamed herself for smothering his brother  
doing and the degree to which I was letting it consume my life.  
with love to make up for her husband's abuse. So, to compensate, she was  
emotionally distant from Mystery. When he was still a virgin at age twenty-  
one, he began to worry that maybe he was gay. So, in a bout of depression,  
he began formulating what would become the Mystery Method, dedicating  
his life to pursuing the love he never received from his parents.  
It took two more bribes of equivalent sum, spread between two other  
officials, to grease our way across the border. It was never enough for them  
just to accept the money. Each separate bribe took an hour and a half of dis-  
cussion. Maybe they were just trying to give Mystery and I more time to get  
to know each other.  
When we finally reached Odessa, we asked our hotel clerk about Trans-  
Dniester. She explained that the country was the result of a civil war in  
Moldova, triggered largely by former communist apparatchiks, military  
elite, and black berets who wanted to return to the glory days of the Soviet  
Union. It was a place with no rules—the Wild West of the Eastern bloc and a

country few foreigners dared to visit.

When Marko told her about our experience at the border, she said,

“You shouldn’t have asked them to arrest you.”



**103**

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery’s Lounge

**SUBJECT:** Re: Sticking Point

**AUTHOR:** Maddash

I’ve never had a woman over to my place in a one-on-one situation who I

didn’t at least kiss-close. Here is my routine.

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery’s Lounge

**SUBJECT:** Sticking Point

1. I have her come over to pick me up and only let her stay a couple

**AUTHOR:** Style

minutes. This is because it’s a lot easier to get a woman back to your house

at the end of the night if you’ve already had her over and nothing has

I’m hitting a sticking point, which I hope you all can help me get past.

happened.

Mystery and I just returned from Belgrade, where I met a beautiful,

intelligent girl who probably would have been my Serbian girlfriend if it weren't

2. At the end of the date, I invite her back to my place and pour drinks.

for my sticking point I'm having huge trouble kiss-closing.

For some reason, transitioning to the kiss is a big hurdle for me. I'll feel the

3. If she notices my guitar (it is prominently placed), I pick it up and play her a

window open, and then instantly I start thinking all the "what-ifs"—"what if she

song.

rejects me," "what if I ruin the rapport we have," "what about that thing she

said about her ex-boyfriend." Then either I build up too much anxiety and go

4. We play with my puppy.

for it tentatively (and fuck up), or the window closes and I miss if and get

pissed at myself.

5. I show her the rooftop.

So what's my problem? I'm so damn close to that golden ring of PUA-dom,

but this little sticking point is holding me back.

6. I bring her back to the apartment and show her the Winamp music program

on my computer while I sit her down on my lap. While she's playing with the

—Style

visualizations in Winamp, I kiss her on the cheek.

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

7. She either turns and kisses me on the lips, or she continues playing with

**SUBJECT:** Re: Sticking Point

Winamp. If she hesitates, I just show her more things on the computer and then

**AUTHOR:** Nightlight9

kiss her on the cheek again. She wants to be directed and ordered about. That

is what almost all women want.

What if she reacts me? Yeah, and what if a meteor hits your house.

You asked how to tell if she's ready. The way to tell is the other three-

8. You can figure out the rest.

second rule. It works 100 percent of the time. While sitting close, just let the

conversation trail off Look her in the eye while you pause the conversation. If

—Maddash

she looks back for a count of three seconds, she wants to kiss. The uncomfort-

ableness you may experience is my favorite thing in the whole world—sexual

tension.

—Nightlight9

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105

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

focus a girl's attention on something else so she doesn't resist overt sexual

**SUBJECT:** Re: Sticking Point

moves. I agree. Say, “Look at the puppet show over there,”  
while you play with

AUTHOR: Grimble

her tits. If she hesitates about the tit-play, simply point to the  
puppets and laugh,

“Look at the puppets. Look, they are funny puppets.” Then play  
with the tits

One of my favorite closing routines is massage. When we’re  
back at my

again.

place, I tell her I’m sore from playing basketball and need a  
back massage.

But during the massage, I constantly tell her she’s doing it all  
wrong. Finally, I

—Mystery

pretend to be exasperated and insist on showing her how it’s  
done. While

massaging her back, I tell her she carries a lot of tension in her  
legs and that I

MSN GROUP: Mystery’s Lounge

give amazing leg massages to my friends. I start to massage her  
through her

SUBJECT: Sticking Point Solved

pants, but then tell her to remove them because they’re getting  
in the way. If

AUTHOR: Style

you act as if you are the authority, she will not question you.

At first, I stick to the legs. But, slowly, I work my way up to her  
buttocks.

Thanks for all your help. I think I finally figured out a solution.  
The answer came

When she begins to get turned on, I begin rubbing her through  
her panties until



to me out of the blue a week ago, and I've field-tested it successfully nearly

she's dripping wet. At this point, I usually just unbutton my pants, put on a con-

every night since.

dom, and start fucking her without kissing or actual foreplay.

It struck me when I was sitting at the Standard with an Irish girl who told

This technique is not for the timid.

me she married young, recently divorced, and now craves adventure. When I

started to get IOIs, I thought about your posts. I realized that if I lunged for her,

—Grimble

she'd be startled and reject me. So I decided to take baby steps in the direc-

tion of kissing while doing something like Mystery's puppet show and talking

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

logically the whole time. Lo and behold, it worked, as it has ever since. Prob-

SUBJECT: Re: Sticking Point

lem solved.

AUTHOR: Mystery

Here's what I did—the evolution phase-shift routine:

Want to know how I solve this problem? I don't just say, "I don't care what she

1. I leaned in and told her she smelled good. I asked her what perfume she

thinks." I actually don't care what she thinks. When I was younger, this was

was wearing, and then discussed how animals always sniff each other before

such a big deal for me. But now, whether I get it or not, I am still the guy who

they mate and how we're evolutionarily wired to feel aroused when someone

goes for it.

smells us.

It helps to just think of the girl as practice. If the fear is still there inside, just

say, "Phase-shift! I'm now a caveman! I'm no longer Style. Let's see if she hates

2. Then I discussed how lions bite each other's mane during sex, and how

me. If so, fuck it. I don't give a shit."

pulling the back of the hair is another evolutionary trigger. As I spoke, I ran my

Look back to girls you didn't caveman, and they aren't in your life. So fuck—

hand up the back of her neck, grabbed a fistful of hair at the roots, and pulled

ing what? Do you care that she has a fond memory of some guy she met six

it firmly downward.

months ago while a caveman is now fucking her? You gotta actually hit on her

sometime. Say, "Stick your tongue out." Then suck on it. If she slaps you, good!

3. She didn't seem upset, so I pushed further. I told her how the most sensitive

That story would rock.

parts of the body are usually hidden from contact with the air—for example,

Maddash talked about how using well-chosen props are a great way to

where the arm bends on the other side of the elbow. Then I took her arm, bent

**104**

**105**

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

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SUBJECT: Re: Sticking Point

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Maddash talked about how using well-chosen props are a great way to

where the arm bends on the other side of the elbow. Then I took her arm, bent



STEP 4

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if a little, and erotically bit the crease on the opposite side of the elbow. She

said it gave her the chills.

DISARM

4. Afterward, I said, “But do you know what the best thing in the world is? A

bite ... right ... here.” I pointed to the side of my neck. Then I said, “Bite my

## THE OBSTACLES

neck,” as if I expected her to do it. She refused to at first, so I turned away

calmly to punish her. I waited a few seconds, then turned back and repeated,

“Bite me right here.” This time, she did. It was cat-string theory in action.

5. However, her bite was lame. So I told her, “That’s not how you bite. Come

here.” Then I swept her hair aside, gave her a good bite on the neck, and

instructed her to try again. This time, she did a great job.

6. I smiled approvingly and said, very slowly, “Not bad.” Then we finally

kissed.

We had a few more drinks, then I took her to my place. After a brief tour, I

did a Maddash move and had her sit on my lap while showing her a video on

the computer. I massaged and kissed the back of her neck until she turned

around and started making out with me. Then she asked if she could lie on the

floor for a second. I laid down next to her and—guess what happened—she

passed out. Cold!

I took off her shoes, threw a blanket over her, put a pillow under her head,

and climbed into my own warm bed.

So the joke was on me, but at least I get it now. All it took was one night,

really, to get to the other side of this.

I am ready, finally, for the next step.



—Style

*Chapter*



Choose a dojo.

There's Ross Jeffries and the school of Speed Seduction, where sublim-

inal language patterns are used to get a girl aroused.

Or Mystery and the Mystery Method, in which social dynamics are ma-

nipulated to snag the most desirable woman in a club.

Or David DeAngelo and Double Your Dating, in which he advocates

A MAN HAS ONLY ONE ESCAPE FROM

keeping the upper hand over a woman through a combination of humor

and arrogance that he calls cocky funny.

HIS OLD SELF: T O S E E A D I F F E R E N T

Or Gunwitch and Gunwitch Method, in which the only thing students

have to do is project animalistic sexuality and escalate physical contact un-

SELF IN T H E M I R R O R O F S O M E

til the woman stops them. His crude motto: "Make the ho say no."

Or there's David X, David Shade, Rick H., Major Mark, and Juggler—

the newest guru on the scene, who appeared online one day claiming he

W O M A N ‘ S EYES.

could pick up women better and faster than any other PUA simply by read-

ing his grocery list. Then there are the inner-circle teachers, like Steve P. and

Rasputin, who reveal their techniques only to those they deem worthy.

Yes, there are plenty of mentors to choose from, each with his own

methods and disciples, each operating under the belief that his way is *the*

— C L A R E B O O T H E L U C E

way. And the giants do battle constantly—threatening, name-calling, de-

The Women

bunking, competing.

My goal was to feed from all of them. I’ve never been a true believer in

anything. I’ve preferred to combine teaching and wisdom from various

sources, find what applies to me, and discard what doesn’t. The problem is

that when you drink from the source of knowledge, there is a price. And that

price is faith. Every single teacher wanted to know that he was the best, that

his students were the most loyal, that the competition wasn’t getting laid.

Yet every single student wanted to absorb as much information from as

many different experts as possible. It is a crisis that's specific not to the com-

munity but to humanity: Power is retained by attracting loyalty, and subju-

gation is guaranteed by giving it.

Though I had enjoyed teaching in Belgrade, I didn't want followers. I

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wanted more teachers. I still had a lot to learn. I found that out when Ex-

they'd come up with anything. But they stood there and taught me sign lan-

trasmask took me to a party at the Argyle hotel on Sunset Boulevard.

guage for five minutes. IOI.

I was dressed rakishly, in a black sport coat with long tails and a thin,

We sat down together and made small talk, which the PUAs refer to

shaped goatee. Extrasmask, meanwhile, looked better and more outrageous

somewhat disparagingly as fluffing. The girls were easy to tell apart, be-

every time I saw him. He now had his hair cut and spiked into a four-inch

cause one had chicken pox scars and the other had punctures in her face

Mohawk.

from removed piercings. They were visiting from Portland and planned to

At the party, I noticed a pair of heavily peacocked twins sitting on a

fly home the next day. They told me about their striptease show, in which

couch like alabaster statues. Though their well-coiffed hair and matching

they dance on stage and simulate lovemaking together.

vintage dresses earned them admiring looks; the girls didn't say a word to

As we talked, I realized they were just ordinary, insecure girls.

That's why

anyone all night.

they'd been so quiet. Most men make the mistake of believing that an attrac-

“Who are they?” I asked Extramask, who was talking to a petite moon-

tive woman who doesn't talk to or acknowledge him is a bitch.

Most of the

faced woman who seemed very interested in him.

time, however, she's just as shy or insecure as the less attractive women he's

“They're the Porcelain TwinZ,” he said. “They do a goth burlesque show

ignoring—if not more so. What made the Porcelain TwinZ different is that

together. They're also well-known groupies. They double-team band members.

they tried to compensate for their inner plainness with outer ostentatious-

I've masturbated with my penis about them and blown spectacular loads.”

ness. They were just sweet girls looking for a friend. And now they had found

“Introduce me.”

one. As we exchanged numbers, I felt the window open. But I didn't know

“But I don't know them.”

whether to go for one twin, the other, or both. I couldn't figure out how to

“That's okay. Introduce me anyway.”

separate them, but I didn't know what to do to seduce them simultaneously

Extramask walked over to the girls and said, “This is Style.”

either. I was stuck. So I excused myself and went to find to Sandy.

I shook their hands. They were surprisingly warm hands for girls who

As I talked to Sandy, she sidled up next to me. She seemed like she

looked half-dead. “We were just having a discussion about magic spells,” I

wanted something. So I did the evolution phase-shift routine, then pulled

told them. “Do you think spells work?”

her into the bathroom to make out. I wasn't really attracted to her: I was

I knew this was the perfect opener, because it was clear they believed in

just excited about being able to kiss women so easily now. I was already

spells—for some reason, most girls who strip or exploit their sexuality for a

abusing my newfound power.

living do. Then I transitioned into the ESP number-guessing routine.

When we emerged ten minutes later, the twins had left the party. I'd

“Entertain us more,” they cooed.

blown it once again by taking the easy road rather than pushing myself.

I’d gone too far. “I’m not a dancing monkey,” I replied.

“Besides, I’m a

I returned to my apartment in Santa Monica empty-handed.

Mystery

guy. I need a few minutes to recharge.”

was sleeping on my couch, and I told him about my failure with the twins.

It was a line of Mystery’s. They laughed on cue.

Fortunately, the next day, I received a message from the girls.  
Their plane

“I’ll tell you what,” I continued. “I’ve shown you a couple of  
cool things.

had been canceled, and they were stuck at a Holiday Inn near  
the airport. I

Why don’t you teach me something?”

still had a chance to redeem myself.

They had nothing to show me. “I’m going to talk to some  
friends,” I

“What should I do?” I asked Mystery.

said. “I’ll give you five minutes to think of something.”

“Invite yourself over. Just say, I’m coming over.’ Don’t give  
them any

I wandered away and struck up a conversation with a cherubic  
little

option.”

punk named Sandy. Ten minutes later, the twins approached.

“Then what happens when I’m in this weird hotel room with  
them?

“We have something to teach you,” they said proudly.

How do I get things started?”

I actually hadn’t planned on speaking to them again. I didn’t  
think

“Do what I always do. As soon as you walk in, run yourself a  
bath. Then

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take off your clothes, get in, call the girls in to scrub your back,  
and take it

the tub and handed her the soap. I was too embarrassed to look  
her in

from there.”

the eye.

“Wow. That’s pretty ballsy.”

I straightened my spine so it didn’t look too much like the dinosaur

“Trust me,” he said.

scales of Mr. Burns. She rubbed the soap in circles on my back. It wasn’t

So I called the twins back that evening and told them I was coming over.

erotic; it was workmanlike. I knew she wasn’t turned on, and I hoped she

“We’re just lying around in our sweats watching TV,” they warned.

wasn’t grossed out. Then she wet the washcloth in the tub and wiped the

“No problem. I haven’t showered or shaved in a month.”

soap off. My back was clean.

“Are you serious?”

Now what?

“No.”

I thought sex was supposed to automatically happen afterward. But

So far, everything was going according to plan.

she was just kneeling there, doing nothing. Mystery hadn’t told me what I

I drove to the hotel, rehearsing every move in my head. When I walked

was supposed to do after asking them to wash my back. He’d just said take

in the room, they were lying on adjacent twin beds watching *The Simpsons*.



it from there, so I assumed the whole sex thing would unfold organically.

“I need to take a bath,” I told them. “My hot water at home isn’t work-

He hadn’t told me how to transition from a back scrub to a hand job. And I

ing.”

had no idea. The last woman to wash my back was my mother, and that was

It’s not lying; it’s flirting.

when I was small enough to fit in the sink.

I made small talk while the water ran. Then I turned the corner into the

But now was the moment. Something had to be done.

bathroom, left the door open, removed my clothes, and sat in the tub.

“Urn, thanks,” I told her.

I didn’t want to use soap yet because it would make the water dirty. So

She walked out of the bathroom.

I sat naked in the bathwater, trying to work up the courage to call the girls

Fuck. I’d blown it.

in. I felt so vulnerable sitting there pale, skinny, and naked. I needed to take

I finished washing myself, climbed out of the bath, toweled off, and put

Mystery’s advice and start working out.

my dirty clothes back on. I sat on the edge of the bed of the girl who had

A minute passed. Five minutes. Ten minutes. I could still hear *The Simp-*

washed me, and we talked. I decided to try to adapt the evolution phase-shift

*sons* coming from the television set. The girls probably thought I'd drowned

pattern to a party of two. I told the other sister to sit on the bed with us.

by now.

"Mmm, you both smell so good," I began. Then I pulled their hair si-

I had to make my move. I'd hate myself if I didn't. I sat there for five

multaneously and bit each of their necks. But it still didn't get anything go-

more minutes until I finally mustered the courage to stutter:

"Hey, can you

ing. They were both so passive.

help me sort of wash my back?"

I had them each massage one of my hands as we talked about their

One of the girls yelled something. There was silence, then whispering. I

stage show. I wasn't going to leave the room a failure.

sat in the bathtub panicking, worried they wouldn't even come in. What a

"You know what's funny," one of them said. "We get all our physicality

dumb thing to say. The only thing more embarrassing would be if they ac-

out on stage. We never even touch or hug each other in real life. We're prob-

tually came in, and saw me sitting here naked with my dick floating in the

ably more distant than most sisters."

water like a lily pad. I thought of my favorite line from *Ulysses*,  
when sexually

I left their hotel room, a failure. On the way home, I stopped by  
Extra-

frustrated Leopold Bloom imagines his impotent manhood in  
the bath-

mask's house, where he lived with his parents.

water and calls it the limp father of thousands. And then I  
thought, if I was

"I'm confused," I told him. "I thought you said they did guys  
together."

smart enough to quote James Joyce in the bathtub, why did I  
feel so stupid

"Yeah, but I was just joking around. I thought you knew."

in front of these girls?

Extramask had a date the following week with the moon-faced  
woman

Finally, one of the twins walked in. I'd been hoping for both,  
but beg-

he'd been talking to at the party. Women with wide faces  
seemed to find

gars can't be choosers. With my back to her, I reached over the  
side of

him attractive.

*Chapter*



We lay on the floor for two hours talking about the game and our progress. Since adolescence, whenever I'd had the opportunity to make a wish (on an eyelash, a digital clock at 11:11, an ever-increasing number of birthday candles), thrown in with the usual pleas for world peace and personal happiness, I'd ask for the ability to attract any woman I wanted. I had fantasized about an incredible seductive energy entering my body like a lightning bolt, suddenly making me irresistible. But instead it was coming

*The first person I wanted to learn from was Juggler. His posts intrigued me. He advised*

in a slow drizzle and I was running around underneath it with a bucket,

*AFCs to overcome their shyness by trying to talk a homeless person into giving them a*

working to catch each drop.

*quarter or by calling people randomly out of the phone book to ask for movie recom-*

In life, people tend to wait for good things to come to them. And by

*mendations. He told others to challenge themselves and intentionally make pickups*

waiting, they miss out. Usually, what you wish for doesn't fall in your lap; it

*more difficult by saying they worked as trash collectors and drove '86 Impalas. He was*

falls somewhere nearby, and you have to recognize it, stand up, and put in

*an original. And he had just announced his first workshop. The cost: free.*

the time and work it takes to get to it. This isn't because the universe is

*One of the reasons Juggler rose so quickly in the community, besides his competi-*

cruel. It's because the universe is smart. It has its own cat-string theory and

*tive pricing was his writing: His posts had flair. They weren't the disorganized scrawl-*

knows we don't appreciate things that fall into our laps.

*ings of a high school senior in perpetual conflict with his testosterone. So when I called*

I would have to pick up my bucket and work.

*Juggler to discuss using afield report of his in the book, he asked if he could write some-*

So I took Mystery's advice. I got Lasik surgery, shedding my nerdy

*thing new instead: the story of the day he sarged me at his first workshop in San Fran-*

glasses once and for all. I paid to get my teeth laser-whitened. And I joined a

*cisco.*

gym and took up surfing, which was not only a cardiovascular workout but

also a way to get tan. In some respects, surfing reminded me of sarging.

## **FIELD REPORT—THE SEDUCTION OF STYLE**

Some days you go out and catch every wave and think you're a champ; other

**BY JUGGLER**

days you don't get one good wave and you think you suck. But no matter

what, every day you go out and you learn and you improve. And that's what

I clicked off the cell phone. "Style talks really fast," I said to my housemate's

keeps you coming back.

cat, who understands these things and was my longstanding partner in crime

However, I hadn't joined the community just to get a makeover. I

when it came to getting girls to the house. (The offer of, "Want to come back

needed to complete my mental transformation, which I knew would be

to my place and watch the cat do back flips?" hardly ever failed.)

much more difficult. Before Belgrade, I had taught myself the words, skills,

That was my first impression of Style's real life persona. Two weeks later I

and body language of a man of charisma and quality. Now I needed to de-

sat in a restaurant in San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf waiting for Style to

velop the confidence, self-worth, and inner game to back it up. Otherwise,

arrive, mentally tallying a list of crazy things that could be wrong with him. I

I'd just be a fake, and women would sense it instantly.

ignored the waiter who was trying to upgrade my beer and made a prayer to

I had two months off until my next workshop with Mystery in Miami,

myself. “Please, goddess of seduction and patron saint of pickup artists and

and I wanted to really blow away the students there. I aimed to outdo Mys-

guys trying to get nookie everywhere, please do not let Style be weird.”

tery’s sarge at Club Ra in Belgrade. So I gave myself an assignment: to meet,

Talking too fast is usually a sign of a deep lack of confidence. People who

in the next few months, every top PUA there was. I planned to make myself

feel that others aren’t interested in what they think talk fast for fear of losing the

a seducing machine, designed from pieces of all the best PUAs. And now

attention of their audience. Others are so in love with perfection that they have

that I had some status in the community as Mystery’s new wing, it would be

a difficult time editing it all down and continuously speed up in hopes of

easy to meet them.

getting it all in. Such people usually become writers. That was it: weirdo or

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writer. I hoped it was the latter. I needed a friend and equal in this world of

and thin with bits of prickly straw sticking out of my sleeves. I sat down on the

seduction, not another student.

bench there. She relaxed. Our eyes touched—hers almond green, mine blood-

I'd first heard of Style on the Internet. We had come to admire each other's

shot from jet lag. The best seductions happen when the woman seduces you.

postings on a website dedicated to the art of seduction. He wrote with grace

You have to lead to be a good seducer but you also have to follow. In that

and eloquence. He seemed [to be a](#) positive guy who was focused on sharing.

moment I realized I wanted her to take me by the hand to her secret camp in

What he saw in my posts I can only guess.

the woods. I wanted her to show me her goofy magic trick. I wanted her to

Style entered the room with a galloping lope. Were those platform shoes

read me the naughty poems she writes on coffee shop napkins.

he was wearing? He made easy eye contact, beamed with a beautiful smile,

CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP.

and was a touch nervous in just the right amount to make him endearing—an

Style and his shoes were moving along the backside of the divider that

effect I'm sure was deliberate. With his relatively short stature, baby-like shaved

bisected the long room. I didn't want him to join us. It is not that I didn't



head, and soft-spoken voice, no one would ever suspect him of being a pickup

appreciate Style. He had me at a humble, “Greetings, I am the one called

artist. I perked up. This guy could be good.

Style.” It was just that the vibe between her and me and the never-ending

I liked Style right away. He was obviously very practiced at making

white petals was so ... mesmerizing. And also because I am a wolf and this

people like him. He made me feel important. He had a way of summing up

little doe separated from her herd was mine. If Style shows up, I might have

many of my more clunkily expressed ideas into simple, beautiful statements—all

to bite his face.

the while attributing the eloquence back to me. He was the perfect accomplice

The first thing you say to a woman matters very little. Some guys tell me

for an up-and-coming guru.

they can't think of anything or they need a really good line. I tell them they are

And yet I wasn't sure what his weakness was. We all do that as we get to

thinking too much. You are not that important. I am not that important. We have

know someone. Like a tabloid editor, we search for both greatness and

never thought a thought so great that it needs to be wrapped with so much

weakness, jotting notes in our heads for future exploitation. We are never

care. Give up your need for perfection. As far as opening lines go, a grunt or

comfortable with those who have no visible flaw. Style's softness was not real

a fart is sufficient.

weakness. My only guess as to Style's flaw was a pride in his ability to get

"How are you?" I asked.

others to open up and reveal themselves. Pretty lame as far as a weakness

That is one of my usual openers. Just something you hear every day from

goes but that was all I had to go on.

the grocery store clerk. Ninety-five percent respond with a one-word, noncom-

He was a cool guy. But he had a lack of confidence that made no sense,

mittal answer: "fine" or "okay." Three percent respond with enthusiasm: "great"

as if he felt there was something missing about himself—a piece that would

or "super." Those are the ones you learn to stay away from—they're nuts. And

make him complete. I was pretty sure he was searching for it outside when he

two percent respond with an honest, "Terrible. My husband just left me for his

would eventually find it inside.

yoga teacher's receptionist. How fucking Zen." Those are the ones you love.

After lunch, we did exactly what all hot pickup artists on the  
make do in

She tells me she is “fine.” Her voice is rough for such a small  
package.

San Francisco. We went to the Museum of Modern Art.

She must have been up late screaming at the Courtney Love  
concert. I am not

We walked downstairs and spread out—commandoes of  
seduction. I

really into the loud rock scene. I like elevator music. But I  
forgive her. I don’t

turned a corner in the dimly lit new media section and noticed a  
cute

screen women. That would only limit my adventures. I only  
screen on how well

twenty-year-old. She was small. I love petite women. There is  
something about

I get treated.

their inherent weakness that turns me on. I joined her at a video  
projection on

I look at her expectedly. She takes the hint. “How are you?” she  
asks.

the floor. The scene looped every minute or so—white petals  
falling delicately

I ponder a moment. “I’m an 8.”

off seasoned branches.

I’m always an 8, sometimes an 8.5.

Height can be intimidating. I am the scarecrow in *The Wizard of  
Oz*—tall

There are two paths to move a conversation. You can either ask  
questions:

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“Where are you from?”; “How many ways can you curl your tongue?”; “Do

She laughed musically. It was like the soundtrack to falling leaves.

you believe in reincarnation?”

CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP.

Or you can make statements: “I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan—home to

Focus is passe. In the modern world we want to feel everything all the

hundreds and hundreds of ice cream shops”; “I had a girlfriend who could curl

time. There is no point in just taking a walk in the park when we can also listen

her tongue into a poodle”; “My housemate’s cat is the reincarnation of Richard

to headphones, munch on a hot dog, crank up our vibrating soles to the

maximum, and check out the passing carnival of humanity. Our choices shout

Nixon.”

I spent my early twenties trying to get to know girls by asking tons of

the creed of a new world order: stimulation! Thought and creativity have be-

questions—open-ended questions, smart questions, strange questions, the most

come subservient to the singular goal of saturating our senses. But I’m old

school. If you are not prepared to focus on me when you are with me—

heartfelt questions wrapped in beautiful boxes. I thought they would appreciate

conversation, touch, our momentary entwining of souls—then get out of my

my interest. All I got was name, rank, serial number, and sometimes the finger.

face and go back to your 500 channels of surround-sound life.

Interrogation is not seduction. Seduction is the art of setting the stage for two

people to choose to reveal themselves to each other.

“Look, I can’t talk to you anymore.”

“Why not?”

Talking in statement form is the way old friends speak to each other.

Statements are the mode of the intimate, the confident, and the giving. They

“I am enjoying this but you either have to commit to talking with me or go

look at art. And, besides, with you standing there I’m going to get a crick in

invite others to share and make perfect metaphysical sense.

Trust me on that—

my neck.”

you do not have to spend nights lying in the grass, staring up into our

She smiled and joined me on the bench. Ah.

spread-eagled Milky Way galaxy figuring it all out. I have done it for you.

CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP.

“This video makes me feel peaceful,” I said. “Like raking leaves into a big

“I’m Juggler.”

pile and falling into them. But if they had some actual leaves here that we

“I’m Anastasia.”

could play in—now that would be art.”

“Hi Anastasia.”

She smiled. “I got thrown in the leaves a lot by my older brothers when I

Her tiny hand felt calloused. Her nails were trimmed short. They were the

was growing up.”

hands of a worker bee. I needed to investigate fully. I pulled her closer. She

I chuckled. The thought of this tiny girl being tossed gleefully into a huge

came willingly.

pile of leaves was funny.

CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP, CLICKITY CLOMP  
CLOMP CLOMP.

“You know,” I said, “I have a friend who swears he can figure out a

Style entered the scene. His perfume wisped and his Italian fabric rustled.

person’s personality based on the age and sex of their siblings.”

Did he flourish? It felt like he flourished. What was wrong with him? Couldn’t

“Like having older brothers makes me butch?” She adjusted her Harley-

he see I was enjoying an intimate moment with this girl? Was he so focused on

Davidson belt buckle. “That is so much bullshit.”

some sort of entertainment phase of seduction that he couldn’t see we were

You can't lead without being able to follow. "Crazy bullshit," I agreed.

beyond that? My moment with this girl evaporated. A growl built deep in my

"The guy is completely wiggled out. Of course, he did read me exactly."

chest.

"Really?"

"Do I know you?" I asked him.

"Yeah, he knew I had one older sister. Just like that."

"How did he know?"

"Does anyone truly know anyone?" Style retorted.

"He said I was needy."

He made me laugh. Damn him to hell—in that moment I hated Style for his

"Are you?"

mischievous timing but loved him for his way with words. I decided not to bite

"Yes, of course. All my girlfriends have to write me love notes and give me

his face—this day.

I could tell Style was eager to demonstrate himself in action. I introduced

backrubs. I'm high maintenance."

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the two of them. Then something freaky happened. Style's eyes rolled back in

Later my research shifted toward understanding people and myself. I

his head, and he became someone else. My best guess as to whom he was

became a variety act—juggler, street performer, comedian. It's the backwater of

channeling was Harry Houdini—a fast-talking Harry Houdini. He performed

entertainment, but a great place to learn about human interaction. As a side

tricks. He had her punch him in the stomach. He mentioned sleeping on a bed

effect, I became good with women. By my twenty-third birthday, I had slept with

of nails. She was enjoying herself. Her phone number appeared out of thin air.

only one woman. By my twenty-eighth, I could sleep with as many as I wanted.

That was good enough for Harry. We left her where I found her.

My approach became subtle and efficient, my game graceful and compact.

There is pride involved in being a pickup artist. It is a challenge. I have

Then I found the community. Although my interest was much broader than

performer friends who can explode on stage (like samurai and kill five hundred

just seduction, their dedication to understanding human interaction was like

people, but they are afraid to approach a girl in a bar. I don't blame them.

coming home.

Most audiences are horny to be fucked. They want it hard and deep. But the

Then I met Style and felt a kinship on an entirely new level. Style listened.



girl sitting on the barstool is more difficult. She is scarier. She is the five hundred

Most people don't listen because they are afraid of what they might hear. Style

pound gorilla in a little black dress. And she can bust you up, if you let her. But

had no preconceived notions. He was cool with however anyone wanted to

she is also horny to be fucked. We are all horny to be fucked.

be. He didn't find bitchy girls who had to be broken. He found feisty girls w h o

San Francisco was my first group workshop. I had booked six guys. We met

were fun to play with. He didn't see a path of random obstacles. He saw an

up with them at a restaurant near Union Street. Style helped me quickly check

opportunity to explore new territory. Together we were the Lewis and Clark of

their credentials. They were six members in good standing of the community.

seduction.

We spent dinner making up conversation starters, such as the pretend-

W h e n the workshop ended at 3 : 0 0 A.M., Style and I decided to share a

someone-is-a-movie-star opener. On the w a y back from the restroom, I ap-

hotel room with some of his family who were in town. We talked in hushed

proached a good-looking middle-aged couple at a nearby table.

voices so as not to wake them. I teased Style's fashion sense. He made fun of

“I hope I am not interrupting,” I said to the woman, “but I just had to tell

my midwestern sensibilities. We shared stories from our experiences with the

you that I loved you in that one with the boy and the lighthouse. It made me cry

community and counted up the loot—a couple of kisses for Style, a couple of

for three days. I stayed up late watching it with my housemate’s cat. He used to

telephone numbers for me.

be the president.”

The mood was giddy. We felt on the edge of something.

They nodded and smiled amicably “You ... thank ... very much,” the

“It’s really amazing, man,” Style said. “I can’t wait to see where all this

woman responded in broken English. “It is great.”

leads.”

“Where are you from?” I asked.

He was so full of wide-eyed optimism in the power of pickup, in the

“Czechoslovakia.”

benefits of self-improvement, in the belief that we—the community—had the

I gave her a hug and shook the man’s hand. “Welcome to America.”

answer to the problems that had plagued him his whole life. I wanted to tell

Pickup artists are the only real diplomats left in the world.

him that the answer he was seeking lay elsewhere. But I never got around to it.

I didn't start out as a pickup artist. I began as a small boy  
obsessed with

We were having too much fun.

taking things apart. I carried a screwdriver everywhere. I had a  
burning desire

to know firsthand how things worked. Toys, bicycles, coffee  
makers—

everything comes apart if you know where the screws are. *My d*  
*a d* would go

to cut the grass, but the lawnmower would be in pieces. My  
sister would

switch on the television ... and nothing. All the vacuum tubes  
were under my

bed. I was much better at taking things apart than putting them  
back together.

My family was reduced to living in the Stone Age.

## *Chapter*



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I smiled wanly. “He has seen what Mystery has to offer and  
decided to be-

come my disciple. Isn't that right, Style?”

Every greasy head in the room turned to look at me. The  
reviews of Mys-

tery's Belgrade workshop had hit the Internet, and my skills in  
the field had

been soundly praised. People were curious to *meet* Mystery's  
new wing—or,

in Ross's case, to own him.

When I returned home from San Francisco, where the only person I spent

I stared at the thin black headset coiling around his face like a spider.

the night with was Juggler, I received a phone call from Ross Jeffries.

"Something like that," I said.

"I'm having a workshop this weekend," he said. "If you want, you can

That was not enough for him. "Who is your guru?" he asked.

come sit in for free. It's at the Marina Beach Marriott hotel on Saturday and

It was his room. But it was my mind. I didn't know what to say. Since

Sunday."

the best way to deflect pressure is with humor, I tried to think of a joke re-

"Sure," I told him. "I'd love to go."

sponse. I couldn't come up with one.

"There's just one thing: You owe me parties. Good Hollywood parties

"I'll get back to you on that," I answered.

with hot chicks. You promised me."

I could see that he wasn't happy with my response. After all, this wasn't

"Got it."

just a seminar he was running. It was a cult.

"And, before we hang up, you can wish me a happy birthday."

When the meeting broke for lunch, Ross pulled me aside. "Why don't

"It's your birthday?"

you join me for some Italian?” he asked, twirling his ring, a replica of the

“Yes, your guru of gash is forty-four. And my youngest this year was

one worn by the superhero Green Lantern.

twenty-one.”

“I wasn’t aware that you were still a big supporter of Mystery,” he said

I had no idea he was inviting me to his seminar not as a student, but as

over lunch. “I thought you had come over to the good side of the force.”

a conquest.

“I don’t think your two methods have to be mutually exclusive. I told

I arrived on Saturday afternoon to find a standard hotel conference

Mystery what you did with the waitress at California Pizza Kitchen, and he

room, the kind that’s so brightly lit and mustard yellow it seems designed

flipped out. I think for the first time, he saw how Speed Seduction could re-

as a habitat more for salamanders than for human beings. Rows of men sat

ally be effective.”

behind white rectangular tables, facing the front of the room. Some were

Ross’s face turned purple. “Stop!” he said. It was a hypnosis word, a

greasy-haired students, others were greasy-haired adults, and a few were

pattern interrupt. “Do not share anything with him. I don’t want that guy

greasy-haired dignitaries—top-ranking officials at Fortune 500 companies

taking my best work, stealing it, and making money off it. This is disturb-

and even the Justice Department. In the front was our porous, bony guru of

ing.” He stabbed a fork into his chicken. “I knew something was wrong. If

gash, talking into a headset.

you’re going to be this deeply involved with Mystery, then I’m going to have

He was telling the students about the hypnotic technique of using

a problem. If you’re going to learn privately with me, I forbid you from

quotes in a conversation. An idea is more palatable, he explained as he paced

telling him the details.”

the room, if it comes from someone else. “The unconscious thinks in terms of

“Listen,” I tried to appease the angry guru. “I haven’t told him anything

content and structure. If you introduce a pattern with the words, ‘My friend

in detail. I just let him know that you were the real deal.”

was telling me,’ the critical part of her mind shuts off. Do you follow me?”

“Fine, then. Just tell him you saw me get a chick hot as hell and wetting

He looked around the room for a response. And that was when he no-

her panties just by asking a couple of questions and making some gestures.

ticed me, sitting in the back row between Grimble and Twotimer. He

Let the arrogant fuck figure it out for himself!”

stopped speaking. I felt the heat of his glare on me. “Brothers, this is Style.”

I watched his nostrils flare and the veins in his forehead bulge as he

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spoke. He was clearly a guy who’d been beaten down early in life. Not by the

published book. The title pretty much summed up where he was coming

brutality of his father like *Mystery*; Ross’s parents were a smart, good-

from emotionally at the time— *How to Get the Women You Desire Into Bed: A*

humored Jewish couple. I knew because they’d arrived at the seminar a few

*Down and Dirty Guide to Dating and Seduction for the Man Who’s Fed Up With*

minutes after me and instantly started teasing him. Rather, Ross had been

*Being Mr. Nice Guy*. He sold the book through small classified ads in the back

beaten down socially, which probably took a great toll on his psyche when

of *Playboy* and *Gallery*. When he added seminars to his repertoire, he began

combined with the constant teasing and high expectations of his parents.

marketing on the Internet as well. One of his students, a legendary com-

His siblings must have been overwhelmed as well. His two brothers had

puter hacker named Louis DePayne, soon created the newsgroup alt.seduc-

turned to God and became Jews for Jesus. As for Ross, he had turned to to a

tion.fast. Out of that forum, an international cabal of PUAs gradually came

religion of his own making.

into being.

“You are being led into the inner sanctum of power, my young appren-

“When I first came out with this stuff, I was savagely ridiculed,” Ross

tice,” he warned, wiping the gray stubble on his chin with the back of his

said. “I was called every name in the book and accused of the worst things. I

hand, “and the price for betrayal is dark beyond measure of your mortal

was really angry for a while. Very pissed off. But gradually the argument

mind. Keep quiet and keep your promises, and I will keep opening the

went from ‘Is this real?’ to ‘Should they be doing it?’” door.”

And that is why every guru owes at least a pledge of allegiance to Ross

Jeffries. He laid the groundwork. It’s also why every time new teachers pop



Ross's severity and anger, though unconscionable, were understand-

up, Ross tries to shoot them down; in a few cases, he has even threatened to

able. The fact was that Ross had built the seduction community almost

reveal a young competitor's online seduction activities to his parents or

single-handedly. Sure, there'd always been a stable of men giving pickup ad-

school administration.

vice, like Eric Weber, whose book *How to Pick Up Girls* helped start the trend

that culminated in the movie *The Pick-Up Artist* with Molly Ringwald and

Worse than Mystery, in his mind, was a former Speed Seduction stu-

Robert Downey Jr. But there had never been a community of guys before

dent named David DeAngelo. Originally, DeAngelo called himself

Ross. The reason was fortuitous timing. As Speed Seduction was develop-

Sisonpyh—hypnosis spelled backward—and worked his way into the

ing, so was the Internet.

Speed Seduction hierarchy. But the two of them had a falling out when

Ross supposedly hypnotized a girlfriend of DeAngelo's into fooling

In his twenties, by all accounts, Jeffries was an angry man. His ambi-

around with him.

tion was stand-up comedy and screenwriting. One of his scripts, *They Still*

*Call Me Bruce*, was even produced, but it flopped. So Jeffries drifted be-

According to Ross, DeAngelo had brought the girl to him to seduce. It

tween paralegal jobs, lonely and girlfriendless. That all changed when he

wasn't uncommon, he said, for students to bring him women as a sacrifice

was in the self-help section of a bookstore and his hand, he claims, invol-

of sorts. According to DeAngelo, Ross was in no way given permission to

untarily reached out and grabbed a book. That tome was *Frogs Into Princes*,

touch the girl. Whatever the case, the result was that the two stopped

the classic book on NLP by John Grinder and Richard Bandler. Ross went

speaking and DeAngelo set up a rival business called Double Your Dating.

on to devour every book on the subject he could find.

It was based not on NLP or any other form of hypnosis, but rather on evo-

lutionary psychology and DeAngelo's principle of cocky funny.

One of his heroes had always been the Green Lantern, who was en-

dowed with a magic ring able to bring the desires of his will and imagina-

“You know, my cheapjack imitator David DeAnushole is having his

tion to life. After using NLP to end a long streak of involuntary chastity by

first seminar in L.A.,” Ross said. “The guy is so fucking good-looking and

seducing a woman who’d applied for a job in the law office where he

well-connected in the nightclub scene it just astounds me that people think

worked, Ross Jeffries believed he had found that ring. The power and con-

he could ever understand their situation and the difficulties they encounter

trol that had eluded him his whole life was finally his.

in dealing with women.”

His professional pickup career began with a seventy-page self-

I made a mental note to sign up for the seminar.

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“There’s a certain view of women that David DeAnushole, Gun Bitch,

tern about the qualities women look for in a man. “I’ve never heard it said

and Misery have,” Ross continued, working himself into a rage. “These guys

like that before. Where do you teach? I’d love to know more.”

are focusing on the worst tendencies of some of the worst women out there

Ross collected her phone number and returned to the table. He turned

and spreading it like a cloud of fertilizer on all women.”

to me, smiled, and said, “Now do you see who’s teaching the true way?”

Ross reminded me of an old rhythm-and-blues artist who has been

Then he rubbed his thumb on his chin.

ripped off so much that he trusts no one. But at least there are publishing

companies and copyrights in place to protect songwriters. There is no way

to copyright a woman's arousal, to declare certain authorship over her

choice of a partner. His paranoia, sadly, made sense—especially when it

came to Mystery, the only seducer with the ideas and skills to supplant

him.

The waiter cleared our pasta. "I am so passionate about this because I

care about these kids," Ross was saying. "I think that 20 percent of my stu-

dents have been abused. They have been severely impacted. Not just with

women but with all people, male and female. And a lot of problems in soci-

ety come from the fact that we all have such strong drives, but live in a cul-

ture that discourages us from exploring them freely."

He turned around and noticed three businesswomen eating dessert a

few tables away. He was about to freely explore his sex drive.

"How's that berry cobbler?" Ross yelled at them.

"Oh, it's good," one of the woman replied.

"You know," Ross said to them, "people have signal systems for dessert." He was off and running. "The signals say: This is sugar-free; this

melts in my mouth. And the signal system fires up your body's responsive-

ness to get ready for what comes next. It's tracing an energy flow through

your body."

He had the women's attention now. "Really?" they asked.

"I teach courses in energy flow," Ross told them. The women *ooohed* in

unison. The word energy is the equivalent of the smell of chocolate to

most women in Southern California. "We were just talking about whether

men really understand women. And we think we've figured it out."

In a flash, he was at their table. As he spoke, the women forgot com-

pletely about their dessert and stared at him rapt. I couldn't tell sometimes

if his patterns really worked on the sophisticated subconscious level he

claimed, or if most conversations were so boring that simply saying some-

thing different and intriguing was enough to trigger attraction.

"Oh my God," one of the women said when he finished running a pat-

*Chapter*



I talked to his mother for a while about her son's line of work.

"Some

people think if he talks about sex and women, it's terrible," his mom said.

"But he's not crude and vulgar. He's a very bright boy." She stood up and

ambled to a wall of shelving. "I have a book of poetry he wrote when he was

nine years old. Do you want to read some of it? One of them says he's a king

and he's on a throne."

In Sin's eyes, I was a pawn.

"No, you don't want to read that," Ross interrupted. "Jesus Christ, this

"Ross is a seductionist and a plotter," he said when I called him in

was a mistake. Let's get going."

Montgomery, Alabama, where he'd been stationed. He was living with a girl

The party was a disaster. Ross couldn't handle himself around classy

he'd met who liked being taken out on the end of a leash and collar. Unfor-

people. He spent most of the night thinking he was flirting by acting as if he

unately, the military frowned on such perversions, so Sin had to drive all

were my gay lover and crawling on all fours behind Carmen Electra, pre-

the way to Atlanta to walk her on the downlow.

tending to be a dog sniffing her ass. When I was talking to another girl, he

“You have a special place in Ross’s plans,” he warned. “You are the mar-

interrupted to brag about a pickup he had just done. At 10:00 P.M., he said

keting tool he’s using to attack Mystery. You are Mystery’s first and best

he was tired and demanded that I drive him home.

student, the only guy who’s sarging regularly with him. So every time Ross

“Next time, we should stay later,” I said.

asks you a question like, ‘Are you lying to your guru?,’ and you answer, the

“No, next time we have to arrive at the right time,” he scolded me. “I

presupposition that he’s your guru is affirmed. Every little thing he does is

can stay out late, provided I get about twelve hours notice so I can take it

to prove you are a convert and you’ve disavowed your old religion to em-

easy and nap in the afternoon.”

brace the true one that actually works. That is his message. So be careful.”

“You’re not that old.”

There was a catch to learning NLP, manipulation, and self-

I made a mental note never again to take Ross anywhere cool. It was an

improvement. No action—whether yours or another’s—was devoid of in-

embarrassment. Since I’d started spending so much time with PUAs, I’d

tent. Every word had a hidden meaning, and every hidden meaning had

lowered my standards for people I hung out with. All my old friends had weight, and every weight had its own special place on the scale of self-fallen by the wayside. Now my social life was monopolized by a caliber of interest. However, as much as Ross may have been nurturing a friendship nerd I'd never associated with before. I was in the game to have more with me in order to crush Mystery, he also had a reputation for befriending women in my life, not men. And though the community was all about younger students just so they'd take him to parties. women, it was also completely devoid of them. Hopefully, this was just part I invited Ross to his first event the following week. Monica, a struggling of the process, the way cleaning a house often makes it messier first. but well-connected actress I'd sarged, had invited me to her birthday party at For the rest of the drive back to his apartment in Marina del Rey, Ross Belly, a tapas bar on Santa Monica Boulevard. I thought it would be a good harangued me about his rivals. Of course, Ross's detractors weren't any scene full of beautiful people for Ross to dazzle with his skills. I was wrong. kinder to him. They had recently nicknamed him Mine '99, claiming that



I met Ross at his parents' place, a middle-class red brick house on the  
whenever Ross took someone else's tactic and made it his own, he liked to  
west side of L.A. His father, a retired chiropractor, school principal, and  
insist it was something he had developed at his 1999 Los Angeles seminar.  
self-published novelist, sat on a couch near his mother, who clearly wore  
"That traitorous creep David DeAnushole," Ross seethed as I dropped  
the pants in the family. On the wall were a purple heart and a bronze star  
him off. "His seminar is tomorrow, and I just found out some of my stu-  
that Ross's father had won during World War II in Europe.  
dents are scheduled to speak. They didn't even have the courtesy to let me  
"Style's very successful," Ross told them. "He gets a lot of chicks using  
know."  
my material." Even pickup artists in their forties still seek the approval of  
I didn't have the heart to tell Ross that I'd be going also.  
their parents.

## *Chapter*



honest, and hiding your motives. That is not what I am teaching. I'm teach-

ing something called attraction. Attraction is working on yourself and im-

proving yourself to the point where women are magnetically attracted to

you and want to be around you.”

Not once did DeAngelo mention the names of his competitors and ri-

vals. He was too smart for that. He was going to try to take this whole un-

Attraction is not a choice.

derground world up for air, and he was going to do it by not acknowledging

Those were the words David DeAngelo had projected on the wall. The

the underground world at all. He had stopped posting online and, instead,

seminar was packed. There were more than a hundred and fifty people in the

let his employees stick up for him when he was flamed. He wasn't a genius

room. Many of them I recognized from other seminars, including Extramask.

or an innovator like Mystery and Ross. But he was a great marketer.

It was getting to be an all-too-familiar sight: a person onstage with a

“How do you make someone want something?” he asked, after making

headset instructing a group of needy men on how to save themselves from

his students practice giving each other James Dean underlooks.  
“You give it

nightly onanism. But there was a difference. DeAngelo was a  
good-looking

value. You show that others like it. You make it scarce. And you  
make them

guy, like Ross Jeffries had said. He reminded me of Robert  
DeNiro, if

work for it. I want you to think about other ways during lunch.”

DeNiro had been a mama’s boy who’d never been in a fight in  
his life.

I joined DeAngelo and some of his other students for a burger  
and

DeAngelo stood out from the other gurus precisely because he  
didn’t

found out a little more about him. A struggling real estate agent  
from Eu-

stand out. He wasn’t charismatic or interesting. He didn’t have  
the crazy

gene, Oregon, he moved to San Diego for a fresh start. Lonely,  
he yearned to

gleam of a wanna-be cult leader or some gaping hole in his soul  
that he was

cross that invisible barrier separating two strangers at a club. So  
he began

trying to fill with women. He didn’t even claim to be good at the  
game. He

searching the Web for tips and cultivating friends who were  
good with

was very ordinary. But he was dangerous because he was  
organized.

women. One of those friends was Riker, a Ross Jeffries protege  
who turned

He had clearly spent months working on his seminar. It was not only him onto using America Online to meet women. Sending instant messages entirely scripted but cleaned up for mass consumption. It was a school of was a way for DeAngelo to practice flirting the way his new pickup instruction that could be presented to the mainstream without did, but without risking public embarrassment. shocking anyone with its crudeness, its attitude toward women, or the dev- “That was the *chi*” he said as students milled about awkwardly, trying ousness of its techniques—except, that is, for his recommendation of read- to overhear. “I was learning new ideas, implementing them, and then notic- ing the book *Dog Training* by Lew Burke for tips on handling girls. ing how women responded on AOL. That’s when I learned that busting DeAngelo was a bright guy—and a threat to Ross. Many of the speakers women’s balls and really slamming them immediately didn’t have the effect at his seminar were, like himself, Ross’s former students: among them Rick that the intuitive mind would guess it would. So I became cocky and funny. H., Vision, and Orion, an uber-nerd who was famous as the first PUA to sell

I stole their lines, teased them, accused them of hitting on me, and never videotapes of himself approaching girls on the street. This video series, *Mag-* gave them a break.”

*ical Connections*, was considered hard evidence that nerds with hypnosis Flushed with his new findings, DeAngelo delivered a fifteen-page skills could get laid.

screed to Cliff’s List, one of the most established online seduction newslet- “Seduction,” DeAngelo read from his notes, “is defined in the diction- ters. The then-nascent seduction community ate it up: A new guru had ar- ary as an ‘enticement to wrongdoing, specifically the offense of inducing a rived. Cliff, the middle-aged Canadian businessman who ran the list by day woman to consent to unlawful sexual intercourse by enticements which and hunted for new master PUAs to bring into the community by night, overcome her scruples.””

helped convince DeAngelo to spend three weeks turning his manifesto into “In other words,” he continued, “seduction implies tricking, being dis- an e-book, *Double Your Dating*.

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While we were talking, Rick H. joined us. He was one of the friends

DeAngelo had cultivated and was now his roommate in the Hollywood

“Oh, yeah,” Rick said. “That’s what we do.”

Hills. I’d heard a lot about Rick H. He was supposed to be the best, a master

When the gurus left, I sat with Extramask. He was sipping apple juice

PUA who specialized in bisexual women. His garish style of dress, like that

from a small can. He had a barbell-shaped piercing in the back of his neck

of a Vegas lounge lizard, was one of the inspirations for Mystery’s peacock

now and if it weren’t for his swollen eyes, he would have been the coolest

theory.

looking guy at the seminar.

“What happened to you?” I asked.

Rick H. was short, slightly stocky, and dressed in a large-collared shirt

and a red blazer. Trailing behind him were six attraction adepts eager to

“I went out with that moon-faced girl and got my second lay ever,” he

soak up his wisdom. I recognized two of them: Extramask, whose eyes were

said. “But even though we fucked three times, I didn’t blow my load again.

swollen nearly shut, and Grimble, who was beginning to have doubts about

Either condoms fucking suck or I have mental anxiety and need to calm

his application of Speed Seduction. Hypnotizing women into being groped

down—or Mystery’s right and I’m a homo.”

in clubs wasn’t getting him any girlfriends. So after spending time with

“But what does that have to do with your eyes? Did she punch you?”

Rick H., Grimble had turned cocky funny. His new approach was to stick

“No, she had a feather pillow or some shit, and I got an eye infection be-

his elbow out whenever a woman walked past, bump her, and then yell

cause of my allergies.”

“*owwww*” loudly, as if she’d hurt him. When she stopped, he’d accuse her of

He said he met her for coffee. They sat together and he ran the ESP test,

grabbing his ass. It was much more rewarding, he realized, to be funny in a

a psychological game called the cube, and other demonstrations of value.

bar than creepy.

When she started laughing at all his jokes—even the ones that weren’t

funny—he knew she liked him. They rented the movie *Insomnia*, went back

Rick took a seat at the table and spread himself out comfortably. While

students crammed around him, he began holding court.

to her house, and cuddled together on the couch.

He had two rules for women, he said.

“I had a pretty legit boner going on,” he said, matter-of-factly.

“You

know, that kind of rock-hardness where you get the pre-cum dabbing your

The first: No good deed goes unpunished. (A phrase, ironically, that

was coined by a woman, Clare Boothe Luce.)

Underoos.”

The second: Always have a better answer.

“I know. Do go on.”

One of the corollaries of Rick’s second rule was to never give a woman

“And it was cool because one of her legs was pressed up against my

a straight answer to a question. So if a woman asks what you do for a living,

juicy, rock-hard cock. She definitely felt the hardness. I took off my shirt,

keep her guessing: Tell her you’re a cigarette lighter repairman or a white

and she started kissing me and feeling my chest. It was cool.”

He paused

slave trader or a professional hopscotch player. The first time I tried this, it

and took a sip of apple juice through a narrow straw. “Then I took her shirt

didn’t go so well. In a five-set in a hotel lobby one night, a woman asked

off, so she was wearing just a bra. I felt her boobies. But when we went to the

what my job was. I told her the response I had written on my cheat sheet for



bedroom, I had a problem.”

the night: white slave trader. As soon as the words left my mouth, I realized

“An erection problem?”

I probably wasn’t going to get a number-close. Everyone in the set was

“No. She still had her bra on.”

African-American.

“So what’s the problem? Just take it off.”

“I have no clue how to take off bras. So I just left it on.”

One thing I noticed as Rick talked was that people who liked the sound

“I guess unhooking a bra is something you learn from experience.”

of their own voice tended to do better with women—except for soft-spoken

“I have a plan, though. Want to hear it?”

Dustin. Cliff, of Cliff’s List, called it big mouth theory.

“Urn, sure.”

“Why is this shit so fun to talk about?” Rick H. asked DeAngelo.

“Because we’re guys,” DeAngelo said, as if it were the most obvious

“What I’m going to do is take one of my mom’s bras and tie it around a

thing in the world.

pole or something. Then I’m gonna walk toward the pole blindfolded like

in pin the tail on the donkey, reach the bra, and try to undo it.”

## Chapter



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I gave him a funny look. I couldn't tell if he was joking or not.

"I'm dead serious," he said. "It's a legit way to learn, a n d you know it'll

work too."

"How was the sex this time?"

"It was like last time. I fucked her beyond belief, for probably a half

h o u r straight. I was very hard and luscious. But I couldn't spunk a load. I

hate this shit. Seriously, I really want to blow it during sex."

*Though David DeAngelo taught the seminars on cocky funny, the undisputed heavy-*

"You're probably thinking a b o u t it too much. Or maybe you're just n o t

*weight of the genre was a forty-year-old Canadian writer known as Zan. Where*

into the girls, emotionally."

*PUAs like Mystery advocated going under the radar, Zan flaunted the fact that he*

"Or maybe I just adore the tight grip I use for masturbating," he said,

*was a ladies' man. He considered himself a seducer in the tradition of Casanova and*

rubbing his eyes. “I think I got my first blow job, too. Like, I saw her head

*Zorro, and enjoyed dressing up as them for costume parties. In four years on the*

near my penis, and I couldn’t tell whether she was sucking or not. But it was

*seduction boards, he never once asked for advice; he only gave it.*

cool when my balls were licked.”

Grimble walked by and clapped a hand on my shoulder. “The seminar’s

MSN GROUP: Mystery’s Lounge

starting again,” he told me. “Steve P. and Rasputin are speaking, and you

SUBJECT: Zan’s Cocky Funny Waitress Technique

definitely don’t want to miss them.”

AUTHOR: Zan

I stood up and left Extramask at the table, alone with his apple juice.

“You know what else I did?” he yelled after me as I left. “I fingered her!”

One thing I have going for me is that I am fearless around women. My method

I turned back to look at him. He made me laugh. He pretended to be so

is very simple. Every single thing a girl says or does to me is an IOI. Period.

confused and helpless, but maybe he was smarter than all of us.

She wants me. It doesn’t matter who she is. And when you believe that, they

“The inside of a vagina isn’t at all what I thought it would feel like,” he

start to believe it too.

shouted excitedly. "It feels very organized."

I am a slave to my love of women. They can sense it. The weakness of

Maybe not.

women is language and words. Fortunately, that is one of my strong points. If

they try to repel my advances, I act like they are from Mars and what they are

saying doesn't make any sense.

I never try to defend myself or apologize for being a womanizer. Why?

Because a reputation is attractive to women. It's true. I am the other man who

guys worry about when they marry a girl.

So with that in mind, I'd like to share with you today my patented cocky

funny waitress technique:

Usually when a group of guys is confronted with a new and devastatingly

pretty waitress, they stare at her ass when she walks by, then talk about her be-

hind her back. But when she comes to their table, they become downright cour-

teous and nice and act like they are not interested in her.

Instead, I go cocky funny immediately. I am going to be very detailed in

my description of what I do because I think some guys don't really understand

cocky funny role-playing.

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When I see her conning toward us, I immediately engage a buddy across

**ZAN:** (*Smile, wink*) You know what? You're kinda cute. I think I'm going to

the table in seemingly deep conversation. I make sure to face my body away

call you.

from her.

**HER:** You think so, huh? You don't have my number.

When she comes up and asks us what we would like to drink, I ignore her

**ZAN:** Why, you're right! Okay, tell me and I will write it down.

for a few seconds or so. Then I glance in her direction and pretend I am just

**HER:** [*Smiling*] Not a good idea. I have a boyfriend.

now seeing her for the very first time. Immediately, I show great interest in

**ZAN:** (*Pretending to write*) Whoa, slow down. I didn't quite catch your

her—as if she were a new discovery. I glance quickly at her body, just long

number there. You better repeat it for me. Let's see ... 555 ...

enough for her to notice, then turn myself fully around to face her. A big smile

**HER:** (*Laughs and rolls her eyes*)

and a wink, and the game begins.

The absurdity of this exchange is that there is no way she is going to give me

**HER:** What can I get for you?

her phone number in front of a bunch of my friends. No girl would. But her dig-

**ZAN:** *[Ignoring the question]* Hello, I haven't seen you around before.

its are not the goal just yet.

What's your name?

Now she and I have a rapport, in a manner of speaking. And I've made

**HER:** My name is Stephanie. What's yours?

myself memorable enough that the next night we go there, she'll recognize me.

**ZAN:** I'm Zan. And I will have a gin and tonic. *(Big smile)*

This way, I can walk up, put my arm around her, and continue with my usual

"You would make a good girlfriend for me" talk. And since everything is said in

So far I've broken the ice a bit and, by exchanging names, she has given me

a half-joking manner, she doesn't know if I'm really hitting on her or if I'm just

the implicit right to be more familiar with her. So the next time she comes

fooling around. So when I return:

around, I smile and wink again.

**HER:** *(Laughing)* Oh no! Not you again!

**ZAN:** You again? Wow, you sure like to hang around us, don't you?

**ZAN:** Stephanie, my sweet! Hey, listen, sorry I didn't return your call last

**HER:** *[Laughs]* (some stuff)

night. You know how it is. I'm just a busy guy.

**ZAN:** (Some other stuff)

**HER:** *(Playing along)* Yeah, I'm really mad about that.

**HER:** (Some other stuff)

**ZAN:** (*As she is leaving*) I bet you'll come back again real soon. I can see

This gets the whole table laughing, including her. And it's back on again for the

it in your eyes.

evening.

**HER:** (*Smiling*) Yeah, I can't resist.

Later:

Now I have established a cocky funny theme—her wanting to hang around us

**ZAN:** You know what, Stephanie. You're a terrible girlfriend. In fact, I can't

and that is why she keeps coming back to our table. Of course, she has to

even remember the last time we had sex. That's it. We're through.

come back to our table: She's the waitress. And when she does, I smile at her

**ZAN:** (*Pointing to another waitress*) She's going to be my new girlfriend.

and give the other guys a knowing look in front of her as if to say, "See, I was

**HER:** (*Laughing*)

right." All along, I strive to make the interaction come off like I have known her

**ZAN:** [*Playing with my phone*] You are now downgraded from *Booty Call*

for a long time. This establishes a level of familiarity that usually takes several

# 1 to *Booty Call* # 10.

meetings to build.

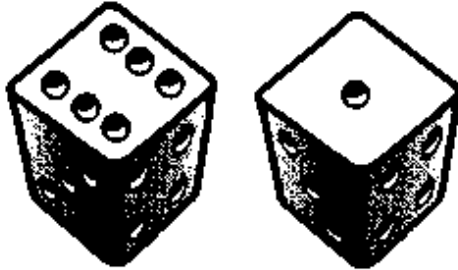
**HER:** (*Laughing*) No, please, I'll do anything to make it up to you.

So now, after a while, I will say something like:

And later still:

**HER:** Can I get you another drink?

### *Chapter*



13B

**ZAN:** [*Motioning for her to come over and pointing at my knee*]  
Stephanie,

come and sit down. I'll tell you a bedtime story. [*Smile, wink*]

I have used that last line for years. It is gold.

Some of you guys are probably thinking, "Okay, now what?  
How do you

transition from funny ball-busting to more serious, romantic,  
sexual talk?"

It's simple, actually. At some point, I just talk to her quietly  
alone. Remem-

The highlight of the seminar was an appearance by two people  
who would

ber to turn on the bedroom eyes.

give me my much-coveted inner game and more: Steve P. and  
Rasputin.

These were guys I'd heard whispered about in the seduction  
community

**ZAN:** [*No longer cocky funny*] Stephanie, do you want me to  
call you?

since I'd joined—the true masters; leaders of women, not men.

**HER:** You know I have a boyfriend.



The first thing they did when they walked onstage was hypnotize every-

**ZAN:** That's not what I asked. Do you want me to call you? body in the room. They both talked at the same time, telling different

**HER:** Tempting, but I can't.

stories—one to occupy the conscious mind and the other to penetrate to the

**ZAN:** Sneak away with me, girl. I'll take you higher up the slopes of Par-

subconscious. When they woke us up, we had no idea what they had in-

nassus than you have ever been. Etc.

stalled in our heads. All we knew was that these were two of the most confi-

dent speakers we'd ever seen. Every ounce of fire and charisma that

Everything you just read actually happened last Thursday and Friday evening

DeAngelo lacked, they possessed in bulk.

with me and a waitress named Stephanie. She was easily the hottest thing

Wearing a leather vest and an Indiana Jones hat, Steve P. was equal

around in a long time. The jury is still out on this one, but she has no illusions

parts Hell's Angel and Native American shaman. Rasputin was a strip club

about my intentions. My friends she views as nice guys, but not me. She knows

bouncer with mutton-chop sideburns who looked like a steroid-jacked

that any interaction with me is going to be passionate from the start. And now

Wolverine. The two had met in a bookstore while both reaching for the

she can choose to accept it or reject it.

same NLP book. Now they worked as a team and were among the most

The truth is, she may very well reject my overtures. But it doesn't matter.

powerful hypnotists in the world. Their advice on seducing women was

She won't soon forget me. And you can bet that the other waitresses know all

simply: "Become an expert in how to feel good."

about the things I said to her. And that is very good, especially since I have

Toward that end, Steve P. had figured out a way to get women to pay to

said almost the exact same things in the exact same way to all the other wait-

have sex with him. For anywhere from several hundred to a thousand dol-

resses there. And I will continue to do so—right in front of Stephanie.

lars, he trained women to have orgasms from a single vocal command; he

The net effect is social proof. When you go in, you own the place. You

taught them five different stages of deep throat he had devised; and, most

wave the waitresses over, point to your cheek, and say, "Hey, girl, where's my

fantastically, he claimed to give hypnotic breast enlargements, which he

sugar?” No one is intimidated because you treat them all the same way. In this

said could make a woman jump as much as two cup sizes.

particular restaurant, there are four waitresses who have come home with me,

Rasputin’s forte was what he called hypnotic sexual engineering. Sex,

three less attractive waitresses who want to come home with me, and several

he explained, must be viewed as a privilege for the woman, not a favor to

more who are works-in-progress (including Stephanie). And you can bet they all

you. “If a woman wants to give me a blow job,” he elaborated, “I tell her,

know about each other. But, again, that is very good.

‘You only get three sucks. And you may only go down as far as you receive

pleasure.’” His chest stuck out like the top of a Volkswagen.

“Afterward, I

—Zan

tell her, ‘Didn’t that feel nice? Next time, you get five sucks.’”

“What if you’re scared of getting caught trying to manipulate her?”

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asked a businessman in the front row who looked like a miniature Clark

to make women his slaves. You seem like you may care about women: You

Kent.

don't just want to stuff your meat bat in some hole. You're willing to ex-

"There is no such thing as fear," Rasputin replied. "Emotions are just

plore shit."

energy and motion that you trap inside your body because of a thought."

Suddenly, we heard a commotion behind us. Two sisters and their

Mini-Clark Kent stared at him stupidly.

mother had made the mistake of walking down a hotel hallway full of

"Do you know how you get over it?" Rasputin looked at his interlocu-

pickup artists, and the vultures were descending on the carrion. Orion the

tor like a wrestler about to break a folding chair in half. "You don't shower

uber-nerd was reading one of the girls' palms; Rick H. was telling the

or shave for a month, until you smell like a sewer. Then you walk around

mother that he was Orion's manager; Grimble was moving in on the re-

for two weeks wearing a dress and a goalie mask with a dildo strapped to

maining girl; and a crowd of wanna-be PUAs had gathered around, trying

the front. That's what I did. And I will never be afraid of public humiliation

to see the masters at work.

again."

“Listen,” Steve P. said, in a rush. “Here’s my card. Call me if you ever

“You have to live in your own reality,” Steve cut in. “I had a girl once tell

want to learn some inner-circle shit.”

me I was kind of pudgy. I said, ‘Well, if that’s what you think, you don’t get

“I’d love to.”

to pat the Buddha belly or ride the jade stalk.”

“But this is classified,” he warned. “If we let you in, you cannot share

He paused, then added as an afterthought, “But I said it in a gentle

these techniques with anybody. They’re very powerful, and in the wrong

fucking way, on the spiritual fucking path.”

hands they could really screw a girl up.”

Afterward, DeAngelo introduced me to the pair. The top of my head

“Got it,” I said.

came up to Rasputin’s Volkswagen.

He twisted a piece of white paper into the shape of a rose, then

“I’d love to learn more about what you do,” I said.

bounded off in the direction of the carrion. He approached the girl Grimble

“You’re nervous,” Rasputin said.

was sarging, told her to smell the flower, and within thirty seconds she was

“Well, you two are a little intimidating.”

passed out in Steve’s arms. This *was* inner-circle shit. And I was about to

“Let me get rid of that anxiety,” Steve offered. “Tell me your phone

learn it.

number backward.”

I started saying, “Five ... four ... nine ... six.” As I did, Steve snapped

his fingers.

“Okay, take a deep breath and now blow out hard,” he commanded.

As I did, Steve traced his fingers up from my navel and made a whoosh-

ing sound. “Be gone!” he commanded. “Now watch that feeling just blow

away like a smoke ring on a windy day. Notice how it’s gone; it’s no more.

Take a tour of your body and try and find where it was. Notice how there’s a

different vibration there. Okay. Open your eyes. Try really hard to bring any

piece of it back. See? You can’t.”

I couldn’t tell whether it had worked or not, but I was reeling. He’d def-

initely taken my mind and body on some kind of one-minute trip.

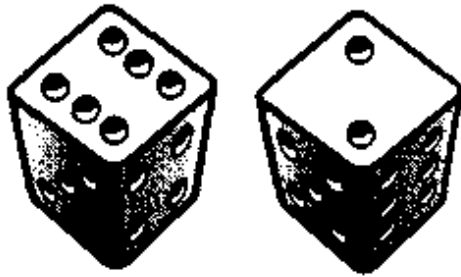
He took a step back and scanned my face, as if reading a diary.

“A guy

named Phoenix offered to pay me two thousand dollars to follow me

around for three days,” Steve P. said. “And I told him no, because he wants

## Chapter



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school without girlfriends or even dates. Thus, we're forced to spend years

feeling intimidated by and alienated from women, who hold in their sole

possession the key to releasing us from the stigma blighting our young

adult lives: our virginity.

Steve fit in with my theory on naturals. He was initiated into sex when

he was in first grade. An older girl wanted to give him a blow job; he re-

And so began the weirdest phase of my education.

sponded by trying to hit her with a rock. But she eventually convinced him,

Every weekend, I'd drive two hours south to San Diego and stay at

and the experience set off a lifelong obsession with oral sex. When he was

Steve P.'s small, squalid apartment, where he raised two sons the same way

seventeen, he said, a cousin hired him to work in the kitchen of a Catholic

he talked to his students—with compassionate obscenity. His thirteen-year-

girls' school. After he gave oral sex to one of the girls, word spread and he

old was already a better hypnotist than I would ever be.

soon became the sexual go-to guy on campus. In addition to giving the girls

In the afternoons, Steve and I drove to see Rasputin. They'd sit me in a

pleasure, however, he also gave them guilt. And after a few too many con-

chair and ask what I wanted to learn. I had a list: to believe that I was at-

fessions that involved the boy in the kitchen, Steve was fired.

tractive to women; to live in my own reality; to stop worrying about what

He ran with a bike gang for a while but left soon after accidentally

other people thought of me; to move and speak with an air of strength, con-

shooting a guy in the nuts. He now devoted his life to a self-styled mix of

fidence, mystery, and depth; to get over my fear of sexual rejection; and, of

sexuality and spirituality. And for all his crude talk, he was at heart a good

course, to attain a sense of worthiness, which Rasputin defined as the belief

person. Unlike many of the other gurus I'd met, I trusted him.

that one deserves the best the world has to offer.

After Steve's kids went to sleep each night, he taught me inner-circle

It was easy to memorize routines, but mastering inner game after a life-



magic he'd learned from shamans whose names he'd sworn never to pro-

time of bad habits and thought patterns was not easy. These guys, however,

nounce. The first weekend I stayed over, he gave me a lesson in soul-gazing,

had the tools to fix me in time for Mystery's next workshop in Miami.

which is when you look deep into a woman's right eye with your own right

"We're going to reframe you to where you're not glad to have some

eye as you breathe together.

boopsy sucking your dick," Steve explained. "It will be a privilege for her to

"Once you do this with her, she's going to bond real strong with you,"

get to drink from the nectar of the master."

he warned. His cautionary speeches were often longer than the actual teach-

At each session, they'd put me under, and Rasputin would tell complex

ing process. "When you do this, you become anamchara, which in Gaelic

metaphorical stories into one of my ears as Steve P. issued commands to my

means friend of the soul. A soul friend."

subconscious in the other ear. They'd leave open loops (or unfinished meta-

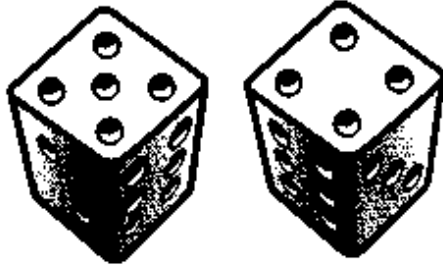
The following weekend I learned about menage-a-trois management,

phors and stories) in my mind that they'd close a week later. They'd play

and how to train a woman to eat another woman's pussy by having her put music designed to elicit specific psychological reactions. They'd put me into a dried nectarine in her mouth and chew erotically on it during sex. The trances so deep that hours went by in the blink of an eye. next weekend he showed me how to throw *chi* through my hands into a woman's abdomen. Afterward, I'd go back to Steve's house and read his NLP books while contain and cy- he screamed lovingly at his kids. cle orgasmic energy, so that a woman can stack one withheld orgasm on top I have a theory that most naturals, like Dustin, lose their virginity at a of another—until, as Steve P. put it, she's "shaking like a dog shitting peach young age and consequently never feel a sense of urgency, curiosity, and in- seeds." Finally, he shared what he considered to be his greatest skill: guiding timidation around women during their critical pubescent years. Those who any woman, through words and touch, to a powerful orgasm that "gushes must learn to meet women methodically, on the other hand—like myself like Niagara Falls." and most students in the community—generally suffer through high

This was a whole new level of game. He was giving me super powers.

## *Chapter*



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I was in a whirlwind of learning. I didn't call my friends. I barely talked

to my family. I turned down every writing assignment that came my way. I

was living in an alternate reality.

"I told Rasputin," Steve said one night, "that more than all the other se-

duction boys out there, I'd like you to become one of our trainers."

It was an offer I'd have to turn down. The seduction world was a palace

I returned home one Sunday night from San Diego to find a message on my

of open doors. Walking through one, no matter how tempting the treasures

machine from Cliff, of Cliff's List. He was in town, and he wanted to take

inside, would mean having to shut the rest.

me to meet his latest PUA discovery—a biker turned construction worker

who called himself David X.

Cliff had been in the community since its inception. He was in his for-

ties and was as nice as he was uptight. Though he was conventionally handsome, some, he was also the living embodiment of the word square. He looked like he'd stepped out of a 1950s family sitcom. He had a closet in his home, he claimed, with more than a thousand pickup books. There were issues of the *Pick-Up Times*, a short-lived magazine from the seventies; an original edition of Eric Weber's classic *How to Pick Up Girls*; and misogynist obscurities with titles like *Seduction Begins When the Woman Says No*.

David X was one of half a dozen PUAs Cliff had discovered over the years and promoted on his list, which he'd started in 1999 after Ross criticized him on the Speed Seduction mailing list for discussing a pickup technique that wasn't related to NLP. Every PUA had a specialty, and David X's was harem management—juggling relationships with multiple women without lying to them.

When we walked into the dim sum restaurant, I was shocked by what saw waiting for me. David X was quite possibly the ugliest PUA I'd ever met. He made Ross Jeffries look like a Calvin Klein underwear model. He was immense, balding, and toadlike, with warts covering his face and the voice of a hundred thousand cigarette packs.

My meal with him was like so many I'd had before. Except the rules

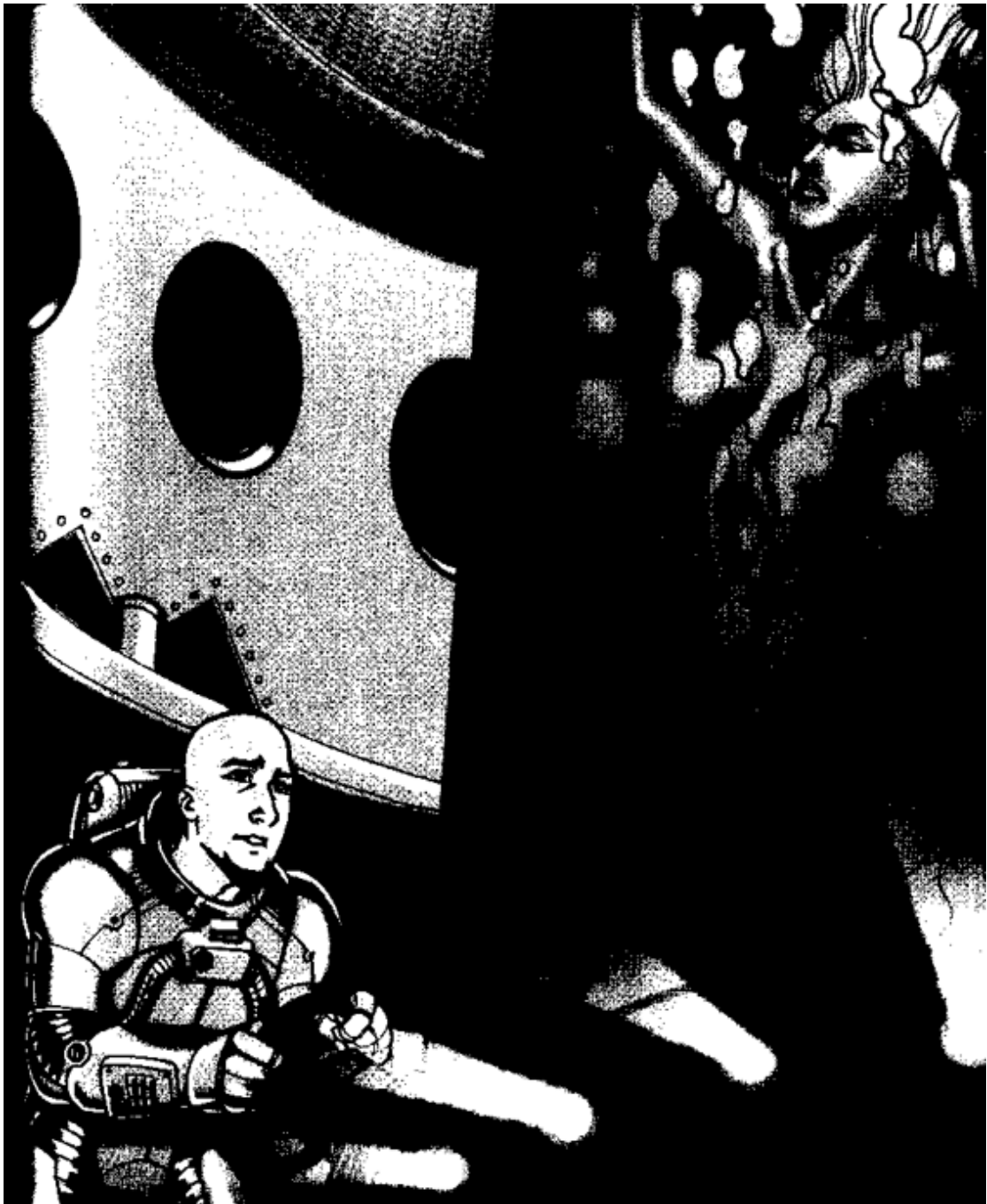
were always different. His were:

I. Who cares what she thinks?

II. You are the most important person in this relationship.

His philosophy was to never lie to a female. He prided himself on bed

ding women by trapping them with their own words. For example, on meet



STEP 5

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ing a girl at a bar, he'd get her to say that she was spontaneous and didn't

have any rules; then, if she was reluctant to leave the bar with him, he'd say,

ISOLATE

“I thought you were spontaneous. I thought you did what you wanted.”

He spread out in his chair like a melting shard of Swiss cheese and in-

formed us: “The only lies I’ll ever tell are: ‘I won’t come in your mouth’ and

‘I’ll just rub it around your ass.’” It wasn’t a pretty visual.

## THE TARGET

His philosophy was in direct contrast to what I had learned from Mys-

tery, and he let me know it—all through dinner. He was evidence of Cliff’s

big mouth theory, a natural alpha male.

“The best thing is,” he boasted, “there are guys like me and guys like

you and Mystery out there. While you’re still in the bar doing magic tricks,

I’m coming back for seconds.”

It was an interesting dinner, and I learned a lot of little pieces of game I

would go on to use scores of times. But by the time brunch was over, I’d re-

alized something: I didn’t need to meet any more gurus.

I had every piece of information I needed to become the greatest pickup artist in the world.

I had hundreds of openers, routines, cocky funny comments, ways to

demonstrate value, and powerful sexual techniques. And I’d been hypno-

tized to Valhalla and back. It wasn’t necessary to learn anything else, unless

it was for my own fun and interest. I just needed to be in the field

constantly—approaching, calibrating, fine-tuning, and working through

sticking points. I was ready for Miami, and all the workshops to follow.

As Cliff drove me home, I made a promise to myself: If I ever met a guru

again, it would be not as a student but as an equal.

## *Chapter*



As Mystery and I traveled the world doing workshops, meeting all the players

in the game, the seduction community became more than just a bunch of

anonymous screen names. It became a flesh-and-blood family. Maddash was

no longer seven letters of type but a funny, Jeremy Piven-like entrepreneur

from Chicago; Stripped was an uptight book editor from Amsterdam with

male-model looks; Nightlight9 was a lovable nerd who worked for Microsoft.

Over time, the posers and keyboard jockeys were outed, and the super-

IT IS UNFAIR TO TEAR SOMEBODY

stars were given their due. And Mystery and I were the superstars because

we delivered: Miami, Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Montreal, San Fran-



cisco, and Chicago. Every workshop made us better, stronger, more driven.

## A P A R T W H E N H E R H E A L T H A N D

All the other gurus I had met clung to the safety of the seminar room. They

had never been forced to prove their teachings in the field city after city,

## E X U B E R A N C E T H R E A T E N Y O U .

night after night, woman after woman.

Every time we left a city, a lair sprung up if one didn't exist already,

bringing together students eager to practice their new skills.

Through word

of mouth, the lairs soon doubled, tripled, and quadrupled in size.

And all

these guys worshipped Mystery and Style: We were living the life they

— J E N N Y H O L Z E R,

wanted, or so they thought.

### *Benches*

Each workshop generated more online reviews praising my newly ac-

quired game. Each field report I posted triggered a flood of e-mails from

students wanting to be my wing. The list of sargers in my phone book was

actually starting to surpass the number of girls I'd met.

Most of the time when my phone rang, it was a guy asking for Style.

And, dispensing with introductions, he'd ask, "When you call a girl, should

you block your number or not?" or "I was in a three-set, and the obstacle

ended up liking me and giving me her phone number. Do I still have a

chance with the target?"

The game was consuming my old life. But it was worth it, because it was

part of the process of becoming that guy in the club—the one I'd always en-

vied, the one in the corner making out with a girl he'd just met. The Dustin.

Before I discovered the community, the only time I'd ever made out

with a girl I met in a club was when I first arrived in Los Angeles. But in

## *Chapter*



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the middle of kissing, she pulled away and said, "Everyone must think

you're a producer or something." The subtext was that she was otherwise

too hot to be making out with a slob like me. It shattered me for months.

I was too insecure to handle what was, in retrospect, her own form of neg.

But now, when I walked into a club, I felt a rush of power, wondering

which woman would have her tongue down my throat within a half hour.

For all the self-improvement books I had read, I still wasn't above shallow

It was the perfect sarge.

validation-seeking. None of us were. That's why we were in the game. Sex

When they walked into the VIP area of Miami's Crobar, everyone no -

wasn't about getting our rocks off; it was about being accepted.

ticed. They were both platinum blondes with well-tanned fake breasts and

Mystery, in the meantime, had gone through his own metamorphosis

identical outfits—tight white tank tops and tight white pants. How could

during our travels. He had developed a radical new form of peacocking. It

anyone not notice? They were what the PUAs would call perfect 10's, and

was no longer enough to wear just one item to catch the attention of the

they were dressed to turn men into beasts. This was South Beach, where

opposite sex. Now, all his items were larger-than-life, turning Mystery into a

testosterone levels run high, and the pair had been whistled and hollered at

mobile sideshow. He wore six-inch platform boots and a bright red tiger-

all night. The girls seemed to enjoy the attention almost as much as they sa-

striped cowboy hat, which combined to make him seven feet tall. He added

vored shooting down the men who gave it to them.

skintight black PVC pants, futuristic goggles, a plastic-spiked backpack, a

I knew what to do—and that was to do what everyone else wasn't doing.

mesh see-through shirt, black eyeliner, white eye shadow, and as many as

A pickup artist must be the exception to the rule. I had to suppress every

seven watches on his wrists. Every head turned as he walked down the

evolutionary instinct inside me and pay them no attention whatsoever.

street.

With me were Mystery and two of our students, Outbreak and the

He didn't need openers. The women opened him. Girls followed him

Mattador of Love. The rest of our pupils were sarging on the perimeter of

for blocks. Some grabbed his ass; one older woman even bit his crotch. And

the dancefloor downstairs.

all he had to do if he was interested was perform a few magic tricks, which

Outbreak went in first, complimenting the platinum twins on their

seemed to justify his outlandishness.

outfits. They brushed him off like a gnat. Next, the Mattador of Love moved

His new look also served as a great litmus test for women. It repelled

in with the Maury Povich opener. He too crashed and burned.

the type of girl he wasn't interested in and attracted the type he was. "I'm

Now it was my turn. This was going to take every bit of confidence and

dressing for the outrageous club girls, the hot slutty girls, the ones I could

self-esteem that Steve P. and Rasputin had hypnotized into me. If I showed

never get," he explained one night when I accused him of looking like a

even a flicker of weakness or doubt, they'd eat me alive.

clown. "They're playing groupie, so I gotta play rock star."

"That tall one isn't a 10," Mystery leaned in and whispered to me.

Mystery constantly encouraged me to dress as outlandishly as he did.

"She's an 11. This is going to take some hardcore negging."

Though I buckled one afternoon and bought a purple fur vest in a Mon-

The girls strolled to the bar, where they began talking to a transvestite

traveller lingerie shop, I didn't get off on the constant gawking and attention.

in a black tutu. I moved in, not even glancing at them, and greeted the

Besides, I was doing well enough without it.

transvestite as if I knew him. I asked if he worked at the club, and he said

My reputation stemmed largely from the Miami workshop, where in a

no. It didn't really matter what I said to him: I was just maneuvering into

period of thirty minutes I put my previous six weeks of hypnosis, training,

position, pawning him for the two-set.

and guru-chasing into action. It was a night that would go down in the an-

Now that I was in range, it was time to neg. "That girl over there is bit-

nals of community history. It was seduction not as wrestling but as ballet: a

ing your style," I said to the 10, the shorter of the two. "Look at her." I

perfect example of form. It was the night of my official graduation from

pointed to another platinum blonde in a white outfit.

AFC to PUA.

"She's just got the same hair," the 10 replied, dismissively.

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"No, look at her outfit," I persisted. "It's almost the exact same."

"I live in Los Angeles," I continued. "It's where the most beautiful

They looked over, and here was the make-or-break moment. If I didn't

women in the country come to try and make it. You look around a club

come up with something good to follow, I'd lose their interest and be

there, and everyone's good-looking. It makes this VIP room look like a dive

branded just another weirdo. So I continued with the negging.

"You know

bar.” They were words I’d learned, almost verbatim, from Ross Jeffries. And

what?” I told them. “You both look like strange little snowflakes.”

they were working.

It was a bizarre, cryptic comment, but now I had their attention. I could

I let her look around, then continued: “And do you know what I’ve

sense it, and my heart began to pump faster. I continued with what I knew

learned? Beauty is common. It’s something you’re born with or you pay for.

all along would be my true opener: “I have to ask you something. Is your

What counts is what you make of yourself. What counts is a great outlook

hair real?”

and a great personality.”

The 10 looked shocked, then recovered her composure. “Yes,” she said.

Now I was in. It was the girls who were dumbstruck now, not me. I had

“Feel it.”

entered their world, as Jeffries once put it to me, and demonstrated author-

I pulled it gently. “Hey, it moved. It’s not real.”

ity over it. And, to ensure my position there, I threw in one more neg, but

“Pull harder.”

softened with a slight compliment, as if they were winning me over: “And

I complied, and yanked it so hard that her neck jerked back.

“Okay,” I

you know what? You have a great smile. I can tell that underneath all that,

said. “I believe you. But how about your friend there?”

you’re probably a good person.”

The 11’s face reddened. She leaned over the bar and looked me hard in

The 10 sidled up to me and said, “We’re sisters.”

the eye. “That is really rude. What if I’m bald underneath here? That could

A lesser pickup artist would have thought that his work was done, that

really hurt someone’s feelings. It’s disrespectful. How would you feel if

he had won them over. But no, this was just one more shit test. I looked very

someone said that to you?”

slowly at both of them, and then took a chance. “Bullshit,” I said, smiling. “I

The pickup is a high stakes game, and to win you have to play hard. All

bet a lot of guys believe you, but I’m a very intuitive person. When I look at

I had done so far was commandeer their attention and provoke an emo-

you both, I can tell you’re very different. Too different.”

tional reaction. Sure, it was a negative one, but now we had a relationship. If

The 10 broke into a guilty smile. “We never tell anyone this,” she said,

I could turn her anger around, I’d be in.

“but you’re right. We’re just friends.”



Fortunately, I happened to be trying to make a point to the students

Now I'd broken through her programming, moved her away from the

and was wearing a black mod wig and a fake lip piercing—just to show that

auto-pilot responses she gives to men, and demonstrated that I was not just

looks don't matter. It's all game.

another guy. I took another chance: "And I'd be willing to bet that you

I leaned over the bar and stared the 11 down. "Well," I told her. "I actu-

haven't even been friends for that long. Usually, best friends start to have

ally *am* wearing a wig, and I *am* bald underneath here."

the same mannerisms, and you two don't really."

I paused, and she looked at me with her mouth open. She didn't know

"We've only known each other a year," the 10 admitted.

how to respond. Now it was time to reel her in. "And I'll tell you something

Now it was time to back off my game and fluff a little.

However, I made

else. Whether I go out totally bald, in this wig, or in some crazy longhaired

sure never to ask questions; instead, as Juggler had taught me, I made open-

wig, it doesn't change the way I'm treated by other people. It's all your atti-

ended statements that led them to ask me the questions.

tude. Don't you agree?"

The 10 told me they were from San Diego, so we fluffed for a while

Everything I say in a pickup has an ulterior motive. I needed to let her

about the West Coast and Miami. As we talked, I kept my back to the 11, as

know that unlike every other guy in the bar, I am not and will not be intim-

if I were less interested in her. This was classic Mystery Method: I wanted

dated by her looks. Beauty to me was now a shit test: It weeded out the los-

her thinking more about me, wondering why I wasn't giving her the atten-

ers who got dumbstruck by it.

tion she was so used to. Nothing in the game is an accident.

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I think of a woman's interest in me as a fire, and when it starts to die

tually a sweet girl beneath that laboriously wrought exterior, took the bait.

out, it's time to turn around and stoke it. So, just when the 11 was about to

“Don't mind him,” she said, pointing to their guy friend. “He's just rude.”

walk away to find someone to talk to, I turned around and delivered a beau-

As she called the bartender over and ordered me a shot, Rebekah threw

tiful line: “You know what? When I look at you, I can see exactly what you

her a dirty look. “Remember our rule?” she whined.

looked like in middle school. And I'm willing to bet you weren't so outgo-

I knew what their rule was: Girls like this love it when guys buy them

ing or popular then."

drinks. But David X had taught me better: Girls don't respect guys who buy

Sure, it was a truism. But she stared at me flabbergasted, wondering

them drinks. A true pickup artist knows never to buy meals, drinks, or gifts

how I could possibly know that. To seal the victory, I laid out one last

for a girl he hasn't slept with. Dating is for tools.

beauty-neutralizing cold-reading routine. "I bet a lot of people think you're

"We promised not to buy any drinks on this trip," Rebekah whined.

a bitch. But you're not. You're actually shy in a lot of ways."

"But you're not buying a drink for yourself," I told them.

"You're buy-

She began to give me the doggy dinner-bowl look, as the PUAs call it. It

ing one for me. And I'm different from all the other guys."

is the look that is the goal of any approach. Her eyes glazed over, her pupils

I'm not really that arrogant, but in the game there are rules. And the

dilated, and she just watched my lips move, entranced and attracted. I no-

rules must be obeyed, because they work.

ticed, however, that the more interested the 11 became, the more kino the

Suddenly, Mystery walked toward me and whispered in my ear, “Isolate!”

10 gave me.

“I want to show you something,” I said to Heather, as I took her by the

“You’re interesting,” the 10 gushed, pressing her breasts against me. I

hand. I led her to a nearby booth, sat her down, and performed the ESP ex-

could see Mystery, Outbreak, and the Matador of Love rooting me on in the

periment. Behind me, I saw Mystery punching his fist into his open hand in

background. “We have to hang out with you in L.A.”

slow motion. It was a code: the signal to phase shift, to slow down and move

She leaned in and gave me a tight hug. “Hey, that’ll be thirty dollars,” I

in for the kill.

told her, disentangling myself. “This shit ain’t free.”

I told her about soul-gazing and, with house music and dozens of con-

The more you push them away, the more they run toward you. “I love

versations blaring around us, we stared into each other’s eyes and shared a

him,” she told her friend. Then she asked if she and her friend could stay

moment together. In my head, I imagined her as the pudgy middle school

with me next time they were in L.A.

student she used to be. If I’d been thinking about how beautiful she really

“Sure,” I said. But as the words left my mouth, I realized, too late, that I was, I would have been too nervous to sully her with my lips, as I was about should have made my hospitality more of a challenge. There’s so much to attempt to do. remember and juggle during a pickup that it is hard to get everything per- I slowly moved my head toward hers. fect. But no matter. She gave me her phone number, and I gave her mine. “No lips,” she said, quietly. You may have noticed that I haven’t been referring to these girls by I held up my index finger, placed it against her lips, and said, “Shhhh.” their names. That’s because I never introduce myself during a pickup. As Then I kissed her—on the lips. Mystery had taught me at that first workshop, I wait for the woman to in- It would have been the most beautiful kiss of my life. But I was so lost troduce herself or ask for my name. That way, I know she’s interested. So, as in the seduction that I forgot I was wearing a fake lip ring. Worried that it we exchanged numbers, I received my first real IOIs and learned that the 10 would fall out (or, even worse, end up on her lip), I pulled back, looked at

was Rebekah and the 11 was Heather. Now it was time to separate the two her again, and then nibbled on her lower lip. of them and see if I could get enough IOIs to kiss-close Heather. Her tongue darted out of her mouth. “Hey, not so fast,” I told her, as A guy they knew suddenly showed up and bought three shots—for if she were the one hitting on me. The key to physical escalation, David Heather, Rebekah, and himself. I held out my empty hand and looked DeAngelo had said in his seminar, is always two steps forward, one step around, pretending to be hurt. Heather, who I was slowly realizing was ac-back.

## *Chapter*



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We made out carefully, and then I returned her to Rebekah at the bar. I had a workshop to wing, so I told them both that it was a pleasure meeting them and I should rejoin my friends. We confirmed our plans to spend a weekend together, and I left with my heart singing.

The Matador of Love was the first person to run up to me. He took my hand in his and kissed it. "In India, we put ourselves prostrate before people like you," he said, flapping his arms excitedly. "You've given me a new mean-

After another two months of workshops, I flew back to Los Angeles for a

ing on life. It was like watching John Elway do the two-minute drive. You

break. But I grew restless sitting at home alone. There were clubs and bars

knew he had game before, but in that moment he really proved it. You got

full of sets to be opened, each one a potential new adventure. The compul-

the Super Bowl ring."

sion to sarge consumed my body like a fever.

For the rest of the night, I was on fire. Women who hadn't even seen me

Fortunately, I received a call from Grimble. He was at the Whiskey Bar

with the platinum non-sisters were opening me. They could smell it.

and had started talking to Heidi Fleiss, the former Hollywood madam

When I ran into Heather again, I asked her, "You're not a thief, are you?"

who'd recently been released from jail for pandering and tax evasion. She

"No," she said.

wanted to meet me.

I removed my necklace and very slowly put it around her neck.  
“This is

I slipped into a custom-made suit I had recently bought, threw  
my

still mine,” I whispered, kissing her lightly. “It’s something to  
remember to-

prop bag over my shoulder, and dabbed a different cologne on  
each wrist. I

night by. But I want it back next time I see you. It’s very special  
to me.”

had a feeling this was not a casual call.

As I walked away, I knew I’d just made her night.

When I arrived, Grimble was standing next to her at the bar. He  
was

It didn’t even matter whether I got laid or not, because this was  
the

wearing the exact same floral-print button-down shirt I had met  
him in, ex-

game artfully played. It was exactly what I’d been working so  
hard for. I just

cept the silver had faded to gray from so many washings. Three  
buttons

didn’t realize that I’d ever be able to pull it off so smoothly or  
that, in the

were open, and his hairless chest was thrust further out than  
ever. Like a

process, I was creating a hunger that could never be satiated.

baseball player, he seemed to believe it was his lucky shirt.

“This is Style,” Grimble told her, flashing a shady smile that  
was a little

unnerving to a friend, but to a certain type of girl was no doubt a  
turn on.

“The guy I was telling you about.”



Heidi was attractive but hard, like only women who've had to fend for themselves in Los Angeles can be. I wondered if he was trying to set me up with her. She seemed like an odd choice. I try to avoid women who've served time.

She reached out and shook my hand firmly. "So," she said. "Show me your stuff."

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Grimble here says you're a pickup artist. He was telling me about what you teach. Let's see what you've got."

I flashed Grimble a dirty look. He'd sold me out. "Why don't you show her?" I asked Grimble.

"I have a girl here," he said, flashing a cruel smile and nodding to a petite

Hispanic woman in four-inch heels. "Besides, she can see me on *Elimidate*."

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Grimble had told me months ago that he was going to test his seduc-

The line must have been part of her routine; it was the second time I'd

tion skills by auditioning for the dating show *Elimidate*. I just didn't *realize*

heard her say it. I also noticed that she always kneeled on the ground after

he'd gone through with it—and actually been accepted.

approaching, so as not to intimidate the girls. I was glad Grimble had

“When’s it airing?” I asked.

called: Heidi Fleiss was one of us.

“Tomorrow night.”

In recent weeks, I’d figured out my own routine. It was a simple struc-

“Who won?”

ture that allowed me to determine the direction in which I needed to take a

“I’m not allowed to talk about it. You’ll have to watch.”

girl: First, open. Then demonstrate higher value. Next, build rapport and an

I searched his face for a clue, but he betrayed nothing.

emotional connection. And, finally, create a physical connection.

“Well.” Heidi prodded. “Go pick up a girl. I bet I can get anyone you can.”

So now that I’d opened the set, it was time to demonstrate value and

It looked like I would be competing in my own *Elimidate* that night. I

blow Heidi out. I ran a piece I’d invented after meeting the fake sisters in

was exhausted from months of travel and constant pickups, but I wasn’t

Miami—the best friends test.

going to pass up the challenge.

“I have to ask you guys: How long have you known each other?” I began.

Heidi spun around and approached three girls who were sitting on the

“About six years,” one of the girls said.

patio smoking. The battle had begun.

“I could totally tell.”

I opened a nearby three-set—two men and a lady who looked like an an-

“How?”

chorwoman in search of a camera—with the cologne opener. Afterward, I

“Rather than explain, I’ll give you two the best friends test.”

asked the usual fact-finding question: “How do you all know each other?”

The girls leaned in toward me, thrilled by the idea of an innocuous test.

Unfortunately, she was married to one of the guys in the set.

Guys in the community have an expression for this phenomenon: I was giv-

Just as I was about to eject, Heidi marched in.

ing them “chick crack.” Most women, they say, respond to routines involv-

“So,” she asked my former target. “How do you know Style?”

ing tests, psychological games, fortune-telling, and cold-reading like addicts

“We just met him,” she said.

respond to free drugs.

“You looked like old friends,” Heidi told her with an obsequious smile.

“Okay,” I said, as if I were about to ask a serious question. The girls

Then she turned to me and whispered, “They’re boring. Let’s move on.”

huddled in closer. “Do you both use the same shampoo?”

As we left, I asked how her three-set had gone.

They looked at each other to decide on an answer, then turned to me

“The girls were all twenty,” she said. “I could have turned them out in a

and opened their mouths to speak.

half hour.” Evidently, pickup to Heidi Fleiss meant recruiting girls as escorts.

“The answer doesn’t matter,” I cut them off. “You already passed.”

Minutes later, she was in another group. I had to give her credit: She

“But we don’t use the same shampoo,” one of the girls said.

had no fear of approaching. I decided it was time to humble her with the

“But you both looked at each other before you answered. See, if you

awesome power of my newfound game.

didn’t know each other well, you’d keep eye contact with me.

But when two

She was kneeling on the ground in front of two women with gold glit-

people have a connection, they look at each other first and communicate al-

ter lightly dusting their cheeks, talking about local restaurants. I walked in

most telepathically before answering. They don’t even need to speak to each

with a new opinion opener I had made up about a friend whose new girl-

other.”

friend won’t let him talk to his ex-girlfriend from college.

The two girls looked at each other again.

“Is she being fair?” I asked. “Or is she being too possessive?”

“See,” I exclaimed. “You’re doing it right now.”

The point was to get the glitter girls talking amongst themselves, but

They burst out laughing. Big points for Style.

Heidi blurted, “The guy should just fuck both girls. I mean, I always put out

As the girls started telling me how they’d met on the plane the day

on the first night.”

they’d moved to Los Angeles and been inseparable ever since, I looked at

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Heidi Fleiss kneeling there uselessly. The girls seemed to have completely

forgotten about her.

But Heidi was no quitter. “So,” she announced loudly, “are any of you

girls gonna fuck him?”

Ouch.

In one sentence, she had humiliated me. Of course none of the girls

wanted to fuck me—not yet. I hadn’t even made it halfway through my se-

It was a red-letter day for the seduction community. Tonight on *Elimidate*,

quence, and even if I had, the comment still would have blown me out.

Grimble would be paired with three other eligible bachelors to compete for

“Hey, I’m not that easy,” I responded, recovering a little too late. “I need

the favor of a lingerie model named Alison. Our entire lifestyle was at stake.

trust, comfort, and connection first.”

If he won, it would prove that the community really did have a social edge

Heidi and I walked away together. She clapped a hand on my shoulder

over the jocks and studs we’d felt inferior to all our lives. If he lost, then we

and smiled. “If I left here right now,” she said, “they’d follow me out like a

were just self-delusional keyboard jockeys. The fate of PUAs everywhere was

line of ducks.”

in his hands.

Seconds later, she was in another two-set. I dashed in after her, and the

I sat on Grimble’s couch and watched the episode with Twotimer.

competition was on again. She was sitting with a balding man who said he

Where the other guys on the show tried to suck up to Allison, Grimble

was a stand-up comic and a heavily peacocked woman with long gumball-

leaned back and acted as if he were the prize. Where the other guys bragged

blue hair, an impish voice, and a wickedly smart sense of humor.  
Her name

about how successful they were, Grimble took the advice of his  
new guru

was Hillary, and she said she was performing a burlesque show  
the follow-

and claimed to be a disposable lighter repairman. He made it  
past the first

ing night at a club called the Echo. She was so interesting, I  
hardly needed

elimination.

to game her. We just talked, and I took her phone number right  
in front of

During the second round, a waitress brought a bottle of  
champagne to

her date. Then Heidi invited them to a party and gave Hillary  
her number.

the table for Alison, courtesy of Grimble. She was shocked,  
especially since

She wasn't going to let me walk away victorious.

Grimble hadn't been trying as hard as the other guys. He made it  
past the

"I could have her working in a day," she said. She always had to  
get the

second elimination.

last word in.

The final round was on the dance floor, which I knew would  
seal it, be-

Some people are born to be rock singers. Others are born to be  
teach-

cause Grimble and I had taken salsa-dancing lessons together.  
When he

ers. “I was born to be a madam,” Heidi said. “I’ll always be one.”

dipped her to the floor and scooped her back up, taking her breath away, I

Every time she left a set, she was convinced she could have turned the

could see it in her eyes. He had won.

girls into hookers or extracted them to her house—even though those days

“Congratulations,” I told him. “You have vindicated the good name of

were now behind her. By the time we left the bar that night, we had com-

PUAs around the world.”

peted for every girl in the place. And I’d learned that there’s a fine line be-

“Yeah,” he said, with a cocky smile. “Not all models are stupid.”

tween pimp and player.

We went out that night to see Hillary perform. Since my crush on Jes-

Grimble and his date came up to me laughing afterward. “That was the

sica Nixon in sixth grade, one-itis had been a regular part of my life. But in

sickest thing I’ve ever seen,” he said. “I can’t believe how much you’ve

the past eight months, I hadn’t felt even a tremor of one-itis. In fact, every

changed. You’re like a new man.” He gave my forehead a slimy kiss and then

woman I met seemed disposable and replaceable. I was experiencing se-



negged me. “You held your ground pretty well, especially considering she

ducer’s paradox: The better a seducer I became, the less I loved women. Suc-

had an advantage because everyone recognized her.”

cess was no longer defined by getting laid or finding a girlfriend, but by how

“Well,” I replied. “Let’s see if you do any better on *Elimidate* tomorrow.”

well I performed. The bars and clubs became, as Mystery had coached me at

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that first workshop, just different levels on a video game I had to get

Suddenly, the girl broke away from Grimble. “Style?!” She peered at

through.

me, incredulous.

I knew Hillary, in particular, would be a challenge. Not only was she

I looked at her: She seemed familiar. “It’s me,” she said. “Jackie.”

sharp and cynical, but she’d seen me run around picking up women all

My jaw dropped. It was the stinky-footed comedian whose hotel room I

night with Heidi Fleiss.

had run out of. My first semi-success story. Either this was a miraculous co-

Grimble and I sat in the back of the Echo and watched Hillary strip.

incidence, or we were running out of fresh women to sarge.

She was dressed as a gangster, with a machine gun water pistol and a form-

I talked to her for a while about her comedy class, then excused myself.

fitting pinstripe suit over a garter and matching panties. She had a classi-

I couldn't lose any more time; every minute was an inch higher up Hillary's

cally curvy body that suited the art form. When she saw me in the back of

thigh that Andy Dick's hand was moving. And I had a plan to stop it.

the room, she sashayed over, sat on my lap, and sprayed me in the face with

I walked back to the table, sat down, and ran the best-friends test on

the water pistol. I wanted her.

Hillary and her sister, which diverted the attention to me. Then, after dis-

Afterward, I joined Hillary, her sister, and two of her friends for drinks

cussing body language, I suggested we play the lying game. In the game, a

at a Mexican bar called El Carmen. As we talked, I took Hillary's hand in

woman comes up with four true statements and one lie about her house or

mine. She squeezed back. IOI. Grimble was right: A new me had evolved.

her car. However, she does not say them out loud; she merely thinks them

She took a step closer to me. My heart began to hammer against my

one at a time. And by looking for a variation in her eye movements, you can chest, as it always does during the two parts of a pickup that give me the usually tell which is untrue because people look in different directions most anxiety: the approach and the kiss. when they lie than when they're telling the truth. All through the game I But just as I was about to tell her about animals and evolution and hair-teased Hillary mercilessly, until her body language closed off to Andy Dick pulling lions, disaster struck. Andy Dick walked in the bar with a group of and opened up to me. his friends. One of them knew Hillary, so they joined us at the table—and Andy asked me what I did for work (I didn't realize this at the time, but suddenly my game evaporated. Our connection was eclipsed. There was a it was an IOI), and I told him I was a writer. He said he was thinking of writing a brighter, shinier object in her field of vision. When we rearranged ourselves, ing his own book. Soon he completely forgot about Hillary and started bar-Andy Dick somehow ended up between us, separating me from Hillary. raging me with questions, asking if I'd help him. He was my fan. And, as

He was all over her in an instant. It happens in Los Angeles:  
Celebrities

Mystery says, own the men and you own the women.

hit on your dates. In my AFC days, I stood by helplessly and  
watched one

“My biggest fear is being thought of as boring,” he told me.  
That was

night at the Whiskey Bar as Robert Blake slipped my date his  
phone num-

his weakness. I had beat him by being more interesting than him  
—and by

ber. But I was a PUA now, and a PUA wouldn't stand by  
helplessly and

having value to him. The tactics had worked, even better than  
they had the

watch a celebrity molest his date.

night before with Heidi Fleiss. Only I didn't realize just how  
well they had

Why was I constantly battling tabloid stars for this girl?  
worked.

I stood up and walked outside. I needed to think. I'd given Heidi  
Fleiss

Andy slid closer to me and whispered: “What are you? Straight,  
bi, or

a run for her money the night before, so I ought to be able to  
take out Andy

gay?”

Dick. It wasn't going to be easy, though, because he was so loud  
and obnox-

“Um, straight.”

ious. It was clear from the moment he arrived why he'd become  
a star: He

“I’m bi,” he said, breathing in my ear. “That’s too bad. We could’ve had

loved attention.

a lot of fun.”

The only chance I had was to become more interesting than he was.

After Andy and his friends left, I cozied back up to Hillary. She in-

Grimble was outside, talking to a woman with curly, unkempt brown

stantly gave me the doggy dinner bowl look. I took her hand under the

hair. He reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a pen and paper. He

table and felt the warmth emanating from her palm, from her thigh, from

was about to number-close.

her breath. She would be mine tonight. I had won her.

## *Chapter*



He looked at me with big, wet brown eyes, the ones that had gazed into

the souls of countless beautiful women. “I d o n ‘ t . . . ” He paused. “I don’t re-

ally do that anymore.”

I looked at him—incredulously, at first. But then I noticed that the

skullcap on his head was a yarmulke.

“I live in Jerusalem now,” he continued. “In a yeshiva. It’s a religious

When I came home from Hillary’s in the morning, Dustin was waiting in

school.”

my apartment for me. The king of the naturals had returned.

“You’re kidding.”

But what was he doing in my apartment?

“No. I haven’t had sex for eight months. It’s not allowed.”

“Hi,” he said in his soft, effeminate voice. He was wearing a tweed

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing: The king of the naturals had gone

sportcoat with large brown buttons, straight-legged polyester black slacks,

celibate. It couldn’t be true. Wasn’t that why prisons were invented? They

and a black skullcap.

offered men food, clothing, shelter, television, and fresh air but deprived

I hadn’t talked to Dustin in more than a year, since before I had joined

them of the two things that really mattered—freedom and women.

the community. Last I'd heard, he was managing a nightclub in Russia. He

"Are you allowed to masturbate, at least?"

had sent me photos of his girlfriends: one for each night of the week. He ac-

"No."

tually referred to them as Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on.

"Really?"

"How'd you get in here?"

He paused. "Well, sometimes when I sleep, I have wet dreams."

"Your landlady, Louise, let me in. She's really a sweet person. Her son's

"See. God is trying to tell you something. It *has* to come out." a writer too, you know."

He laughed and patted me on the back. His gestures were slow and his

He had a way of making people feel comfortable with him.

laugh condescending, as if he had spiritually bypassed toilet humor. "I go

"It's good to see you, by the way," he said as he gave me a big bear hug.

by my Hebrew name now," he said. "It was given to me by one of the highest

When he pulled away his eyes were misty, as if it really were good to see me

rabbis at the Yeshiva. It's Avisha."

again.

I was stunned: How could Dustin transform so suddenly from night-

The feeling was mutual. Dustin had been on my mind every day as I

club player to rabbinical student—especially now that I needed him most?

learned the pickup arts. Where Ross Jeffries needed spoken hypnotic pat-

“So what made you give up women?” I asked.

terns to convince a woman to explore her fantasies with him, Dustin was

“When you can get any girl you want, every guy—even if he’s rich or

able to achieve the same result without uttering a word. He was a blank

famous—looks at you in a different way because you have something he

male canvas for a woman to project her repressed desires onto—even if she

doesn’t,” he said. “But after a while, I’d bring girls home, and I didn’t want

didn’t consciously know what they were before meeting him. I never had

to have sex with them anymore. I just wanted to talk. So we’d talk all night

the resources to understand how he operated before; but now, with my new

and bond on a very deep level, and then I’d walk them to the subway in the

knowledge, I could watch him work, ask questions, and eventually model

morning. That’s when I started to leave it behind. I realized that I got my

his process. I could usher a whole new school of thought into the pickup

entire validation from women. Women became like gods to me, but false



community.

gods. So I went to find the real God.”

“I don’t know if I told you what I’ve been doing the past year,” I said.

Sitting in his Moscow apartment, he said, he searched the Internet for

“But I’ve been hanging out with the world’s greatest pickup artists. My

guidance, until he came across the Torah and started reading. After an eye-

whole life has changed. I get it now.”

opening trip to Jerusalem, he returned to Russia and went to a casino party,

“I know,” he said. “Marko told me.”

where the mafia, corrupt businessmen, and materialistic hangers-on sick-

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ened him in comparison with the people he’d met in Israel. So he packed

ful in every other human interaction, from dealing with my landlord to

his bags, left his week’s worth of girlfriends, and arrived in Jerusalem on the

handling credit card overcharges.”

eve of Passover.

Still looking.

“I stopped by,” he said, “to ask your forgiveness for some of my past

“So I guess what I’m trying to say is that I’m learning how to pick up

actions.”

women, sure, but in the process, I'm becoming a better human being."

I had no idea what he was talking about. He'd always been a great

His mouth began to move. He was going to speak. "Well," he said.

friend.

Yes? What?

"I idealized a lifestyle and behavior that were corrupt," he explained. "I

"I am eternally here for you as a true friend, and also to make up for

abhorred kindness, mercy, human dignity, and intimacy. Instead, I used, de-

what I did."

graded, and exploited women. I thought only about my pleasure. I despised

He wasn't convinced. Fuck him. I was going to take a nap.

the good instincts within me and within others, and attempted to corrupt

"Mind if I stay over for a couple of days?" he asked.

anyone I met."

"No problem, but I'm leaving for Australia on Wednesday."

As he spoke, I couldn't help thinking that all these things he was apol-

"Do you have an alarm clock I can borrow? I need to pray with the

ogizing for were the very reasons I had befriended him in the first place.

sunrise."

"I promoted and dragged you into this whole pickup thing, as if what I

After I found him a small travel clock, he reached into his bag and

was doing were the highest ideal a person could live for,” he went on. “So, to

pulled out a book. “Here,” he said. “I brought this for you.”

whatever extent I am guilty of affecting the natural goodness of your soul, I

It was a small hardcover edition of an eighteenth century book called

am deeply sorry.”

*The Path of the Just* with a note he had written for me inscribed on the title

It all made sense intellectually. But I’ve never trusted extremes, whether

page. It quoted the Talmud:

it be drug addiction, religious fanaticism, or zero-carb diets.

There was

something odd about Dustin, or Avisha. He had a hole he was trying to

*Whoever destroys a single life is as guilty as though he had destroyed the en-*

fill—first with women, now with religion. I listened to him, but I had a dif-

*tire world; and whoever rescues a single life earns as much merit as though*

ferent opinion.

*he had rescued the entire world.*

“I accept your apology,” I told him, “but with the caveat that you have

nothing to apologize for.”

So he was trying to save me. Why? I was having fun.

He looked at me softly but didn’t say anything. I could see why he was

so seductive: It was those eyes that glistened like the surface of a mountain

lake, that intense power of focus, that way of making you believe that noth-

ing else existed for him except what you were saying at that very moment.

“Think about it,” I continued. “If a guy wants to improve his odds of

meeting women, he’s going to have to make some changes to himself. And

it just so happens that all the qualities women look for in guys are good

things. I mean, I’ve become more confident. I started working out and eat-

ing healthier. I’m getting in touch with my emotions and learning more

about spirituality. I’ve become a more fun, positive person.”

He looked at me, listening patiently.

“And I’m not just more successful with women now, I’m more success-

## *Chapter*



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ing us into his house. “We talk on the phone about seven times a day. I

asked her to marry me before I left. It’s sick, isn’t it? And on top of that, I

made half a million dollars this week on a real-estate seminar.  
So life is just  
amazing. Thanks to the community, I have health, fun, money,  
love, and  
great people all around me.”

Sweater’s place was a sunny, airy bachelor pad overlooking  
Brisbane

Mystery and I were on another road trip. The sun was blazing,  
the map was

River and the City Botanic Gardens. He had a large pool and  
Jacuzzi; there

accurate, and there was a surfboard strapped to the top of a  
brand-new

were three bedrooms upstairs; on the ground floor, four  
employees—all en-

rental car. We had five workshops sold out in three cities in  
Australia. Life

terprising, fresh-faced Australian boys in their early twenties—  
sat at a large

was good, at least for me.

horseshoe-shaped desk, each working on his own computer.  
Sweater had

Mystery, however, was in low spirits. I made a mental note to  
never go

not only trained each of them to sell his products—books and  
courses on

on a road trip with him again. Before he left Toronto, his  
girlfriend, Patri-

real-estate investing—but he’d turned them onto the seduction  
commu-

cia, had given him an ultimatum: marriage and children, or  
good-bye.

nity as well. By day, they made Sweater money; by night, they went sarging

“I haven’t been laid in five days because of this bullshit,” Mystery said

with him.

as we drove up the coast of Queensland. “But I’ve been jerking it mercilessly

“I’m still having fun helping the guys here get girls, but I’m off the

to lesbian porn. I guess I’ve been sort of depressed a bit.”

market,” Sweater said when we asked how he felt about his decision to set-

After four years of dating, their goals were diverging. Mystery wanted

tle down with one woman. “And as far as I’m concerned, I’m getting out at

to travel the world as an illusionist with two loving bisexual girlfriends; Pa-

the top. I’ve come to understand that without commitment, you cannot

tricia wanted to settle down in Toronto with one man and no bonus

have depth in anything, whether it’s a relationship, a business, or a

woman. Celebrity and alternative lifestyle be damned.

hobby.”

“I do not understand women,” he complained. “I mean, I know exactly

In many ways, I was jealous. I hadn’t met any woman yet I could say

what to do to attract them. But I still don’t understand them.”

that about.

We'd come to Australia because Sweater, the older Australian student

Mystery's workshop had changed all of our lives. Sweater was filthy

from Mystery's first workshop, had invited us to stay with him for a week in

rich and in love; Extramask had recently moved out of his parents' house

Brisbane. After four months of sarging, he had finally met the woman he

and finally orgasmed in coitus; and I was traveling the world teaching men

wanted to marry.

a skill I'd never even possessed a year ago.

"I'm like a smitten teenager," Sweater exclaimed when we pulled into

Mystery was even more blown away than I was by Sweater—less by his

his driveway. He looked nothing like the insecure middle-aged man I had

engagement than by his home office. When he wasn't grilling Sweater and

met in the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel. He was tan, healthy, and, most ex-

his employees on how they ran their business, he was silently watching

traordinarily, an irresistibly welcoming smile was now plastered constantly

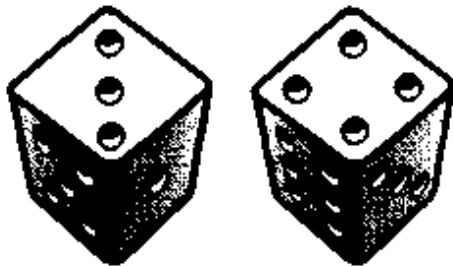
them work.

to his face.

"I want this," he kept telling Sweater. "You have a good social environ-

Helena Rubinstein once said, “There are no ugly women; only lazy  
ment, and it creates a good working environment. I’m rotting  
away in  
ones.” Since society holds men to less rigid standards of beauty  
than  
Toronto.”  
women, this is doubly true of guys. Give a man like Sweater—  
or any man—a  
As we drove to the airport, tan and flush with excitement,  
Mystery and  
tan, better posture, whiter teeth, a fitness regime, and clothes  
that fit, and  
I plotted our next adventure.  
he’s well on his way to handsome.  
“I have a one-on-one workshop booked in Toronto next month,”  
Mys-  
“I just spent the week in Sydney with my girlfriend,” Sweater  
said, walk-  
tery said. “The guy is paying me fifteen hundred dollars.”

### *Chapter*



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“How’d he get the money?” Most of Mystery’s clients were  
college kids  
who could barely scrape together the standard fee, which he’d  
raised to six



hundred dollars while reducing the number of nights from four to three.

“His dad’s rich,” Mystery said. “Exoticoption, from the Belgrade work-

shop, told him about me. He’s a student at the University of Wisconsin. He

just started posting online under the name Papa.”

Most conversations with Mystery involved plans: organizing work-

The day had arrived. This would be the most monumental trip of my se-

shops, performing a ninety-minute magic show, creating a porn website in

duction career. First, I was going to Toronto for Papa’s one-on-one work-

which we’d have sex with girls disguised as clowns. His latest scheme was

shop with Mystery. Then we were going to get our PUA heart tattoos, take

the PUA tattoo.

the bus to New York for Mystery’s first classroom seminar, and finally, fly to

“Everyone in the Lounge is going to get the tattoo,” he said as we parted

Bucharest so Mystery could implement what he called Project Bliss. He

ways at the airport. “It’ll be a heart on the right wrist, directly over the pulse.

wanted to return to Eastern Europe, find two young bisexual women

It’ll allow us to identify each other in the field. And it’ll be great for an illu-

searching for a better life overseas, and seduce them. He planned to get

sion; I can teach you how to stop your pulse for ten seconds.”

them student visas, take them back to Canada, and train them to become

A couple of PUAs had already run out and gotten the tattoo—including

strippers, girlfriends, and, eventually, magic assistants.

Vision, which was somewhat of a surprise considering he'd moved to Los

Tattoos and white slavery: That's where self-improvement had led me.

Angeles to make it as an actor. He'd e-mailed us a photo. But there was a

On my way out of the house, I checked my mailbox. Along with the usual

problem: He'd put the tattoo in the wrong place and upside down. The

overdue bills and raised car insurance notices was a postcard of the Wailing

heart was supposed to go over the vein where the pulse can be felt. But he

Wall in Jerusalem. “Your Hebrew name is Tuvia.” The writing was Dustin's. “It

had put it in the center of his wrist, an inch too high, and facing inward.

comes from the word Tov, or good. Its opposite is Ra, or evil. And in Hebrew,

Nonetheless, it was a vote of affirmation, a pact that this PUA society

Tov also means that which endures and Ra is that which is short-lived. So your

was for life.

essence is connected to a desire to search out and connect to that which

endures—the good. But sometimes you get stuck at the bad along the way.”

On the flight, I reread the postcard. Dustin was trying to give me a mes-

sage from God. And maybe he had a point. But, on the other hand, I'd had

an enduring wish ever since adolescence for the power to seduce any

woman I wanted. Now I was getting my wish. This was good. This was Tov.

Mystery had recently gotten his own place in Toronto with a PUA

named No. 9, a Chinese software engineer who, thanks to Mystery's ever-

present advice, had turned himself into a relatively cool-looking guy. They

lived in a cramped two-bedroom apartment above a cybercafe near the Uni-

versity of Toronto.

Since No. 9 was out of town, I put my bags in his room and joined Mys-

tery in the kitchen. Patricia had broken up with him, for good this time.

And he'd been staying in his room a lot, playing a video game called Mor-

rowind and downloading lesbian porn. Getting out of the house for these

upcoming workshops would be good therapy for him.

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There were three types of people who signed up for the workshops.

dent the first impression he made. We weren't afraid of hurting his feelings.

There were guys like Exoticoption from Belgrade, who were normal and

We corrected his every gesture, phrase, and item of clothing, because we

well-adjusted socially, but wanted to have greater flexibility and choice in

knew he wasn't living up to his potential. None of us is. We get stuck in old

meeting girls. There were guys who were uptight and set in their ways, like

thought and behavior patterns that may have been effective when we were

Cliff, who couldn't even handle having a nickname like everybody else.

twelve months or twelve years old, but now only serve to hold us back. And,

They tended to gather as much knowledge as they could but had trouble

while those around us may have no problem correcting our minor flaws,

making even the smallest behavioral change. And then there were people

they let the big ones slide, because it would mean attacking who we are.

like Papa—approach machines who compensated for a lack of social skills

But who are we, really? Just a bundle of good genes and bad genes

with a lack of social fears. Approach machines tended to improve the

mixed with good habits and bad habits. And since there's no  
gene for cool-  
fastest, simply by following the flowchart of material they were  
given. But  
ness or confidence, then being uncool and unconfident are just  
bad habits,  
once they ran out of material, they floundered.  
which can be changed with enough guidance and will power.  
And this was going to be Papa's challenge. He was a soft-  
spoken Chi-  
And that was Papa's asset: will power. He was an only child and  
used to  
nese pre-law student. He wore a checkered button-down shirt  
and jeans  
taking any measure necessary to get what he wanted. I  
demonstrated some  
that were a size too large. They always seemed to arrive in a  
checkered  
of my best routines on him—the jealous girlfriend opener, the  
best friends  
button-down shirt and oversized jeans. And they always left in a  
loud shiny  
test, the cube, and a new piece I'd made up involving C-shaped  
smiles,  
shirt, tight black synthetic pants, silver rings, and sunglasses  
pushed up on  
U-shaped smiles and the personality characteristics each  
conveyed. Papa  
their heads. It was the player uniform, designed to convey  
sexuality, which  
recorded every word on his digital recorder. He would later  
transcribe them,  
was evidently synonymous with cheesiness.

memorize them, and ultimately use my exact words to pick up Paris Hilton.

Mystery and I sat down with Papa at a cafe and asked the usual ques-

I should have recognized the signals then. I should have realized what

tions: What's your score? What would you like it to be? What are your stick-

was going on. This wasn't teaching; it was cloning. Mystery and I were trav-

ing points?

eling around the world making miniature versions of ourselves. And we

"Well, I used to be the social chair of *my fraternity*," he began.

"And I

would soon pay for it.

come from a lot of money. My father is the president of a major university."

Our first stop was a lounge on Queen Street. After watching Papa crash

"Let me cut you off right there," I said. "You're qualifying yourself to

and burn in a couple of sets, I started interacting. For some reason, I was on

us. Instead of gaining our admiration, all you're doing is displaying lower

fire. It was just one of those nights. Every woman's eye was on me. A red-

status. A rich man doesn't have to tell you he's rich."

head who was there with her fiance even slipped her number into my

Papa nodded stupidly. His head seemed to be surrounded by a dense

pocket. I figured this must be what they call seducer's aura: I was emanating invisible fog, which made his reaction time just a little slower than most something special. And what a perfect evening to do it, too—in front of a people's. It gave the impression that he wasn't all there. student.

“Is it okay if I record everything you're saying?” Papa asked, struggling

I noticed Papa talking to a cute girl with short brown hair and a round

to pull a small digital recorder out of his pocket.

face that perfectly matched his. However, she wasn't paying attention to

There are certain bad habits we've groomed our whole life—from per-

him; her eyes kept twinkling in my direction. This was what the PUAs, in

sonality flaws to fashion faux pas. And it has been the role of parents and

their worst acronym ever, call pAImAI, which basically translates as an un-

friends, outside of some minor tweaking, to reinforce the belief that we're

spoken invitation to approach. (Literally, it's a pre-approach invitation,

okay just as we are. But it's not enough to just be yourself. You have to be

male approach invitation.)

your best self. And that's a tall order if you haven't found your best self yet.

When Papa walked away, I said something to her. Afterward, I couldn't

That's why the workshops were so life-transforming: We told each stu-

remember exactly what I said—and that was a good sign, because it meant I

was internalizing the game, that I was getting away from canned material,

tion skills. He was even studying to get a hypnotist's certification with one

that I could ride a little without the training wheels. After two minutes, I

of the field's most respected teachers, Cal Banyan. But until this workshop,

noticed she was giving me the doggy dinner bowl look. So I popped the

he'd never seen real PUAs in the field before. He was so blown away he

question: "Would you like to kiss me?"

signed up for another workshop on the spot.

"Well, I wasn't thinking about it before," she said, holding eye contact.

On our last day with Papa, we went to a club called Government. I

I took that as a yes and moved in for the kiss. She responded enthusias-

pushed him into sets and watched him repeat, like a robot, the openers,

tically, thrusting her tongue into my mouth and grabbing my knee with her

routines, and negs Mystery and I had taught him. And women were re-



hand. I saw a flash in the background; Papa was taking a picture.

sponding to him now. It was amazing how effective just a few simple lines

When I came up for air, she smiled and said, “I don’t have any of your

could be—and it was also a little depressing. The first thing aspiring stand-

albums, but my friends like your music.”

up comics do is develop a tight five-minute routine that can win over any

My response: “Umm, okay.”

audience. But after seeing hundreds of rooms fill with laughter on cue at

Who did she think I was?

the exact same points, they begin to lose respect for their audience for being

Then she smiled and licked my face, like a dog. Maybe David DeAngelo

so easily manipulated. Being a successful pickup artist meant risking the

was right with his whole canine-training advice.

same side effect.

She looked at me expectantly, like I was supposed to talk about my mu-

When Papa left to get some sleep before his flight home, Mystery and I

sic. I didn’t want to correct her and rob her of the story she thought she’d

stayed at the club to continue sarging. Grimble had recently given me the

earned by kissing me, so I politely excused myself. She gave me her phone

idea of taking all the scraps of paper with p h o n e n u m b e r s  
I'd collected a n d

n u m b e r and told me to call when I got back to my hotel  
room.

p u t t i n g t h e m u n d e r glass on a coffee table for  
decoration. But as I was

sharing the idea with Mystery, he cut me off. "Proximity alert  
system!" he

On the way out, the hostess of the lounge pulled me aside a n d  
said,

announced.

" T h a n k you very m u c h for coming. Here's my card. Let me  
k n o w if we can

ever do anything for you."

When women stand near a m a n b u t facing away from him,  
especially

" W h o does everyone t h i n k I am?" I asked.

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a t particular

"Aren't you Moby?"

spot, it trips what Mystery calls the proximity alert system. It  
means they're

interested; they want to be opened.

So I wasn't having an on night after all. Apparently, because of  
my

shaven head, the hostess h a d t h o u g h t I was Moby, a n d  
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Mystery wheeled a r o u n d a n d started talking to a delicate  
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people in the room. All t h a t time I'd p u t i n t o seduction  
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strapless dress a n d a muscular brunette in a do-rag. When he  
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me, he told them I was an amazing illusionist. We'd been winging together

the same attraction switches a celebrity does—chiefly validation and brag-

ging rights—without being famous.

the practical jokes and pseudomagic tricks I'd learned in elementary school.

In the field, one quickly learns that everything that was funny at age ten is

I suppose a lesser man would have taken advantage of the situation

funny all over again.

and continued the charade. But I never called the girl. I got into the game

not to deceive women, but to make them like me for me—or at least for the

Mystery had brought along a video camera, so he began taping the in-

new me.

teraction. The girls didn't seem to mind. As he isolated the

brunette, I

talked to the blonde. Her name was Caroline; her friend was Carly. Caroline

In the clubs that followed, we watched Papa work. Every piece of mate-

lived in the suburbs with her family. Her goal in life was to be a nurse, but

rial we gave him, he used. Every error we pointed out, he corrected instantly.

she was currently working at Hooters, despite having breasts the size of

With each successful set, he seemed to grow an inch taller. Instead of sum-

Sweetarts and a shy, withdrawn personality.

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From two feet away, Caroline's face seemed alabaster; from one foot

After Caroline b r o u g h t in some blankets to make the hardwood floor a

away, I noticed it was dappled with pinprick freckles. O n e of her teeth was

little more comfortable, I went down on her. I stacked her orgasms as Steve

crooked. She h a d a red mark on the skin over her collarbone, as if she'd

P. had t a u g h t me, until it seemed like her body was melting into the ground.

been itching it. She smelled like cotton. She had gotten a manicure in the

But when I reached for a c o n d o m afterward, I heard the five words t h a t h a d

last twenty-four hours. She weighed no more t h a n o n e h u n d r e d p o u n d s .

taken the place of "let's just be friends" in my life: "But I j u s t met you."

Her favorite color was probably pink.



It was a m u c h sweeter sound, a n d there was no reason to p u  
s h for sex

I observed all these things as my m o u t h moved, reciting the  
routines

with Caroline. I knew I'd see her again.

I'd told to h u n d r e d s of girls before. W h a t was different a  
b o u t Caroline was

She lay on my shoulder, and we enjoyed the afterglow. She was  
nine-

t h a t the routines didn't seem to be working. I just couldn't  
reach what I call

teen, she said, a n d h a d n ' t had sex in almost two years. The  
reason: She had

the hook point, which is when a w o m a n you've approached  
decides she en-

a one-year-old child at h o m e in the suburbs. His n a m e was  
Carter, a n d she

joys your company a n d doesn't want you to leave. T h o u g h I  
stood j u s t a

was determined n o t to be another neglectful teenage mother.  
This was the

foot away from Caroline, a mile-wide chasm separated us.

first time she'd been apart from h i m for a weekend.

After watching the movie *Boiler Room*, about ruthless cold-  
calling

When we awoke the next afternoon, awkward from the passion  
of the

stockbrokers, Mystery h a d decided t h a t p h o n e n u m b e r s  
were wood—in

night before, Caroline suggested having breakfast at a restaurant  
next door.

other words, they were a waste of paper. O u r new strategy was  
no longer to

In the days t h a t followed, I m u s t have watched Mystery's  
video of t h a t  
try to call a girl for a date, b u t to take her on a date right away  
—an instant  
breakfast a h u n d r e d times. At the diner the night before,  
Caroline's blue  
date—to a nearby bar or restaurant. Changing venues quickly  
became a key  
eyes were flat a n d distant. But at breakfast in the morning, they  
glittered  
piece in the pickup game. It created a sense of distorted time: If  
you went to  
a n d danced when she looked at me. Whenever I m a d e a joke,  
even one t h a t  
three different places with a g r o u p you'd just met, by the end  
of the night it  
wasn't funny, a broad smile spread across her face. Something  
inside her  
felt as if you'd k n o w n each other forever.  
heart h a d opened. It was, I realized, the first time I'd made a  
real emotional  
“Why d o n ‘ t we all grab a bite to eat?” Mystery suggested.  
connection with a w o m a n since I'd started picking t h e m u p  
. . .  
We walked to a diner nearby, arm-in-arm with o u r i n s t a n t  
dates. Dur-  
I d o n ‘ t have a particular type of girl I'm attracted to, the way  
some guys  
ing the meal, everything suddenly clicked in the group. Carly  
felt comfort-  
are Asian fetishists or chubby chasers. But of all the women in  
the world,

able enough to unleash her biting wit, and Caroline began to radiate

the last type I ever thought I'd fall for would be a nineteen-year-old single

empathy and warmth. We didn't need any routines or tactics. We all just

mom who waited tables at Hooters. But the great thing about the heart is

made fun of ourselves and each other. Juggler was right: Laughter was the

best seduction.

After the girls dropped us off at home, Mystery and I broke

down the

Afterward, Carly invited us to call a cab from her apartment around the

events of the previous night, trying to figure out what we did right and

corner. She had just moved in and the rooms were bare of furniture, so Mys-

wrong. Despite what Caroline and I had thought, Mystery hadn't even got-

ten a kiss from Carly, though not for lack of trying. She had a boyfriend.

us to, which we took as an IOI.

She was clearly attracted to Mystery, however, despite having resisted

Carly soon left the room with Mystery, giving Caroline tacit permission

his advances. So we concocted a plan: the freeze-out. It was based on my

to fool a r o u n d with me. As we wrapped ourselves a r o u n d  
each other, the

Moby experience. If women have sex for validation, Mystery  
figured, why

chasm t h a t had separated us in the bar disappeared. Caroline's  
touch was

n o t take validation away from her? His plan was to be cold a n d  
d ignore her,

soft a n d gentle, her body frail a n d forgiving. Now I u n d e r s  
t o o d why it h a d

until she became so uncomfortable t h a t she wanted to cozy up  
to h i m j u s t

been so difficult to get rapport with her when we'd first met.  
She didn't

to make things n o r m a l again.

communicate with words; she c o m m u n i c a t e d with  
feelings. She'd make a

We loaded the footage of Carly and Caroline into Mystery's  
computer

great nurse.

a n d proceeded to spend the next six hours self-indulgently  
editing it into a

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six-minute video. When we finished, I called Caroline and she  
picked us up

When we finally emerged into the front room, we found Carly  
and Mys-

that evening.

tery wrapped around each other in a blanket. Judging by the  
clothing

Juggler was in town, running his own workshop. He'd met a  
preternat-

strewn across the floor, Mystery's freeze-out had been a success. Usually bright jazz violinist named Ingrid and had started dating her exclu-

Caroline and I spooned on the couch next to them, and together we

sively. So we all went to dinner together.

watched an episode of *The Osbournes* on Mystery's computer, each basking

"I'm going to get out of the seduction business," Juggler said. "I want to

in our own post-coital glow. It was a beautiful moment. And it wouldn't

devote the time to my relationship." Ingrid squeezed his hand approvingly.

last.

"Some people may say I'm pussy-whipped, but I say it is my choice. These

workshops are too stressful for Ingrid."

It was good to see Juggler again. He was one of the few pickup artists

who wasn't needy, who didn't scare away my real-life friends, who made me

laugh, who was normal. And for that very reason I didn't believe he was

truly a pickup artist: He was simply a funny, masterful conversationalist.

He seemed especially witty in comparison to Mystery, who was freezing us

all out and making dinner somewhat uncomfortable. If Mystery's plan

worked, it would be worth it; if not, then he was just an asshole.

Afterward, Mystery said decisively, "We're heading back to my place,

and I'm going to show you the video I made of last night."

Victory belongs

to the person with the strongest reality and the most decisive actions.

As we watched the video at Mystery's house, Caroline couldn't stop

smiling. Afterward, I brought her into No. 9's room, and we lay on the bed

and slowly undressed each other. Her body trembled with so much emotion

that it seemed to dissipate beneath me. It felt like making love to a cloud.

When she came, she didn't make a sound.

As we lay together afterward, Caroline rolled away from me. She stared

at the wall and grew distant. I knew what she was thinking.

When I asked her about it, she burst into tears. "I gave it up too fast,"

she sobbed. "Now I'm never going to see you again."

They were such sweet words, because they were so honest. I slid my arm

under her and placed her head on my shoulder. I told her first of all that

every passionate relationship I've ever had began passionately. It was a line

I'd learned from Mystery, but I did believe it. Second, I told her that maybe

she shouldn't have, but she wanted to and needed to. It was a line I'd learned

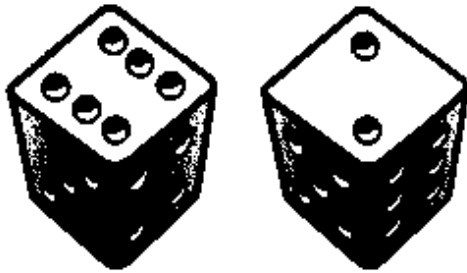
from Ross Jeffries, but I did believe it. Third, I told her that I was more ma-

ture than a lot of the people she'd been with before, so not to judge me by

her past experiences. It was a line I'd learned from David X, but I did believe

it. Finally, I told her that I'd be sad if I never saw her again. It wasn't a line.

### *Chapter*



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screwing up my chances of being a cool dad. If I'd married my first girlfriend

and had kids with her, they'd be, say, eight and ten now. And I'd be an excel-

lent father, able to relate to them on nearly every level. But it's too late for

me now. By the time my kids are ten, I'll be well into my forties. I'll be so out

of touch they'll make fun of my taste in music and beat me at arm-wrestling.

And now I was really going to screw up my chances of getting married:

There is nothing more bonding than successfully picking up girls together.

I was about to brand myself a player for life.

It is the basis for a great friendship. Because afterward, when the girls are

An hour later, Mystery and I were outside Fineline Tattoo on Kingston

gone, you can finally give each other the high-five that you've been holding

Road. I was smarter than this, I thought. But it's easy to get caught up in  
back since you met them. It is the sweetest high-five in the world. It's not  
the moment, in the hand slap, in the brotherhood.  
just the sound of skin hitting skin; it's the sound of brotherhood.  
I turned the handle of the door and pushed. It didn't open.  
Though it  
"You know what's so fucked up?" Mystery said. "I feel so bad, and then  
was three o'clock on a Monday afternoon, the shop was closed.  
a girl sleeps with me and likes me and, bam, I'm on top of the world again."

"Damn," Mystery said. "Let's find somewhere else."

*Smack.*

I'm not a superstitious person, but when I'm on the fence about an

"So?" Mystery asked.

idea, it only takes a slight draft to push me in either direction.

"So."

"I can't go through with this," I said.

"Are you ready to commit to this lifestyle?"

"What's wrong?"

"I thought I was committed."

"I have problems with commitment. I don't think I can even commit to

"No, for life. It's in your blood now. You and me, we have to challenge

a tattoo that signifies a lack of commitment."

each other. Of all the guys I've met, you're my only competition. No one else



My neurotic nature had saved me for once.

has the chance to reach the throne except you.”

The next night, Caroline drove to Mystery’s house, and we all went out

When I was a teenager, I’d lie awake in bed, praying to God,  
“Please

for sushi.

don’t let me die before having sex. I just want to see what it feels like.” But

“Where’s Carly?” Mystery asked.

now I have a different dream. At night, I lay in bed and ask God to just let

Caroline flushed and looked into her tea. “She, um, couldn’t make it,”

me have the opportunity to be a father before I die. I’ve always lived for ex-

she said. “She says hi, though.”

perience: traveling, learning new skills, meeting new people. But having a

I could see Mystery’s body language change. He slumped in his chair

child is the ultimate experience: It’s what we’re here for. And despite my

and pressed further.

rakish behavior, I hadn’t lost sight of that.

“Did she say why? Is there a problem?”

Yet, at the same time, living for experiences also means wanting the

“Well,” Caroline said. “She’s ... well, she’s with her boyfriend.”

novelty and adventure of dating different women. I can’t imagine ever

Mystery’s face went pale. “And she wouldn’t come?”

choosing one person for life. It's not that I'm scared of commitment; it's

“Carly said you and she were very different anyway.”

that I'm scared of arguing with someone I love over whose turn it is to do

Mystery went quiet. He didn't speak for another ten minutes. When-

the dishes, of losing the desire to have sex with the woman lying next to me

ever we asked a question to draw him out, he responded monosyllabically.

every night, of taking a back seat in her heart to our children, of resenting

It wasn't that he loved Carly; he just hated rejection. He was experiencing

someone for limiting my freedom to be selfish.

the downside of seducing a woman with a boyfriend: She usually went back

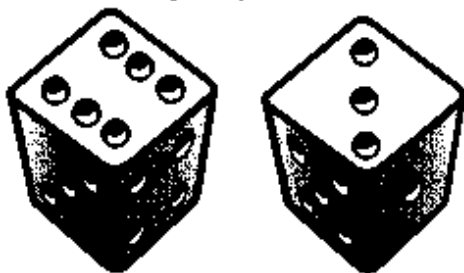
This pickup thing had never been about sowing my wild oats. My oats

to him afterward. And seeing Caroline and I enjoying each other's company

are always going to be wild. And that's not necessarily something I relish. I'm

so much only rubbed it in.

*Chapter*



“I’m the world’s greatest pickup artist,” he grumbled in my direction.

“How come I don’t have a girlfriend?”

“Well, maybe because you’re the world’s greatest pickup artist.”

After a long period of silence, Mystery asked Caroline to drive him to

the strip club where his ex-girlfriend Patricia worked. She dropped him off

in the parking lot, and then took me to spend the night at the house in the

suburbs where she lived with her mother, sister, and brother. It would be

While I was playing daddy with Caroline, Mystery was spiraling.

my first time meeting her family.

Dropping him off at the club was a bad move. Seeing Patricia had

Her mother greeted us at the door. In her arms was a crying baby—my

fucked him up. Not only would she not take him back, but she also told

teenage girlfriend’s baby.

him that she’d started dating other people.

“Do you want to hold him?” Caroline asked. I suppose the stereotypical

“She’s been working out three hours a day,” he said over the phone.

reaction would be to say that I was scared, that reality sunk in, that I wanted

“She lost fifteen pounds and her ass is a 10, dude. The things a chick will do

to get out of there.

when she's angry. Damn."

But I didn't. I wanted to hold him. It was kind of cool. This was what I

"Don't think about how good she looks," I advised. "Look for the flaws

got into the game for—to have these kinds of adventures, to hold a baby in

and blow those up in your mind. It'll make it easier."

my arms for the first time and wonder, "What does his mother expect of me?"

"I know that intellectually, but emotionally I'm fucked up. I feel like

I'm being raked over coals. It all came crashing down on me when I saw her

again. That hot body, the tan lines. She was the hottest stripper in the place.

And I can't have her. Carry's back with her boyfriend. And I'm beat from try-

ing to make my new place livable. For what?"

"Dude, you're a pickup artist. There are hundreds more just like Patri-

cia out there. And you can get them in a night."

"I'm not a pickup artist. I'm a lover. I love women. I swear, I don't even

think about threesomes anymore. I would be so happy to settle for Patricia

now. I've got Patricia withdrawal on the mind. I miss her every minute of

the day."

Mystery had hardly thought about Patricia or talked about her until

she rejected him. Now he was obsessed. His own theories on attraction had

come back to slap him in the face. Patricia was doing a  
takeaway. But for her

it wasn't a technique—it was for real.

As a magician used to exploiting the gullibility of others,  
Mystery had

no patience with anything spiritual or supernatural. His religion  
was Dar-

win. Love, to him, was simply an evolutionary impulse that  
enabled human

beings to fulfill their two primary objectives: to survive and  
replicate. He

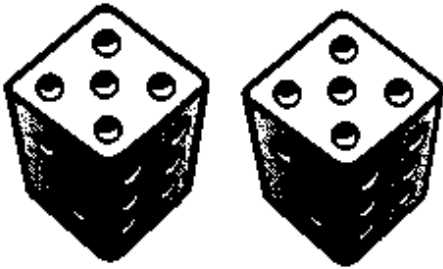
called that impulse pairbonding.

“It's strange how strong pairbonding is,” he said. “I feel so  
alone now.”

“I'll tell you what. We'll pick you up tomorrow, and you can  
play in the

suburbs with us. It'll cheer you up.”

### *Chapter*



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Caroline and I put Carter in his stroller and pushed him around  
the

block to a park. As I sat down on the bench, I thought about  
what a pa-

thetic couple of pickup artists Mystery and I were. Kids around  
the world

thought we were in hot tubs surrounded by bikini-clad models.  
Instead he

was alone in his apartment, probably crying and watching lesbian porn,

and I was in the suburbs pushing a baby around in a stroller.

In the morning, Caroline and I fetched Mystery from the city.

He

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

hadn't shaved since I'd last seen him, and thin patches of stubble dappled

SUBJECT: Life Goals

his baby-white skin. He wore a gray T-shirt that hung loosely over faded

AUTHOR: Mystery

jeans.

"Just make sure your family doesn't ask me to do any magic for them,"

I'm staying at Caroline's place right now because I've been upset over Patricia.

he told Caroline.

Caroline is Style's Toronto girlfriend, and it must be tough for him. She is really

Yet that night, when Caroline's mother asked him what he did for

beautiful, but she's got a kid. Style and Caroline look great together, but I

work, Mystery launched into a spectacular performance. He introduced

understand the limitations too. Damn.

each illusion—mind reading, bottle-levitating, self-levitating, sleights of

Solution: Be fair. Love her, dude. Be true to your feelings and don't hurt her

hand—with ten minutes of patter and panache that put every other illu-

but also know that you are polyamorous and want more. The idea of having

an illusionist I'd seen to shame. He charmed everyone in the room: Caroline's

many girls in many parts can be wholesomely nurtured.

mom was flabbergasted, her younger sister was attracted, and her brother

She has a great family. I did magic for her eighteen-year-old sister, who's a

wanted to learn how to levitate chalk to freak out his teachers. In that mo-

cutie, and her brother and mom for like forty-five minutes. It was fun. I did a

moment, I realized that Mystery actually had the skills to achieve his dream of

a rune cast for the mom. Caroline is like my sister. I get that feeling of caring for

being a superstar daredevil illusionist.

her and her baby. And it's great to have Style here!

After Caroline's family turned in for the night, Mystery asked her if she

Then I took codeine to sleep because they all went to bed at normal hours,

had any sleeping pills.

and I'm fucked up with my sleeping. But I didn't sleep. I just felt love. Don't get

"All we have is Tylenol #3, which has codeine," Caroline told him.

me wrong. I'm fully aware it's the Tylenol I took but, hey, the feeling is good

"That'll work," Mystery said. "Just give me the whole bottle. I have a

nonetheless. I love this lounge. You guys are super bright. I hope we can all

high tolerance.”

have a huge party one day.

Already thinking like a nurse, Caroline brought him just four pills. But

And all this will wear off when the codeine gets pissed out, haaa.

they weren't enough to knock him out. So while Caroline and I slept, Mys-

This is what I want to see happen in the future: I want us to become closer

tery, on a codeine high, stayed up all night writing posts on Mystery's

friends—you think we can manage that? Grimble and Twotimer, your game is

Lounge.

so different from mine. I want to sarge with both of you sometime to legitimately

attempt to understand where you are coming from.

Papa, the game you played was fucking mint when you were up here. It

was great to do a workshop with you, and you are welcome anytime, man. I

don't even mind that you call me every day.

I envision this lounge as not being about pickup, but rather about

something bigger: life goals. Women are a huge part of that, and we work

together to help each other obtain them. However, I'd like to extend our topics

to money, social status, and other ambitions.

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I think one of life's biggest difficulties is not being able to share your

P.S. I've been reading Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*, and I want to

problems honestly. So, state your issues here, and you have a hundred

suggest something related. If you regularly masturbate, you can easily become

intelligent, trustworthy men who can assist you

addicted. This addiction comes in the form of daily regularity that curbs your

Also, tell us your goals and objectives. If you don't have any, now is the

desire to go out. It also does not allow you to harness your sex drive, which

time to make them. I want to see all of us get our shit together and reach

can be used to motivate yourself to work on wealth-building projects.

self-fulfillment. Travel, women, money, social status, whatever. Let's assist each

If you aren't getting laid on a regular basis (which happens to all of us

other along the way. Let's all work on the same projects and synergize our

from time to time), then don't just choke 'til you're broke. Set a date with

efforts like a corporation.

yourself. Only jerk it once a week. If you jerked it today, set the jerk date for

I want to see Vinigarr5 in his own apartment with a kickass car,  
coin in the

seven days from now. If you don't get a girl between then and  
now, you'll have

bank, a hot nanny to help care for his kid (a nanny he gets to  
boink), and a

something to look forward to. Make it a good jerk! Use the best  
porn and

couple girls who love him to death. He should own sections of  
New York—

hand lotion. Look forward to it and this will keep you from  
wasting your life

nightclubs or whatever. He should be driven around in his own  
limo. He should

away jerking it daily and focusing constantly on the pain of not  
having a

run his own escort agency.

girlfriend.

Papa, you sponge off daddy And the enemy of the best is the  
good. I

In the meantime, harness your sex drive and build something.

want to see you focus as much on wealth as you do on  
relationship mastery.

You have the drive to become a multimillionaire. You need to  
step out from

daddy's financial shadow and dwarf his success. Imagine  
harnessing your sex

drive and using it to create a successful business.

This is what I need: I need to complete promotional material to  
pitch to

networks for a one-hour magic special. I need major funding to  
produce this.

I'm not bullshitting or having fame fantasies when I say I can do it. People

who have met me know I can play the role all the way. Once I have the

special on the air, I can put on a Vegas show. I've designed the show in detail

already.

Anyone interested in helping? Think of the after-parties! Let's build some-

thing. Let's exploit the fact that I need attention (must do shows) every day or I

don't feel normal.

This isn't a freebie thing either. I don't believe in that. Work with me, and

you'll get paid. Just tell me what your objectives are first so we can work on all

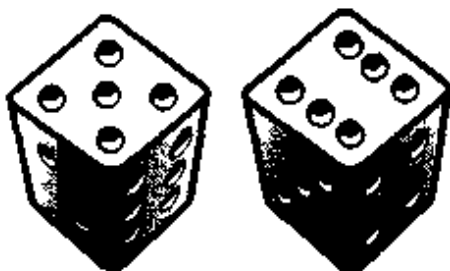
our shit together! Gentlemen, let's get down to business.

—Mystery

5A former workshop student **from Brooklyn, Vinagarr is a single father who earns a living as a**

driver for an escort service

*Chapter*



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“I’ll tell you what,” Mystery snapped. “I’m going to get a knife, and we’ll

find out just who exactly should be in the hall when I get back.”

Mystery marched back to the house as the rest of us exchanged con-

cerned looks. Again, I recognized the behavior from our road trip: It re-

mined me of when he'd snapped at the border crossing after I'd told him

what to do, triggering his father issues.

The reverend slammed the door shut, and Caroline and I slipped away

The morning after his codeine-high post, Mystery lay slumped in the back-

in the confusion.

seat of Caroline's car, wrapped in a blanket and shrouded by a hat pulled

low over his eyes. Beyond asking us to drop him off at his family's condo, he

didn't say a word, which was rare for him. It reminded me of our Eastern

European road trip. Except this time, Mystery wasn't sick—at least not

physically.

We parked and took the elevator to his sister's apartment on the twen-

tieth floor. It was a cluttered two-bedroom hovel crammed with people.

Mystery's mother, a zaftig German woman, sat on a beat-up flower-

patterned sofa chair. His sister Martina, her two children, and her husband,

Gary, were crammed into a couch next to her. Mystery's father was shut up

in his apartment four floors above them, sick with liver disease from a life-

time of drinking.

“Hey, how come you don’t have a girl with you?” Mystery’s thirteen-

year-old niece, Shalyn, chided him. She knew all about his girls. He often

used his nieces as a routine to convey his vulnerable, paternal side to

women. He truly loved his nieces and seemed to come back to life a little

when he saw them.

Mystery’s brother-in-law, Gary, played us some pop ballads he had

composed. The best of these was a song called “Casanova’s Child,” which

Mystery sang along with at a near-deafening volume. He seemed to identify

with the title character.

Caroline and I left afterward. The girls chased us all the way to the ele-

vator bank, laughing and screaming, followed by Mystery. Suddenly, a door

swung open and a man in a clerical collar gave the girls a steely, conde-

scending stare.

“You shouldn’t be making so much noise in the hallway,” he said.

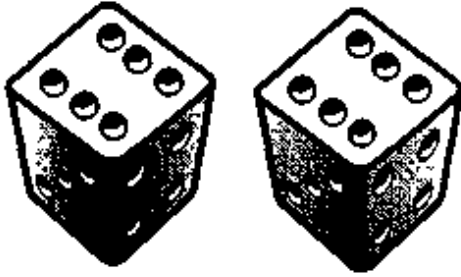
Mystery turned crimson. “What are you going to do about it?” he asked.

“Because I think we should. These are young girls. They’re having fun.”

“Well,” the reverend said. “They can have fun in a place where they’re

not disturbing other residents.”

## Chapter



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We walked upstairs to Mystery's apartment and opened the door. He

was sitting on his bed watching Steven Spielberg's *AI* on his computer. He

was wearing the same gray T-shirt and jeans I had last seen him in. There

were scratches on his arms from his fight with his sister.

He turned to me and began to speak. His voice was cold and dispa-

sionate. "I've been thinking," he said. "The robots in this movie have moti-

I didn't really want to go back to Caroline's. I've lived in cities my whole life.

vated self-interest. They set objectives and then work to accomplish them.

I hate the suburbs. Like Andy Dick, my biggest fear is being bored or boring.

The child robot seeks protection from his mommy. The sex robot chases

Weekend nights weren't made for sitting around watching videos from

women. When he's freed from a cage, he sets out to mate with real women

Blockbuster. But Caroline couldn't stay in Toronto. She didn't want to be

again because that's his objective."

away from her son; she didn't want to be a typical teenage mother.

"Okay." I leaned against a computer desk pushed flush against his bed.

So while Caroline played with Carter the next day, I checked my e-mail.

The room was the size of a large closet. The walls were bare.

"What's your

Mystery and I had posted a field report a b o u t Carly a n d Caroline a few days

point?"

earlier, and my inbox was full with messages from kids in N o r t h Carolina,

"The point is," he said, in the same deadened *voice*, "what is my objec-

Poland, Brazil, Croatia, New Zealand, and beyond. They were looking to me

tive? And what is yours? I'm a child robot, a sex robot, and an entertainer

for help just as I had once looked to Mystery.

robot."

There were also two e-mails from Mystery. In the first, he wrote t h a t

On the floor in front of his bed was a half-eaten plate of uncooked

he'd gotten i n t o a fight with his sister over the hallway incident: "She pro-

spaghetti. Shrapnel from the spaghetti sticks was scattered a r o u n d t h e room.

ceeded to p u n c h me several times. I had to restrain her by grabbing her

Nearby were the remnants of a black cordless p h o n e t h a t  
had been smashed

throat a n d flipping her to the ground. I then left to go back to  
my house. I

against the floor. The battery dangled helplessly out of the open  
back.

wasn't angry. I just wanted to stop her from attacking me.  
Weird, h u h ? ”

“What happened?” I asked.

The second one read simply: “I'm crackin' u p . I'm hungry, my  
head

“I blew up at my sister and my m o m . They wouldn't shut up.”

hurts, my skin aches, and I've been choking it all day to Kazaa  
porn. I'm go-

When Mystery—or any PUA—was in a funk, there was only  
one cure for

ing to get sleeping pills because if I stay up all night alone, I'll  
go n u t s . I

it: to go o u t sarging and meet new options.

can't wait to disappear. I'm so close to saying fuck it a n d  
ending it all. This

“Let's get peacocked a n d go to a strip club tonight,” I  
suggested. Strip

living t h i n g isn't fun anymore.”

clubs were Mystery's weakness. He h a d a list of strip club  
rules t h a t pretty

He was losing his mind. And I was stuck in bumblefuck,  
Ontario,

m u c h guaranteed h i m at least a p h o n e n u m b e r every  
time: a m o n g them,

watching Britney Spears in *Crossroads* with three teenagers, one  
of w h o m



befriend the DJ; never pay for a dance or a drink; do n o t hit on, compli-

was supposedly now my girlfriend.

ment, or touch a stripper; stick to your material; and change the subject

The next morning, I h a d Caroline drive me to Mystery's place.

whenever a stripper starts reciting the stories she tells every other guy.

"Can you stay with me?" I asked.

"I d o n ' t want to go out," he said. "There's no point."

"I should really get back to Carter," she said. "I haven't been paying

He stopped the movie on his computer a n d began working on a half-

enough attention to him, a n d I d o n ' t want my m o m to think I'm being

finished e-mail.

neglectful."

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Your m o m wants you to go o u t and be with your friends. You're put-

"I'm e-mailing the students in New York a n d telling t h e m the seminar's

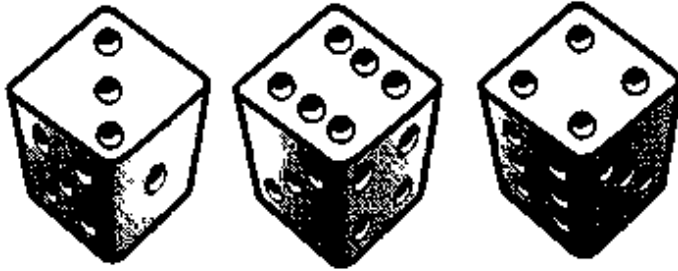
ting this pressure on yourself."

canceled." He spoke as if he were on autopilot.

She agreed to come inside for an hour.

"Why are you doing that?" I was pissed. I'd p u t a m o n t h of my life on

## Chapter



192

hold so we could go to New York a n d Bucharest together. Fd  
already

b o u g h t the plane tickets. And now, because of some mixture  
of Steven

Spielberg a n d codeine after effects, he was bailing out.

“Not enough people. Oh well.”

“Come on,” I said. “You’re already making eighteen h u n d r e  
d dollars.

And I’m sure more guys will sign up at the last minute. It’s New  
York, for

chrissake. No one commits to anything in advance.”

So I went back to Caroline’s house in the suburbs—to her m o t  
h e r a n d her

“Living,” he sighed, “costs too much.”

brother a n d her sister a n d her son a n d her Britney Spears  
movies.

It was all too melodramatic for me. The guy was a black hole  
sucking

I could tell I was becoming a burden to her and a distraction  
from her

up attention. Fuck him.

son. And she could tell she was becoming a bore to me. It  
wasn’t her con-

“You are so fucking selfish,” I seethed. “What about our tickets to  
stant fretting over her son I minded; it was her complete lack of  
initiative.  
Bucharest?”  
The days and nights spent imprisoned in her house doing nothing were get-  
“You can go if you want. I’m canceling all shows, all agents, all  
semi-  
ting to me. I refuse to take time for granted.  
nars, all workshops, all trips. I’m stopping everything. I don’t  
want to be  
One of the primary rules of pickup is that a girl can fall out  
of love with  
known for being a Ross Jeffries.”  
you as quickly as she falls in love with you. It happens every  
night. The girls  
I gave his dresser a mule kick from behind. I have a long fuse, but  
when  
who start rubbing your chest and making out with you in a  
club in two  
it hits bottom I explode. Though my father may not have  
taught me much  
minutes will leave you just as quickly for a bigger, better deal. That’s the  
about women, he did teach me that.  
game. That’s life in the field. And I understood that.  
An orange prescription bottle hit the floor, scattering pills. I  
picked it  
During a workshop in San Francisco, I’d spent the night at  
the house  
up and looked at it. The word Rivotril was on the label.

of a lawyer named Anne. On her nightstand there was a thin book by a guy

“What are these?”

named Joel Kramer. Unable to sleep, I picked it up and leafed through the

“They’re my sister’s anti-depressant pills. They really aren’t about deal-

pages. He explained the emotions Caroline and I were feeling best: We have

ing with depression so much as making me sleep.” Cold. Clinical.

this idea that love is supposed to last forever. But love isn’t like that. It’s a

I figured they couldn’t be doing much good. So I left three in the bottle

free-flowing energy that comes and goes when it pleases. Sometimes it stays

and stuffed the rest in my pocket. I didn’t want him overdosing.

for life; other times it stays for a second, a day, a month, or a year. So don’t

Mystery logged on to Party Poker, an online gambling site, and started

fear love when it comes simply because it makes you vulnerable. But don’t

playing mechanically. The Mystery I knew was too logical to gamble.

be surprised when it leaves, either. Just be glad you had the opportunity to

“What are you doing?” I said. But I didn’t wait for an answer.

“Never

experience it.

mind.”

I'm very loosely paraphrasing, but his ideas reverberated in my head as

I slammed the door behind me and found Caroline in the front room.

I spent yet another night in bed with Caroline. I had originally memorized

“Let's go back to your house,” I told her.

the passage to use as a routine. I never thought it would actually apply to

She smiled weakly, sympathetically. She didn't know what to say. In

my own life. Love was supposed to be something women chased, not men.

that moment, I hated her. She just seemed so useless.

I spent the next day juggling airplane tickets and travel plans. I kept my

flight to Eastern Europe, but instead of watching Mystery Hunt for bisexual

slave girls, I decided to meet a group of PUAs operating out of Croatia. I'd

been corresponding with one of them, named Badboy, since the day I'd

joined the community.

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One of the reasons I became a writer is that, unlike starting a band, di-

“One of the things that attracts a woman is lifestyle and success,” I told

recting movies, or acting in a theatrical production, you can do it alone.

Papa. “Imagine how easy the game would be if you were a high-powered en-

Your success and failure depend entirely on yourself. I've never trusted col-

tainment lawyer with celebrity clients. By getting into a good law school,

laborations, because most people in this world are not closers. They don't

you'll be improving your game."

finish what they start; they don't live what they dream; they sabotage their

"Yeah," he said. "I need to prioritize. I love the game, but it's become

own progress because they're afraid they won't find what they seek. I had

too much of a drug for me now."

idolized Mystery. I had wanted to be him. But, like most everyone else—

Mystery's depression was affecting not just his own life, but the lives of

perhaps more than most—he was his own worst enemy.

the kids who looked up to him and modeled themselves after him. Some,

When I checked the seduction boards that day, there was one new mes-

like Papa, were still modeling him, even in his downward spiral.

sage from Mystery. Its title: Mystery's Last Post.

"Everyone who gets too absorbed in the game is depressed," Papa said.

"Ross Jeffries, Mystery, me. I want Mystery's game, but not at the expense of

I won't be posting here anymore. Just wanted to say thanks for the memo-

life."

ries and good luck to you all.

The problem was t h a t this epiphany was coming too late for Papa. He'd

already signed up for seminars with David X a n d David DeAngelo. All of it,

Your friend,

of course, m e a n t blowing off days of classes.

Mystery

“My dad called yesterday,” Papa continued. “He’s really worried about

me. All I’ve been doing is game for half a year while ignoring my education,

I went to Mystery’s website, a n d it h a d been taken down already. It’s

finances, a n d family.”

impressive how quickly years of work and effort can be dismantled.

“You have to learn balance, man. Pickup should just be a glorified

An h o u r later, my cell p h o n e rang. It was Papa.

hobby.”

“I’m scared,” he said.

It was wise advice—advice I should have been following myself.

“So am I,” I told him. “I d o n ‘ t know whether this is just a cry for atten-

After I h u n g up, I called Mystery. He wanted to give me his motorcycle.

tion or the real thing.”

He wanted to give Patricia his computer. And he wanted to give the illu-

“I feel the same way as Mystery.” His voice was distant and weak. “My

sions he had designed for his ninety-minute show to a local magician.

life is going all the way down. All I am is game. I haven't opened a book

"You can't give away the magic tricks you've worked so hard on," I

since school started. And I need to get accepted into law school."

protested. "You may want them later."

Papa wasn't an exception. There was something about the community

"Those are illusions. I'm not good at anything but bullshitting people.

that took over people's lives. Especially now. Before Mystery started doing

I never meant to be a bullshitter, so I'm stopping now."

workshops, it was just an online addiction. Now everyone was flying

I didn't need to be a high-school guidance counselor to recognize the

around the country meeting and sarging together. It wasn't just a lifestyle;

warning signs. If I didn't take them seriously, I might regret it later. I

it was a disease. The more time you devoted to it, the better you got. And

couldn't turn the other way while my mentor walked off a cliff—even if it

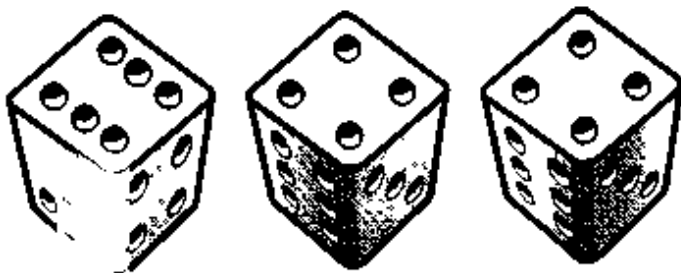
the better you got, the more addictive it became. Guys who had never been

was a cliff of his own making. I once had a friend whose ex-boyfriend was al-



to clubs could now walk in, be superstars, and leave with pockets full of ways threatening to kill himself. One day she didn't respond to his cry for help. He shot himself on his front lawn an hour later. could write a field report and brag about it to everyone else in the community. As Mystery had noted in his codeine-high Lounge post, we had a valuable network at our disposal. The Lounge linked together surgeons, students, bodyguards, movie directors, fitness trainers, software developers, with women. concierges, stockbrokers, and psychiatrists. So I called Doc.

### *Chapter*



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Doc had discovered the community when Mystery signed up, on a lark, for a dating seminar Doc was conducting at the Learning Annex. Mystery

listened patiently as Doc shared tips and tactics that were AFC stuff com-

pared to the technology in the community. Afterward, he talked to Doc,

who confessed to not being much of a ladies' man. So Mystery took him

out for a night on the town, schooled him in Mystery Method, and gave

him access to the Lounge. Now Doc was a machine, with his own harem of

When I arrived at Mystery's place, he was in the process of dismantling his

women. His nickname came from his doctorate in psychology, so I called

him. His movements were mechanical. So were his responses.

him and asked for advice.

He suggested asking Mystery the following questions, in exactly this

STYLE: What are you doing?

order:

MYSTERY: I'm giving my bed to my sister. I love her, and she deserves a

better bed.

• *Are you so down that you just feel like giving up on everything?*

STYLE: Are you so down that you just feel like giving up on everything?

• *Are you thinking about death a lot?*

MYSTERY: Yes. It's the futility of it. It's memetic. If you understand

• *Do you think about hurting yourself or doing something destructive?*

memetics, then you understand t h a t it's all futile. There's no point.

- *Are you thinking about suicide?*

STYLE: But you have a superior intellect. It's your duty to breed.

- *How would you do it?*

MYSTERY: It doesn't matter. I'm going to weed my genes o u t of

- *What keeps you from doing it?*

existence.

- *Do you think you would do it within the next twenty-four hours?*

STYLE: Are you thinking about death a lot?

MYSTERY: All the time.

I wrote down the questions on a sheet of paper, folded it in quarters,

STYLE: Do you think a b o u t h u r t i n g yourself or doing something

a n d p u t it in my back pocket. This would be my cheat sheet. My routine.

destructive?

MYSTERY: Yes. This living thing is fubar.

STYLE: Are you thinking about suicide?

MYSTERY: Yes.

STYLE: How would you do it?

MYSTERY: Drowning, because it's what I'm most afraid of.

STYLE: W h a t keeps you from doing it?

MYSTERY: I have to give away all my stuff. I dropped Patricia's computer

and broke it. So I want to give her mine. She needs a computer.

*Chapter*



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STYLE: Did she care?

MYSTERY: No, not really.

STYLE: Was she mad that you broke it?

MYSTERY: No.

STYLE: Do you think you would take your life in the next twenty-four

I left Mystery in his room, went to the kitchen, and dialed information for

hours?

his parents' number. His real-world name was Erik von Markovik, but that

was just another illusion. He'd legally changed it from his birth name, Erik

MYSTERY: Why are you asking me all these questions?

Horvat-Markovic.

STYLE: Because I'm your friend, and I'm worried about you.

The phone rang once, twice, a third time. A man picked up. His voice

was gruff, his manner curt. It was Mystery's father.

*[Doorbell rings]*

"Hi, I'm friends with your son, Erik."

STYLE: Who is it?

"Who are you?"

“I’m Neil, Erik’s friend. And I wanted to ... ”

VOICE ON INTERCOM: Hi, this is Tyler Durden. I’m here for Mystery. I’m

“Don’t call here again!” he barked.

a fan of his posts, and I want to see if I can meet him.

“But he needs ... ”

STYLE: It’s probably not a good time right now.

*Click.* The asshole hung up .

There was only one other person I could call. I returned to Mystery’s

VOICE ON INTERCOM: But I came all the way from Kingston.

room. He was washing a pill down with a glass of water. His face was red

STYLE: Sorry, man. He can’t see anyone. He’s, um, sick.

and twisted, as if he were crying invisible tears.

“What did you just take?” I asked.

“Some sleeping pills,” he said.

“How many?” Fuck. I was going to have to call an ambulance.

“Two.”

“Why’d you take them?”

“When I’m awake, life sucks. It’s futile. W h e n I’m asleep, I dream.” He

was starting to s o u n d like Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now*.

“I dreamed

last night t h a t I was in a flying DeLorean. Like the one in *Back to the Future*.

And there were all these wires a r o u n d us. I was with my sister. And she was

driving. We went above the wires. And I saw my life below them.”

“Listen,” I said. “I need Patricia’s p h o n e number.”

The tears came now. He looked like a big baby. A big baby who was

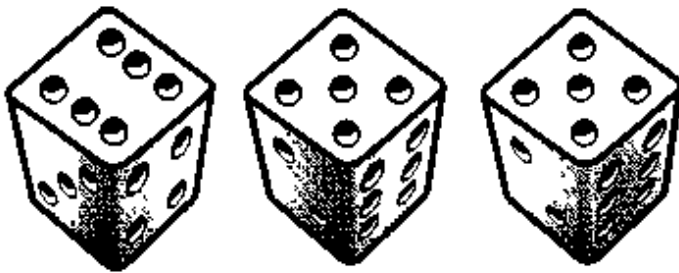
about to kill himself.

“Can you tell me Patricia’s p h o n e number?” I asked again slowly, gen-

tly, as if speaking to a child.

He gave it to me—slowly, gently, like a child.

### *Chapter*



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I hoped t h a t Patricia wouldn’t h a n g up on me, t h a t she h a d n ‘ t cut Mys-

tery o u t of her life entirely, t h a t she’d have a solution.

She answered on the first ring. As a girlfriend, she h a d been taken for

granted by Mystery. But in reality she was part of an invisible s u p p o r t sys-

tem. Her stabilizing effect wasn’t noticed until she was gone.

Patricia’s voice was a little masculine, with a light Romanian accent.

She didn’t seem overly intelligent, b u t she cared a b o u t Mystery. There was

I chased after Mystery. He was descending the stairs slowly, as if sleepwalk-

compassion a n d concern in her voice.

ing. I shot ahead of him and barred the lobby door in front of him.

“He’s tried to kill himself before,” she said. “The best thing you can do

“Hey.” I tugged at his sleeve. “Let’s go back upstairs. I talked to your sis-

is call his mother or his sister. They’ll probably put him in an institution.”

ter. She’s coming to get you. Just wait a couple more minutes.”

“Forever?”

He hesitated for a moment, unsure whether to trust me or not. He

“No, just until he gets through it.”

was so docile, he didn’t seem like he would hurt a fly. I shooed him up -

The door to Mystery’s room swung open. Mystery emerged.

stairs with gentle whispers of encouragement. As he turned and walked, I

He walked past me toward the door.

called his family again.

“Hey!” I yelled at him. “Where are you going?”

“He’ll be okay,” I thought, “as long as his father doesn’t answer.”

He turned back for a moment and looked at me through blank, emo-

His mother answered. She said she’d be there within a half hour.

tionless eyes.

Mystery sat on a futon in his kitchen and waited. The sleeping pills

“Good knowing you, buddy,” he said, then turned away.

m u s t have kicked in. He stared at the wall a n d m u m b l e d strands of evolu-

“Where are you going?” I repeated.

tionary philosophy, memetics, and game theory. The conclusion of his

“I’m going to shoot my father a n d then kill myself” were his last words

mutterings was always the same: the words “futile” or “fubar.”

as he opened the front door to the house and closed it gently behind him.

His m o t h e r arrived with his sister in tow. The m o m e n t they saw him,

they went ashen.

“I h a d no idea it had gotten this serious,” M a r t i n a said.

She packed h i m a suitcase while his m o t h e r b r o u g h t h i m downstairs.

He followed passively, dead to the world.

They left the building a n d headed toward a car t h a t would soon take

him to the psychiatric ward of the H u m b e r River Regional Hospital. As

Mystery’s m o t h e r opened the door for him, a four-set of girls poured o u t of

an SUV parked in front of them. For a m o m e n t , a spark of life flickered in

Mystery’s eyes.

I watched him, h o p i n g to hear h i m say those six magical words: “Is this

your set or mine?” T h e n I’d know everything would be okay.

But his eyes went dead again. His m o t h e r helped lower h i m into the

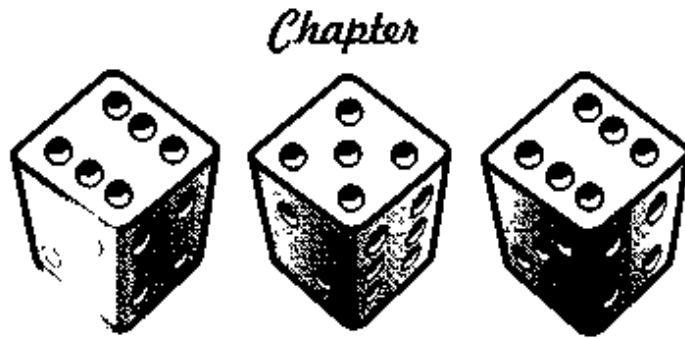
car. She picked up his legs a n d moved t h e m inside, then slammed the door



shut.

I saw h i m t h r o u g h the glass, the smiling blonde four-set reflected

against his face. His complexion was pale and bloodless. He stared blankly



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ahead, his m o u t h closed, his jaw set, his sharp labret piercing angrily glint-

ing in the cold afternoon light.

The girls were looking at the m e n u of a sushi restaurant. They giggled.

It was a beautiful sound. It was the s o u n d of life. I h o p e d Mystery could

hear it.

Mystery's breakdown triggered a crisis of faith a n d self-examination in the

community. We were all submerged so deep in the game t h a t it was fucking

with our lives.

Papa was failing o u t of school. A San Francisco PUA named Adonis had

been fired from his advertising job when they discovered how m u c h time

he'd been spending on Mystery's Lounge. And my writing h a d come to a

near-standstill. Even Vision had become so addicted to the seduction news-

groups that he gave his DSL cable to his roommate and ordered, "Don't

give these back to me for two weeks."

Meanwhile, the community was growing exponentially. More and

more newbies were flocking to the boards. They were young kids—some of

them still in high school—and they looked to us PUAs for advice on not just

seduction and socializing but everything. They wanted to know what col-

lege to apply to; if they should stop taking prescribed psychiatric medica-

tion; if they should masturbate, wear condoms, do drugs, run away from

home. They wanted to know what to read, think, and do to be like us.

One of those lost souls was a short, well-muscled Lebanese student in

his early twenties known as Prizer. He was from El Paso and had never even

kissed a girl. He wanted advice on how to get comfortable around women,

so we told him that first he needed to make female friends. And, second, he

needed to experience sex, and not be too picky about a partner. He took us

a little too literally.

Witness a few choice excerpts from his field reports:

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

SUBJECT: Field Report—Losing My Virginity in Juarez

AUTHOR: Prizer

I decided to see how it actually felt to have sex, so I crossed the border to

Juarez Since she was a hooker, I guess it's not technically a pickup. But I think

this will help my game because I'll be less desperate I had trouble keeping

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hard, except I got excited when I was going down on her and doing sixty-

He planned to go cold turkey on seduction and, for starters, cancel the

nine. It was my first time for all of that. Now that I'm not a virgin, do you think

seminars he'd already signed up for. "I'll also stop calling HBs until I get my

girls will find me more attractive?

life in order," he said. "If they call me, I'll tell them I need to get my life

straight before I sarge them. I choose life. I will not be game."

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

"You have to treat school and studying like you treat seduction."

SUBJECT: Field Report—Another Night in Juarez

"Yes," he said, as if he'd just had an epiphany. "I will make school wings.

AUTHOR: Prizer

I will make study pivots. I will fuck-close my tests."

"That may be taking it a little too far. But, um, good for you."

I had sex again in Juarez. This makes four hookers for me now. She even swal-

"I feel free," he said. "Whoa."

lowed my cum, but I still haven't been able to ejaculate during intercourse. Is

And I'd like to say that's how we all felt, that we all realized we'd be-

this normal? Anyway, what I did this time to help my game is I pretended like

come too consumed and came to our senses, that we put our lives in bal-

she was my girlfriend. But when I wanted to eat her ass out, she charged me

ance and got our priorities straight, that we relegated seduction to a

an extra five bucks. That was lame Anyway, I'm writing this report because I'm

glorified hobby.

thinking that it might improve my sarging more if I spend my money on hookers

But there is a concept in hypnosis called fractionation. And it states

in Juarez for maybe six months instead of on workshops and e-books and shit.

that if a person under hypnosis is brought out of trance and then put back

It's much more direct. Do you think that having more sex can raise your game

under, the trance will be even deeper and more powerful.

and your confidence level?

And so it was with seduction. We all came out of it for a moment—we

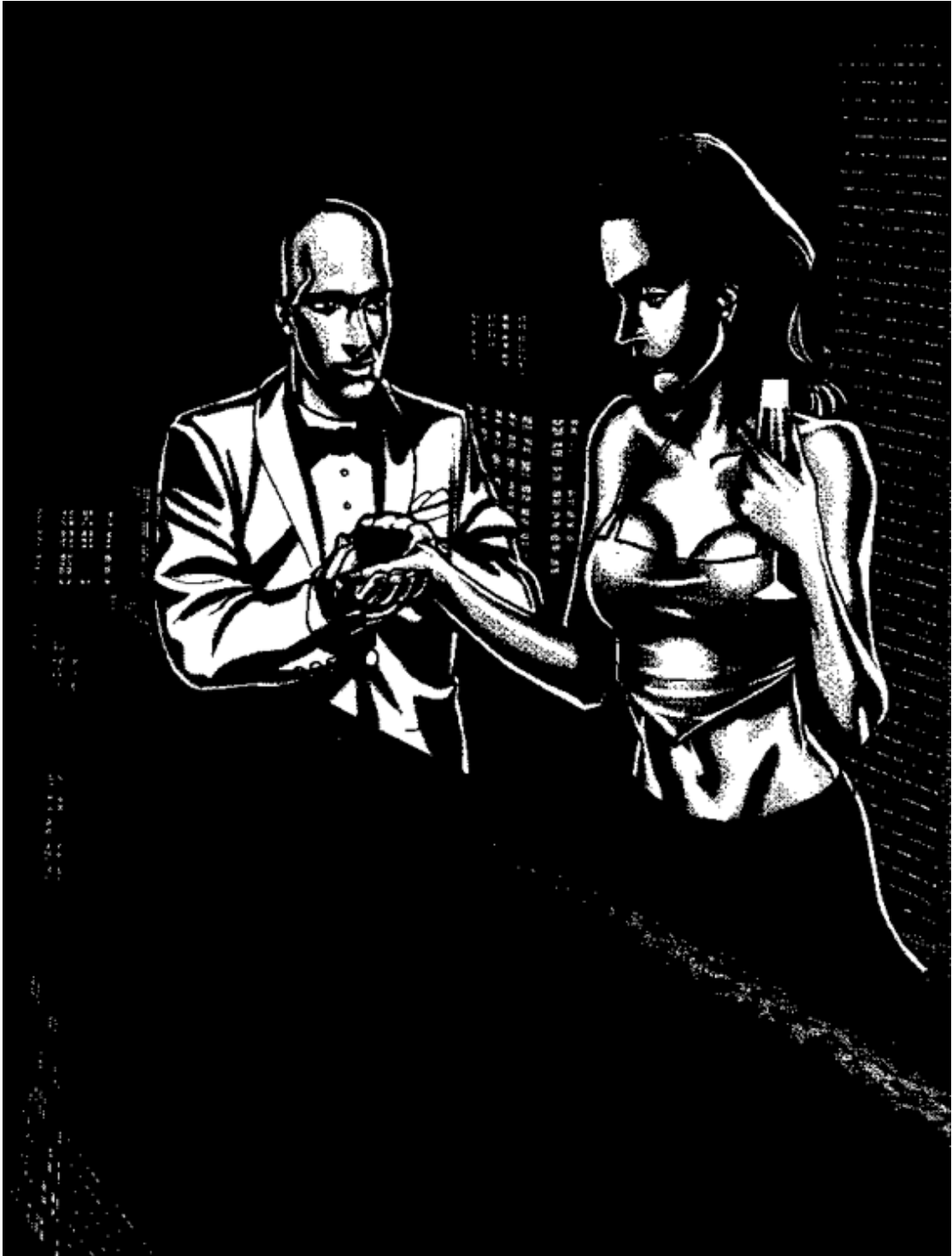
opened our eyes and saw the light of the real world. But then we went back

After everyone in the community chastised Prizer for posting field re-

under, deeper than we ever were before—and to an extent  
beyond what any  
ports about prostitutes, he was the first to turn to me for help.  
Then came a  
of us could have imagined.  
note from Cityprc in Rhode Island. Then came pleas from a  
dozen others  
I'd never met. They were all offering me money to teach them  
seduction.  
They wanted to fly in; they wanted to fly me out; they were  
willing to pay  
any price just to watch a real PUA in action.  
With Mystery confined to the psychiatric wing of Humber  
Hospital  
and Juggler so deep in his LTR that he had taken down his  
website, the  
students were hungry. And somehow I had become their new  
guru. All  
those posts where I'd explained my routines and discussed my  
nights out  
hadn't just been a way of learning and sharing; they'd also been  
a form of  
advertising.  
But seduction is a dark art. Its secrets come with a price and we  
were all  
paying it, whether in sanity, school, work, time, money, health,  
morality, or  
loss of self. We may have been supermen in the club, but on the  
inside we  
were rotting.  
“I was modeling myself after you and Mystery,” Papa said when  
I called

to check on him. “I need to be me. I have so much potential for success, and

I’m blowing it all. I used to be a straight A student.”



STEP 6

CREATE AN EMOTIONAL  
CONNECTION

## *Chapter*



PEOPLE USED TO LOOK OUT ON THE

Petra was a nineteen-year-old Czech with long chestnut hair, a thin golden-

PLAYGROUND AND SAY THAT THE

brown model's body, and no more than a dozen words of English in her vo-

cabulary. I met her and her cousin on the island of Hvar in Croatia with a

BOYS WERE PLAYING SOCCER AND

Seattle PUA named Nightlight9. We showed them our magic tricks. They

showed us their popcorn. On a piece of paper, we drew a picture with a

THE GIRLS WERE DOING NOTHING.

clock and a time on it to rendezvous that night. They met us and led us by

the hand to a small, deserted beach. They took off all their clothes except

BUT THE GIRLS WEREN'T DOING

their panties and tennis shoes, and ran into the water. We followed and

made love to them as they chattered away in Czech to each other.

Anya was a whip-smart twenty-two-year-old Croatian who was vaca-

NOTHING THEY WERE TALKING.

tioning with her younger sister. She oozed confidence, sensuality, and good

breeding; her sister was the opposite. Nightlight9 and I met them on the

THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THE

beach in the Croatian town of Vodice. That night they slipped away from

their parents, and we wandered along the waterfront until we found a

WORLD TO ONE ANOTHER. AND THEY

docked sailboat. We snuck on board and had sex in the galley. I left twenty

euros for the bottle of wine we drank.

BECAME VERY EXPERT ABOUT THAT

Carrie was a nineteen-year-old waitress at Dublin's in Los Angeles. She

approached me and complimented me on my dreadlocks; I neglected to tell

her I was wearing a Rastafarian wig as a joke. I met her the next day com-

IN A WAY THE BOYS DID NOT.

pletely bald, but we still ended up in bed together. When I e-mailed her the

next day to tell her she'd left her rings at my house, she responded, "I don't

wear rings. They're not mine."

Martine was a free-spirited blonde I met in New York, with milky skin,

smearred red lipstick, and an iron-on T-shirt. I'd opened so many sets that

CAROL GILLIGAN,

I can't even remember what I said to her. The next night, we went to a bar. I



*In a Different Voice: Psychological*

brought along two other girls so she'd have to work for me. For a second I

*Theory and Women's Development*

felt guilty about that. But only a second. In the bar, I asked her how good

she was in bed, on a scale of one to ten. In my hotel room, I found out. She

was a seven.

Laranya was a JAP in the body of an Indian woman. I'd met her when I

was in college and we were both interning at the same weekly newspaper.

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She was the hot intern; I was the shy intern. But when I ran into her years

Hea and Randi were girls I met at the club Highlands. Hea was a teeny

later in Los Angeles, Style took her out on the town. The first thing she said

indie-rocker nerd with a boyfriend. Randi was a cute actress with the most

when we woke up together was, "I can't believe how much you've changed."

mischievous smile I'd ever seen, and a boyfriend. It took a month to con-

Neither could I.

vince Hea to cheat on her boyfriend; it took a day to convince Randi.

Stacy was a twenty-eight-year-old anorexic I met in Chicago. During a

Mika was a Japanese girl I met at Jamba Juice. She was an orange dream  
lengthy e-mail correspondence, she seduced me with her intelligence, can-  
machine with energy boost. I am an orange dream machine with protein  
dor, and poetry. When she finally came to visit, I was disappointed to dis-  
boost. I was intrigued. When we had sex, I discovered that she didn't believe  
cover that she was awkward and ineloquent. She probably felt the same way  
in shaving her pubic hair. The next morning she told me, "I grow my hair  
about me. Nonetheless, I brought her directly to my bedroom, and we be-  
out because I donate it to children with cancer." I was astonished: "They  
gan to make out. I put a finger inside her and felt a fleshy cord bisecting her  
wear your pubes on their head?" She replied that she'd been talking about  
vagina like a tennis net. It was her hymen. I told her I didn't want to be the  
the hair on her head.  
one to take her virginity. That's when I realized that being a PUA sometimes  
Ani was a stripper who worked out two hours a day and was addicted to  
meant saying no.  
plastic surgery. She had metallic red hair and lipstick tattooed on to match.

Yana was an older Russian woman with chiseled features and a great

After we had sex, she told me, “I have mastered the art of visualization.”

boob job. I met her at a bar in Malibu. She told me it was her birthday but

When I asked her to elaborate, she told me that since men are so visual, she

wouldn't say her age. I guessed forty-five, but not out loud. As a present, I

makes sure that everything she does in bed looks hot. But when she devel-

told her I'd be her boy toy. She grabbed my butt; I told her I charged extra

oped feelings for me, she discovered that she was no longer able to have sex

for that. Two nights later, we had a cocktail and adjourned to my house.

because the emotions opened wounds from childhood abuse. The visualiza-

She said she didn't put out anymore, that she was looking for something

tions ended.

deeper. We had sex that night. We role-played. I was the teacher; she was the

Maya was a black-haired goth belly dancer I flirted with at one of her

naughty schoolgirl. It was her idea.

performances. When our paths crossed months later, she still remembered

She was a drunk Asian girl with large breasts, surrounded by three

me. I invited her over the next night. Her car was in the shop, so I offered to

sober Asian girls with small breasts. I can't remember her name. She

pay for a cab. She was there in a half hour.

thought I was gay. We talked for fifteen minutes, then I took her by the

Alexis was a clothing store manager who looked like she should have

hand and led her to the bathroom. We gave each other oral sex and never

been in an eighties new-wave band. Susanna was a recently divorced de-

spoke again. It was overrated.

signer who wanted to rediscover her sexuality. Doris was a married woman

Jill was an Australian businesswoman a fellow pickup artist set me up

whose sex life had died. Nadia was a librarian who had the skills of a porn

with. She had spiky blonde hair, leopard-print pants, and a voracious sexual

star; I guess you can learn a lot from books. All four were the result of an ex-

energy. When she danced—if you could call it that—every man's head

periment: I tried to concoct the perfect routine for the personals. After sev-

turned. We fucked in her BMW, with the top down and our legs out the

eral failures, I succeeded. The secret, I learned, was to seem like a selfish

door. When I asked her when she had first wanted to kiss me, she said, “As  
prick in the ad, and then be a fascinating, laid-back gentleman on meeting.  
soon as I saw you.” No woman had ever said that to me before.  
Maggie and Linda were sisters; they’re no longer talking to each other.  
Sarah was a fortysomething casting agent I met at the lounge of the  
Anne was a French girl who didn’t speak a word of English.  
Jessica was a  
Casa Del Mar hotel in Santa Monica. She looked clean and radiant, like she  
bookworm I met on jury duty. Faryal helped me call a tow truck when my  
had stepped out of a shampoo commercial—even in the harsh light of my  
car broke down. Stef was handing out flyers for a strip club on Sunset  
elevator, where, an hour after meeting, we made love. She kept asking if  
Boulevard. Susan was a friend’s sister. Tanya was a neighbor.  
there were cameras. I couldn’t tell if she was afraid of being caught or ex-  
My wish had come true. Women were no longer a challenge. They were  
cited by the possibility. Probably both.  
a pleasure.

## *Chapter*



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In the months since Mystery's breakdown, I'd turned a new corner in

my game. Once I'd gotten the number of a woman, it was easy to meet and

have sex with her. In the past, I was too obsessed with trying to get some to

actually take a step back, assess the situation, and act appropriately. Now,

after a year of accumulating knowledge and experience, I had finally gotten

out of my own head. I understood the process of attraction and the signals

women gave. I saw the big picture.

### **WHO IS THE BEST PUA?**

When talking to a woman, I could recognize the specific point when

**BY THUNDERCAT**

she became attracted to me, even if she was acting distant or felt uncom-

**FROM THUNDERCAT'S SEDUCTION LAIR**

fortable. I knew when to talk and when to shut up; when to push and when

to pull; when to tease and when to be sincere; when to kiss and when to say

Okay, so the debate has been raging for a while now over who is the best

pickup artist out there.

we were moving too fast.

Whatever test, challenge, or objection a woman threw my way, I knew

Obviously, a lot of egos are involved in this assessment, and everyone has

how to respond. When Maya the belly dancer wrote and said, “Thanks for

their own opinions about who the best really is. In fact, it’s so subjective that I

don’t really think there will ever be a clear and honest

the multiple orgasms. Call and we can discuss when you’ll be taking me out

answer on the subject. It’s like asking who the best warrior or soldier is in a

for dinner. You owe me for the cab ride, and I feel like being taken out on a

war. But that doesn’t stop some people from categorizing the guys in our

real date,” I didn’t assume she was a bitch or pushy at all. She just trying to

little community as the best. So I’ve decided to rate the top PUAs operating out

get validation for having put out so quickly and testing to see how much

there.

she could control me. I didn’t even need to think about the response.

“I’ll tell you what,” I wrote. “I’ll pay you back for the cab, like I prom-

Style is definitely, hands down, the best operating in the game today. This

ised, and then you can take me out to dinner in exchange for all those or-

guy is probably the most evil, sneaky, manipulative bastard I have ever seen in

gasms.” She took me out to dinner.

operation. The thing is, this guy comes in totally under the radar, and that is

I saw the matrix.

why he is so dangerous. His subtlety is so amazing that before you know if,

you are qualifying yourself to him and he has you right where he wants you.

*I was* Mystery.

And the thing is, he does if with both girls and guys. No one is safe.

To give you an idea of how incredible Style is, he’s invented most of the

techniques a lot of the fop guys are using and teaching. He is practically

Machiavellian in nature and is someone I both admire and fear. Add to this the

fact that he’s a rather average-looking guy, and you have the most powerful of

the Jedi, bar none.

*Chapter*





was walking to the dry cleaners and an aspiring actress-model-waitress

passed by, I felt like a hypocrite if I didn't open her. And where simply talk-

ing to a stranger was enough to elate me in my AFC days, now I needed to

have her in my bed within a week.

Though I knew my new mindset was seriously warped, I felt more ethi-

It was when I went to Croatia after Mystery's breakdown that I realized

cal in many ways as a PUA than I had been as an AFC. Part of learning game

was not just memorizing openers and phone game and rapport-building

everything had changed. I was no longer in the game to meet women; I was

tactics, but learning how to be honest with a woman about what I expected

in the game to lead men. Two of the Croatian pickup artists I was staying

from her and what she could expect from me. It was no longer necessary to

with had even shaved their head in emulation of pictures of me they had

deceive a woman by telling her I wanted a relationship when I just wanted

seen online.

to get laid; by pretending to be her friend when I only wanted to get in her

Despite my aversion to being a guru, I had clearly become one. When I

pants; by letting her think we were in a monogamous relationship when I

talked to a woman, the room went silent. The guys leaned in close to hear

was seeing other women.

what I was saying, pulling out notebooks to write my words down and com-

mit them to memory.

I had finally internalized the idea that women don't always want rela-

tionships. In fact, once unleashed, a woman's physical needs are often

On returning home, I watched Ross Jeffries run a variation of my jeal-

more ravenous than a man's. It's just that there are certain barriers and

ous girlfriend opener (about the woman who doesn't want her boyfriend to

programming walls to be overcome in order for her to feel comfortable

speak to his ex from college), followed by a false time constraint. Afterward,

enough to surrender to them. I got good at the game because I understood

he even e-mailed and asked for a copy of my evolution phase-shift routine.

that the goal of the PUA was simply not to trigger a woman's shutdown or

He was modeling me. And he planned on sharing these techniques in his

flight responses.

seminars.

Then Thundercat's PUA ranking came out, and I was number one. I

[As I write this, I look up and, I swear to God, there is a girl on top of

me. She has blonde hair and a sleeveless undershirt with a black bra under-

could no longer claim to be a student. Neil Strauss was officially dead. In

neath. She is smiling at me. I am inside her.

the eyes of these men, I was Style, the king of the unnaturals. All over the

world people were using my jokes, my comebacks, my lines, my words to

She is biting her lower lip as she rubs her clit against my pelvic bone. I

meet, kiss, and fuck girls.

can hear her gasping. She is supporting herself with one hand on my thigh

and the other lightly resting on the top of the computer.

I had overshot my goal.

In the old days, I was just Mystery's wing or Ross's disciple or Steve P.'s

"You know it turns me on when you click the typewriter," she just said.

"Can I put you in my mouth for a minute?"

hypnotic subject. Now I had to prove myself every time I went out. Guys in

the community would ask behind my back, "How is Style? Is he any good?"

So fuck the stereotypical image of the writer. This is the new one. I can

get work done and play at the same time. It reminds me of sometlkhing

If I didn't walk up to a group of girls and make out with the hottest one

Steve P. said, about always being in your own reality. Everyone is just a guest

within fifteen minutes, they'd think I was a fraud. Before I joined the com-

in it. So if it's my work time, and you want to have sex with me, well, e wel-

munity, I had been afraid of failing in front of women. Now I was afraid of

come to my reality.

failing in front of men.

And the pressure ran both ways: I also began to develop unreasonable

I think she's about to come. She is coming allksd; Good for her.]<sup>6</sup>

expectations of myself. If I was at an Italian restaurant and there was an al-

luring woman five tables away, I felt like a failure if I didn't sarge her. If I

<sup>6</sup> This portion of the text has not been edited in order to preserve its authenticity.

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So every part of the pickup is designed simply to anticipate and disarm

you were talking about (a website, a song, a book, a movie clip, a shirt, a

objections—at least, when we're talking about solid game as opposed to

bowling ball, whatever). But first, give her another false time constraint:

fool's mate.

Tell her you have to get to sleep early because you have a lot of work tomorrow-

The opener, for example, is casual. It is not perceived as a pickup attempt-

row. Say, "You can only come in for fifteen minutes, and then I'm going to

tempt. You are just being a friendly stranger when you walk up and ask her

have to kick you out." By this point, you both may know you're going to

and her friends, "My neighbor just bought two dogs, and she wants to

have sex, but you still have to play solid game so she can tell herself later

name them after an eighties or nineties pop duo. Do you have any ideas?"

that it just happened.

When you start talking to a group of people, their first concern is, "Are

Show her around the house. Get her a drink. Tell her you're dying to

we going to be stuck with this guy all night? How do we get rid of him?"

play her a really funny five-minute video clip. Unfortunately, the TV in your

So you give yourself a false time constraint. "I can only stay for a

living room is broken, but there's one in your bedroom.

minute," you tell them as you join their group, "because I need to get back

Of course, there are no chairs in your bedroom, only a bed.

When she

to my friends."

sits on the bed, position yourself as far away from her as possible. Allow her

As you interact, you pay attention to the people who seem most likely

to feel comfortable, perhaps even confused that you're not hitting on her. If

to shut you out—the jealous men, the overprotective friends. You make

you touch her, pull back afterward. Continue using a combination of time

them feel good about themselves as you challenge, tease, and neg the target.

constraints and push-pull to amp her attraction. Keep telling her she has to

If she interrupts you, for example, say, “Wow. Is she always like that? How

leave soon.

do you deal with her?” If she looks shocked, you reel her back in with a light

Then, at your leisure, tell her she smells nice. Sniff her slowly, from the

compliment. This is what I call push-pull—keeping her guessing by pushing

bottom of her neck to just below her ear. This is when you use the evolution

her away and then quickly pulling her in closer.

phase-shift routine: smell her, bite her arm, let her bite your neck, bite her

After they're finished giving opinions on names for the dogs (Milli and

neck, and then kiss. Unless she attacks you with lust, as you physically esca-

Vanilli, Hall and Oates, Dre and Snoop—I've heard them all), then you  
late continue talking to keep her mind occupied and pulling back just be-  
demonstrate value. You give the girls the best friends test or teach them  
fore she starts to get uncomfortable. You should always be the first one to  
something about their body language or analyze their handwriting. Then  
object. This is called stealing her frame. The goal now is simply to arouse  
you pretend like you have to get back to your friends.  
her without making her feel pressured, used, or uneasy.  
Now they don't want you to leave. You are in. You've shown them that  
You make out, you remove her shirt, she removes your shirt, you start  
you're the most interesting, fun person in the room. This is the hook point:  
to remove her bra. What's this? She's stopping you from going any further?  
You can now relax and enjoy their company. You can listen to them, find  
The PUAs have a name for this—last minute resistance, or LMR. Back up  
out about their lives, and make a real connection.  
one or two steps, then continue. Wash, rinse, repeat. It's not real. It's just  
In a best-case scenario, you can take the group or your target on an in-  
ASD—anti-slut defense. She doesn't want you to think she's easy. So you

stant date to another bar, club, cafe, or party. Now you're part of the group.

cuddle, you talk. She asks dumb questions like how many siblings you have;

You may relax, tease, enjoy, and bond with your target, who is becoming at-

you answer honestly and make her feel comfortable again. Then you start

tracted to you after the negging and after leading her group. When it comes

from the top: You make out, then remove her bra. She lets you this time.

time to leave, tell the group you lost your friends and need a ride home.

You suck her breasts. She arches her back. She is aroused now. She gets on

This will give the woman an opportunity to be alone with you without let-

top of you and starts grinding. You are hard. You are excited. You want her.

ting her friends know she plans to sleep with you. (If the logistics are too

You lift her off and begin to unbutton her pants. She pulls your hand

difficult, get her number and make a plan to hang out later in the week.)

away. "You're right, this is so bad," you agree, breathing heavily into her ear.

When she pulls up to your house, invite her in to show her that thing

We shouldn't be doing this."



## Chapter



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You make out more. You reach for the pants again. Wash, rinse, repeat.

But she still stops you. So you blow out the candles, turn on the light, turn

off the music, and ruin the atmosphere. Then you grab your laptop com-

puter and check your e-mail while she lies there confused. This is called a

freeze-out. She was feeling good a moment ago, enjoying your attention,

your touch, and the intimacy of the room; now you're taking it all away.

She rolls over and starts kissing your chest, trying to reel you back in.

As a community, we had reached a new height of arrogance.

You put down your computer, turn off the light, and return her affection.

"I'm starting to feel like I'm hunting rabbits with a howitzer," Mad-

You reach for her pants. She stops you. She says you just met. You tell her that

dash, a former student, told me.

you understand. You turn the light on again. She asks what you're doing. You

He had just returned from pulling off one of the most unlikely sarges  
tell her that when a woman says no, you respect that, but it just pushes a but-  
in community history. A Chicago office worker named Jackie Kim had acci-  
ton in you that turns everything off. You are not upset. You tell her this in a  
dentally forwarded her highly judgmental review of a date to her entire ad-  
matter-of-fact voice. She rolls on top of you and whines, playfully, “No.”  
dress book. It was just as shallow as the field reports of some PUAs.  
She wants to have sex. All she wants to know is that you’re going to call  
“So where do I stand on ... the date,” she wrote. “The car, the money,  
her afterward, so that she feels good about what she did—even if she doesn’t  
the job, the cute apartment, the boat—which by the way only seats six peo-  
actually want to see you again. You let her know that.  
ple, so I really don’t consider that really amazing—his mannerism, and his  
You tell her, “Take off your pants.”  
great kiss will probably lock in another date. But I can tell you now, unless  
She does. You enjoy yourselves and give each other many orgasms over  
he cuts his hair and sends me gifts, it won’t lead me to seek anything more

the course of the night, the morning, and perhaps even for years afterward.

than my first thirty-year-old friend.”

One morning, she asks you how many women you’ve been with.

The post became an Internet phenomenon, forwarded around the

This is the only time you’re allowed to lie.

globe and chronicled in the *Chicago Tribune*. One person who received

the e-mail was Maddash, who promptly sent her a sympathetic response.

Jackie wrote him back, saying the e-mail made her day and she read it every

time she received a hate letter. A few e-mails, an exchange of photos, and

one date later, she was in Maddash’s bed. It took no gifts, no boats, no hair-

cut. Just pure seduction.

Maddash’s success set off a rash of copycat sarges in the community.

Suddenly, just going out to a bar and bringing a girl home seemed too ordi-

nary and easy.

Vision called an escort and paid her \$350 for an hour. His goal was to

be so interesting and seductive that she would pay him to spend the next

hour together. He managed to tease her out of eighty dollars at the rate of

twenty dollars per hour. They continued to see each other afterward, free of

charge.

Grimble seduced a nineteen-year-old girl who came to his door selling

magazines. Despite the fact that he was wearing boxers and a dirty sweater,

he fucked her within an hour. And he didn't even buy a magazine.

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After hearing about Maddash, Vision, and Grimble's latest antics, any

evant information on seduction and reinvented himself as a self-styled au-

PUA who had been disillusioned with the community after Mystery's

thority, delivering stream-of-consciousness essays and field reports full of

breakdown was soon back in the game full throttle. And the most full

impressive feats and braggadocio.

throttle of them all was Papa.

Like thumbtacks to a magnet, the seduction boys were up his ass. He

Papa's pledge to study for law school had lasted a month. Then he went

was a manic new voice, an instant do-it-yourself guru. And, soon, he was

on a road trip around the country, visiting all the PUAs he could. Every

Papa's trusted wing. He joined Papa on his journey to spend face time with

week he sent me his schedule: He was driving to Chicago on Wednesday to

every seducer with a silly nickname. And one of them, naturally, was me.

spend time with Orion and Maddash; then he was going to Michigan to

Tyler Durden e-mailed me constantly. He was a persistent little brat, as

meet Juggler; finally, he was spending the weekend in Toronto with Captain

I suppose I had been. He seemed to pride himself on being a provocateur.

BL (a deaf PUA) and No. 9. The next week he was in Montreal hanging out

For years, nervous AFCs who were new to the community were told to

with Cliff and David X. The week after, he was working his way down the

take the newbie mission. It involved simply showering, putting on nice

California coast, from San Francisco to Los Angeles to San Diego. As for

clothes, going to the nearest shopping center, and smiling and saying “hi”

PUAs in other countries—London, Tokyo, Amsterdam—he was constantly

to every woman who passed by. Many AFCs found that this not only

talking to them on the phone or online.

helped them overcome their shyness, but that some women actually

After a while, I couldn’t tell whether he was still learning game or just

stopped to talk.

trying to build his social circle. I don’t think he knew either. He was simply

Tyler Durden advocated a new mission. He called it Project Mayhem, in

imitating what he’d seen me do: travel around the world, meet different

honor of *Fight Club*. And the directive was to run up to an attractive woman

PUAs, and become the best.

and—before even uttering a word—lightly body check her,  
whack her on the

There was one fledgling PUA, in particular, whom Papa  
bonded with: a

head with something soft, or physically accost her in some  
other playful

twenty-two-year-old Canadian who had discovered the pickup  
scene when

manner.

his mother stumbled across a seduction website. He called  
himself Tyler

On the seduction boards, the majority of people didn't think.  
They

Durden, after the seditious character in *Fight Club*. And like a  
virus or a dem-

obeyed. I could have posted that snorting birth control pills  
helped my

agogue (choose your simile), he would eventually change the  
course of the

game, and they all would have been lining up outside Planned  
Parenthood.

community and everyone in it.

So after reading about Project Mayhem, hundreds of sargers  
around the

He was a philosophy student at Queens University in  
Kingston, On-

world were suddenly knocking into women with grocery carts  
and smacking

tario. Beyond that, not much else was known about him—or  
would ever be

them with gym bags. It wasn't seduction, it was elementary-  
school recess.

known about him. He claimed to have been one of the biggest drug dealers

And therein lay his appeal: Tyler Durden made seduction seem playful

in Kingston. He claimed to come from a rich family. He claimed to have

and subversive—unlike, say, Speed Seduction, which required homework,

written rigorous philosophy papers for academic journals. He claimed to

rote memorization, and even meditation exercises.

have been a bodybuilder. But no one really knew.

Yet, at the same time, there was something off about Tyler Durden. Vi-

Tyler hit the seduction boards like a hurricane. Before anyone had even

sion had kicked him out of his house after finding him a snotty and un-

met him, one thing was clear: He was obsessed to a degree beyond what any

grateful guest, constantly demanding to be shown new routines. And

of us had seen before. He read the posting archives—thousands of pages

though Tyler's field reports were fun and compelling, every time he had the

long—of every master PUA in the game. And he was whipping through the

option of getting laid, he seemed to back down.

list of recommended books—from *Introducing NLP* to *Mastering Your Hidden*

*Self*—at a furious rate. He was a knowledge junkie.



Within a couple of months, he had consumed nearly every piece of rel-

## *Chapter*



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**TD:** I love you.

**HB:** Ha ha. Urn, okay. I love you too.

**TD:** Awesome! We're going to get married. Wow, you can really find love

in the strangest of places, like right here at the Booster Juice.

**HB:** Ha ha.

**TD:** Wait a sec. I know, close your eyes.

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

**HB:** Why?

**SUBJECT:** Field Report—Speed Closing

**TD:** Just do it.

**AUTHOR:** Tyler Durden

**HB:** Are you gonna steal my cash register or something?

**TD:** No, nothing like that. I swear. Remember, I love you.

Okay, this just happened not even fifteen minutes ago, and I can't tell anyone

**HB:** Okay, (*closes eyes*)

other than you guys about it.

The counter was pretty wide. I leaned way over, so that I was Superman-

I was pretty bored today, so I went to the Rideau Centre shopping mall in

style horizontal over the top, and kissed her.

Ottawa, hoping to meet some new HBs to hang with tonight because my AFC

As soon as I kissed her, she started screaming like fucking crazy.

friends were all with their girlfriends.

I cruised the mall, and I couldn't find any HB higher than a 7.5, so I was

**HB:** Aaaaaaaahhhh! Aaaaaaaahhhh!

pretty pissed.

I was about to leave when I saw this new Booster Juice place with a cute

All these people started looking over at me. She was freaking out,

little redhead working there—about a 7.5 like every other damned Rideau

screaming her head off like a banshee, flailing her arms around and shit.

Centre chick.

I was thinking, “Fuck, fuck, fuck. I knew this shit would backfire someday.

I ordered a juice, and here's what happened:

Fuck. I should have waited for more IOIs or something. Fuck. I thought I had

the IOIs! I'm never doing this ever again!”

TD: Which mango is better: mango hurricane or mango breeze?

**HB:** Mango hurricane.

TD: Urn, I said I loved you first.

TD: Awesome. I'll have the breeze.

**HB:** Aaaaaaaahhhh! Aaaaaaaahhhh!

**HB:** Ha ha, okay. Which booster do you want?

TD: Urn, are you okay?

TD: What are boosters?

**HB:** Aaaaaaaahhhh!

**HB:** Those things on the sign on the wall.

TD: Uh-oh.

TD: Ooh, so I can get like vitamins and energy and shit in it.  
Awesome! I'll

**HB:** Urn, okay. That will be five dollars and thirty-one cents.  
Aaaaaaaahhhh!

be like a new man after I drink this. This is the shit!

**HB:** Ha ha.

She was trying to regain her composure by talking, but she kept screaming

TD: High-five!

intermittently.

**HB:** Okay! (*She high-fives me.*) Wow! That was like the coolest thing that's

TD: Please calm down.

happened to me all day.

**HB:** Urn, yeah. I'm okay. What's your name?

TD: Pretty bored, huh?

TD: Please don't call the police on me.

**HB:** Yeah, it sucks here.

**HB:** No, no. It's just for the computer. ! ask everyone.

TD: Hmm, well, guess what?

TD: Okay. It's Tyler.

HB: What?

*Chapter*



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HB: Wow, that's an awesome name.

TD: Urn, thanks. What's your name?

HB: Lauren.

TD: I like that.

HB: Oh my God, that was the most awesome thing that's ever happened

to me in my entire life!

TD: Cool!

Mystery was back.

HB: Oh my God, you rock. Oh my God, I love you! That was fucking

No. 9, his roommate, called and told me Mystery had been released

awesome!

from the hospital and was staying with his family. He was expecting him

TD: Glad to be of service. I promise I'll come back. I'll make you close

back at the apartment the following week, when Tyler Durden would be

your eyes again.

driving in to take a one-on-one workshop. It was probably too soon to be

HB: Will you do more next time? [*winks, implying sex, I suppose*]

teaching again, but Mystery needed to pay the rent—and Tyler was deter-

TD: I won't let you down. You know I love you.

mined to meet him.

HB: I'm looking forward to it.

"I came out of this strange emotional journey with some incredible

TD: Wow, it looks so cool back there. Give me the backstage tour.

cognitive models," Mystery told me a few days later.

HB: Okay, c'mon back.

His voice was Anthony Robbins clear again, his mind lucid. Life ap-

peared to matter once more. However, something seemed different. He was

I was thinking, "Holy shit, I can't believe this!" I felt inside my jacket pockets,

in manic mode—more so than ever—but it was a new type of manic mode.

and I still had these two LifeStyles Tuxedo Black condoms that Orion had given

He hadn't exactly returned; he had transformed.

me last weekend, so I could go for it if I wanted to.

"I have my life goals set," he continued. "The motivational carrots are

Then I totally chickened out. I was like, "I can't handle this shit! I met this

all dangling properly in front of me. This year, I will build the foundation to

girl not even two minutes ago!"

take down Copperfield. I've decided to beat him. I am a superstar. My brain

There were literally fifty people all staring at me, watching the chick open

pupated into a butterfly.”

the door for me to come back there with her. They were all looking like, “What

I asked him if he was on any medication. He said he wasn't.

the fuck is going on?” And it was making me really uncomfortable. With

“I've given it a great deal of thought,” he went on. “I only get depressed

hindsight now, I would have done it. But at the time, I was so taken by surprise.

when I isolate myself. Look at what got me there: the pair-bond break with

So I said:

Patricia, new hotties staling and blurring,<sup>7</sup> no career momentum, and being

alone in the apartment with no one to talk to. So we need to design a social

TD: Urn, actually I'm in a major rush.

environment with people to motivate me—something like Sweater's place in

HB: Will I see you again?

Australia. We can all motivate each other. While I was at the hospital, I took

TD: Well, I'm leaving town tomorrow.

a lot of notes on this idea. I showed them to my psychiatrist. Even he was im-

HB: Okay, what about after work?

pressed. I'm calling it Project Hollywood.”

TD: Urn, I have to go hang out with my friends. I'll come back tomorrow

That moment was the first time I heard the phrase Project Hollywood.

and we'll go out then.

I didn't think much about it at the time. I figured it would end up like Pro-

HB: Okay. Oh my God, that rocked! Wow!

ject Bliss: another stillborn scheme consigned to the trashcan of mental

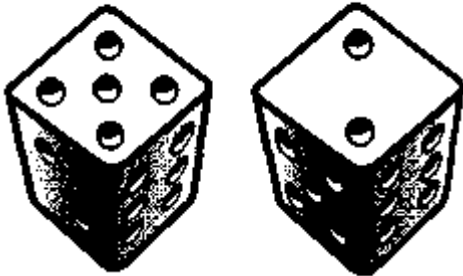
masturbation.

Then I turned around and walked off.

—TD

Staling and blurring occur when a woman stops returning phone calls. See glossary.

### *Chapter*



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"I shine," he went on. "I see this now. I'm a superstar, just like I'm tall.

I'm simply a superstar who's been holding himself back. And I'd like you to

come be a star with me."

It was good to have Mystery back. Flawed though he was, he had a cer-

tain charm. Some would call it narcissism, and they wouldn't be wrong, but

at least he saw greatness reflected not just in the mirror but also in the potential of those around him. That's what had made him such an influential

Mystery wanted to book me for three months straight. He planned to teacher.

schedule workshops in London, Amsterdam, Toronto, Montreal, Vancou-

“Dude, I'm already a star, at least in the community,” I told him.

ver, Austin, Los Angeles, Boston, San Diego, and Rio.

“While you were gone, I was voted number one pickup artist—above even

But I couldn't commit to the time. I needed to resuscitate my career.

you. It's insane. A guy from England I've never even met before called the

There was something I used to do before I was a full-time pickup artist—or,

other day and said he pretends to be me when he's fucking girls. It makes

as the kids now called me, an mPUA (master pickup artist). It was called

him feel more powerful. What do you think of that?”

writing. Somewhere, in another life, I used to wake up in the morning, sit at

It was getting harder to live up to my name. One of our former stu-

a desk before even eating or showering, and stew in my own filth as I sat typ-

dents, Supastar, a ruggedly handsome teacher from South Carolina, had re-



ing on a computer and not getting laid.

cently posted, “When I die and go to pickup heaven, Style will be there

Now that I was mastering this whole girl thing, I needed to put the

waiting for me because he is a pickup god.”

other pieces of my life back in balance. All the sarging was starting to

Mystery laughed when he heard it. “That’s something you’re going to

scramble my brain. I was becoming too dependent on female attention, al-

have to come to grips with,” he said. “You’ve created an alter ego that you

lowing it to be my sole reason for leaving the house besides food. In the pro-

cess of dehumanizing the opposite sex, I had also been dehumanizing

myself.

So I told Mystery that I was going to cut back on the whole sarging

thing. I was currently seeing eight girls in L.A. My dance card was full. There

was Nadia and Maya and Mika and Hea and Carrie and Hillary and Susanna

and Jill. They had needs, and there were no strings attached. They knew I was

seeing other women. And they were probably seeing other guys. I didn’t

know, didn’t care, and didn’t ask. All that mattered was that when I called

them, they came. And when they called me, I came. Everybody came.

What I didn't tell Mystery was that I didn't trust him anymore.  
I wasn't

going to set aside time and buy plane tickets only to have him  
break down

on me again. I wasn't a babysitter. Trust, I always told women,  
is something

you must earn. And he would have to earn my trust again.

It didn't take Mystery long to find two willing and enthusiastic  
wings

to replace me: Tyler Durden and Papa. I wasn't surprised.  
Since Mystery

had gotten out of the hospital, the pair was constantly in  
Toronto, staying

at his apartment and vacuuming every shred of pickup  
information from

his brain.

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Mystery would call every day to fill me in on their progress.

rectly to it. He was the victim of a disease called thinking too  
much. My

He'd say, "I've h u m b l e d Tyler D u r d e n with my game.

He was an asshole

head spun listening to him.

at first, b u t we've broken t h r o u g h t h a t a n d he's  
allowed himself to be taken

"I was busting on this girl Michelle," he was saying. "I was  
busting on

u n d e r my wing as a proper student."

her hard. Hard fucking busting, dude." And here he pulled his  
head back,

He'd say, "I've finally figured out the formula for getting rapport with a woman. Are you ready?" Big pause. "Rapport equals trust plus comfort!"

pursed his mouth, raised his eyebrows, and started nodding. The gesture was meant to convey how hard the busting was, but it looked strange and artificial. "Then this dude comes up to her and is like, 'Michelle, you are so cute. You are the bomb.' And she looks at me and goes"—here he smirked "Then why do you hang out with him?"

and spoke in a whiny falsetto to imitate her—"I hate it when guys do that. He'll call and say he's coming for the weekend, and I just let him. He's Now I will never ever like him. I only want a guy who doesn't want me. I like a thorn in my side that gets me out of the house." hate guys who want me. I hate it."

"So should I let him stay at my place when he comes to town with After an hour of blather, I started to understand Tyler Durden. Human Papa?"

interaction to him was a program. Behavior was determined by frames and

“He’s p a r t of the PUA family. Just t h i n k of him as the annoying cousin

congruence a n d state a n d validation a n d other big-chunk psychological

who farts a lot.”

principles. And he wanted to be the Wizard of Oz: the little guy behind the

One week later, Papa and Tyler D u r d e n were on my doorstep.

curtain, pulling the strings t h a t made everyone a r o u n d h i m think he was a

Papa actually looked somewhat cool. He wore a leather jacket, sun-

big a n d powerful master of the realm.

glasses p u s h e d up on his forehead, and an expensive cotton dress shirt un-

I got it. I liked getting it.

tucked over jeans. Behind him was the palest non-albino h u m a n being I

Now here’s the context: He grew up physically small and mentally slow

h a d ever seen. A shock of orangey blond stuck straight up from his ovoid

for his age, he said. His father, a football coach, imposed high standards on

head like a toy troll. His head was cocked upward; his smile seemed like a

him t h a t he could never meet. This was all the biographical detail I was

plastic snap-on attachment, and his features were flattened as if pressed

able to gather. It felt like a lot of hard information coming from him. And I

back by an invisible stocking. T h o u g h he claimed online to  
be an avid

still didn't know if it was truthful.

weight-lifter, his body and face were doughy. Technically, he  
was a small

Every time the waitress came to the table, Tyler D u r d e n  
wanted me to

person. He j u s t had a certain genetic softness.

demonstrate a routine on her.

This was Tyler Durden. He reminded me of Heat Miser from  
*The Year*

“Do the jealous girlfriend opener,” he'd say.

*Without A Santa Claus.*

“Show me an IVD,” he'd say.

He n o d d e d at me when he walked in. No word of greeting  
—and, a pet

“Do Style's EV,” he'd say.

peeve, no eye contact. I d o n ' t trust people who d o n ' t look  
me in the eye

I t h o u g h t about how Tyler D u r d e n had constantly  
pestered Vision for

when they meet me. But I gave him the benefit of the doubt.  
Maybe he was

routines and material. Now I understood why Vision h a d  
kicked him o u t of

nervous a b o u t making a good first impression. In his  
writings, he con-

the house. He didn't seem to see the h u m a n i t y in us. He  
didn't care about

stantly referenced my posts and techniques. He looked up to  
me. They all

what we did for work; where we were from; or what our thoughts on cul-

did. But most were humble about it. Tyler Durden reacted to being uncom-

ture, politics, and the world were.

fortable by acting aloof and arrogant. Fine. Bono from U2 does that too.

There was a distinction he didn't seem to understand: We weren't just

That's their thing.

PUAs. We were people.

When we went out to dinner, Tyler opened up. In fact, he talked non-

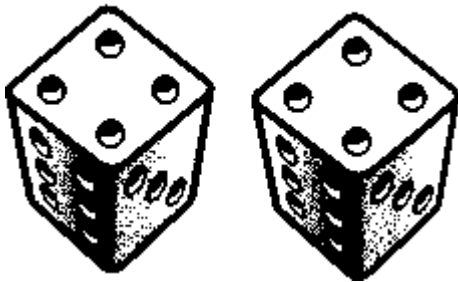
stop, without even pausing between sentences. It was difficult to get a word

8 An acronym for interactive value demonstration. See glossary.

in edgewise. He liked to talk in circles around a point rather than getting di-

9 An acronym for eliciting values. See glossary.

## *Chapter*



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“Dude, don't you have a personality of your own that you can use?”

Hillary was wearing just feathered pasties and matching panties now.

She had such soft skin. Her nose looked like a beak, though.  
The last time I

saw her, she told me she'd had a herpes outbreak. I couldn't  
bring myself to

have sex with her.

"Let's go somewhere else?" Tyler nudged me.

After dinner, I had a special evening planned for Tyler Durden  
and Papa.

"Why? There are plenty of girls here."

Hillary, the blue-haired burlesque dancer I'd battled Heidi  
Fleiss and Andy

She had done the right thing by telling me she had herpes. It's  
better

Dick for, was performing at the Spider Club in Hollywood. So  
I called a few

than keeping it a secret and letting me catch it. I couldn't  
punish her for

other women to join us there, including Laurie, the Irish girl  
who had in-

honesty. But now I was too paranoid to sleep with her.

spired me to invent the evolution phase-shift routine. I figured  
Tyler would

"I want to see you work in a place where you don't know  
anyone," Tyler

want to meet Grimble, so I invited him as well.

prodded.

When we arrived, Laurie and her girlfriends were sitting at the  
bar.

She covered her body with a feather, reached under her legs,  
and threw

Nearly every male in the room was staring at them, trying to  
work up the

her panties into the audience. A flying herpes rag. A hipster with mutton-courage to approach. I introduced them to Tyler. After saying hello, he pro-chop sideburns caught it. He crumpled it in his fist and thrust it into the air

ceeded to sit down and not speak another word. For ten minutes, he sat excitedly. His little venereal prize.

there in uncomfortable silence. It was the first time he had shut up all

A hand clapped my shoulder. It was Grimble, in his lucky pickup shirt.

night.

“So what’s up, man?” he asked

When I introduced them to Papa, he immediately came to life. He took

“Nothing much. How do you feel about accompanying Tyler Durden

the sunglasses off his head and put them on Laurie—a move Mystery had

here to the Saddle Ranch?”

taught him in Toronto when he asked how to keep the target from wander-

“You’re not coming?” Tyler Durden asked. “I really wanted to see your

ing off while being ignored. He then started running my value-game.”

demonstrating routine about C-shaped smiles versus U-shaped smiles.

“I’m tired, man.”



I liked watching Papa's progress. Arbiters of cool like to say that some

"If you come, I'll do my Mystery-talking-about-how-much-he-misses-

people have *it* and other people don't. And you can tell in an instant, just

his-soul-mate-Style imitation for you. It's a real crowd pleaser."

from looking at someone, whether they have it. I'd thought my whole life

Thanks but no thanks.

that it was something one was born with. However, the whole community

I walked to a booth and grabbed a seat opposite Hillary.

was predicated on the idea that it was something people could learn.

"Who are those losers you're with?" she asked.

Though there was still something mechanical about Papa, he was starting

"They're pickup artists."

to get it. He was like an *it* robot.

"Could have fooled me."

While Papa entertained the girls, Tyler Durden and I went to the other

"Well, they're young. And they're still learning. Give them time."

room to watch Hillary dance. She was in a birdcage, waving two massive

She pinched her left eyelash and slowly peeled it off. "Want to go to El

feathered fans in front of her body. A glimpse of shoulder here. A glimpse of

Carmen?" she asked. Then her right eyelash.

leg there. She had a spectacular body. Too bad I'd never sleep with her again.

If I went, I'd have to sleep with her. That was part of the contract. "No.

"Why didn't you say anything to Laurie and her friends?" I asked Tyler.

I should really go home."

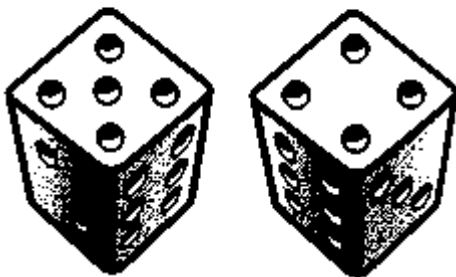
"I didn't know what routines you had used on them," he replied. "I

I wanted to get myself tested for everything. I was too neurotic to be so

didn't want to repeat anything."

promiscuous.

## *Chapter*



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I understood where Ross was coming from. I had been completely ig-

noring him since our last party together. He'd have to hypnotize the image

of him sniffing Carmen Electra's butt out of my head if I was ever going to

take him to a party again.

However, I called Ross a couple of nights later and invited him to din-

ner for old-time's sake. He wasn't as angry as I thought he'd be, chiefly be-

Despite everything, I wanted to like Tyler Durden. Everyone else seemed to.

cause his mind was consumed by someone else: Tyler Durden.

As he and Papa traveled the country winging workshops with Mystery,

"The guy gives me the willies," Ross said. "There's something creepy

the reports of his skills were stellar. Perhaps he'd just been nervous around

about his lack of ordinary human warmth. I wouldn't be surprised if sooner

me. Or maybe he'd improved after being forced to perform for so many stu-

or later he breaks from Mystery and just teaches totally on his own. He's un-

dents, as I had. I decided to give him the benefit of the doubt.

comfortable around people who are more powerful than him. Besides, he's

There were trends in the community. Ross Jeffries and Speed Seduction

already claiming to be better than Mystery."

had ruled the seduction boards when I arrived over a year ago. Then Mys-

Though I wrote the comment off as more of Ross's competitive para-

tery Method took over, followed by David DeAngelo and cocky funny. Now,

noia, Tyler Durden soon proved him right.

Tyler Durden and Papa were on the rise.

And it was my fault, according to Mystery.

The funny thing was that although the methods kept changing,  
“The workshops aren’t fun anymore,” Mystery complained.  
He was

women weren’t. The community was still so underground that  
few women,

calling from New Jersey, where he was rained in with Tyler  
Durden and

if any, knew what we were up to. These were trends that had  
nothing to do

Papa at the home of a PUA named Garvelous, who invented  
toys for a liv-

with females and everything to do with male ego.

ing. “They’re just work. These things are only fun when you  
come with, be-

And one of the biggest egos of them all, Ross Jeffries, was  
getting left

cause then we get to wing each other.”

behind. Though Speed Seduction still had a lot to offer, it  
seemed as ar-

I was flattered, though workshops weren’t supposed to be fun;  
as the

chaic to the new generation of community members as buying  
a girl flowers

name implied, they were work.

and sharing a malt at the soda shop. And Ross wasn’t happy  
about it. He

“Besides, my goals are changing,” he continued. “It started  
with want-

wasn’t happy about much. I found that out one night when I  
returned

ing attention. Now I think I’m looking for love. I want to be in  
a relation-

home to find the following message on my machine:

ship where I can feel butterflies in my stomach. I want a woman I can

respect for her art, like a singer or a super-hot stripper.”

*Hey Style, it's Ross. I'm in a cranky mood. It's ten after twelve. Normally*

The inevitable split came soon after.

*when I'm in a cranky mood, I call people I don't like and chew them out.*

Mystery flew to England and Amsterdam with Tyler and Papa to teach

*But I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to tell you that it's uneven. It*

another round of workshops. When he left with glowing reviews and nu-

*won't kill you to take me to more than one party, buddy, though I think you*

merous requests for an encore performance, Tyler Durden and Papa stayed

*owe me a lot more than that.*

behind to run a few workshops of their own to satisfy the demand. They

*If you don't come through, I won't get mad. I'll just cut you out of the*

were on break from college, and teaching men how to pick up women

*Speed Seduction community and everything else. I really will. So think*

seemed a lot more appealing as an interim job than scooping ice cream or

*about how my work has changed your life, and think about what you've*

working at the local Baby Gap.

*given in return and what you've promised to give. It's just not fair. I'm hop-*

Mystery phoned as soon as he returned to Toronto. "My father has

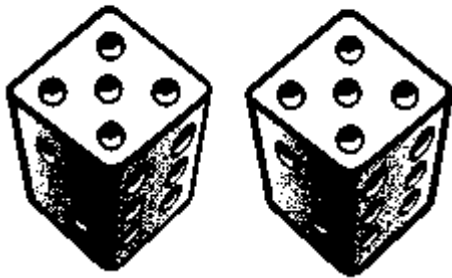
*ing there's more to you than that. If it sounds like a challenge I'd issue to a*

lung cancer, so he's on his way out," he said. "It's strange, but the first per-

*girl, so be it.*

son I wanted to call was you."

### *Chapter*



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"So how do you feel about it?"

"I'm not upset, but my mom was crying and it's the first time I've ever

seen her cry. Dad always wanted whiskey poured on his grave, so my

brother said, 'I just hope he doesn't mind me filtering it through my blad-

der first.'"

Mystery laughed. I tried to force a chuckle out for his sake. But it didn't

come. The image wasn't funny to anyone who didn't hate the guy.

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

Meanwhile, Tyler Durden and Papa were running wild in Europe. At

SUBJECT: AMOG Tactics

first, they pretty much taught Mystery's material. But that all changed one

AUTHOR: Tyler Durden

night in London, when they came into their own in the great outdoors of

Leicester Square, ground zero for backpackers, clubbers, tourists, players,

Here's some stuff I've been up to lately that is pretty funny.

and drunks. It was here that AMOGing was born.

I learned most of this from European naturals while trying to steal sets from

The AMOG is the alpha male of the group, a constant thorn in the side

them and prevent them from stealing sets from me. The guys here are not

of sargers. There's nothing more humiliating than having a lumbering high

pushovers l i b most guys in North America. Many have game. So I've been

school quarterback who reeks of alcohol pick you up from behind and

figuring out how to out-game them.

make fun of your peacocking gear in front of the girls you're trying to game.

All of this has been field-tested probably hundreds of times.

It's a constant reminder that you are not one of the popular kids, that

you're just a closet nerd faking it.

AMOG: Hey girls, what's up?

Tyler Durden may have been the biggest closet nerd of us all.  
But what

PUA: Hey dude (*put your hands in the air like you give up*), I  
will pay you

he lacked in coolness and grace, he made up for in analysis.  
He was a social

a hundred dollars right now to take these girls away from me.

deconstructionist and behavioral micromanager. He could  
watch a human

interaction and break it down to the physical, verbal, social,  
and psycholog-

(The girls will go, “No, no. We love you PUA.” And they’ll  
giggle and crawl

ical components that powered it. And AMOGing—or cutting a  
competitive

on you, which is immediately deflating to the guy.)

male cockblock out of a set—appealed to his subversive side;  
stealing a

woman from the jocks who used to pick on him in school was  
a taste far

AMOG: (*Shows signs that he wants to fight*)

sweeter than simply seducing a woman sitting alone in a cafe.

PUA: Ha ha, dude. Are you like trying to pick a fight with me?  
Ha ha.

So he watched the body language AMOGs used to lower his  
status in

Okay, okay. Hold up, hold up. Wait a sec. We’ll do even better.

sets; he observed the eye contact they used to signify to girls  
that he was a

First, we’ll have an arm-wrestling competition. Then, we’ll do  
creep; he analyzed the way they’d pat him on the back with so  
much force



one-armed push-ups. And last, pose-down!

that he'd lose his balance. Soon he was spending more time in the field

studying AMOGs than sarging women, until he slowly and painstakingly

(Then start flexing and go, "Ladies?" They'll start saying how you're so strong.

laid out a new social order—where, to paraphrase the musician Boyd Rice,

The AMOG will look like a tool because you're making him seem like he's

the strong live off the weak and the clever live off the strong.

trying too hard to impress the girls with his physical superiority.)

Now nothing could stop the PUAs. They could steal girls right out

from under the disbelieving eyes of boyfriends the size of refrigerators.

AMOG: Hey man, keep talking. Let's hear your pitch. Pick these girls up,

They were stepping into dangerous territory.

man. You're doing awesome.

PUA Hey, you know I've gotta try to impress you cool London guys (or

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rugby-shirt-wearing guys or shiny-shoes guys or whatever).

You guys

If an AMOG is with the girls I'm sarging, the goal is to neutralize him. If

fucking rock.

he's just met the girls, the goal is to blow him out.

AMOGing works best with the right body language. When you say these

(The point is to cut him down on whatever limited amount of knowledge you

lines, you want to have a big smile on your face. If you can, elbow him hard

have of him, even if it's not relevant. He'll feel uncomfortable and his body

in the chest or slap him on the back hard enough to make him spit up his drink.

language will show it.)

All this has to be under the guise of being friendly. And then (and this

happened to me) tell him, "Fair play, mate," and offer him your hand. When

AMOG: Is that design on your shirt a sphincter? Man, you're going to need

he reaches to shake your hand, pull away at the last minute. Tool him con-

somebody to protect you, mate. You're going to have all the guys into

stantly.

you.

Also, you can use an AMOG's work for yourself. He lines 'em up, you

PUA: Dude, that's why I rolled up on you. I need you, man. Help me,

knock 'em down. This is something I do a lot. I let a guy pick a girl up and

please, man. I look at you, and I just know that you were born to

increase her buying temperature, then I go in and out-alpha him. I say he's

protect my sphincter.

creepy to the girls, and then remove them from him. The girls are already

aroused, so they are still in state based on what the A M O G did. I can do this

(Somebody actually said this to me. And, to be honest, it was a good diss. So

on maybe 90 percent of sets I approach where a natural AMOG is talking to

when you have an AMOG who knows the game, you have to go further. Put

a girl.

him in the position of trying too hard to be your friend or joke about hiring him

Have fun.

to do jobs that are beta to you. Say, “You’re like a comedian, but you don’t

have to be funny for me to like you.” Or, “Man, that’s great. You should like

—TD

design my website or something.”)

AMOG: *[Starts touching you to show dominance)*

PUA: Ha ha, dude. I’m not into guys, man. Dude, the gay club is over

there. Hands off the merchandise, buddy.

(The girls laugh at him, then he starts qualifying himself to you that he’s not

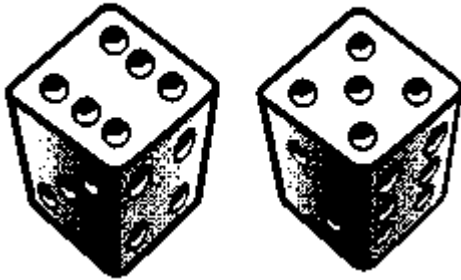
gay.)

AMOG: *( Gets in your face)*

PUA: *(Silence)*

(Don't respond. Just stand there quietly. If he keeps trying to out-alpha you and you don't answer, eventually he looks beta because he is trying too hard to get your attention. Another trick is to make let's-get-out-of-here motions with your eyes to the girls—mimic what they do to each other when you're running a bad set—and they'll leave with you.) Here are some other pointers.

### *Chapter*



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In the meantime, after seeing Tyler and Papa's success, two things dawned on the rest of the community. The first was that anybody could run a workshop. It didn't take any special talent to point two girls out to a guy and say, "Go approach them." The second was that the demand for seduction schooling was elastic. Guys would throw any amount of money at the problem to solve it. When the reviews of Tyler Durden and Papa's London workshops hit

Cliff's List, Mystery was outraged. He wasn't upset about AMOGing. You

Mystery had made a crucial mistake: He didn't give his students non-

had to give the pair credit for that. He was upset because Tyler Durden and

disclosure agreements. And now the genie was out of the bottle. One by

Papa had set up their own website and rival company. Mystery had called

one, everyone woke up to the notion that all those hours they had spent

his classroom seminars Social Dynamics. They called their in-field work-

studying and practicing seduction—more time than they spent with family,

shops Real Social Dynamics.

school, work, and real-life friends—had more applications than just keeping

Papa was as robotic about setting up his seduction business as he had

the prophylactic industry healthy. We were the creators and beneficiaries of

a body of knowledge that was light years beyond the rest of the mating

been about sarging. He copied Mystery's model to the letter. Mystery

world. We had developed an entirely new paradigm of sexual relations—one

charged six hundred dollars. So did Tyler and Papa. Mystery scheduled his

that gave men the upper hand, or at least the illusion of having the upper

workshops for three nights. So did Tyler and Papa. Mystery started his les-

hand. There was a market for this.

sons at 8:30 P.M. and ended them at 2:30 A.M. So did Tyler and Papa.

Though Tyler Durden and Papa said Mystery gave them permission to

Orion, the spazz who had made the *Magical Connections* videos, started

run their own workshops, Mystery claimed they used his client list and

leading daytime workshops in shopping malls and on campuses.

never asked him. When they exhausted that, they went around and spoke to

Next, two PUAs named Harmless and Schematic began advertising

the Speed Seduction lairs, drumming up business from Ross Jeffries's disci-

their own workshops, which was a surprise to everyone considering that

ples. And when Ross began to smell a rat, they started their own lair in each

Schematic had only lost his virginity a month beforehand.

region, beginning with P-L-A-Y (for Player's Los Angeles Yahoo group) in

One of the Croatians I had met, Badboy, a charismatic PUA who

Southern California.

limped and had only partial use of his left arm after getting hit by sniper

Where Mystery limited his workshops to six people, Papa and Tyler

fire during the war, started a company called Playboy Lifestyle. Students

Durden packed in dozens. It was sarging anarchy, but they were rolling in

flew to visit him in Zagreb for training in how to become an alpha male. Ex-

ercises included punching Badboy in the stomach and yelling, “Fuck you,

money. At nearly every workshop, Papa handpicked a student—even if he

Badboy!” as loud as they could. The average monthly salary in Croatia was

happened to be a virgin—and made him a guest instructor at the next

\$400; his workshops cost \$850 per student.

workshop. Soon, Papa had his own gang of wings—Jlaix, a San Francisco

karaoke champ; Sickboy, a square-jawed New Yorker in the fashion indus-

Wilder and Sensei, both Mystery Method graduates, led Pickup 101

try; Dreamweaver, a University of California senior and former Mystery

workshops out of San Francisco. A mysterious website appeared offering a

student; and even Extramask—that he was flying around to each work-

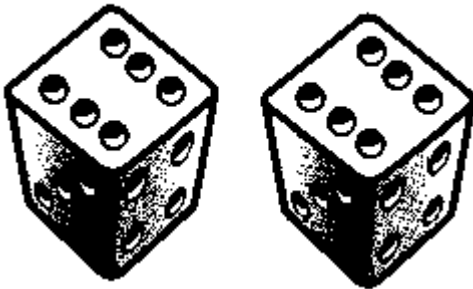
book called *Neg Hits Explained*. Vision quit his job to run one-on-one work-

shop.

shops. One of Sweater’s employees put together a seduction website and

Despite all this, Mystery continued to let Tyler and Papa stay at his line of products. Three college students in London—Angel, Ryobi, and house and pick his brain whenever they were in Toronto. When I asked him Lockstock—started teaching workshops called Impact Interaction. And even Prizer, the border-crossing hooker-fucker, put out a rambling DVD why, he answered, “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” With a course, *Seduction Made Easy*, that doubled as unintentional comedy. wonderful cliché like that, I assumed he knew what he was doing. Finally, Grimble and Twotimer jumped into the fray, each developing

### *Chapter*



his own method of seduction and writing an e-book on it. Grimble made fifteen thousand dollars the week his was released; Twotimer took in six thousand. The community was blossoming with enterprise. I realized that it was time for me to move. This was getting too big. The



lid was going to blow.

I'd been in the community for a year and a half since taking Mystery's

The night before the story on my double life as a pickup artist was pub-

first workshop. It was time to stake a claim on the seduction subculture be-

lished, I slept fitfully. I had created this character Style; now, in two thou-

fore another writer beat me to it. It was time to reveal myself. It was time to

sand words of newsprint, I was going to kill him. I was sure everyone in the

remind myself that I wasn't just a PUA; I was a writer. I had a career. So I

community would be pissed off that there had been a traitor in their midst.

called an editor I knew at the Style section of the *New York Times*. It seemed

I had nightmares of sargers gathering outside my house with torches to

like an appropriately named section to write for.

burn me alive.

No one ever posted their real names online; we called each other by our

But no amount of fretting and worrying could have prepared me for

nicknames. Even Ross Jeffries and David DeAngelo were pseudonyms. Our

the response: There was none.

real-world jobs and identities were unimportant. Thus, everyone in the

Sure, there was a little bit of bellyaching about the community being

community knew me as Style. Few, if anyone, knew my real name or that I

exposed and potentially ruined. A few people didn't like the tone of the

wrote for the *Times*.

story, and Mystery resented being called a pickup artist rather than a

It wasn't easy to get the story into the newspaper. It took two months

"Venusian artist," his latest neologism. But Style's credibility was safe: He

of going back and forth with editors, writing draft after draft. They wanted

had become so entrenched in the community that to the sargers of the

more skepticism. They wanted proof of the powers of the various gurus.

world, he was a pickup artist first and a journalist second. Instead of being

They wanted the inherent weirdness of the techniques to be acknowledged.

upset at Neil Strauss for infiltrating their community, they were proud of

They seemed to have trouble believing that these people—and this world—

Style for getting an article in the *New York Times*.

really existed.

I was flabbergasted. I hadn't killed Style at all. I'd only made him

stronger. Sargers Googled my name and ordered my books on Amazon,

writing long posts detailing my career. When I asked them to keep my real-world and my online identities separate—especially since I didn't want women I met looking up field reports I'd written about them—they actually agreed. I was still in charge.

Even more surprising, I didn't want to leave the subculture. I was a mentor now to these kids, and I had a role to fill. I had friendships to maintain. Though I'd more than attained my goal as a pickup artist, along the way I had accidentally found the sense of camaraderie and belonging that had eluded me my whole life. Like it or not, I was an integral part of the community now. The kids were right not to feel shocked or betrayed. I was one of them.

As for the women in my life, the article also had little effect. I'd already told them about the community and my involvement in *it*. And, in doing



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STEP 7

so, I'd discovered a curious phenomenon: If I told a woman that I was a

pickup artist before sleeping with her, she'd still have sex with me, but she'd

## EXTRACT TO A

make me wait a week or two longer just to ensure that she was different

from all the other girls. If I told a girl I was a pickup artist after sleeping

with her, she was usually amused and intrigued by the whole idea, and con-

## SEDUCTION LOCATION

vinced that I hadn't been running game on her. However, her tolerance for

the community lasted only until we broke up or stopped seeing each other,

at which point it was used against me. The problem with being a pickup

artist is that there are concepts like sincerity, genuineness, trust, and con-

nection that are important to women. And all the techniques that are so ef-

fective in beginning a relationship violate every principle necessary to

maintaining one.

Shortly after the article came out, I received a phone call from Will

Dana, the features editor at *Rolling Stone*.

"We're doing a cover story on Tom Cruise," he told me.

"That's great," I said.

"Yeah. He wants you to do it."

"Would you mind specifying the pronoun? Who do you mean by *be*?"

"Tom Cruise asked for you specifically."

"Why? I've never interviewed an actor before."

“He read that article you wrote in the *Times* on the pickup guys. You can ask him about it when you see him. He’s in Europe right now scouting for locations for the next *Mission: Impossible*. But he wants to go to wheelie school with you when he gets back.”

“What’s wheelie school?”

“It’s where you learn to do motorcycle wheelies.”

“Sounds cool. I’m in.”

I neglected to tell Will that I’d never ridden a motorcycle in my life.

However, it was high on the list of seduction-related skills I still wanted to

learn—just above improv classes and below self-defense.

## *Chapter*



### AMONG OUR STRUCTURALLY

He was the first person I’d met since joining the seduction community who

didn’t let me down.

His name was Tom Cruise.

### CLOSEST ANALOGUES T H E

“This is going to be great, man,” he greeted me when I met him at

wheelie school. He smiled, complimented my adventurousness, and

P R I M A T E S T H E M A L E D O E S N O T

smashed a friendly elbow into my chest. It was the exact same AMOGing

gesture that Tyler Durden had written about in London.

F E E D T H E F E M A L E . H E A V Y W I T H

He wore black bike leathers with a matching helmet tucked under his

left arm and two days of stubble on his chin. "I'm training to jump a

trailer," he said. He pointed to a mobile home sitting just off the track. "It'll

Y O U N G , M A K I N G H E R W A Y

be bigger than that one. But it's not that hard."

He squinted at the vehicle for a moment, visualizing the feat. "Well, the

L A B O R I O U S L Y A L O N G , S H E F E N D S

jumping's not that hard. It's the landing that's difficult."

He cocked his right hand and slugged me in the shoulder.

F O R H E R S E L F . H E M A Y F I G H T T O

Tom Cruise was the perfect specimen. He was the AMOG that Tyler

Durden and Mystery and everyone else in the seduction community had

P R O T E C T H E R O R T O P O S S E S S H E R ,

been trying to emulate. He had a natural ability to remain dominant, phys-

ically and mentally, in any social situation without seeming to exert any ef-

fort. And he was the living embodiment of all six of Mystery's five

BUT HE DOES NOT NURTURE HER.

characteristics of an alpha male. Nearly everyone in the community had

studied his films to learn body language and regularly used terminology

from *Top Gun* in the field. There was so much I wanted to ask him. But first

I needed to confirm something.

— MARGARET MEAD,

“So what made you pick me for this article?”

The dust lifted off the track and blew around us as we clutched our

*Male and Female*

bike helmets under our arms.

“I dug your *New York Times* piece,” he replied. “You were writing about

the dating guys.”

So it was true.

He paused and his eyes narrowed to slits, indicating that he was speak-

ing about a serious topic. His left eye closed a little more than the right one,

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giving the appearance of deep intensity. “Now is that guy you wrote about

any edge. So why not work at it and learn to do it well, like I'd done with



in your article really saying that the character in *Magnolia* is based on him?

everything else in my life? Who says you're allowed to take lessons in mo-

Is he saying that?"

torcycle riding but not in interacting with women? I just needed someone

He was talking about Ross Jeffries. One of Ross's claims to fame was

to show me how to start the engine and shift to higher gears. And I wasn't

that he was the inspiration for Frank T.J. Mackey in Paul Thomas Ander-

hurting anyone. No one was complaining after I slept with them, no one

son's film *Magnolia*. Mackey was the character Cruise played: an arrogant se-

was being lied to, no one was being hurt. They wanted to be seduced. Every-

duction teacher with unresolved father issues who wears a headset during

one wants to be seduced. It makes us feel wanted.

his seminars and orders his students to "respect the cock."

"We made this whole speech, because the guys were taking what we

"He shouldn't," Cruise continued. He swallowed a salt pill and chased

were saying and going with it and getting into it. So PTA and I were saying,

it down with a long swig of bottled water. "That's not okay. It's not true. Re-

'Hey man, oh my God. Easy.'"

ally. That is an invention that PTA had.” PTA is Paul Thomas Anderson.

See, I wanted to tell him. Seduction is seductive. But I couldn't, because

“That guy is not Mackey at all. He is not Mackey.” It seemed important for

as he remembered that moment, Cruise let out a laugh. And Cruise doesn't

Cruise to establish this. “I worked on creating that character with Paul

laugh like ordinary people do. His laugh takes over a room. It comes on just

Thomas Anderson for four months. And I didn't use that guy at all.”<sup>10</sup>

fine, a regular laugh by any standards. You will be laughing too. But then,

Cruise sat me on his 1000 CC Triumph motorcycle and taught me how

when the humor subsides, you will stop laughing. At this point, however,

to start the engine and shift gears. Then he raced around the track, popping

Cruise's laugh will just be crescendoing. And he will be making eye contact

wheelies, while I wiped out going five miles an hour on his top-of-the-line

with you. *Ha ha HA HA heh heh*. And you will try to laugh again, to join him,

bike. Afterward, he brought me into his trailer. The walls were covered with

because you know you're supposed to. But it doesn't come out right, be-

pictures of the children he and his ex-wife Nicole Kidman had adopted.

cause it's not natural. He will squeeze out a couple words sometimes be-

“Has this Jeffries guy turned his character more Mackey-ish since the

tween chuckles—“It's not real,” in this case. And then he will stop, as

movie?” Cruise asked.

suddenly as he started, and you will be relieved.

“He's arrogant and megalomaniacal like Mackey. But he's not as alpha

“Well,” I told him, squeezing out the last breath of an awkward laugh.

male as Mackey.”

“That's easy for you to say.”

“I'll tell you something,” Cruise said as he sat down at a table spread

We spent the next week together visiting various Scientology buildings.

with finger sandwiches and cold cuts. “When I did that monolog as Mackey,

It's no secret that Tom Cruise is a member of the Church of Scientology—a

we didn't tell the audience anything about what we were doing. And the

religion, self-help group, charity, cult, and philosophy started by the science

guys just started getting pumped up as I was talking. So at the end of the

fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s. But Cruise had never taken a

day, PTA and I had to get on stage and say, ‘Look, man. We just want to tell

journalist into that world before.

you that where this character is going and what he’s saying is not good. And

The more I learned about L. Ron Hubbard, the more I realized that he

it’s not okay.’”

was the exact same personality type as Mystery and Ross Jeffries and Tyler

Here came the lecture. First Dustin; now Tom Cruise. I couldn’t under-

Durden. They were wickedly smart megalomaniacs who knew how to syn-

stand it. What was wrong with learning how to meet women? That’s what

thesize great bodies of knowledge and experience into personality-driven

we’re here for. It’s how the species survives. All I wanted was an evolution-

brands, which they sold to people who didn’t feel like they were getting

what they needed out of life. They were obsessive students of the principles

that guide human behavior. But the ethics of and motivation for their use

10 When asked how he had come up with the character of T.J. Mackey in an interview in *Creative*

of those principles made them controversial figures.

*Screenwriting* in 2000, however, Paul Thomas Anderson did mention researching Ross Jeffries.

On our last day together, Cruise took me on a tour of the Scientology

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Celebrity Center in Hollywood, where I saw a classroom full of students be-

son who will think about something, and if I know it's right I'm not going

ing trained to use e-meters, devices that measure skin conductance. When

to ask anybody. I don't go, 'Boy, what do you think about this?' I've made

curious civilians come into the church, they are hooked up to e-meters and

every decision for myself—in my career, in my life.”

asked various questions. Afterward, the interviewer goes over the results

Cruise leaned forward in his chair, resting his elbows in his lap. He was

with them and tells them why they need to join the Church of Scientology

low in his seat and his head was parallel with the surface of the table. As he

to fix their problems.

spoke, he expressed himself through gestures as subtle as changing the

Students were paired up in the classroom, role-playing the various sce-

aperture of his eyes. The guy was born to sell things: movies, himself, Scien-

narios that can occur during an interview. They had large books spread out

tology, you. Whenever I criticized myself or made an excuse for myself, he

in front of them. Everything the interviewer (or auditor, in Scientology

jumped down my throat.

terms) utters—every response to every contingency—was contained in those

“I’m sorry,” I said at one point, when discussing an article I’d written. “I

books. Nothing was left to chance. No possible convert was going to slip

don’t mean to sound like one of those writer guys.”

through their hands.

“Why are you apologizing? Why not be a writer guy? Who are those

What they were rehearsing, I realized, was a form of pickup. Without a

guys? They’re talented people who write about things that people are inter-

rigid structure, rehearsed routines, and troubleshooting tactics, there

ested in.” Then he continued, mockingly, “No, you don’t want to be one of

would be no recruitment.

those guys who’s creative and expressive.”

One of my main frustrations with sarging was repeating the same lines

He was right. I had thought I was done with gurus, but I needed one

over and over. I was getting tired asking girls if they thought spells worked

more. Tom Cruise was teaching me more about inner game than Mystery,

or if they wanted to take the best friends test or if they noticed how their

Ross Jeffries, Steve P., or my father ever had.

nose wiggled when they laughed. I just wanted to walk into a set and say,

He stood up and slammed his fist down on the table, hard—  
AMOG-

“Love me. I’m Style!”

style. “Why don’t you want to be one of those guys? Be one of those guys,

But after watching the auditors, I began to think that perhaps routines

man. I mean it. That’s cool.”

weren’t training wheels after all; they were the bike.’ Every form of dema-

Okay. Cruise says it’s cool. Case closed.

goguary depends on them. Religion is pickup. Politics is pickup. Life is

As we talked, I realized that out of all the people I’d met in my lifetime,

pickup.

no one had their head screwed on more tightly than Tom Cruise. And this

Every day, we have our routines, which we rely on to make people like

was a disturbing thought, because nearly every idea Tom Cruise expressed

could be found somewhere in the massive writings of L. Ron Hubbard.

us or to get what we want or to make someone laugh or to endure another

day without letting anyone know the nasty thoughts we're really thinking

I discovered this when Cruise had his personal Scientology liaison

bring a heavy red book to the table. He opened it to the Scientology code of about them.

honor, and we discussed it point by point—set a good example, fulfill your

After the tour, Cruise and I ate lunch in the Celebrity Center restau-

obligations, never need praise or approval or sympathy, don't compromise

rant. He was clean-shaven and ruddy-cheeked, wearing a dark-green crew-

your own reality.

neck T-shirt that fit his body like a glove. Over a healthy slab of steak, he

discussed his values. He believed in learning new things, doing the work re-

When Cruise promised to send me an invitation for the center's annual

Scientology Gala, I began to worry that this wasn't about an article for

quired of him, and competing with no one but himself. He was strong-

*Rolling Stone* at all. It was about getting another convert to Scientology. If

willed, centered, and resolute. Any thinking that must be done, any turmoil

that was true, he'd picked the wrong person. At most, he was introducing



that must be resolved, any issue that must be handled was solved first and

me to a body of knowledge I could draw from, like the writings of Joseph

foremost in a dialogue between Tom Cruise and himself.

Campbell or the teaching of the Buddha or the lyrics of Jay-Z.

“I don’t really keep counsel with others,” he said. “I’m the kind of per-

## *Chapter*



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After our meal and study session, Cruise invited me to the president’s

room to meet his mother, who was taking a course in the building. “Let me

ask you something else about that article you wrote,” he said as we walked.

“A lot of that stuff is about trying to control people and manipulate situa-

tions. Can you imagine all the effort they’re putting into that? If they took

that effort and put it toward something constructive, who knows what they

could accomplish.”

My church, however, still needed to be built.

The interview ended. The article was published. And Tom Cruise and I

Tom Cruise was right: all our effort did need to be put toward some-

would meet again. I would be a different person then, but he would be the

thing constructive, something bigger than ourselves. I had felt after writing

same. He would never change. He was an AMOG—and he had AMOGed me.

the *Times* article that my work was not done in the community, that it was

However, he hadn't converted me.

all leading somewhere. Now I knew where: Project Hollywood, our church

He had his church. I had mine.

of the spread legs.

The epiphany came to me on my birthday. Some of the PUAs threw a

party for me at a Hollywood club called Highlands. They called nearly

everyone I knew and had met in the last year. About three hundred guests

came, along with another two hundred who showed up at the club just be-

cause it was a Saturday night. Even the big boys from the community were

there: Rick H., Ross Jeffries, Steve P., Grimble, Bart Baggett (who specializes

in handwriting analysis), Vision, and Arte (who stars in his own line of sex-

ual technique videos).

Despite such heavy-hitters working the room, I had zero competition

because, for the night, I was the man at the club. I was dressed like a dandy,

in a long black jacket with a single button at the top and a cream shirt with

ruffled sleeves exposed at my wrists. And I was surrounded by women: fuck

buddies, friends, strangers. I couldn't carry on a conversation for more than

two minutes because people were constantly pulling me away to talk. I

didn't have time to spit game.

Women complimented me on my looks, my body, even my ass. Four

different girls handed me their phone numbers over the course of the night.

One said she had to meet her boyfriend, but then wanted to escape and

party with me; the other gave me not just her phone number, but also her

address and apartment number. These were girls I didn't know before the

party, and two weren't even there for my birthday. I didn't need routines,

boyfriend destroyers, gimmicks, or wings. All I needed was a big pocket to

hold all the scraps of paper.

In addition, two porn stars a friend had brought with him introduced

themselves. One was either named Devon or Deven; the other had big teeth.

## Chapter



We talked for a half hour, and they supplicated to me the whole time. The night felt like the time in Toronto when everyone thought I was Moby— except this time they knew I was Style.

Mystery had recently developed another theory of social interaction. It basically stated that women are constantly judging a man's value in order to determine if it can help them with their life objectives of survival and replication. In the microcosmic world we had created at the Highlands that Mystery flew into town to meet me. All he had needed was the word go.

That night, I had the highest social value in the room. And just as most men are He was the only person I could talk to who wasn't afraid to take chances and make changes to pursue his dreams. Everyone else I knew and possesses large breasts, women tend to respond to status and social ways said, "Later"; Mystery said, "Now," and that was an intoxicating word

proof.

to me—because later, every time I'd ever heard it, translated as never.

In the end, I took a petite, mischievous stripper with big saucer eyes

“Now is the time, Style,” he said when he arrived at my apartment in

named Johanna back to my house. While she was on my bed, grinding me

Santa Monica. “Let's build this shit. Sarging *is* for losers. I mean, sure, it's

through my clothes, she asked, “What do you do for a living?”

better to be a loser who gets laid than one who doesn't, but we're talking

“What?” I replied. I couldn't believe she would ask that, but she seemed

about a championship level of game now.”

to need that piece of information in order to explain my status at the party

I knew he'd understand.

and her attraction to me.

According to the books I'd read on cold-reading, all human problems

“What do you do?” she asked again.

fall into one of three areas: health, wealth, and relationships, each of which

And that's when I had the epiphany: Sarging is for losers.

has an inner and an outer component. For the past year and a half, we'd

Somewhere along the line, sarging became seen as the goal of pickup.

been focusing solely on relationships. Now it was time to get every cylinder

But the point of the game is not to get good at sarging. When you sarge,

in our lives firing. It was time to follow through on Mystery's codeine-

every night is a new one. You're not building anything but a skillset. What

added ramblings and join forces to work together for more than just

got me laid on my birthday was not sarging but lifestyle. And building a

HB10s. We were greater than the sum of our cocks.

lifestyle is cumulative. Everything you do counts and brings you closer to

The first step to making Project Hollywood a reality was to find a man-

your goal.

sion in the Hollywood Hills, preferably with guest bedrooms, a hot tub, and

The right lifestyle is something that is worn, not discussed. Money,

a location near the clubs on Sunset. Next we needed to hand-select the best

fame, and looks, though helpful, are not required. It is, rather, something

in the community to live with us.

that screams: Ladies, abandon your boring, mundane, unfulfilled lives and

Perhaps I shouldn't have trusted Mystery again. But this time, I

step into my exciting world, full of interesting people, new experiences,

wouldn't let myself be dependent on him. His name wasn't going to be on

good times, easy living, and dreams fulfilled.

the lease. Neither would mine, for that matter. We'd find a third party to

Sarging was for students, not players, of the game. It was time to take

take the risk and the responsibility.

this brotherhood to the next level, time to pool our resources and design a

We found that third party living in the Furama Hotel. His name was

lifestyle in which the women came to us. It was time for Project Hollywood.

Papa. His grades had kept him out of law school, so instead he'd enrolled at

Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles to study business. The day he moved

from Wisconsin to Los Angeles, he dropped his bags off in his hotel room

near the airport and took a taxi to my apartment, where six foot five inch

Mystery was sleeping on my five foot six couch.

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"The three most influential people in my life," Papa told us as he sat

Papa's face clouded. He didn't like the word no. He was an only child.

down on the couch at Mystery's feet, "have been you two and my father."

He disappeared into his hotel room and emerged a half hour later with

Papa's hair was now spiked and gelled, and he looked like he'd been

a sheet of paper in his hands. On it, he had sketched out a plan to earn

working out. I left him to talk with Mystery in my living room while I ran

\$50,000 a month. We'd throw a weekly party in the club, and make \$8,000

downstairs to a Caribbean food stand to get dinner for everyone.

by charging admission and \$5,000 in drinks per month; various pickup and

When I returned, Papa was Mystery's manager.

lifestyle seminars would earn the house \$20,000; we'd offer tennis lessons

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" I asked Mystery. I couldn't

that would add up to \$2,000 a month; and the ten residents of the house

believe he was going to let a protege-turned-competitor manage him. Mys-

would pay \$1,500 each in rent.

tery was an innovator. If Ross Jeffries was the Elvis of seduction, Mystery

It was completely impractical. It wasn't worth spending all our income

was the Beatles. Tyler and Papa were merely the New York Dolls: They were

on overhead. But it was impressive. Papa was going to make Project Holly-

brash, they were loud, and everyone thought they were gay.



wood happen, no matter what it took. I began to understand why Mystery

“Papa likes the business and he can fill workshops every weekend,”

wanted to work with Papa. He was one of us: He was a go-getter. He had ini-

Mystery replied. “So all I have to do is show up.”

tiative. And, unlike Mystery, he was a closer.

Papa, in his networking mania, was in constant contact with nearly

As a pickup artist, Papa also seemed worthy of Project Hollywood. He’d

every major sarger. He knew all the lair presidents and was on all the seduc-

proven his fearlessness in the field over and over since we’d met him in

tion mailing lists. With just a few e-mails and phone calls, he could recruit a

Toronto. And he would prove himself once more the following day, when

dozen students nearly anywhere in the world.

he picked up Paris Hilton at a taco stand.

“It’s win-win,” Papa insisted. Ever since he’d gotten into the pickup

business, that had become Papa’s favorite phrase. He was smarter than I’d

given him credit for. He was going to become the middle man for the

biggest pickup artists in the community. And they were all going to let him,

because most artists have the same fatal flaw: They’re too lazy to deal with

anything practical themselves.

We never actually invited Papa to join us in Project Hollywood that day.

It just happened because he was willing to do the work. There was a Cold-

well Banker office across the street from the hotel, and Papa walked in and

found us a real estate agent named Joe. Real estate agents don't make much

money on rentals, but Papa managed to talk Joe into working for us by

promising to teach him the game.

"He's going to take us tomorrow to look at houses," Papa said when we

met him in the lobby of the Furama Hotel one afternoon.

"There are three

places I really like. There's a mansion on Mulholland Drive; there's the for-

mer Rat Pack crib off Sunset; and there's the supermansion, which has ten

bedrooms, tennis courts, and a built-in nightclub."

"Well, I'm for the supermansion," I told him. "How much is it?"

"It's fifty thousand a month."

"Forget it."

## *Chapter*



**PAPA:** Hmm. Actually, this is a two-part question.

**PARIS:** (*Smiles and giggles*)

**PAPA:** Imagine you were dating a guy who was still friends with his

ex-girlfriend. And you were going to move in with him but he had a

drawer with pictures of his ex-girlfriend—not nudie pictures or

anything, just regular pictures and some letters.

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

**PARIS:** Ooh. I would so get rid of them. I would put them in a box.

SUBJECT: Field Report—The Seduction of Paris Hilton

AUTHOR: Papa

I cut her off and continued with the opener.

Today, I went with Style, Mystery, and our real estate agent to our prospective

**PAPA:** Do you think it's unreasonable for her to want him to get rid of those

mansion, Dean Martin's old crib in the Hollywood Hills. I am in love with the

pictures?

place and can't wait to close the deal. We will be on top of the world, literally

**PARIS:** Oh, for sure. I dated a guy who did that, and I tossed them.

and figuratively. When you are in our crib, everything seems perfect.

**PAPA:** Wow! The reason why I asked was because I have a friend in the

It's a short walk to a popular Mexican fast-food restaurant, so we went

same situation, and she burned them.

over there for a late lunch. After ordering food, we found a table outside.

**PARIS:** Yes. That's what I should have done. *[Smiles]*

Suddenly, our agent leaned over to me and whispered:

**PAPA:** Hmm. Cool.

REAL ESTATE AGENT: You know, I saw Paris Hilton walk inside the

Paris finished getting her salsa, then took her salsa containers and started to

restaurant. I think she's ordering a burrito. Why don't you go pick her

walk away.

up?

PAPA: Really?

**PAPA:** Hey, you know, you look like a little cartoon version of Britney

STYLE: Hey, if you are going to walk over there, don't look in her direction.

Spears. Oh, maybe it's just your teeth.

**PAPA:** All right, it's playtime.

Paris put her salsa container back on the table, looked at me, and smiled. Then

I got up, walked into the restaurant, and saw a hot blonde chick getting salsa.

I told her Style's Cs versus Us routine.

So I thought, "Salsa sounds good to me." I've been gearing my game up for

this moment, and now it was time to take what I deserved. So I walked over to

**PAPA:** Yeah! You have Britney teeth. Well, that's what my ex-girlfriend said. I

her side and pretended like I was just at the salsa bar by coincidence. I helped

mean, she has a theory that girls who have teeth in a wide C-shape,

myself to some salsa, and then looked over my right shoulder at her and started

like Britney Spears, are perceived as good girls, no matter how many

the conversation with Style's jealous girlfriend opener.

guys they hook up with. You have the same kind of C-shaped teeth.

**PARIS:** (*Excited and smiling*) Oh, yeah?

**PAPA:** Hey, I need a female opinion on something?

**PAPA:** Hey, I mean, just look at the smiles of the cover girls on magazines.

**PARIS:** (*Smiles and looks up*) Okay.

They have the same kind of teeth. Well, at least that's what she said.

**PAPA:** Would you date a guy who was still friends with his ex-girlfriend?

She even got surgery done to her teeth because she had U-shaped

**PARIS:** Yeah. I think so. Sure.

teeth, like Christina Aguilera. She said U-shaped teeth are perceived

as unfriendly, and that's why Christina Aguilera has the bad girl

I started to walk away, then turned back and continued the conversation.

reputation and Britney Spears doesn't.

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**PARIS:** *[Smiles)* Wow.

**PARIS:** Yes. Sure. *[Smiles)*

**PAPA:** *[Escalating the yes-ladder)* Before I start, I need to ask you a few

We walked to the counter and she grabbed her food. I acted as if I were

questions. Are you intelligent?

going to leave, but don't think I'm going to leave Paris without proper game.

**PARIS:** Yes.

She had her food and was about to exit the restaurant, so I had to keep her

**PAPA:** Are you intuitive?

there. I looked over my shoulder and continued the conversation.

**PARIS:** Yes.

**PAPA:** Do you have a good imagination?

**PAPA:** I have an intuition about you.

**PARIS:** Yes.

**PARIS:** What?

**PAPA:** Okay. Great! We'll continue then. Imagine you're driving in the

desert and you see a cube. How big is the cube?

She put her food down and looked at me.

**PARIS:** It's really big!

**PAPA:** How big is that?

**PAPA:** You know, I can tell you deep insights about yourself just by asking

**PARIS:** As big as a hotel.

three questions.

**PARIS:** Oh yeah?

Though I knew who she was, I didn't give it away and acknowledge she was

**PAPA:** Yeah. Here, come over to this table.

a Hilton.

**PARIS:** Okay, sure.

**PAPA:** Hmm. Interesting. Okay, so what color is it?

I sat down at a nearby table, and she placed her food on the table and sat

**PARIS:** Pink.

across from me. When she sat down, she smiled. I knew I was set and that it

**PAPA:** Cool. Is it something you can see through or is it solid?

was time to work solid game. For the next fifteen minutes, we shared some sto-

**PARIS:** You can see right through it.

ries about Hollywood and talked about commonalities. I did some qualifying,

**PAPA:** Rock on! Now, let's add a ladder. Where is the ladder in relation to

gave her some Speed Seduction patterns, and told her some socially proofed

the cube?

higher-value stories.

**PARIS:** It's leaning against the cube, going into the middle of it.

**PAPA:** Ah! I would have expected you to say that.

**PAPA:** Well, my friend taught me this fascinating visualization technique

**PARIS:** Yeah. ( *Smiles and giggles*)

called the Cube. He's over there right now, and we just finished

**PAPA:** Yeah. So let's add one more thing to your picture. Let's add a horse.

shopping for a house over there [*pointing in the direction of the Holly-*

Where is the horse in relation to everything in your picture?

*wood Hills*). I've been living in a hotel for the last ten weeks. Ugh.

**PARIS:** It's sleeping.

**PARIS:** Oh yeah! Which one?

**PAPA:** Where is it sleeping?

**PAPA:** The Furama.

**PARIS:** In front of the cube.

**PARIS:** [*Nods*] Yeah, I live right up the street on Kings Road.

**PAPA:** Wow. Interesting. ( *Pause*) Okay. Are you ready to find out what all

**PAPA:** Cool. I'll be your neighbor. I'm moving into a house on Londonderry.

of this mean? ( *Pause*) It doesn't mean anything! No, just kidding. The

It's a great place, and I already have so much heart for it. My friend

cube represents what you think of yourself. It's your ego. Now, your

Style and I are talking about making it a place for after-parties.

cube is pretty big. You have a lot of self-confidence. It's not super-

**PARIS:** Cooool.



huge. I mean, it's not like you have a huge ego, but you definitely

**PAPA:** Okay. Are you ready for the Cube?

carry yourself with a lot of confidence. Also, your cube is pink.

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**PARIS:** Yeah. That's my favorite color.

REAL ESTATE AGENT: High five, bro.

**PAPA:** Well, pink is also a color that is playful and bright, and you chose

that because you carry yourself with the same kind of energy. You

I explained to the boys what happened. This rocks. I know that this is the way

are the kind of person who really likes to have fun and party, but you

things are going to be. It just makes sense that I would roll with Paris Hilton

are also the kind of person who just enjoys being in other people's

when I am in Project Hollywood.

company.

Mystery, this is my set. So hands off when Paris comes by the crib to see

**PARIS:** Yes.

Papa.

**PAPA:** And your cube is something that you can see right through. Now, that

represents how people interact with you because you are the kind of

Cheers,

person who even when people first meet you, they can see right

Papa

through you. You really connect with people and that rocks.

**PARIS:** What's your name?

**PAPA:** Papa. What's your name?

**PARIS:** Paris.

**PAPA:** Rock on. I feel like we have so much to talk about.

**PARIS:** Yes.

**PAPA:** We should definitely party it up together sometime.

**PARIS:** Yes. We should.

**PAPA:** H e r e .

I gave her a piece of paper and a pen. She wrote down her first and last

name, and then handed it to me, expecting to impress me and get a wow

response. But I didn't give her any response, as if I had no idea who she was.

Then I handed it back to her.

**PAPA:** H e r e .

**PARIS:** Okay. Write it down right here?

**PAPA:** Yes.

**PARIS:** This is my cell phone.

**PAPA:** C o o l .

**PARIS:** Yeah. We should definitely meet up.

**PAPA:** Yeah. Rock on. I'll see ya, kid.

I walked back to see the boys at the table outside.

**STYLE:** Nice job, man. Nobody give Papa a high-five or acknowledge it,

in case she sees it. Well done, bro.

## *Chapter*



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longer sarged girls when he went out; instead he sarged promoters and

celebrities, trying to make connections for Project Hollywood after-parties.

He even used Speed Seduction and NLP tactics to try and hypnotize people

into investing in the house.

In his spare time, he made bids for tanning beds, movie projectors, pool

tables, and stripper poles on eBay. He wanted to make Project Hollywood a

Every word Papa told Paris Hilton had come from me: the jealous girlfriend

place Paris Hilton would want to come every weekend to party.

opener, the C-shaped versus U-shaped-smiles routine. Even his delivery of

There were still two bedrooms that needed to be filled, so we issued a

the Cube was the exact same as what he'd recorded at his first workshop

call for roommates on Mystery's Lounge. The response was terrifying:

with Mystery and me, down to the way he said, “Interesting” and “Cool.” He

Everybody wanted in.

was a great robot, and he had just outperformed his programmer.

We walked back to the house to meet the owners and sign the paper-

work. The former home of Dean Martin (and later the comedian Eddie

Griffin), the Rat Pack crib was just above Mel’s Diner on Sunset Boulevard.

It was \$36,000 cheaper per month than the supermansion, and it was walk-

ing distance from the clubs on Sunset Boulevard.

The living room looked like a ski lodge. There was a fireplace, a sunken

dance floor, a thirty-foot-high ceiling, a massive wood-inlay wall mural, and

a large bar in the corner. The space could easily hold a few hundred people

for seminars and parties. There were two bedrooms off the living room on

the ground floor. Outside each of these rooms was a staircase leading up to

another bedroom. And then there was a small maid’s room off the kitchen.

The crown jewel of the house was the multitiered backyard.

On one

level, there were two patios shaded by palm and lemon trees.

On the second

level, there was a large brick terrace with a peanut-shaped pool, a Jacuzzi, a

dining area, and a working barbecue and refrigerator. Beyond it lay a land-

scaped hill with a path winding up to a small, secluded deck at the top of

the property. From there, we could see the glittering lights and ten-story

movie billboards of Hollywood. The place was a chick magnet. There was

no way we could fail here.

Papa put his name down on the lease. This, in addition to paying the

larger of the rents, earned him the right to the master bedroom, which

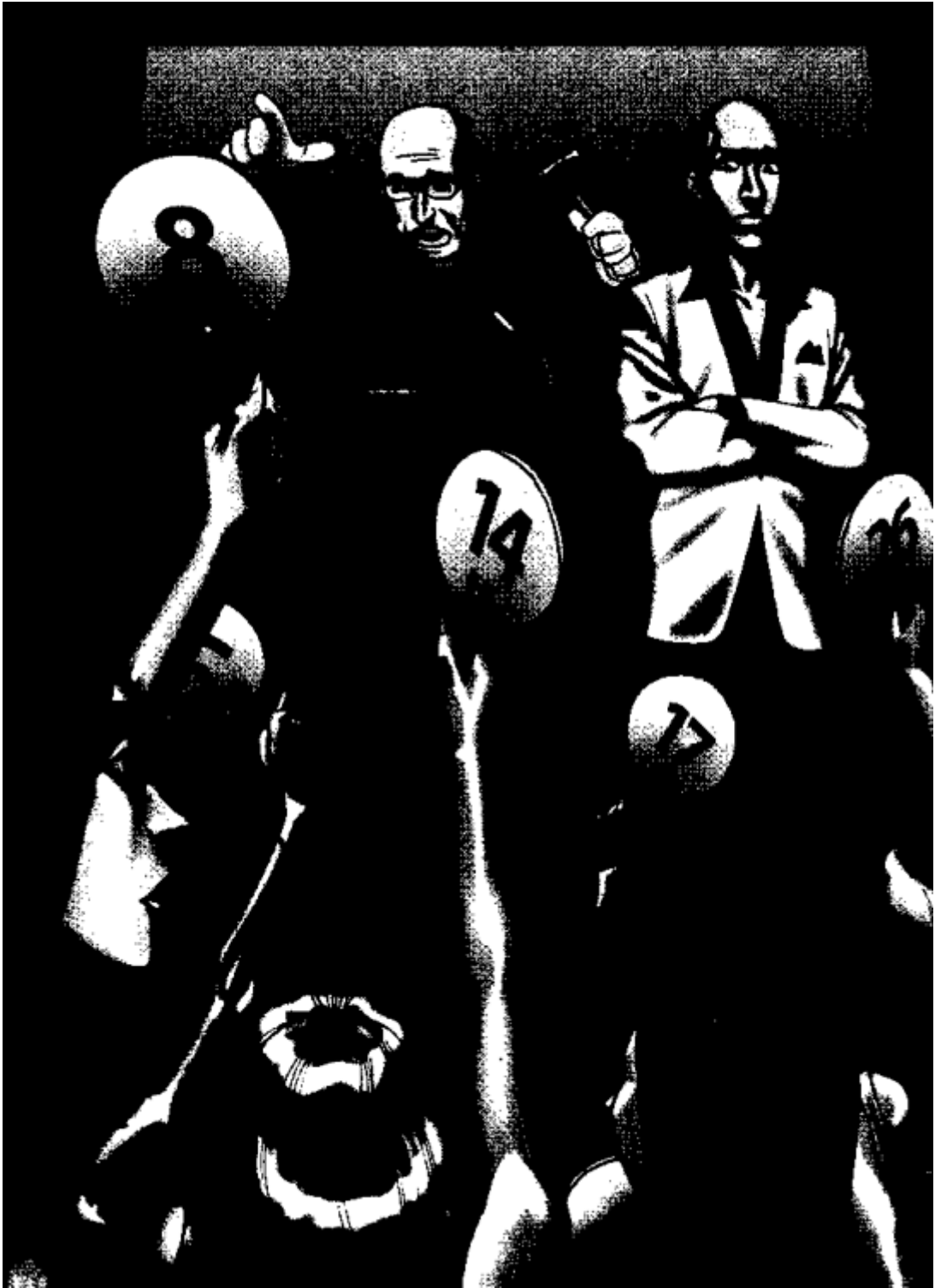
came equipped with a raised platform intended for a bed, picture windows,

and a fireplace. The bathroom was decked out with a glass-encased circular

shower, two walk-in closets, and a whirlpool bathtub built for three.

The possibilities were limitless. Papa had visions of renting the house

for after-Grammy parties, movie premieres, and corporate events. He no



STEP 8  
PUMP BUYING  
TEMPERATURE

## Chapter



The first night, we all sat in the Jacuzzi from midnight until  
the skin hung

loosely from our bodies, gazing at the palm trees of our new  
place and the

lights of the Hollywood clubs we would soon descend upon.  
Mystery sang

the entire soundtrack *of Jesus Christ Superstar* to the night  
sky. Papa told us

about his plan to use the house for A-list Hollywood parties.  
And Herbal

ALL THE GIRLS LINE UP HERE ,

served watermelon drinks from his blender. There were no  
girls, and we

didn't need any to validate us. Tonight, it was just the boys.  
We had done it.

Project Hollywood was not just a fantasy anymore.

ALL THE BOYS ON THE OTHER SIDE .

“We'll make the house famous with our public exploits,”  
Mystery pre-

dicted as we all sat there with smiles plastered to our faces.  
“People will

I SEE YOUR RANKS ARE

drive by and say, ‘This was the home of the Hollywood  
celebrities Style,

Mystery, Papa, and Herbal. They built their careers here and  
had parties

A D V A N C I N G .

that were the envy of the world.””

Herbal was our fourth roommate. He was a tall, pale, even-tempered

I S E E M I N E A R E L E F T B E H I N D .

twenty-two-year-old PUA from Austin who peacocked by painting his nails

silver and wearing all-white clothing. Like the rest of us, he was a reformed

geek. But he owned a house in Texas, a Mercedes Benz S600, a Rolex, an of-

fice on Sunset Boulevard that he never went to, and a robot vacuum cleaner.

They were impressive holdings for someone his age. He had earned them in

— A N I D I F R A N C O ,

some kind of shady casino operation, in which he hired others to gamble

for him. In his spare time—which was basically all his time—he explored

*“The Story”*

caves, recorded extremely catchy rap songs, and surfed the Internet for un-

usual items to buy and then never use.

Mystery insisted that everyone in the home have an identity—so we had

a magician, a writer, a gambler, and a businessman. It was a combination

that would prove more dramatic than the most sensationalist reality show.

A few days later, Papa moved a fifth roommate, Playboy, into the maid’s



room. Playboy was a party promoter from New York who earned my adm-

ration when he told me he'd worked for the Merce Cunningham Dance

Company. He was genetically good-looking—tall and slender with thick

black hair—but he had a bad habit of wearing long artsy scarves and pants

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pulled up to his belly button. He had quit his job to move in with us, so

started Project Perth, approaching one hundred women in their first three

Papa hired him to work for Real Social Dynamics in exchange for rent.

days on campus.

Then there was Xaneus. He lived in a tent in the backyard.

And four PUAs Mystery and I had trained in Sydney rented a beach

Xaneus was a short, stocky, fresh-faced college soccer player from Col-

apartment with an elevator that opened directly into a club below them.

orado who had begged to live in the house. He said he'd sleep anywhere and

This was Project Sydney.

do anything. So Papa pitched a tent for him, asked him to pay for utilities

Nobody had understood the potential of this whole pickup commu-

and house cleaning, and brought him into the Real Social Dynamics fold as nity, the bonding power of dudes talking about chicks. We had manicures, an intern. we had mansions, and we had game. We were ready to infect the world like a For the first two weeks, all we did was marvel at the house. We'd done it; disease. we had beaten the system. We had the most desirable location in West Hol- lywood. And we had lucked out with our roommates. Herbal had already scheduled a Pickup Artist Summit—the first annual—to take place in our house in a month. At our initial house meeting, we established a structure for Project Hollywood, putting Papa in charge of social activities and Herbal in charge of finances. Then we laid down the rules: No unapproved house- guests for more than a month; anyone conducting a seminar in the living room has to give the house fund a ten percent kickback; and no sarging women another PUA has brought into the house. All these rules would soon be broken. I initially enjoyed living with roommates, leaving my introverted

writer's world and being part of a whole that was greater than the sum of its

parts. Every morning, I'd wake up and see Herbal and Mystery pitching

quarters into an ice bucket in the middle of the living room or jumping off

a stepladder into a pile of pillows. They were like two kids in search of a

playground.

"I have a feeling that you and I are going to become great friends," Mys-

tery told Herbal one morning.

When Playboy threw our first house party, five hundred people showed

up. We were setting a great example—maybe not to the neighbors, but at

least to the community. Within a month, we had franchised.

A group of PUAs moved into Herbal's old house and christened it Pro-

ject Austin.

Some of our former students in San Francisco rented a five-bedroom

house in Chinatown and held pickup seminars in their living room, giving

birth to Project San Francisco.

Several college students in Perth, Australia, found a house together and

## Chapter



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I was seeing about ten different girls now. They were what the PUAs call

MLTRs—multiple long-term relationships. Unlike AFCs, I never lied to

these girls. They all knew I was seeing other people. And, to my surprise,

even if it didn't make all of them happy, none of them left me. One of the

most important realizations I'd had in the game came from a Huna self-

improvement book that Ross Jeffries had recommended, *Mastering Your Hid-*

In my first month at Project Hollywood, entirely by accident, my sexual re-

*den Self*. It taught me the idea that, "The world is what you think it is." In

ality burst open. Just as Mystery's first workshop had opened my eyes to

other words, if you believe that you need to have a harem and having a

what was possible in a bar, this latest turn of events opened my eyes to what

harem is normal, women will agree to it. It's simply your reality. However, if

was possible in bed.

you want a harem but secretly feel that it's cheating and unethical, you'll

never have one.

And it all happened because Herbal wouldn't let me sleep—for a week

straight.

The only woman who wasn't entirely comfortable with this arrangement-

"Have you ever heard of a sleep diet?" Herbal asked as we sat at Mel's

restaurant. The woman was a short, curvy, effervescent Spanish girl named Isabel, who had a

habit of twitching her nose like a rat in search of cheese. "I only sleep with

one person at a time," she constantly told me. "And I wish you'd do the

same." In his free time, Herbal discovered a lot of things on the Internet: a lim-

ousine on eBay he wanted to get for the house, dirt-cheap 1,000-thread-

count sheets for our beds, a new and better way to fold shirts, and a business

On the fourth day of the sleep experiment, I invited Hea, the indie-

that sold penguins as pets (though when he ordered a penguin for the

rocker I'd met at Highlands, over to keep me awake. She was tiny, like a Chi-

house, he learned that it was a joke website).

huahua, and wore large black spectacles. Yet there was something

“Basically,” he continued, “it’s a way to train your body to survive on

profoundly sexy about her, as if she were just one glass slipper away from

just two hours of sleep a day.”

becoming a princess. Potential for beauty is as attractive to most men as ac-

“How is that?”

tual beauty. When women go out with their hair, makeup, nails, and cloth-

“They did scientific research, and instead of sleeping for eight hours

ing meticulously arranged, it’s equally for the benefit of other women. Men,

every night, what you do is nap for twenty minutes every four hours.”

though they certainly enjoy it, don’t require fashion-magazine grooming

I was tempted. Having six extra hours in the day would give me time to

from a stranger: We have active imaginations. We are constantly stripping

write more, play more, read more, exercise more, go out more, and learn all

every woman naked as well as dressing her up to see if she meets our femi-

the other PUA skills I never had time to.

nine ideal. Hea, then, was a girl who other women ignored yet every man de-

sired. We saw her potential.

“Is there a catch?”

“Well,” Herbal said. “It takes about ten days to adjust to the schedule.

When Hea arrived, Herbal and I greeted her at the door with bloodshot

And it’s not easy. But once you make it over the hump, the naps become to-

eyes, unshaven faces, and dragging feet. The sleep diet was taking its toll.

tally natural. People say they have more energy, though they also find them-

Our manners and maturity were the first to go. We brought her into

selves wanting to drink a lot of juice for some reason.”

Herbal’s room, sat her down on the floor, and played video games on the

Just like when Marko suggested driving to Moldova, I didn’t hesitate to

Xbox for an hour to keep ourselves awake.

say yes. I had nothing to lose if it didn’t work, except ten days of sleep.

When the doorbell rang again, I trudged to answer it and found Isabel

We stocked up on video games and DVDs, and instructed our house-

standing on the doorstep. “I was dancing with some friends at Barfly,” she

mates to help keep us disciplined. Oversleeping or missing even one nap

said, nose a-wiggle. “So since I was in the neighborhood, I thought I’d

would throw off the entire experiment, and we’d have to start over. As an ex-

drop by.”

tra incentive to stay awake, I invited girls to the house each day.

“You know I hate drop-bys.” I had always told my MLTRs to call before

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coming over, in case something like this happened. I sighed and let her in. It

nects a n d you feel like there are t h o u s a n d s of h a n d s massaging you. It was

seemed rude to t u r n her away. “But good to see you, I guess.”

amazing.”

I b r o u g h t her into Herbal’s r o o m a n d introduced everyone. Isabel sat

If you describe anything with enthusiasm and congruence, people will

on the floor next to Hea. Her intuition tingled. She looked Hea up and

want to try it—especially if you d o n ‘ t give them the o p p o r t u n i t y to say no.

down, then asked, “So how do you know Style?”

“Get on your stomach,” I told Isabel. Since she was the girl most likely to

I h a d a feeling this wasn’t a casual visit b u t a sneak attack. So I left

be jealous, I knew we’d need to massage her first. I kneeled on her right side

t h e m alone in the r o o m a n d went to find Mystery. I was too tired for drama.



and positioned Hea on the left, telling her to follow my movements exactly.

“Dude,” I said. “I’m screwed. Isabel and Hea are catfighting. How do I get

When we finished kneading her back, I pulled off my shirt and lay on

side of one of them?”

my stomach. The girls positioned themselves on either side of my back and

“I’ve got a better idea,” he said. “You should threesome them.”

began massaging me—tentatively at first, then with more confidence. As the

“You’re joking.”

two of them leaned over me, their hands tracing circles around my shoulder

“No. One of my students was telling me about a technique he once

used, blades, I could feel the energy in the room begin to charge. The sexual na-

used to get a threesome started. You should try it. Just suggest an innocent

nature of the situation was beginning to dawn on them, if it hadn’t already.

three-way massage. See what happens.”

This was quite possibly going to work.

“Sounds like a gamble.” I didn’t want another disaster, like the Porce-

When it was Hea’s turn, she took off her shirt and lay on her stomach.

This time I made the massage more erotic, rubbing her inner thigh and the

lame TwinZ bathtub incident.

sides of her breasts.

“You’re not gambling. You’re taking a risk. Gambling is completely ran-

After her massage, Hea remained on her stomach while Isabel and I

dom; a risk is calculated. If two girls are at your house listening to you and

kneeled over her. This was the deciding moment. I had to escalate.

giving you IOIs, the odds are in your favor that something will happen.”

I was so nervous my hand started shaking, just like at my humiliating

Mystery could be very persuasive. Throughout this whole pickup pro-

high-school lunch with Elisa. I pulled Isabel’s face close to mine and began

cess, I’d been trying on clothes and behaviors I’d never thought were me.

making out with her. As we kissed, I lowered our bodies until we were prac-

Some of them worked, so I kept them; others didn’t, so I discarded them. I

tically lying on top of Hea, who was trapped under us. Then I turned Hea’s

decided to take a chance. I was willing to risk losing them.

face toward me and began kissing her. She responded. It was working.

I dragged my feet back to Herbal’s room. “Hey, guys,” I told the girls be-

I gently pulled Isabel into the kiss. Once Hea and Isabel’s lips met, the

tween yawns. “I have to show you these h o m e movies t h a t  
Mystery and I

spark of sexual tension t h a t had h u n g in the room d u r i n  
g the massage ex-

made. They’re hilarious.” Inspired by our video of Carly and  
Caroline in

ploded. They were all over each other, as if they’d been  
wanting to do this all

Montreal, Mystery h a d started filming our trips a n d  
adventures, editing

along. But they hadn’t. They’d been bitter rivals less than an h  
o u r earlier. I

t h e m into h u m o r o u s ten-minute shorts.

didn’t u n d e r s t a n d it—but then again I didn’t need to.

I b r o u g h t t h e m up to my room. I h a d no chairs there, of  
course, just a

Hea removed Isabel’s shirt, a n d we both began sucking on  
her breasts.

bed. So we all lay on the comforter while I showed t h e m a  
video Mystery

We pulled off her p a n t s a n d began licking up her thighs  
until her back be-

had made of o u r trip to Australia.

gan to arch. I pulled off Isabel’s panties while Hea crawled  
behind me and

As it ended, I steadied my nerves a n d took the risk. “I just  
experienced

struggled with my pants.

the m o s t amazing thing,” I told the girls. “I went to San  
Diego and h u n g

o u t with my friend Steve P., who’s a guru a n d a s h a m a n .  
And he h a d two of

As I helped her with the button-fly, I glanced at the clock. It was 2:00

A.M. My heart froze. It had been four hours since my last nap. I couldn't just

his s t u d e n t s perform what he called a dual-induction massage on me.

go to sleep in the middle of the first threesome of my life. But if I didn't, the

Their h a n d s were moving in perfect synchronization on my back. And be-

last four days of sleep deprivation would have been in vain.

cause your conscious m i n d can't process all those movements, it discon-

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“Hey,” I told them. “I hate to do this, but I need to take my twenty-

had a boyfriend, I noticed that she was very touchy-feely with Nadia. She

minute nap now. You can join me if you want.”

seemed to have a crush on her. So I thought I'd give her the opportunity to

With Isabel on one side and Hea on the other, I fell asleep instantly. I

act on it.

dreamed that the streets were water, and I was swimming through them.

I excused myself for my much-needed nap—I dreamed I was stranded

When the alarm went off, I pulled both girls into me, and we began fooling

naked in an endless snow-covered field—and then called them up to my  
around again.

room to watch my home movies. Afterward, I initiated the dual-induction

But this time Isabel pulled away. “This is weird,” she said.

massage. And, to my surprise, it worked again. The moment they started

“It’s totally weird,” I replied. “I’ve been thinking the same thing. But it’s

kissing, the girls devoured each other just like Isabel and Hea had. So it

a new experience, so I’m just going with it.”

hadn’t just been a lucky accident the night before.

She nodded and smiled, and pulled my boxer briefs off. Both women

Unlike Isabel, Nadia was a lead sled dog with no jealousy issues. When

put their hands around me, and I leaned back and watched. I wanted to

I fucked Nadia, Barbara knelt behind me and licked my balls. I wanted to

keep the image in my head for future use.

wait and fuck Barbara too, but there would be no waiting.

What was occur-

However, when Hea began to give me a blowjob, Isabel’s body tensed. I

ring was so far beyond my wildest expectations when I’d first joined the

remembered something Rick H. had said about threesomes at David DeAn-

community that I just lost it. I couldn't hold out any longer.  
And I never got

gelo's seminar: The experience has to be about your  
girlfriend's pleasure,

to have sex with Barbara.

not yours. She has to be the lead sled dog—as he put it—and  
your main ob-

This is what the PUAs call a quality problem.

jective is to make sure she's always comfortable and feeling  
good.

Over the last year and a half, I'd spent a lot of time working on  
my ap-

“Is this making you uncomfortable?” I asked the lead sled dog.

pearance, my energy, my attitude, and my state. Yet now, when  
all those

“A little,” she said.

qualities were at their lowest—when I looked and felt like shit  
—I'd had the

I guided Hea's head back up, and we lay together, talking and  
fooling

most sexually decadent two days of my life. There was a  
lesson here: The less

around, until my next nap. I didn't have sex with Hea that  
night; I knew Is-

you appear to be trying, the better you do.

abel wouldn't be able to handle seeing me inside another  
woman. This had

The next day, Herbal and I sat in the living room with a bowl  
of ice

already been a big step for her.

cubes, which we rubbed on ourselves every few minutes to  
shock our sys-

The next night, I was even more exhausted. Herbal and I sat in the liv-

ings into staying awake. The sleep adjustment process was proving to be

ing room watching *Dangerous Liaisons* to stay awake, but we kept drifting

more difficult than we had imagined. I began to worry that we were wasting

into daydreams that lasted fractions of a second. These are called mi-

our time. After all, this whole sleep diet hadn't even been scientifically

crosses: Our bodies needed rest so badly that they were sneaking naps

proven.

whenever we weren't paying attention.

"There better be a rainbow at the end of this tunnel," I babbled to

"This sleep diet thing was a terrible idea," I told Herbal.

Herbal. "I mean, we're chasing after the pot of gold at the end of the rain-

"Just stick with it," he said. "It'll pay off in the long run."

bow. And we don't even know if it's there, or if the rainbow even has an end."

I'd bought several bottles of vitamins to help bolster my immune sys-

Herbal looked startled; I'd snapped him out of a microsleep. "I had a

tem, but I kept forgetting which ones I had taken and when. Fortunately,

dream about gummy worms," he slurred. "Someone was chopping up

Nadia was coming over soon. She was another one of my MLTRs, the sexy

gummy bears to make gummy worms.”

librarian I had met during my personals experiment. She showed up after a

After another two nap cycles, my head began to hurt and my eyes re-

Suicide Girls burlesque show at the Knitting Factory, accompanied by a girl

fused to raise any higher than half-mast. We bathed in cold water, we

named Barbara whose black bangs reminded me of Bettie Page.

slapped ourselves in the face, we ran around the living room chasing each

I poured them a drink and we sat on a couch together. Though Barbara

other with brooms. But nothing worked.

## *Chapter*



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When I felt my teeth to check my braces, I knew I'd passed over the edge

of reason. I hadn't worn braces since junior high.

“I'm going to sleep,” Herbal finally said.

“We can't,” I told him. “If you go to sleep, I won't make it by myself.”

“Watch out for the toothpicks,” he said.



We both started cracking up. He'd just had a microsleep.  
Dreams and

reality were blurring.

And then Tyler Durden arrived.

"Just try to make it through one more sleep cycle," I told him.

He looked like he'd been spray-tanning. "I know I didn't make  
a good

But after the next twenty-minute nap, I couldn't get Herbal out  
of bed.

impression in L.A.," he said. He shook my hand. He even  
looked me in the

He refused to even open his eyes. I couldn't continue on my  
own, so I

eye for a microsecond.

dragged my feet upstairs and drifted into the sweetest slumber  
of my life.

He wore a trendy black-and-white shirt with ropes hanging  
from the

And though I had failed the sleep experiment, I'd reached a  
new plateau in

rib cage area like a corset. It wasn't peacocky; it was the kind  
of shirt I would

my game.

have bought. "Social intelligence is something that hasn't  
come easy for

I know I should be humble about the dual-induction massage  
and pre-

me," he continued. I think he was apologizing. "I'm still  
working at it.<; .can

tend like it was another step down a degrading path. But  
discovering the se-

come across as self-centered when I slip. Not cool. I suppose I should be

cret to threesomes was like finding the Rosetta Stone of pickup. Once the

more equipped to, as Mystery always tells me, learn how to sarge guys.”

dual-induction massage routine was developed and shared, PUAs all over

It was humble of him. He’d done dozens of workshops since we’d met,

the world started having threesomes. It was like breaking the three-minute

and I’d been watching his progress online. His students said he now rivaled

mile. The dual-induction massage would ultimately ensure my ranking as

Mystery in his pickup prowess. I was willing to give him a second chance:

the number one PUA on Thundercat’s list for a second year running.

maybe he really had done some serious work on himself. That’s the idea

Project Hollywood was already a success.

This community was predicated on, after all. Since we would both be going

to Las Vegas to wing one of Mystery’s workshops that weekend, I was look-

ing forward to seeing if the stories about his prowess in the field were true.

Tyler slung his bag over his shoulder and walked up to Papa’s room.

Between Papa’s newfound passion for business and Tyler Durden’s quest to

be the community's best pickup artist, they made a perfect team.

Our house now had the most admired PUAs in the game. Of course, to

the best of my recollection, Tyler Durden had never been approved as a res-

ident. There wasn't room for anyone else. However, Papa had taken it upon

himself to invite him, converting one of his bathroom closets into an extra

bedroom by putting a mattress on the floor.

We didn't have furniture yet. Just a collection of fifty throw pillows

we'd bought to cover the sunken dance floor. That night, Playboy rigged his

movie projector to show films on the ceiling, and we all lay in the pillow pit

and watched *Carnal Knowledge*.

Afterward, Tyler Durden turned to me. "Your archive has been really in-

fluential in my game," he said. My collected posts on the seduction news-

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groups had been compiled into a large text file and posted online along

and I have developed a lot of new techniques to blow you and Mystery out,"

with the archives of Mystery and Ross Jeffries. "A lot of my best shit I took

he said.

from there."

“So what do you say about me?” I asked, trying to pretend I wasn’t

It was hard to get out of a conversation with Tyler Durden. Whenever

disturbed.

he wasn’t playing the game, he was talking about it.

Tyler Durden started laughing. “We say, ‘There’s Style. He’s actually

“I’ve been experimenting with telling people I’m you in the field,”

forty-five years old, but he looks pretty young to me. He’s so cute. He’s like

Tyler said.

a little Elmer Fudd.”

“What do you mean?”

I stared at him in disbelief. He was AMOGing his fellow PUAs. It was

“I tell them I’m Neil Strauss, and that I write for *Rolling Stone*.”

diabolical.

“And does it get results?” The idea of this pasty little freak running

“You can get me,” Tyler said. “You can say I look like the Pillsbury

around telling people he was me turned my stomach, but I tried to act

Doughboy.”

nonchalant.

I choked back my disgust and thought, “What would Tom Cruise do?”

“It depends. Sometimes they think I’m lying. Sometimes girls instantly

“But I don’t want to get you, man,” I replied, keeping my own counsel

say, Oh my God, we should hang out’. And other girls, if you tell them that

and giving him a big smile like I thought *it* was all very funny.

“Here\ the

shit, you’re blown out because it looks like you’re bragging.”

difference between you and me: I like to surround myself with people who

“Let me tell you something. I’ve been writing for over a decade, and it

are better than me because I enjoy being pushed and challenged. You, on

hasn’t gotten me laid once. Writers aren’t cool or sexy. There’s no social

the other hand, like to become the best person in the room by eliminating

proof to be gained by hanging out with a writer. At least, that’s been my ex-

anyone who’s better than you.”

perience. Why do you think I joined the community? But I’m flattered that

“Yeah, maybe you’re right,” he said.

you tried.”

Later, I would realize I was only half right. Tyler Durden did like to

That weekend, Tyler Durden, Mystery, and I went to Las Vegas. Papa

eliminate competition. But not before he’d squeezed every piece of useful

had booked ten students for Mystery, which was pretty good for a six per-

information out of them.

son workshop. We took them to the Hard Rock Casino.  
Generally, on the

For the rest of the weekend, whenever I talked to a person,  
male or fe-

first night, the students watch the instructors work.

male, Tyler Durden was hovering behind me, listening to  
every word. I

As a PUA, Tyler Durden had improved drastically since I'd  
last seen

could see him thinking, trying to figure out the rules and  
patterns behind

him in Los Angeles, where he didn't talk to any women. When I noticed him

everything I said that kept me dominant in a group. He had studied my

sarging a bachelorette party, I inched closer to listen. He was talking about

archive. He was studying my personality. Soon, he would no doubt know

Mystery.

more about me than I did. And then, as with the AMOGs in Leicester

“See that tall guy in the top hat?” he was telling them. “He needs a lot

Square, he'd turn my own words and mannerisms against me.

of attention, so he'll say hurtful things to people just to make them like

At the end of the night, I saw a two-set sitting at the bar in the Peacock

him. So humor him, because he needs help.”

Lounge: a tall, creepy, bespectacled brunette with incongruously large fake

He was giving away Mystery's game—neutralizing his negs.

breasts and a short blonde tomboy with a white beret and a small, thick,

“He likes doing magic tricks to get people to accept him,” he contin-

curvy body.

ued. “So just be nice and pretend like you're excited. He does a lot of chil-

“That blonde girl's a porn star,” Mystery said. He was the expert. “Her

dren's birthday parties.”

name's Faith. That's your set."

Now he was neutralizing Mystery's value-demonstrating routines.

Despite the year and a half I'd spent in the community, despite being

After Tyler Durden left the set, I asked him what he was doing. "Papa

supposedly the best, I was still intimidated when I saw a beautiful woman.

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My old AFC self was always threatening to snap back, whispering that

"I know," I told her.

everything I'd learned was wrong, that I was bowing before false gods, that

"How?"

all this game talk was just mental masturbation.

"I felt our connection all night. Even when I was talking to those two

But I pushed myself to enter the set anyway, just to prove that little

other girls, I saw you looking at me."

AFC voice in the back of my head wrong. As soon as I opened my mouth, I

She kneeled on the floor, circled her hand around my limp father of

went into autopilot.

thousands, and lowered her mouth over it. But I couldn't get hard. I was

I opened with jealous girlfriend.

overwhelmed.



I gave myself a time constraint.

I stood up and pushed her roughly against the wall. I circled my hands

I negged the target about her hoarse voice.

around her throat and made out with her, as I'd seen Sin do to women in

I did the best friends test.

his house when I was still an AFC. Then I pulled her pants down, sat her on

C-shaped smiles versus U-shaped smiles.

the toilet seat, fingered her, and went down on her. She arched her back,

ESP experiment.

fluttered her eyelids, and moaned, as if she were about to cum; but instead

“There's so much I can learn from you,” Faith said.

she suddenly switched positions and went down on me again.

“We love you,” gushed her creepy friend.

“I want you to cum in my mouth,” she said.

They were eating out of my hands. I'm a nerdy Elmer Fudd spouting

I still couldn't get hard. This had never happened to me before. I mean,

bullshit tests I made up, and these two girls whose collective breasts weigh

I'm hard right now as I'm remembering this.

more than me were staring at me rapt. I had nothing to be afraid of. No guy

“I want to be inside you,” I told her, in a last-ditch effort to get my

out there had the tools we did.

blood flowing to the right place.

I must kill off that inner AFC. When will he die?

She stood up and turned around. I pulled a condom out of my pocket

I signaled to Mystery to wing the obstacle. As he sat next to the creepy

and thought about every beautiful woman I had approached that night. I

girl, I went back on autopilot.

started to get a little harder. She sat down on me, her back against my stom-

Evolution phase-shift.

ach, which was the worst position for a semi-erect dick to reach around. As

Smell.

soon as I was partway inside her, I went soft again. I couldn't figure out if it

Pull hair.

was the two Jack and Cokes I drank that night, the lack of foreplay, the in-

Bite arm.

timidation factor of being with a porn star, or the fact that I'd masturbated

Bite neck.

earlier that day.

“How do you rate yourself as a kisser on a scale of one to ten?”

When we walked out of the bathroom, half the workshop students

Suddenly, Faith jumped out of her seat. “I'm getting too turned on,”

were standing there waiting for a lay report. One of the hippies I had been

she said. “I have to leave.”

talking to before went to the bathroom and emerged afterward  
with my

I couldn't figure out if she was just giving me an excuse because  
I had

condom wrapper in a Kleenex. Evidently, I had left it on the  
floor, and she

made a mistake at some point in the sarge, or if I was really that  
good.

felt obliged to show it around. Everyone was celebrating a feat  
that hadn't

I approached a nearby set—two hippie girls on a bender—and  
was in

actually happened.

with them instantly. Ten minutes into our conversation,  
however, Faith re-

I couldn't look Faith in the eye afterward. I had built myself up  
as such

turned, grabbed my hand, and said, "Let's go to the bathroom."  
a mysterious, fascinating, sexually powerful guy. And then, in  
the moment

We walked into the restroom on the side of the Peacock Lounge,  
and

of truth, the lies had come crashing down, revealing a skinny  
bald guy with

she lowered the toilet seat and sat me down on it. As she  
unbuttoned my

a limp dick.

pants, she said, "You so turn me on, intellectually and sexually."

## *Chapter*



“Come with me,” Tyler Durden said, grabbing her arm.

I started to apologize. What I had done was wrong, and I knew it logi-

cally. But when that bubble of connection and passion builds around you

and a girl, logic goes out the window and instinct takes over. I had fucked

up. Sure, he’d been AMOGing me. But two wrongs don’t make a right. I felt

like shit.

On the last night of the Las Vegas workshop, Tyler Durden picked up a

However, consolation was only a few steps away. Tyler took Stacy to

hostess named Stacy at the Hard Rock Cafe. She was a vampirish blonde

our hotel room, leaving her roommate, Tammy, behind. We were making

who listened to new metal. When her shift ended, Stacy met us at the casino

out within five minutes. I couldn’t believe how easy this was. She was the

and brought along her roommate, Tammy, a quiet beauty with a touch of

sixth girl I’d made out with that weekend.

baby fat and a scent of grape Bubblicious.

Mystery, in the meantime, had picked up a scantily clad stripper named

I was wearing a ridiculous snakeskin suit; Mystery was dressed in a top

Angela who, in his estimation, was a 10.5. So we decided to ditch the

hat, flight goggles, six-inch platform boots, black latex pants, and a black

workshop—it was 2:00 A.M. and they'd gotten their money's worth—and

T-shirt with a scrolling red digital sign that said "Mystery" on it. Even for

take our dates to an after hours club called Dre's.

Vegas, he looked like a freak.

As we walked to the cab stand, Mystery paused and looked at himself in

Within minutes, Tyler Durden was AMOGing him to Stacy. "He wears

the casino mirror. "Winning feels good," he said, grinning to his reflection,

these weird signs and people laugh at him," he told her. "I always tell him he

which grinned right back at him.

doesn't need to do that for people to accept him."

In the taxi, Angela sat on Mystery's lap, facing him, with her skirt

The students fanned the room to talk to women as I leaned against the

spread over his knees. Before we were even out of the parking lot, they were

bar and watched them. After awhile, Stacy sidled up next to me. She had

making out. She bit her lip before they kissed. She softly moaned every time

been watching me lead the workshop and, from sheer social proof (lead the

their lips separated. She sucked his index finger in and out of her mouth.

men and you lead the women), she had become interested. As we talked, she

She was performing for him, for us, for the less attractive masses outside,

held eye contact with me. She played with her hair. She looked for excuses

for God above. Everyone we drove past yelled and whistled at the lip-locked

to touch my arm. She leaned in when I leaned back. All the IOIs were there.

pair. In response, she arched her back and pulled her white panties to the

I could feel the air around us tingle, as it always does when a potential kiss

side, revealing a patch of pubic hair shaved into a perfect teardrop. Mystery

is accumulating energy.

put a finger inside her. He was validated. She was validated. They validated

I knew it was wrong. She was Tyler Durden's girl. There's a PUA code of

each other. They were a perfect pair, each completely unaware of the other.

ethics: The first one to approach a set gets to game the target, until either

At 5:00 A.M., when Angela left to drive back to Los Angeles, Mystery,

she submits or he gives up. But a PUA also doesn't AMOG his wing. If Tyler

Tammy, and I took a cab to the hotel room we were sharing with Tyler Dur-

Durden was going to tell girls I was Elmer Fudd, then Elmer Fudd was go-

den at the Luxor. I collapsed onto the bed with Tammy, and we started

ing to hunt his rabbit.

making out. Mystery was on the other bed. Tyler was in a chair, with Stacy

I stroked her hair. She smiled.

in his lap.

Would she like to kiss me?

Tammy took off her top and bra, and then lowered my pants. She

She would.

wrapped her hand around me, and started working it up and down while

We did.

twisting her wrist. Her mouth joined her hand. This time my equipment

Then a shock of orangey blonde hair appeared in the periphery of my

worked, no problem. I guess something about the combination of whisky,

vision. It was Mr. Heat Miser. And he was pissed.

porn stars, and public bathrooms was too cliché even for me.

## Chapter



EB4

Tammy took her pants off, and I reached into my jeans pocket and put

a condom on. But after having sex with her for a minute, I stopped. The

boys were there. They were watching, or maybe they were trying not to

watch. I had no idea; I was too scared to look at them. I've never had sex

with other guys in the room, let alone PUAs.

Tammy didn't seem to have any qualms about it. I admired her for that.

Nonetheless, I picked her up, brought her into the shower, and turned on

Mystery and Tyler Durden weren't leaving Vegas until the evening, so they

the water. I pressed her against the shower door, smashing her breasts

stayed with the girls and I took a cab to the airport alone. On the flight

against the glass, and took her from behind. After five minutes of thrusting,

home, I had a dream:

the bathroom door burst open and a flash went off. Mystery, Tyler Durden,



I pick up a woman and go back to her house. She takes me to her room,  
and Stacy were standing there, taking photos.  
and I struggle with last minute resistance for hours. All night long, it's push-  
All I could think was, "They have dirt on me now." I didn't realize until  
pull, submit-resist. Finally, I give up and go to sleep.  
later that to them it was just a souvenir of good times in Las Vegas. Just as  
In the morning, I'm sitting on a couch in her living room. Her room-  
with the *New York Times* article, I was the only one worried about being ex-  
mate, a Latin woman with bright red lipstick, saunters up to me and says,  
posed. Everyone else was simply having fun at a friends' expense. I had to  
"I'm sorry my roommate isn't putting out, but you can be with me instead  
get it through my head that these guys didn't care about the writer Neil  
if you want."  
Strauss. They were so entrenched in the community that nothing outside  
She sits on the couch and spreads her legs in the air. She isn't wearing  
of it mattered or seemed real. Newspapers only came across their radar if  
anything below the waist. She repeats her offer. I accept.  
they happened to run a science article about animal mating habits. If a dis-

Her lipstick smears across my face as we make out. But when it comes

aster struck somewhere in the world, it was just material for a pattern about

time to have sex, though my dick looks hard, it isn't rigid. I feel like I'm try-

taking advantage of the moment because you never know what will happen

ing to stuff a Twinkie inside her.

tomorrow.

Afterward, my original target walks in. That's what I call her in my

Afterward, the girls invited us to their place for breakfast. We packed

dream: my target. I try to hide my lipstick-stained mouth as we talk. I can

our bags, drove to their apartment, and ate the best bacon and eggs of our

hear her roommate laughing from somewhere behind me. And I know I've

lives. Tyler Durden and Mystery sat on the couch and talked openly about

just failed a planned test by cheating on the girl who brought me home.

their pickup business: I could see they were squaring off. Mystery kept call-

Now she'll never like me, because she knows what I'm really like.

ing him a former student; Tyler Durden felt like he had surpassed his mas-

That night, the girls have a party. Mystery is hitting on my target. He

ter and was offering an entirely new and original method of seduction.

gives her a garage-door opener as a gift. When no one is looking, I grab it

The sun was up, and I didn't feel like talking about pickup when I had

and walk outside. I keep pressing it, figuring that a door will open some-

a real live girl I could be sleeping with. So Tammy took me to her room and

where with a spectacular present for her.

gave me a blow job, and then I slept for two hours before my flight home.

While I am investigating, Mystery comes outside, looking for the girl. It

There was something about her bed—the way it filled the room, the im-

turns out that the gift was part of a routine—a way to get her outside in pri-

maculate whiteness, the softness of the sheets, the thickness of the com-

vate. By pressing the button, I had paged him. I run down the street at top

forter, the tightness of the tucked-in bedding—that was intoxicating. I've

speed, but within seconds Mystery catches up to me. His legs are so long it

always loved women's bedrooms: They're soft and sweet-smelling, like

isn't even a challenge for him.

heaven must be.

"I'm pissed at you for hitting on my target," I say.

“You had your chance with her’and nothing happened,” he replies.

“The window closed and now it’s my turn.”

## *Chapter*



2BB

When I woke up, I understood the part of the dream about the test right

away. I’d failed it by making out with Tyler Durden’s target. And after my

disaster with the porn star, the impotence was self-explanatory. But I

couldn’t understand the part about Mystery hitting on my target —that is,

until I returned home and Mystery called.

“I hope you don’t mind,” he said, “but Tammy just gave me a blow job.

The point was women; the result was men.

She swallowed my load.”

Instead of models in bikinis lounging by the Project Hollywood pool

Somewhere in her stomach, my sperm was mingling with Mystery’s.

all day, we had pimply teenagers, bespectacled businessmen, tubby stu-

“I don’t mind,” I said. And I didn’t. It was part of being friends —a play-

dents, lonely millionaires, struggling actors, frustrated taxi drivers, and

ful competition between PUAs. “Just remember that I was there first.”

computer programmers—lots of computer programmers. They walked in

Tyler Durden, however, didn't see it that way. It wasn't playful competi-

our door AFCs; they came out players.

tion to him. It was his life.

Every Friday when they arrived, Mystery or Tyler Durden stood in front

He would never forgive me for making out with his target.

of the pillow pit and taught them pretty much the same openers, body lan-

guage tips, and value-demonstrating routines. On Saturday afternoon, they

all went shopping on Melrose. They bought the same four-inch-platform

New Rock boots and black-and-white striped shirt with bits of rope hang-

ing from the sides. They bought the same rings, necklaces, hats, and sun-

glasses. They went to the tanning salon.

We were breeding an army.

At night they descended on the Sunset Strip, a swarm of player bees.

Even when the seminar and workshop ended, students lingered in the clubs

on Sunset for months afterward, working on their game. You could spot

them from behind by the matching boots and the rope dangling from their

shirts. They clustered in groups, prowling for open sets and sending in

emissaries to say, “Hey, I need to get a female opinion on something.”

Even on nights when there weren’t workshops, badly peacocked guys

from a hundred-mile radius gathered in our living room before going

out. At 2:30 A.M., they reconvened at the house—either accompanied by

drunk, giggling girls from Orange County, who they brought to the

Jacuzzi, the terrace, the closets, and the pillow pit, or empty-handed and

breaking down their approaches until dawn. They couldn’t stop talking

about this stuff.

“Do you know why my skill set is better than all my friends?” Tyler

Durden said one afternoon, as he plopped down in the booth at Mel’s next

to me. “There is only one fucking reason.”

“You’re more sensitive?” I asked.

“No, because I plow!” he said with a triumphant flourish. By “plowing,”

“Some of the RSD11 guys.”

he meant blitzing a girl with line after line, routine after routine, without

“How many people?”

even waiting for a response. “The other night, this girl was running away,

“Well, right now, Tyler Durden and Sickboy are in the closets in my

and I screamed the routine at her. She came back like a fucking tractor

bathroom. And I have three boot camp students sleeping in the room.”

beam. I have no regard for social conventions: I’ll pummel their asses down.

“If anyone’s staying more than a month, they need to be approved,

You have to plow it. No situation can’t be plowed.”

like we agreed at the house meeting. There are enough guys in the house

“I don’t plow,” I told him. There were guys who won girlfriends by chas-

as it is.”

ing them until they relented and agreed to meet. But I wasn’t a chaser. I

“Outstanding,” Papa said.

wasn’t a plower. All I did was give her the opportunity to like me, and either

“If they’re using the resources of the house, they should be paying,”

she did or didn’t. Usually she did.

Mystery said.

“You just fucking push push push, and it can’t not work,” Tyler Dur-

Papa looked at him blankly.

den went on. “If the girls get mad at me, I’ll change my voice tone and apol-

“I can’t talk to that guy,” Mystery complained to me. “He just sits there

ogize and tell them I’m not well socially calibrated.”

and stares at you and says, ‘Outstanding.’ He’s so fucking passive.”

I watched Tyler Durden as he spoke. For all his talk about women, I

“That’s not true,” Papa said. “You think you can push me around be-

rarely saw him in the company of one.

cause I was a former student.” I’d never seen Papa upset before. He didn’t

“Maybe the reason I’m not getting into a lot of relationships,” he said

get loud, like most people; instead, his voice became very stuffy. Somewhere

as we left the diner, “is that I don’t like oral sex.”

inside, there was a living, breathing, emotional person waiting to be set free.

“Giving or receiving?”

After that day, Papa stopped entering the house through the front

“Both.”

door. Instead, in order to avoid Mystery, he walked all the way around the

That’s when I realized that Tyler Durden wasn’t in the community to

back to the patio and climbed a staircase that led to a door in his bathroom.

get laid. He wasn’t motivated by sex. He was motivated by power.

All his guests did the same.

Papa’s motivations were harder to determine. Originally, he was in the

game for the girls. When we moved into Project Hollywood, he envisioned

turning his room into a high-tech sultan’s lair, with a harem just a phone



call away. He talked about getting a bed like a throne, a high-end home en-

tertainment center, a bar next to the fireplace, and drapery hanging from

the ceiling.

But that's not what his room became. When I returned from Mel's with

Tyler, Mystery was in Papa's room, arguing.

"You're giving Tyler Durden more students than you're giving me,"

Mystery was saying.

"I'm trying to make this win-win for everyone," Papa protested. The ex-

pression seemed hollow every time he used it.

As I looked around his room, I was appalled. There was hardly any fur-

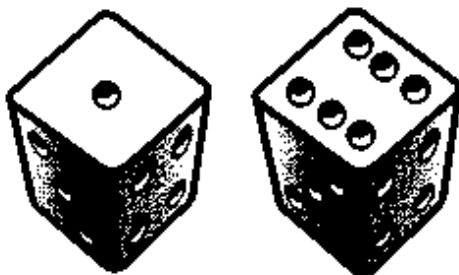
niture, just sleeping bags and pillows strewn across the floor. Women have

one word for bedrooms like this: dealbreaker.

"Who's living here?" I asked.

11 An acronym for Real Social Dynamics. See glossary.

## *Chapter*



**291**

Tyler Durden had been training to become instructors, opened the pro-

ceedings.

As Playboy discussed body language, I thought back to  
Belgrade and

the first workshop I'd taught with Mystery. I remembered too-  
cool Exoti-

coption, Sasha skipping down the street with his first e-mail-  
close, and

Jerry's sense of humor. I loved those guys. I cared about them. I  
wanted

*My father died when I was forty*

them to get laid. I e-mailed them for months afterward, checking  
on their

*And I couldn't find a way to cry*

progress.

*Not because I didn't love him*

Now I looked around the living room and saw neediness and  
hunger

*Not because he didn't try*

and desperation. Bald guys with goatees—miniature and super-  
sized ver-

*I'd cried for every lesser thing*

sions of myself—asked me to pose for photos with them. Good-  
looking

*Whiskey, pain, and beauty*

guys who could have been models clamored for advice on  
hairstyles and

*But he deserved a better tear*

clothes to buy, and then asked me to pose for photos with them.

*And I was not quite ready*

Two gangly brothers at the convention—both virgins—brought  
their

sister along. She was a quiet nineteen-year-old imp with large  
eyes, gum-

The lyrics boomed through the living room. Mystery was lying in the pillow

drop breasts, and a hip-hop fashion sense. Thanks to her brothers, she

pit with his computer on his chest. He was playing the song “The Randall

knew everything about the game. When guys approached her with cocky

Knife” by Guy Clark over and over.

funny lines, she told them, “Don’t try that David DeAngelo stuff on me. I’ve

He seemed to be in need of attention. So I walked over and gave him

read it all.” She introduced herself as Min, and then asked me to pose for a

some.

photo with her.

“My dad died,” he said. His voice was flat and even. It was hard to tell if

“I’m a big fan of your posts,” she said.

he was sad or not. “It’s about time. It happened very quickly. He had an-

“You’ve read them?” I asked, shocked.

other stroke, and then he died at 10:00 A.M. today.”

“Yeah.” She bit her lip.

I sat down next to him and listened to him talk. He was a passive ob-

For my presentation, I brought in five of the girls I was dating. I ran

server of himself, analytically deconstructing his emotions as he felt them.

routines on them, and then used them as a panel of experts to critique the

“Even though I was ready for it, it’s strange. It’s like when Johnny Cash clothing and body language of various wanna-be players in the audience. I died. You knew it was going to happen, but it was still a shock.” received a standing ovation.

Mystery had hated his dad his whole life and wished death on him

Afterward, I sat on our newly purchased blood-red couches surrounded countless times. But now that it had happened, he didn’t know how to feel.

by Papa, Tyler Durden, and a few of their students. They were discussing

He seemed confused that he felt a little sad, despite himself.

the video of Mystery and I picking up Caroline and Carly. Somehow, Gun-

“The only times we ever bonded were when a hot woman came on TV,”

witch had gotten hold of it and put it on the Internet, shattering what was

he said. “Then he’d look at me and I’d look at him, and we’d quietly appre-

left of my anonymity.

ciate it together.”

“It’s so genius,” Papa was saying. “Tyler Durden has broken down

A few days later, we hosted the first annual Pickup Artist Summit at

everything Style does to a science. He calls it Stylemogging.”

our house. PUAs from around the world flew in to speak, and several hun-

“What’s that?” one of the students asked.

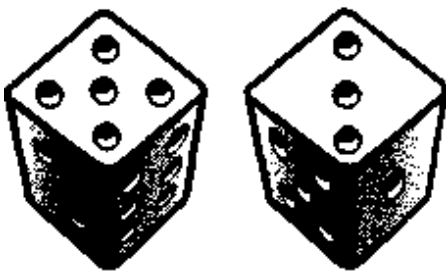
dred rAFCs (recovering average frustrated chumps) gathered in our living

“It’s a type of frame control,” Tyler Durden replied. A frame is an NLP

room to hear them. Our housemates Playboy and Xaneus, who Papa and

term: It is the perspective through which one sees the world. Whoever’s

## *Chapter*



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frame—or subjective reality—is the strongest tends to dominate an interac-

tion. “Style has all these really subtle ways of keeping control of the frame

and getting people to qualify themselves to him. He makes sure that the fo-

cus is always on him. I’m writing a post about it.”

“That’s awesome,” I said.

Suddenly, Papa, Tyler Durden, and the students laughed. “That’s one

of the things you do,” Papa said. “Tyler’s writing about that.”

On the last day of the summit, Mystery had a brainstorm: He was going to

“What? I just said ‘awesome.’ That’s because I think it’s hilarious. Seri-

raise the price of his workshop from six hundred dollars to fifteen hundred.

ously, I can't wait to read it."

He wanted Papa to change the website to reflect the increase.

They all laughed again. Evidently I was Stylemogging them.

"That doesn't make sense," Papa protested. "The market won't support

"See," Tyler Durden said. "You'll use curiosity as a frame to get rapport

that." Papa rarely went out anymore. Instead, he spent his nights working

and make the other person lose social value. When you show approval like

on the Real Social Dynamics website and Internet affiliate program. Since

that, it makes you the authority and makes other people want to seek your

we'd moved into the house, I'd seen him with a woman exactly once.

validation. We're teaching that."

"It's my method," Mystery said. "People will pay. I've worked it all out."

"Shit," I replied. "Now, every time I say something, people are going to

"It's not practical." Papa stared straight through Mystery's chest. He

think I'm running a Real Social Dynamics routine."

didn't like confrontation.

They all laughed again. And that's when I realized that I was fucked:

"This is unacceptable!"

Everything Tyler Durden was writing about wasn't anything I had learned

Mystery stomped through the living room, where Extramask was giving

in the community. That was all part of me and who I really was.  
And even

a presentation. Extramask had arrived in town a week before the  
seminar and

though he had my intentions wrong—that was his frame, his  
way of looking

was sleeping somewhere in the house—I wasn't sure exactly  
where, since Papa

at the world—he had my mannerisms down. He was taking the  
building

had run out of closets to stuff people into. I had hardly talked to  
Extramask

blocks of my personality, giving them names, and turning them  
into rou-

since he'd arrived. He was always either in Papa's room  
working for Real So-

tines. He was going to take my soul and spread it all over the  
Sunset Strip.

cial Dynamics, winging a workshop with Tyler Durden, or  
working out.

I watched him for a few minutes. He was buff now, wearing a  
torn

T-shirt and a loosely knotted tie. He was telling the students that  
he hadn't

lost his virginity—or even held a girl's hand—until he was  
twenty-six-and-

a-half. It was a gimmick now, part of his routine for guys. He  
had become

a guru too. And, along the way, he'd lost the innocence he had  
when we

first met.

“I do a lot of things with this cell phone, and it doesn't even  
work,” he

said, holding it up. “I just like to talk into it and pretend that I’m the man, especially if I feel uncomfortable at a club. Your cell phone is your best wingman.”

Extramask had great stage presence and an oddball sense of humor. I wished he’d spend more time working on his stand-up comedy career than teaching seduction. Unlike Mystery and Tyler Durden, he wasn’t born for this.

I followed Mystery into the kitchen. He was leaning against a counter, and a shaven-headed PUA in tow. It seemed like wherever I was during the waiting for me. “Papa’s been doing workshops behind my back,” he

convention, a small group gathered, and I wound up holding court.

fumed. “Someone told me they saw him at the Highlands with six guys

“You had the best presentation of the day,” the bald PUA said. “You

last weekend.”

were so gentle and elegant with those girls. It was like watching a beauti-

I hopped onto the counter and sat at eye level with him.

fully choreographed dance.”

“Let me catch you up to speed on what else has been going on,” he said.

“Thanks, man. What’s your name?”



I assumed he was going to complain about Papa, but instead he wanted to

“I’m Stylechild.”

talk about Patricia. She had started dating an African-American jock she’d

For the first time in months, I was speechless.

met at her strip club, and now she was pregnant with his baby. Though she

“I named myself after you.”

had no plans to marry him, she wanted to keep the child. Her biological

As he told me about his luckless life and his discovery of the commu-

alarm clock was still ringing.

nity and my posts, I saw Min looking at me with her impish eyes. And I

“I’m trying to look at this objectively,” Mystery said, straddling a chair

made the conscious decision not to game her, because that’s what all the

at the breakfast table that no one used. “I’m not angry. But I am hurt. It

other guys at the seminar were doing. Besides the girls I had used in my pre-

makes me want to kill the baby and kill him.”

sentation, she had been the only woman in the house all weekend.

Among the required reading for all PUAs were books on evolutionary

That night at the Saddle Ranch, Min’s eyes were still burning a hole in

theory: *The Red Queen* by Matt Ridley, *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins,

my head. I had to say something—but it couldn't be anything she'd read on-

*Sperm Wars* by Robin Baker. You read them, and you understand why

line or heard from her brothers.

women tend to like jerks, why men want so many sexual partners, and why

“Listen,” I finally told her. “I'm about to sign up to ride the mechanical

so many people cheat on their spouses. At the same time, however, you un-

bull. Why don't you join me?”

derstand that the violent impulses most of us successfully repress are actu-

It wasn't a line: I still had designs on that mechanical bull. In many

ally normal and natural. For Mystery, a Darwinist by nature, these books

ways, it reminded me of the game. It had eleven settings, from ridiculously

gave him an intellectual justification for his antisocial emotions and his de-

easy to fiendishly difficult. And ever since I'd first set eyes on the bull, it had

sire to harm the organism that had mated with his woman. It was not a

been my goal to get to the top setting—the mythical eleven. So far, I'd only

healthy thing.

made it to ten.

Tyler Durden walked into the kitchen and saw Mystery moping at the

It was a completely pointless ambition, with no practical application

table.

whatsoever. But if you sit the average male down in front of anything

“You know what you need to do?” he told Mystery. “You need to sarge.”

halfway intriguing and explain to him that it has a system of rankings that

Sarging was Tyler Durden’s solution for everything: He truly believed

he can get better at over time, he’ll become obsessed. Hence the popularity

in it. Picking up women could cure all problems—depression, inertia, ani-

of video games, martial arts, Dungeons and Dragons, and the seduction

mosity, colitis, lice. Though I’d moved into the house to build a lifestyle, for

community.

Tyler Durden sarging was the only way to live. He never went on dates. In-

I asked the bull-wrangler to set the machine to eleven, gave him a five-

stead he brought women to the clubs on Sunset, and then usually ditched

dollar tip to make sure he went easy on me, then climbed through the gate

them to pick up more girls.

and mounted the bull. I was wearing leather pants—not to peacock, but to

“You need to get out of the house,” Tyler continued. “Go out with Style

help me stick to the sides of the machine. The first time I rode it,  
my thighs

tonight. You guys have super-tight game. You can find a new  
girlfriend

were black-and-blue the next day, and I could hardly walk. I  
understood

twice as hot as Patricia.”

then what a woman must feel like after sex with a three-  
hundred-pound guy.

Next, the virgin brothers came into the kitchen, with their sister  
Min

I pressed my crotch firmly against the front of the saddle,  
clamped my

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legs against the flank of the bull, and raised my hand to signal I  
was ready.

like gangs. Bands of former students patrolled every club—the  
Standard,

In an instant the machine shuddered to life, vibrating me so  
quickly that

Dublin’s, the Saddle Ranch, Miyagi’s. When the bars closed at  
2:00 A.M.,

my eyes lost focus. I remember feeling my brain about to fall  
out of my

they’d invade Mel’s, walking up and down the aisles, seating  
themselves at

skull, my hips rocking faster than they’d ever moved before, my  
legs losing

any table with a female. They carted women into the house by  
the truckload.

their grip, and my crotch jackhammering into the saddle handle  
in time

And they were all using my material. They were running around  
Style-

with the bull. But just as I was about to slide off the side, the  
bull stopped. I

mogging and delivering the best-friends test like they were  
Spanish flies. In

had lasted seven seconds.

every club, I saw their shaven heads, their diabolical goatees,  
their shoes

At first, I was elated. I felt like I had accomplished something—  
even

that looked like the pair I'd bought in the Beverly Center a week  
before.

though it was really nothing. It wouldn't change my life, or the  
life of any-

Mini-mes were everywhere. And there was nothing I could do  
about it.

one around me in the least. I began to wonder why I had cared  
so much.

Within minutes, I already had buyer's remorse.

Afterward, Min said she was tired and asked me to walk her  
back to

Project Hollywood.

I understood the subtext.

As we ambled back to the mansion arm-in-arm, she talked about  
her

older brothers and their difficulty learning the game. "They're  
real protec-

tive and get mad when I go on dates," she said. "But I think  
they're jealous

because they're not going on dates themselves."

When we returned to Project Hollywood, I brought her to the  
Jacuzzi.

“My last boyfriend was the sweetest guy, and he did everything for me,”

she went on. “But I didn’t like him. He got on my nerves. After I started

reading my brothers’ pickup stuff, I understood why I wasn’t attracted to

him or any of the other guys at school. They’re all so boring. They don’t un-

derstand cocky funny.”

I stripped down to my boxers and jumped in the water, soothing my

bull-bucked wounds. She joined me in her bra and panties. She was thin

and delicate, like a marionette. I took her hands and pulled her toward me.

She straddled my legs, and we began making out. I took her bra off and put

her gumdrops in my mouth. Then I carried her naked and dripping to my

bedroom, put on a condom, and slowly entered her. There was no LMR. By

looking up to me so much, her brothers had driven her into my arms.

She was my first groupie. And she would not be my last. This whole

PUA thing was getting too big. With so many new competing seduction

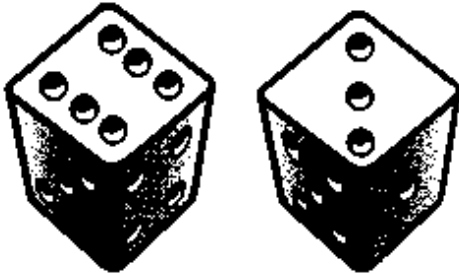
businesses aggressively marketing their services online, the community was

growing exponentially, especially in Southern California, where the Sunset

Strip was transforming before our eyes.

No woman was safe. Workshops of fifteen people wandered the street

## *Chapter*



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and there were already two workshops there. Practically every set there had

been approached already with the “who lies more” opener, so I started open-

ing people in the street outside.

I would recommend that anyone starting out go and do this. (But make

sure you’ve broken in your New Rocks first, lol!) I have now decided to try to

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery’s Lounge

get 1,000 approaches under my belt before the end of the month. My open-

**SUBJECT:** My Approach Schedule

ing game is going to be supertight, and I will no longer be resentful of women

**AUTHOR:** Adonis

and fear their power to make me feel inadequate.

—Adon us

After getting fired from my job (too much time in the lounge, lol), I moved to

L.A. last week to devote myself full-time to getting this game handled. I’ve al-

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

ways felt like the odd guy out here because I'm still a virgin and kind of a key-

**SUBJECT:** My Thousandth Approach

board jockey, so I have locked off Saturday and decided to do a hundred

**AUTHOR:** Adonis

approaches in a single day. I am going to start out on Melrose between La

Brea and Fairfax in the afternoon. I figure I can do ten approaches per hour for

five hours, yielding fifty approaches. (Does anyone know the name of the store

I have kept score of every approach I have done and, as promised, I just got

where they sell the New Rock boots?) Afterward, I'm going to shower up, hit

through my thousandth approach—and still with four days left in the month!

I can say after a thousand approaches, there are only so many ways to

Sunset, and cover four bars (Dublin's, Miyagi's, the Saddle Ranch, the Stan-

get rejected or ignored. It doesn't hurt at all anymore because why should

dard), making twelve to fifteen approaches in each. A hundred approaches

someone who's a complete stranger have any control over your sense of self-

should be no problem. Even if I crash and burn every time, at least I will con-

worth?

quer my fear of rejection.



The other thing I learned is to challenge or intrigue HBs right away instead

—Adonis

of trying to be logical or factual. I can stay in sets now for ten or fifteen min-

utes. I have been Stylemogging too, which was hard at first. But now I'm find-

ing it easier to control a set, despite my size (I'm 5'4"). I am even isolating and

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

doing the cube sometimes, and getting the odd phone number. I feel like I've

**SUBJECT:** 1 25 Approaches!

become a new, more confident person, with no social fears. Before, I was so

**AUTHOR:** Adonis

insecure and self-conscious that people avoided me; now when I walk down

the street, I radiate. HBs can just sense it. I strongly recommend that everyone

Guys, this Saturday rocked. I got through 1 25 approaches. It was phenome-

try this. It's worth it.

nal. Before I left, I listened to Ross Jeffries's Unstoppable Confidence tapes.

They really help. I pictured myself forty feet tall and made of diamond, so no

Next month, I'm going to master phone game—a thousand phone calls,

lol. If I keep this up, I should be getting laid by the end of the year.

one could hurt me.

The opinion opener I used was the RSD classic, “Who lies more, men or

—Adonis

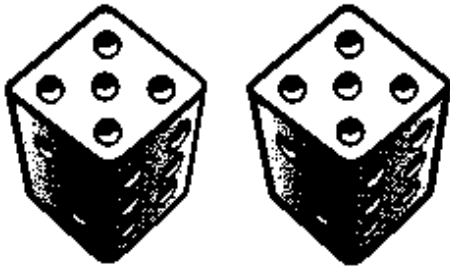
women?” At first, HBs gave me funny looks, like I was taking a survey. It really

started clicking for me at the Saddle Ranch. I think I opened every woman

there. One HB8 offered me an e-mail address, but I pushed for a number close

and lost it completely. Fuck! Lesson learned. Afterward, I went to the Standard,

### *Chapter*



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hen you may be a social robot.

Most of the sargers I know are social robots. This is especially true among

those who found the community in their teens or early twenties. Because they

haven't had much real-world experience, they have learned to socialize

almost entirely through rules and theories they've read online and learned in

workshops. They may never be normal again. After a great twenty-minute set

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

with many of these social robots, a woman begins to realize that they don't

SUBJECT: Are You A Social Robot?

have anything more going for them. And then they post online complaining

AUTHOR: Style

that women are flakes.

Have you ever noticed that there's something strange about a lot of guys in the

The Internet newsgroups and the pickup lifestyle can give you so much—I

community?

know it's given me so much—but it can take away a lot too. You can end up

becoming a one-dimensional person. You start to think that everyone else

It's as if just by looking at them, you can tell that something is missing. They

around you is a social robot too and begin to read too much into his or her

don't seem entirely human.

actions.

Some of these guys even do well in the field. They get great reactions—

sometimes even numbers and lays—but they never seem to have a girlfriend.

The solution is to remember that the best way to pick up women is to have

Are you one of these guys?

something better to do than to pick up women. Some guys give up

everything—school, work, even girlfriends—to learn the game. But all these

To find out, ask yourself the following questions:

things are what make one complete and enhance one's attractiveness to the

opposite sex. So put your life back in balance. If you can make something of

\* Do you panic if you run out of "material" during a conversation with a

yourself, women will flock to you, and what you've learned here will prepare

woman?

you to deal with them.

\* Do you think that everything a woman says to you that isn't 100 percent

—Style

positive is a "shit test"?

\* Do you see every other male who is interacting with a woman as an

AMOG who must be destroyed?

\* Are you unable to discuss a woman without first asking, "What's her rating?"

\* Do you call women in your life who you are not sleeping with "pivots" in-

stead of friends?

\* If you are around a woman in a non-social setting, such as a business

meeting or a nursing home, do you get a strange shot of adrenaline and

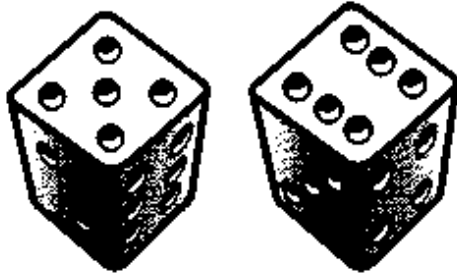
feel obligated to sarge her?

\* Have you stopped seeing value in things that are not pickup related, such

as books, movies, friends, family, work, school, food, and water?

\* Is your self-esteem constantly at the mercy of the reactions of women?

## Chapter



3D3

didn't include me. The curious thing is: Most robots don't program themselves.

In the meantime, every single rule we had laid down at the house

meeting—requiring approval for guests, giving the house a percentage of

seminar money, not hitting on another PUA's woman—was bypassed and

ignored. We had no idea how many students, sargers, and instructors Papa

“I can't just tell students not to come to your workshop.”

was packing into his room. They scurried around the house like peacocked

Mystery and Papa were arguing again.

rats. We didn't even bother to lock the doors anymore.

“You booked too many students,” Mystery said, throwing his hands up,

His latest recruits were two interns who looked like younger versions

exasperated. “It's not fun for me. And it's not fair to them.”

of himself. No one knew their names. They were known simply as the

“And you're making my business look bad.” Papa's voice was stuffy

mini-Papas.

with pent-up frustration.

The mini-Papas were just as cold to me as Papa was, but they were con-

“Fine,” Mystery yelled. “Then take my name off your website. Our busi-

stantly around. They watched my every move, as if it were an assignment

they’d been given. Sometimes I’d see them sitting at Mel’s Diner with Tyler

ness relationship is through. I don’t want anything to do with Real Social

Durden. The three of them would be talking about me.

Dynamics.”

It was a doomed partnership to begin with.

“He’ll reposition his body to steer the conversation in his direction.”

The next day, Herbal offered to be Mystery’s business partner. It

“He’ll leave at times to show scarcity.”

seemed as if he’d been laying low the whole time, waiting for his moment to

“If you make a joke, he exaggerates it to steal the glory.”

get involved in the pickup business. Since he’d arrived at the house, he

“If someone asks him to do a routine, he’ll say, In the field,’ so that it’s

hadn’t been with a single woman besides Sima, an ex-MLTR of Mystery’s

on his time and the person appreciates it more.”

who had moved to Los Angeles from Toronto. When Mystery and Sima

They weren't criticizing me. They were trying to model me. Yet, oddly,

started getting on each other's nerves shortly after her arrival in town, she

they never hung out with me as friends. They just wanted to listen and ab-

started showing IOIs to Herbal. Instead of getting upset, Mystery sat

sorb and take notes. It was dehumanizing. But then again, no one in that

Herbal down and told him everything he needed to do to sarge her. Sima

house seemed entirely human to begin with.

and Herbal ended up fooling around that night. Afterward, it only served to

I needed to get out of there.

strengthen Mystery and Herbal's friendship. But they seemed unaware of

Fortunately, *Rolling Stone* wanted me to tackle another tough subject.

something that everyone else around them realized: a bad precedent was be-

Her name was Courtney Love.

ing set.

The interview was scheduled to take place for one hour at the Virgin

Once Herbal started working for Mystery, we truly became a house di-

Records office in New York. Courtney was at the peak of her infamy at the

vided: There was Real Social Dynamics, encamped in Papa's room, and

time. That week she'd bared her breasts to David Letterman on network TV;

appeared on the front page of the *New York Post* with one of her mammaries

Mystery Method, which had the rest of the house.

in the mouth of a stranger outside Wendy's; and been arrested for allegedly

I was the only person under the roof who wasn't on the payroll of ei-

hitting a fan in the head with a microphone stand during a concert. On top

ther. But that didn't stop Papa from snubbing me along with Mystery and

of all that, she was facing drug charges and had recently lost custody of her

Herbal. I was guilty by association. If Papa and I happened to bump into

daughter. The *Rolling Stone* story was the first interview she'd agreed to do

each other as he snuck around the back of the house, he'd walk past with a

since all the trouble went down.

brusque hello, staring vacantly through me.

He wasn't angry. He was just operating on some sort of program that

When I met her at Virgin, Courtney was wearing a black dress with a

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sash wrapped tastefully around her torso. Her lips were painted red and

"Have you seen a girl in a black cowboy hat?" she asked in a staccato



full. Considering the number of ugly tabloid headlines featuring her name,

German accent.

Courtney looked good—pale, thin, statuesque. Soon, however, the sash was

“Hang out with us,” I said. “We’re more fun than your friends.”

loose and dangling behind her like a tail and the lipstick was smeared. It

It was a line I’d learned from David DeAngelo. And it worked.

My

seemed like a metaphor for her life: constantly unraveling.

friends looked on in shock as she sat down and asked for a cigarette.

“If you guys are waiting for me to die, you’re going to have to wait a

For the rest of the night, the Amazon and I talked. Every now and then,

long time,” she began. I was the press; I was the enemy. “My grandmother

she’d drag me to the bathroom, where I’d watch her inhale cocaine like a

didn’t die until she was a hundred and two.”

human Dustbuster.

This is what PUAs call a bitch shield. It was nothing personal, just a

“Do you watch *Sex in the City*?” she asked as we left the bathroom for

protective mechanism. I couldn’t let it faze me. I had to get rapport and

the third time that night.

show her I was human, not just another bloodsucking journalist.

“Sometimes,” I told her.

“I still have nightmares about my grandmother,” I told her,  
“because

“I just got a pearl,” she said, with Teutonic pride.

the last time I had the chance to see her alive, we had plans to  
go to the Art

“That’s great.” I had no idea what a pearl was.

Institute of Chicago. And I blew her off because I wanted to  
sleep late.”

“It’s cool,” she said. “With those little beads.”

We fluffed for a while about our families. She didn’t like hers  
very much.

“Oh, the beads. Those things are great.”

Now we were getting somewhere.

I was totally confused. But I liked listening to her, enjoying the  
mis-

As the interview continued, I hit the hook point. She looked up  
at me

match between her harsh accent and her spongy lips. Maybe she  
was talking

and the walls came down. Her face flushed, the muscles in her  
cheeks

about anal beads. Good for her.

clamped, and the tears started dripping. “I need to be saved,”  
she sobbed.

I stopped and leaned against the wall of the corridor we were  
walking

“You need to save me.”

through. “How good of a kisser are you, on a scale of one to  
ten?”

Now we had rapport.

“I’m a ten,” she said. “I like soft, slow, teasing kisses. I hate it  
when

Rapport equals trust plus comfort.

someone rams their tongue down my throat.”

When our hour was up, Courtney suggested exchanging phone num-

“Yeah, I had a girlfriend who did that. It was like making out with a cow.”

bers. She said she’d call me later that night to continue the interview. I was

“I give amazing blow jobs,” she said.

relieved, because an hour-long discussion in a record company office

“Respect.”

wouldn’t have made for a very interesting profile. At least Tom Cruise had

That one-word answer had taken me months to figure out. Some taken me motorcycle-riding and Scientology-sightseeing.

women like to make extremely sexual comments after meeting a man. It is a

That night, I met some old college friends at Soho House, a private

shit test. If the guy becomes uncomfortable, he fails; however, if he takes the

club in the meatpacking district of Manhattan. I hadn’t seen them since I’d

bait and gets excited or says something sexual in response, he also fails. Af-

joined the community, and they hardly recognized me. They spent a half

ter watching the British television character Ali G, I discovered the solution:

hour discussing how awkward and introverted I used to be. Then their con-

Just look her in the eye, nod approvingly, and, with a slight smile creeping  
versation turned to work and movies. I tried to contribute, but I had trou-  
across your face, say, “Respect,” in a smart-ass tone. I had responses now for  
ble focusing on the words. They just floated into my ear and accumulated  
nearly every challenge a woman could throw my way. But this was hardly a  
there like wax. I felt like I didn’t fit in with them anymore. Fortunately, an  
challenge—it was fool’s mate. My job was simply to not do anything wrong.  
Amazonian woman with tree-trunk thighs and a lethal boob-job soon  
I fell silent and did what the PUAs call triangular gazing, looking slowly  
stumbled past the table. She was a foot taller than me and somewhat  
from her left eye to her right eye and then to her lips to create suggestive  
drunk.  
sexual tension.  
3DG  
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She threw herself against me. The next thing she did was ram her  
the raging storm or dead calm that lies beneath. Reaching that moment of  
tongue down my throat, like a cow. Then she pulled away.  
“Talking about

passionate truth—of surrender, honesty, revelation—was my favorite part of

kissing got me excited,” she said.

the game. I loved seeing what new person emerged in bed, and then talking

“Let’s get out of here,” I replied, peeling myself off the wall.

with that new person after our mutual orgasms. I guess I just like people.

We took the elevator downstairs and hailed a cab. She gave the driver

I leaned over her breast and plugged my left nostril. I was really dread-

an address in the East Village. I guess we were going to her place.

ing this: I didn’t want to be up all night, and I had a feeling that coke wasn’t

She straddled me in the back seat and pulled a heavy breast out of her

good for a gentleman’s staying power.

tank top. I guess I was supposed to suck it.

Not that I was a gentleman.

We arrived at her house and climbed the stairs to her apartment. She

And then the phone rang. My phone.

turned on a lamp, which cast a dull brown glow over the room, and slipped

“I have to get this,” I told her. I jumped up, spilling fairy dust all over

the Rolling Stones’ *Goats Head Soup* into her stereo.

the sheets, and grabbed my cell phone. I had a feeling I knew who was

“I’m just going to put my pearl on,” she told me.

calling.

“I can’t wait,” I said. And I couldn’t.

“Hey, can you come over?” It was Courtney Love. “See if you can get

As I lay there, I realized I’d forgotten to say good-bye to my friends. In

some acupuncture needles in Chinatown—the big ones that hurt the most.

fact, I’d ignored them all night. Sarging had dropped a polyester curtain be-

And get some alcohol and cotton swabs.”

tween me and my past. But when my new friend emerged in her pearl, I de-

cided, in the heat of the moment, that it was worth it. The pearl wasn’t anal

beads at all. It was a pair of panties with an exposed crotch and a chain of

small metal balls connecting the front side to the back, running over her

pussy.

She’d probably left the house that night hoping to find someone to

take home to show it off to. Obliging, I rubbed the balls gently against her

labia and her clit. I figured that was what it was for, though I wasn’t really

sure because, a minute later, the chain of balls snapped off the underwear.

It dangled between her legs like a tampon string.

So much for her new pearl.

“I’m going to change,” she said. She didn’t seem upset. Inhaling an

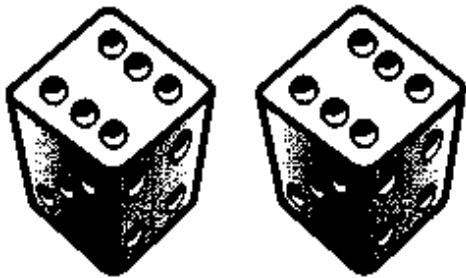
eight ball of cocaine will do that to someone.

She re-emerged in knee-high black leather boots, lay down on the bed,  
and took another Dustbuster snort from a burgundy vial of coke. Then she  
lifted the vial over her chest and tapped a small pile of powder onto the  
crest of her left breast.

I'm not a fan of drugs. Part of being a PUA is learning to control your  
own state, so you don't need alcohol or drugs to have a good time. But if I  
were ever going to do cocaine, now would be the time.

Every woman is different in bed. Each has her own tastes and quirks  
and fantasies. And someone's surface appearance never accurately indicates

### *Chapter*



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him to fall in love with you. And I only slept with him twice. I need one  
more night to get him.”

This director had captured her heart by playing push-pull. He'd walk

her home, make out with her, and then tell her he couldn't come inside.

Whether by accident or design, he was following David DeAngelo's tech-

nique of two steps forward and one step back.

“This one’s for the gallbladder,” Courtney Love said as she slammed an acu-

“If you want to get him,” I said, “read *The Art of Seduction* by Robert

puncture needle into my leg.

Greene. It’ll give you some strategy.”

“Um, shouldn’t this be done by a licensed professional?”

She stubbed her cigarette out on the floor. “I need all the help I can get.”

“I’ve been doing this since I was young,” she replied, “but you’re the

*The Art of Seduction* was classic PUA reading material, along with

first person I’ve done it to in a while.” She wiggled the needle around. “Tell

Greene’s other book, *The 48 Laws of Power*. For the former, Greene studied

me when you feel it.”

the greatest seductions of history and literature in search of common

There. An electric shock to the leg. Okay. Enough.

themes. His book classified different types of seducers (among them rakes,

My scheduled one-hour interview with Courtney Love had turned into

ideal lovers, and naturals); targets (drama queens, rescuers, crushed stars);

a surreal slumber party. Outside of food runs, I didn’t leave her Chinatown

and techniques, all of which jibed with community philosophy (approach



loft for seventy-two hours. It was five thousand square feet with nothing in

indirectly, send mixed signals, appear to be an object of desire, isolate the

it but a bed, a television, and a couch.

victim).

Dressed down in a T-shirt and sweatpants, she was in hiding: from the

“How do you know about that book?” she asked.

paparazzi, from her manager, from the government, from the bank, from a

“I’ve spent the last year and a half hanging out with the world’s greatest

man, from herself. I was stripped down to my boxers on her couch, with a

pickup artists.”

dozen needles sticking out of me. Over time the floor around her bed grew

She sat up in her bed. “Tell me, tell me, tell me,” she squealed like a

dense with crumbs, cigarette butts, clothing, food wrappers, needles, and

schoolgirl. Talking about pickup was better than the alternative: Whenever

root beer bottles; meanwhile, the color of her fingers and toes changed

the discussion veered toward her legal, media, and custody problems, her

from flesh to blackened ash. She was too scared even to answer her phone,

eyes filled with tears.

in case someone called her “with some bullshit news about some fucking

She listened rapt as I told her about the community and Project Holly-  
thing.”

wood. It wasn't easy to have a serious conversation with a dozen acupunc-

It was just the two of us: journalist and rock star, player and playette.

ture needles sticking out of my body. “I want to meet them,” she said

She put *Boogie Nights* into her DVD player, then climbed into her bed

excitedly. “Do you think they're as good as Warren Beatty?”

and threw a stained blanket over herself. “I always ask the guy I'm dating,

“I don't know. I've never met him.”

‘What's your biggest fear?’” she said. “My last boyfriend said it's drifting,

Courtney climbed out of bed and rubbed patchouli oil around the nee-

which he's doing now. The video director I'm currently obsessed with said

dles in my feet, legs, and chest. “Let me tell you, he's smooth.”

failure. And I'm living mine: It's loss of power.”

“I would love to know how he operates.”

Of all the problems in Courtney's life, the one that seemed to consume

“He's great. He once called me and said, ‘Hey, it's me,’ as if I should

her most was romantic. The video director wasn't returning her calls. It was

have known who it was. Then he tried to convince me to come over to his

a problem common to all women, no matter what they looked like or how

house that night. When I finally say yes, he laughed and said he was in Paris.

famous they were.

It's a total mindfuck. He'll blow his nose and then hand the dirty tissue to

"I have a theory," she said. "You have to sleep with a guy three times for

his date."

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It was a neg. Warren Beatty negged women. Every PUA—whether he's

I looked at her blankly. I was so taken aback by the notion that I had

aware of it or not—uses the same principles. The difference between those

trouble processing the words.

in the community and lone wolves like Warren Beatty (when he was single),

"Or you can pick the middle name of my next child. It's your choice."

Brett Ratner, and David Blaine is that we name our techniques and share

"Okay."

our information.

"But I have one condition: I get an hour of advice with each pickup

"I don't know what this director's problem is," Courtney was saying. "I

artist you're living with."

have a magic pussy. If you fuck me, you become a king. I'm a kingmaker."

When it came time for me to leave and catch my plane,  
Courtney

(Translation: If you fuck her, you become famous.)

climbed out of bed and kissed me good-bye.

She began pulling the needles out of my body. Relief. "You have to get

"I just need to be fucked," she said as I waited for the elevator that

one in your head. It's the best feeling."

would take me out of her loft. "I just need a bossy guy to come here and

Fumbling around the floor, Courtney grabbed a dirty needle. She

fuck me."

aimed it just above my eye.

I knew I could have been that guy. The IOIs were there. But there's a

"No thanks. I've had enough for today."

PUA's code of honor, there's a gambler's code of honor, and there's a jour-

"You gotta try it. It's great for the liver."

nalist's code of honor. And having sex with her would have been violating

"My liver's fine, thanks."

all three.

She dropped the needle back to the floor. "Fine. I'm going out to get

What I had told Dustin that morning in my apartment really was true:

some Rice Krispie Treats then."

Learning pickup had enriched so much more than just my sex life. The

She wriggled out of her pink shirt and stood in front of me topless.

skills I had amassed in the community made me a much better interviewer

“These are natural breasts but with a silicone lift,” she said, hovering

than I’d ever been. I discovered just how good when I was assigned an inter-

over me and revealing a scar underneath her left mammary. “Do you know

view with Britney Spears.

how much a shot of my tits is worth? Nine thousand dollars.”

“Then your problems are solved,” I suggested.

“That won’t even get me in the door at the lawyer’s office,” she snapped, slipping into a black-and-white baby-doll dress.

When she returned from the store, she was flushed with excitement.

She pulled a coffee cake out of her bag and split it in half, leaving a trail of

crumbs behind her as she made for the safety of her bed. “Let’s make a bet,”

she said.

“What?”

“I will bet you that I can get this director back.”

“I doubt you can. If he’s not returning your calls, he’s not interested.”

“He even denied he’d slept with me in the *Post*.” She handed me half of

the coffee cake in her blackened fingers. “But I like a challenge.”

“Well, if you can get him back, you’re a better pickup artist than I am.”

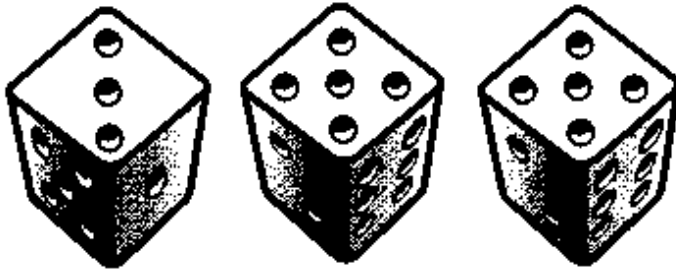
“Then let’s bet,” she insisted.

“What are the stakes?”

“If I can’t get him back, I will give you a one-week stand with me—

wherever you want.”

### *Chapter*



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talking to, the game always worked. Besides, I had nothing to lose by gam-

ing Britney Spears. The interview couldn’t get any more boring. Maybe I’d

even get a decent quote I could actually print.

I folded my list of questions and put them in my back pocket. I had to

treat her like any club girl with attention deficit disorder.

The first move was to hook her attention.

**Was there a lot of pressure on you while making this album?**

“I’ll tell you something about yourself that other people probably don’t

What, now?

know,” I began. “People sometimes see you as shy or bitchy offstage, even

though you aren’t.”

**Was there a lot of pressure from yourself or the label to have a major**

“Totally,” she said.

**hit this time around?**

“Do you want to know why?”

I have no idea.

“Yeah.” I was creating what’s called a yes-ladder, capturing her atten-

tion by asking questions t h a t require an obvious affirmative answer.

**You have no idea?**

“I’m watching your eyes when you talk. And every time you think, they

I have no idea.

go down a n d to the left. T h a t means you’re a kinesthetic person. You’re

someone who lives in her feelings.”

**I heard y o u did a track with the DFA that wasn’t included on your new**

“Oh my God,” she said. “That’s totally true.”

**CD. W h y was that?**

Of course it was. It was one of the value-demonstrating routines I’d de-

W h a t ‘ s the DFA?

veloped. The eye goes to one of seven different positions when someone

thinks: Each position means the person is accessing a different part of their

**They’re two producers from N e w York, James Murphy a n d T i m**

brain.

**Goldsworthy, w h o call themselves the DFA. D o e s that ring a bell?**

As I t a u g h t her how to read different types of eye movements, she clung

Yeah, maybe they did something.

to every word. Her legs uncrossed and she leaned in toward me.

The game was on.

My interview with Britney Spears was going nowhere. I looked at her, cross-

“I didn’t know this,” she said. “Who told you this?”

ing her legs and fidgeting on the hotel-room couch next to me. She didn’t

I wanted to tell her, “A secret society of international pickup artists.”

give a shit. I was just an a m o u n t of time blocked off on her calendar, and

“It’s something I observed from doing lots of interviews,” I answered.

she was tolerating it—poorly.

“In fact, by watching the direction peoples’ eyes move when they speak, you

Her hair was tucked under a white Kangol hat and her thighs pushed at

can tell whether they’re telling the t r u t h or not.”

the seams of her faded blue jeans. She was one of the most desired women

“So you’re going to know if I’m lying?” She was looking at me entirely

in the world. But in person, she looked like a cornfed Southern sorority girl.

differently now. I wasn’t a journalist anymore. I was someone she could



She had a beautiful face, lightly and perfectly touched with makeup, but

learn from, someone who offered value. I had demonstrated authority over

there was something masculine about her. As a sexual icon, she was unin-

her world.

timidating and, I imagined, lonely.

“I can tell from your eye movements, from your eye contact, from the

A gear slammed down in my head.

way you speak, and from your body language. There are many different

There was only one way to save this interview: I had to sarge her. No

ways to tell.”

matter what country I was in or what age or class or race of woman I was

“I need to do psychology classes,” she said, with endearing earnestness.

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“That would be so interesting to me, studying people.” It was working. She

It was as if she had to look at herself in the mirror to make sure that

was opening up. She kept talking and talking: “And you could meet some-

what had just happened was real.

body or be out on a date and be like, ‘Are they lying to me right now?’ Oh

“Whoa,” she gasped. “I did that.” She was like a little girl seeing Britney

my gosh.”

Spears for the first time. She was her own fan.

It was time to pull out the heavy artillery.

“I just knew that it was seven!” she announced as she galloped back to

“I’ll show you something really cool and then we’ll get back to the in-

the couch. Of course she knew. That was the first magic trick I learned from

interview,” I said, throwing in a time constraint for good measure.

“It’ll be an

Mystery: If you have someone chose a number between one and ten ran-

experiment. I’m going to try to guess something that’s in your thoughts.”

domly, seventy percent of the time—especially if you rush their decision—

Then I used a simple psychological gambit to guess the initials of an old

that number will be seven.

friend she had an emotional connection to—someone I wouldn’t know and

So, yeah, I had tricked her. But her self-esteem needed a good boost.

hadn’t heard of. The initials were G. C. And I got one letter out of two cor-

“See,” I told her. “You already know all the answers inside. It’s just that

rect. It was a new routine I was still learning, but it was good enough for her.

society trains you to think too much.” I really believed that.

“I can’t believe you did that! I probably have so many walls in front, so

“Cool interview!” she exclaimed. “I like this interview! This has been

that’s why you didn’t get them both,” she said. “Let’s try it one more time.”

the best interview of my life!”

“This time, why don’t you try it?”

Then she turned her face toward mine, looked me in the eye, and asked,

“I’m scared.” She put her knuckle in her mouth and pinched the skin

“Can we stop the tape recorder?”

between her teeth. She had great teeth. They really were a perfect C-shape. “I

For the next fifteen minutes, we talked about spirituality and writing

can’t do that.”

and our lives. She was just a lost little girl going through a late emotional

She was no longer Britney Spears. She was just a one-set, a lone target.

puberty. She was searching for something real to hold onto, something

Or, as Robert Greene would classify her in his breakdown of seducer’s vic-

deeper than pop fame and the sycophancy of her handlers. I had demon-

tims, she was the lonely leader.

strated value, and now we were moving on to the rapport phase of seduc-

“We’ll make it easier,” I said. “I’m going to write down a number. And it’s

tion. Maybe Mystery was right: All human relationships follow the same

a number between one and ten. What I want you to do is not to think at all.

formula.

You need to trust your instincts. There's no special ability required to read

Rapport equals trust plus comfort.

minds. Just quiet your internal chatter and really listen to your feelings.”

However, I had a job to do. I started the tape recorder and asked the

I wrote a number on a piece of paper and handed it to her face down.

questions I'd given her at the start of the interview, plus all the other ques-

“Now, tell me,” I said, “the first number that you feel.”

tions I had. This time she gave me real answers, answers I could print.

“What if it's wrong?” she asked. “It's probably wrong.”

When the hour was up, I stopped the tape recorder.

This was what we called in the field an LSE girl—she had low self-esteem.

“You know,” Britney said. “Everything happens for a reason.”

“What do you think it is?”

“I truly believe that,” I told her.

“Seven,” she said.

“I do too.” She touched my shoulder and a broad smile spread across

“Now, turn over the paper,” I told her.

her face. “I'd like to exchange numbers.”

She slowly turned it over, as if she were afraid to look, then moved it up

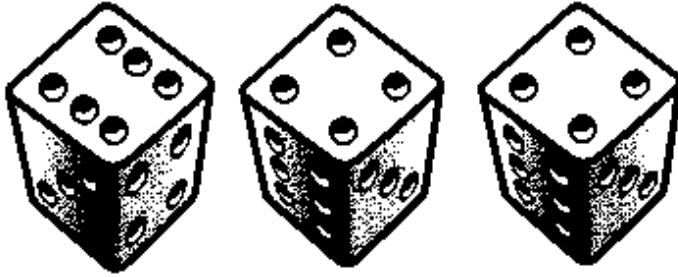
to eye level and saw a big number seven staring right back at her.

She screamed, leaped off the couch, and ran to the hotel mirror. Her

mouth hung agape as she looked her reflection in the eye.

“Oh my God,” she said to her reflection. “I did that.”

### *Chapter*



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Of course, maybe this was all just self-hypnosis. For all I knew, she ex-

changed phone numbers with every journalist to make him feel special and

ensure a good story. She probably had an answering service set up at that

number specifically for gullible writers who thought they were pickup

artists. Or perhaps it was a scheme of the publicist's to make journalists

think they had a special connection with her artist. Maybe I was the one be-

After our hour was up, Britney left the room to change for an MTV inter-

ing sarged, not her.

view. She returned ten minutes later with her publicist.

I would never know the truth.

As she sat down in front of the cameras, her publicist looked at me

I stared at that number every day, but I couldn't bring myself to dial it.

strangely.

I told myself that it was crossing a journalistic line: If she didn't like the

"You know, she's never done that with a writer before," she said.

piece I was writing (which was quite possible), I didn't want her to go on

"Really?" I asked.

record saying I had written a bad article because she hadn't phoned back.

"She said it was like the two of you were destined to meet."

"Just call her," Mystery constantly prodded me. "What do you have to

The publicist and I stood next to each other in silence as the MTV in-

lose? Tell her, 'Can you not look like Britney Spears? We're going to do

interview began.

some crazy shit, and we can't get caught. We're going to wear wigs, climb up

"So you had a crazy time out the other night," the interviewer asked.

to the Hollywood sign, and touch it for good luck.'"

"Yeah, I did," Britney answered.

"If I had met her socially, fine. But this is a work assignment."

"What was the energy level like in the club when you walked in and sur-

"You're playing the game at another level now. When the article is fin-

prised everyone?"

ished, it isn't an assignment anymore. So call her."

"Oh, it was just crazy."

But I couldn't do it. If it had been Dalene Kurtis, the Playmate of the

"And how much fun did you have?"

Year, I would have called her back in a second. I had no fear of women like

Suddenly, Britney stood up. "This isn't working," she told the crew.

that anymore. I felt worthy. I'd proven that over and over since meeting her.

But Britney Spears?

"I'm not feeling this."

She pivoted on her heels and walked toward the door, leaving the crew

One's self-esteem can only grow so much in a year and a half.

and her assistants befuddled. As she passed me, the corners of her mouth

turned upward, forming a conspiratorial smile. I had gotten to her. There

was something deeper to Britney Spears than what the pop machine re-

quired of her.

The game, I realized, works better on celebrities than ordinary people.

Because stars are so sheltered and their interactions limited, a demonstra-

tion of value or the right neg holds ten times the power.

In the days that followed, I thought often about what had happened. I

had no illusions: Britney Spears wasn't attracted to me. She wasn't consid-

ering me as a potential mate. But I had interested her. And that was a step in

the right direction. Pickup is a linear process: Capture the imagination first

and the heart next.

Interest plus attraction plus seduction equals sex.



STEP 9



MAKE A PHYSICAL  
CONNECTION

*Chapter*



It took just one woman to bring Project Hollywood down.

By all appearances, Katya was a standard-issue party girl. She liked to

drink, dance, have sex, and get high, not necessarily in that order. But

Katya—perhaps out of innocence, perhaps out of revenge, perhaps out of

true love—would outgame every PUA in the house. All those years of study,

all those memorized routines and learned patterns of behavior, all those

New Rock platform boots were no match for a woman scorned.

AND DO YOU THINK

When I returned from New York, Mystery had a workshop scheduled

in Los Angeles. He was charging fifteen hundred dollars now—and people

THAT LOVE I T S E L F ,

were paying. He had five students, guaranteeing a healthy profit for a week-

end of talking and sarging. Katya's was just one of several numbers he had

L I V I N G I N S U C H A N U G L Y H O U S E ,

collected while demonstrating his game during the workshop.  
He'd met her

at a Hollywood bar called Star Shoes. She was very drunk at the  
time, and

quite possibly high.

C A N P R O S P E R L O N G ?

Monday was telephone day at Project Hollywood. Everyone  
called the

numbers they'd collected the previous weekend to see which  
leads were hot

and which had staled. When Mystery made his calls, the only  
person who

picked up the phone was Katya. If Katya hadn't been home and  
another one

E D N A S T. V I N C E N T M I L L A Y,

of Mystery's numbers had answered instead, all our lives would  
have been

different.

*"And do you think that love itself "*

Despite our supposed skill, mating is largely a game of chance.  
Women

are at different places in their lives when we meet them. They  
may be look-

ing for a boyfriend, a one-night stand, a husband, or a revenge  
fuck. Or they

may be looking for nothing at all, because they're in a happy  
relationship or

recovering from an emotionally destructive one.

Katya was probably looking for a place to live.

When Mystery called, Katya couldn't remember having met  
him.

Nonetheless, after a half hour of talk (or comfort-building, as  
Mystery put

it), she agreed to come over.

“Dress casual,” Mystery told her. “I’ll only be able to hang out for an

hour or two.”

**r**

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Using words like “casual” and “hang out,” and the time constraint,

fake rope burns around her neck or artificial brain spilling out of a flesh

were all part of a strategy to make the visit a low-pressure event. It’s a much

wound in her forehead or the wrinkles and liver spots of a ninety-year-old

better way to get someone to commit to time with a stranger than AFC-style

woman.

dinner dating, which can be a painful, drawn-out affair that involves two

Katya quickly wove herself into the fabric of the house. She volunteered

people who may have nothing in common stuck together for an entire

to be a pivot for Papa’s workshops; she put eyeliner on Herbal before he

night of awkward conversation.

went out for the night; she cleaned the kitchen that we were all too lazy to

Katya arrived that evening wearing a pink sweatsuit and dragging

deal with ourselves; she went shopping with Xaneus; and she played hostess

along a scrappy little terrier named Lily. Both Katya and Lily instantly made

to Playboy's parties. She had an amazing ability to befriend anyone, though

themselves at home. The former collapsed into the pillow pit and the latter

her motivation was unclear: Maybe she was genuinely a people-loving per-

took a shit on the carpet.

son, maybe she enjoyed the free rent. Either way, she was giving the home its

Mystery popped out of his room in jeans, a long-sleeved black T-shirt,

first rays of warmth and camaraderie since the night we'd moved in and sat

and his hair in a ponytail. "I'm just going to hook my computer up to the

in the Jacuzzi, dreaming of the future together. I liked her. We all liked her.

projector and show you some movies I made," he told her.

We even let her brother, a shaggy-haired sixteen-year-old with Tourette's

"No worries, no troubles," Katya replied in an upbeat Russian accent.

syndrome, sleep in the pillow pit for a few weeks.

She had a button nose that wiggled, puffy cheeks that flared, and blonde

Mystery was particularly happy with himself. He hadn't dated anyone

hair that bounced to maximize her cuteness.

seriously since Patricia.

Mystery dimmed the lights and showed her our home movies.

They

“I actually have a crush on my own girlfriend,” he said with pride one evening, showing Katya’s swimsuit-calendar picture to a group of random strangers. “I think of her constantly, like when you have a baby. I have a very strong nurturing instinct. I need to take care of this girl and make sure she’s safe.”

were becoming a popular routine around the house because they allowed us

to convey positive qualities about ourselves and our friends without even

ers. “I think of her constantly, like when you have a baby. I have a very strong

talking. After movie time, Mystery and Katya massaged each other and

nurturing instinct. I need to take care of this girl and make sure she’s safe.”

made out. On their second meeting, three days later, after much LMR, they

Later that night, as Herbal cooked steak on the barbecue, Katya and I

closed the deal.

sat in the Jacuzzi, sharing a bottle of wine.

“I’m moving out of my apartment,” she told Mystery afterward. “So is

“I’m really scared,” she said.

it okay if Lily stays here while I go to Las Vegas this weekend?”

“Why?” I asked, though I really knew why.

Leaving Lily at the house was a cunning tactic because, while Katya was

“I’m starting to fall in love with Mystery.”

gone, we all grew attached to the cheery, lovable dog—and, by extension, to

“Well, he’s a talented and amazing guy.”

its owner as well. Their personalities were similar: They were both bouncy

“Yeah,” she said. “I never let myself fall in love like this. I don’t know

and energetic and liked licking Mystery’s face.

enough about him yet. I’m worried.”

When Katya returned from Las Vegas, Mystery helped her move out of

Then she sat there quietly. She wanted me to say something, to warn

her old house. “I think it’s completely ridiculous for you to rent a new

her if she was making a mistake.

apartment, knowing that you’ll be spending most of your time with me,” he

I didn’t say anything.

told her. “So why don’t you just move into my room?”

A few days later, Mystery, Katya, and I flew to Las Vegas. As we changed

All she had to her name were two duffel bags, a makeup kit, Lily, and a

to go out for the night, he rattled on about his favorite subject. “I am so

Mazda SUV stuffed with clothing and shoes. As far as anyone knew, she had

into this girl.” He smudged on black eyeliner and smeared white concealer

no job or source of income, though she’d modeled for a couple of low-bud-

beneath his eyes. “She’s even bi. She has a couple she sleeps with in New Or-

get swimsuit calendars. In the evenings, she went to school to learn special-

leans.” He centered a black cowboy hat he had bought in Australia on his

effects makeup. Every night after class she'd prance around the house with

head and admired himself in the mirror. "I feel like I'm pairbonding."

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We had dinner at Mr. Lucky's at the Hard Rock Casino, where Katya

The guy was an idiot.

put away two glasses of champagne; then crossed the street to Club Par-

That evening, Mystery carried Katya over the threshold of Project Hol-

adise, a strip club, where she put away two more glasses of champagne.

lywood humming "Here Comes the Bride."

When the waitress came to the table, Katya commented to Mystery,

They'd known each other for three weeks.

"She's really hot." Mystery looked the waitress over. She was a perky Latina

"Look at my ring," Katya cooed. "Isn't it beautiful?"

with long black hair that reflected the stage lights and a densely packed

"Our rings cost eight thousand dollars," Mystery said with pride. That

body that threatened to burst through her clothing.

was basically all the cash he had. Though he was raking in money from his

"Ever seen the movie *Poltergeist*?" Mystery asked her. He made her straw

workshops, he was a fan of man toys—computers, digital cameras, elec-

move. He told her they wouldn't get along. He asked her what she was fa-

tronic organizers, basically anything with a chip.

mous for—"everybody's famous for something." Soon the waitress was

"This whole marriage thing," Mystery told me while Katya was in the

stopping by our table every few minutes to flirt with Mystery.

bathroom, "is the best routine ever. She loves me now. She gets off on call-

"I would love to see that girl," Mystery told Katya, "eating you out."

ing me her husband. It's like a time distortion."

"You just want to fuck her," Katya slurred. I suppose it was difficult for

"Dude, it's the worst routine ever," I replied, "because you can only do

any woman—especially a drunk one—to see the same routines that had en-

it once."

snared her being used on another woman. And effectively.

Mystery took a step toward me and removed his ring. "I'm going to tell

Katya leapt to her feet and stormed to the bar. Mystery followed to ap-

you a secret," he whispered, putting the ring in my hand. "We're not really

pease her. But when she refused to acknowledge him, he stomped out of the

married."

club like an angry child. Although Katya was bisexual, Mystery still wasn't



If any other PUA had told me he'd gotten married in Vegas to a girl he'd

getting threesomes. He made the same mistake every time: He pushed too

just met, I would have known it was a joke. But Mystery was so headstrong

hard. He needed to follow Rick H.'s advice and make the experience her fan-

and unpredictable that I had given him the benefit—or, more accurately, the

tasy, not his.

detriment—of the doubt.

When I woke up, I took a plane home, leaving the two of them alone in

“Yeah, after you left, we walked by a jewelry store in the Hard Rock and

the hotel room until their flight in the evening.

decided to fake our marriage. So I bought two rings for a hundred bucks.

A few hours later, I received a phone call: “Hey, it's Katya.”

She's such a good liar. She totally fooled you.”

“Hey. Is something wrong?”

“You're both great illusionists.”

“No. Mystery wants to marry me. He got down on his knees at the Hard

“Don't tell Katya I told you. I think she's really enjoying the role-play.

Rock pool and proposed. Everyone applauded. It was so sweet. What

On an emotional level, it's the same as really being married for her.”

should I do?”

Mystery was right: Perception is reality. In the days that followed, their

The only reason I could come up with to explain Mystery's desire to get

entire relationship changed. They actually started acting like an old mar-

married was so he could get a U.S. citizenship. But Katya wasn't a U.S. citi-

ried couple.

zen. She still had a Russian passport.

Now that he was living with a woman, Mystery didn't feel the need to

"Don't rush into anything," I advised. "Just get engaged. Or, if you

go out anymore. To him, clubs were for sarging. To Katya, though, they

want, they have commitment ceremonies at the chapels there. Do that.

were for dancing. So she started going clubbing without him. After a while,

Then spend some more time together and see if this is something you both

Mystery hardly left his room or, for that matter, his bed. It was hard to tell

really want to do."

whether he was just being lazy, or if a depression was coming on.

Mystery grabbed the phone. "Hey, man, you're going to get really mad

There's a pattern the pickup artists have called rocks versus gold. It's a

at me. We're getting married. I love this girl. She's crazy. We're on our way to

speech a man gives a woman he's dating when she stops having sex with

the chapel. Okay, bye."

him. He tells her that women in a relationship want rocks (or diamonds)

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while men seek gold. Rocks, for a woman, are wonderful nights out, roman-

tic attention, and emotional connection. Gold for a man is sex. If you give a

woman only gold or a man just rocks, neither will be satisfied. There must

be an exchange. And Katya was giving Mystery the gold, but he wasn't giv-

ing her the rocks. He wasn't taking her out at all.

It wasn't long before they began to resent each other.

He'd say, "She gets drunk every night. It's driving me crazy."

I knocked on the door of Courtney's corporate apartment in West Los An-

She'd say, "When I met him, he had all these plans and ambitions. Now

geles.

he never leaves his bed. What's the point?"

"Come in. It's open."

He'd say, "She never shuts up. She's constantly yapping about some-

Courtney sat on the floor in the middle of a sea of American Express

thing pointless and bouncing off the walls.”

bills and bank statements with a yellow highlighter in her hand. She wore a

She'd say, “I'm getting wasted every night because I don't want to be in

black Marc Jacobs dress with buttons running down the side.

One was

a reality that's so sad.”

missing

Mystery needed a more passive girl. Katya needed a more active man.

“I can't look at these anymore,” she moaned. “There are so many loans

And it saddened the rest of us; after living in a house full of men for so

here that I never knew of or approved.”

many months, we'd grown attached to her positive energy and high spirits.

She stood up and slammed an American Express bill on the table. Half

Mystery had taught himself everything there was to know about the items were highlighted, with notes in black ink scribbled in the mar-

pickup, but nothing about how to maintain a relationship. He had this

gins. “If I stay here, I'll do drugs again,” she cried.

beautiful creature, full of sparkle and life, and he was just throwing it away.

She didn't have a manager, and taking care of her own affairs was prov-

Soon, another woman, with a very different kind of sparkle, would

ing to be more than she could handle.

move into Project Hollywood.

“I don’t want to be alone,” she begged. “I need somewhere to stay for a

I received the text message at 11:39 P.M.: “Can I stay at yr house? They

couple days. Then I’ll be out of your hair. I promise.”

reped the car and worse. U don’t wanna know. Need to not be alone.”

“That’s fine.” I guess she didn’t have a problem with the story I’d writ-

It was Courtney Love.

ten in *Rolling Stone*. “Herbal said you could sleep in his room. I just want to

warn you, though, that you’re not going into an ordinary house.”

“I know. I want to meet the pickup artists. Maybe they can help me.”

I walked her downstairs and strapped her sixty-pound suitcase to the

luggage rack on the back of my Corvette.

“You should also know that Katya’s brother is staying with us,” I said.

“And if he seems a little off, it’s because he has Tourette’s.”

“Is that like when you yell ‘Shit! Balls!’ uncontrollably?”

“Yeah. It’s sort of like that.”

I parked in the garage and dragged her suitcase upstairs to the house.

The first person we saw inside was Herbal, who was coming out of the

kitchen.

“Hi shit balls,” Courtney said to him.

“No,” I told her. “That’s not Katya’s brother.”

## *Chapter*



3ZB

Her brother walked out of the kitchen a moment later, sipping a Coke.

“Hi shit balls,” Courtney said to him.

She took a step backward and stepped on Lily, who yelped loudly.

Courtney turned around. I assumed she was going to apologize.

“Fuck off,” she told the dog.

This was going to be an interesting couple of days.

I showed her around the house and then bid her goodnight. Two min-

Mystery kneeled in front of Katya and kissed her belly. “If you want to keep

utes later, she marched into my room.

the baby, whether we are together forever or not, I will support your deci-

“I need a toothbrush,” she said as she breezed through to my bathroom.

sion. It would be a beautiful baby.”

“There’s a clean one in the medicine cabinet,” I yelled after her.

The sun poured into the kitchen from the patio, illuminating a thin,

“This will do,” she snapped back, grabbing my gnarly used toothbrush

orderly chain of ants that ran from the brickwork outside to the overflow-

off the sink.

ing trashcan. Before he stood up, Mystery licked his finger and wiped a thin

There was something endearing about her. She possessed a trait nearly

stripe of saliva through the middle of the chain. The ants went scurrying in

every pickup artist desired but lacked: She just didn’t give a fuck.

every direction at the point of rupture.

The next morning, I came downstairs to find her in the living room,

“I can’t even believe you’d think of keeping the baby,” Katya replied, her

smoking a cigarette and wearing nothing but a pair of expensive Japanese

voice chirpy but scornful. “You are weird. You’re acting like we’re married.”

silk panties. Her body was covered with black marks, as if she’d been rolling

The ants began to fall back into line. Soon, order was restored. It was

around in charcoal.

hard to tell there had ever been a catastrophe.

In that state of dishabille, she met the rest of the house.

“I love you,” Mystery said, without emotion. “And you know my mis-

“I used to ride horses with your dad,” Papa told her when I intro-

sion in life: survive and replicate. So I don't see any harm in having the baby.

duced them.

I'm willing to fulfill my half of the obligation."

Courtney scowled. "If you call that man my father again, I'll punch you

Our house wasn't self-organizing like a line of ants. There was no chain

in the face!"

of command or unspoken structure. The invisible chemical path we were all

She wasn't trying to be mean—she just lived in and reacted to the

following smelled like male hormones. And its natural state was disorder.

moment—but Papa didn't take well to aggression. All Papa had wanted

All afternoon, Mystery and Katya fought with each other over whether

from the day he'd signed the lease to Project Hollywood was to hang out

she should have an abortion and who should pay for it. These matters, how-

with celebrities. But now that he was living with one—in fact, the most no-

ever, are not group decisions. Katya and Mystery went to an abortion clinic

torious woman in the country at the time—he was petrified of her. He

three days later.

avoided her from that day forward, like he did everyone else who wasn't



“Guess what?” Katya squealed when she returned. “I’m not pregnant.”

part of his pickup business.

She jumped into the air and clapped her hands together in praise of

Next, Courtney met Katya. “I just took a pregnancy test,” Katya told

luck. Mystery stood behind her, giving her the finger. The look on his face

her, puckering her lips into a childish expression of self-pity. “It came out

was pure hatred. I’d never seen him display such malevolence toward a

positive.”

woman before.

“You should have the baby,” Courtney said. “It’s the most beautiful

A few hours later, I found Katya at the bar pouring herself a glass of

thing in the world.”

Chardonnay. Then another. Then another.

I was living *The Surreal Life*.

“Mystery doesn’t come out of the room, and he doesn’t fuck,” she com-

plained. “So I’m going to have a good time tonight without him.”

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“You deserve it.”

like *Real Genius* and *Young Einstein* and *The Karate Kid*. I liked Werner Herzog,

“Come drink with me,” she cooed.

Lars von Trier, and Pixar. It didn't mean I was better than him:  
It just meant

“That's all right.”

we were different kinds of nerds.

“No worries, no troubles.” She took a slow sip of wine and sat  
next to

“Dude,” I told him, “your wife is hitting on me.”

me on the couch.

“I'm not surprised. She hit on Playboy earlier tonight.”

“Wow,” she said. “You really have been working out. Your arms  
look

“Aren't you going to do anything about it?”

good.”

“I don't care. She can do what she wants.”

“Thanks.” One of the things I'd learned in the past year and a  
half was

“Well, at least she's not pregnant.”

how to take a compliment. Just say, “Thank you.” It's the only  
response a

“Get this,” he said. “She's such an idiot. That wasn't a  
pregnancy test at

all. It was an ovulation test. She bought the wrong box at Rite  
Aid. She took

confident person can make.

the test three times and each one was positive. So all she  
discovered was that

She sidled up to me and squeezed my biceps. “You're the only  
person in

at twenty-three, she's still ovulating.”

the house I can talk to.” Her face was inches away from mine.

“Listen, man.” I noticed that there were scratches on his arm.

“You're

I felt that tingle of energy, the one I'd felt just before I kissed the host-

driving her away. If she's hitting on everyone in the house, it's only because

ess Tyler Durden had picked up at the Hard Rock.

"Look at this," she said. She was lifting her top now. "I got a scratch."

she's trying to get revenge on you. It's rocks versus gold, man. You haven't

"That's nice."

been giving her rocks."

"Here, feel it."

"Yeah. She's a brainless alcoholic." He paused, shut his eyes for a mo-

She took my hand and pulled it toward her breast. I really had to get

ment, and nodded wistfully. "But that body: Her ass is a 10." going.

When I left Mystery's room, Katya was no longer in the living room.

"Well, it's been fun talking, but I have to go to my room and floss my

Papa's door was open, and she was cuddled next to him on his bed—with

cat now."

her top off.

"But you don't have a cat," she whined.

I retreated to my room and waited. An hour later, the storm came.

I circled around to the back of the house and entered Mystery's  
Voices yelled, doors slammed, glass smashed.

room through the patio. He was lying on top of his bed in jeans with a

There was a knock on my door.

laptop computer resting on his bare stomach. He was watching *Back to*

It was Courtney. "Are your roommates always this loud?"

*the Future II.*

She was one to talk.

"When I was in tenth grade, I wanted to kill myself because I had noth-

I followed Courtney to Herbal's room. Herbal had been sleeping in the

ing left to live for," he said. "Then I heard that *Back to the Future II* was open-

pillow pit while Courtney commandeered his room. Clothes, books, and

ing in twenty-three days. I had a calendar, and I would mark off each day

cigarette ash were spread across the floor. A candle sat burning at the foot

of the bed, its flame licking just an inch below the comforter.

One of her

until I could see the movie. It's the only thing that kept me from killing my-

dresses was draped over a hot, exposed light bulb for mood lighting. And all

self."

four of the house phone books were spread across her bed, with pages torn

He paused the movie and lifted the laptop off his stomach.

"When I saw

out of each. I examined the ripped scraps. They were listings for lawyers.

it and heard the opening music, I cried, dude. It was my reason to live. I

The noises coming from Mystery's room grew louder.

know all the props." He held up the DVD box and showed me the cover. "I

"Let's see what's going on," she said.

touched this car."

I sat down at the foot of his bed. No one wants to be the bearer of bad

I didn't want to be involved. I didn't want to clean up anyone's mess.

news. I picked up the DVD box and looked at it. Mystery enjoyed movies

This wasn't my fucking responsibility.

### *Chapter*



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We walked into Mystery's bathroom. Katya was kneeling on the floor

with her hands clasped around her neck, as if she were choking. Her brother

was leaning over her, holding an asthma inhaler in her mouth. Mystery

stood a few feet away, staring daggers at Katya.

"Should I call an ambulance?" I asked.

"They'll arrest her because she has drugs in her system," Mystery said

contemptuously.

The next morning, Courtney burst out of her door at an atypically early

Katya looked up and glared at him.

hour. She was wearing an Agent Provocateur nightie.

If she had the presence of mind to glare at Mystery, then she clearly

“What? What’s going on?” she asked, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes.

wasn’t dying.

“I had a bad dream. I didn’t know where I was.” She looked around: at me,

When Katya finally emerged from Mystery’s room, her face red and

at Katya sleeping on the sofa, at Katya’s brother and Herbal snoring inches

damp, Courtney took her by the hand and led her to a sofa in the living

apart in the pillow pit. “Everyone’s nice,” she observed with relief. “No one’s

room. She sat down next to her, still gripping her hand, and told her about

mean. Okay.”

the abortions she had been through and about the beauty of childbirth. I

She returned to her room and shut her door. A few minutes later, a

looked at the unlikely pair sitting there. Courtney was both Project Holly-

driver arrived at the house.

wood’s child and its mother.

“Where’s Courtney?” he asked.

She was also probably the sanest person in the house. And that was a

“Sleeping,” I said.

scary thought.

“She’s got a court date in an hour.”

He knocked on her door and walked inside. Shortly afterward, a slew of

dresses came tumbling out of Courtney’s room, followed by their owner.

“I need to find something to wear to court,” she said as she slipped on

various outfits, running in and out of the bathroom to check them in the

mirror. Eventually, she left the house in a strapless black cocktail dress of

Katya’s, Herbal’s eight-dollar sunglasses, and Robert Greene’s *The 48 Laws of*

*Power* book tucked under her right arm.

“It’s a silly dress because it’s a silly case,” she told court reporters that day.

While she was gone, we inspected the damage. There were cigarette

burns in Herbal’s bedspread, and the wall behind the door was destroyed

from the constant slamming. There were slicks of unidentifiable liquid on

the floor, candles still burning, and clothing flung over every light fixture.

In the kitchen, the refrigerator and cabinet doors all hung open. Two

peanut butter jars and a jelly jar sat on the counter top, with their caps scat-

tered on the floor. Globes of peanut butter dripped from the counter, the

cabinets, and the refrigerator shelves. Rather than open bags of bread using

the twist tie on the end, she had torn the tops of the plastic bags open like

an animal. She didn't give a fuck. She was hungry; she ate. It was another

quality that pickup artists admired: She could go caveman.

When Courtney returned from court, she sat with the house's cabal of

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pickup artists and planned her appearance that evening on *The Tonight Show*

right arm thrust out and a middle finger in the air, directly in line with

*with Jay Leno*. Mystery and Herbal taught her about concepts like social

Katya's face.

proof, and NLP ideas like framing. She needed to be reframed. The current

Katya crawled into the driver's seat and drove to the intersection,

frame everyone saw her through was that of a crazy woman. But having

then turned around to fetch Mystery, who had started walking along the

lived with her for two weeks, we knew she was just going through a bad pe-

sidewalk. When she pulled up next to him, he stopped, shot her a scornful

riod. She was eccentric, but not crazy. In fact, she was incredibly smart. She



look, crossed his arms into the fuck-you position, and then continued

understood and internalized every concept they taught her. walking.

“So my new frame, then, is that I’m a damsel in distress,” she said.

She drove off without him. She wasn’t angry; she was just disappointed

That evening, she shone on *The Tonight Show*. Unlike during her by his childishness.

tabloid-headline-making *Letterman* appearance, she was composed and

That night, Mystery didn’t return home. I called him several times, but

well-behaved on camera—and her performance with her all-female band,

he didn’t answer. When I woke up the next morning, he still hadn’t re-

the Chelsea, was a reminder that she wasn’t just a celebrity, she was a rock

turned. Every time I dialed his number, the call went straight to voice mail.

star.

I began to worry.

I had driven to the show in Katya’s car with Herbal, Mystery, Katya,

A few hours later, there was a knock on the door. I answered it, expect-

and Kara, a girl I’d met in a bar a couple of days before. After the show, we

ing Mystery, but found Courtney’s driver standing there instead. One of

went upstairs to Courtney's dressing room, where she was sitting on a

Courtney's many talents was the ability to turn anyone within a hundred-

stool surrounded by the Chelsea. I was stunned by her guitarist: She was a

yard radius into a personal assistant. Seduction students visiting the house

tall, gorgeous bleached-blond rock-and-roller oozing attitude. Why

for the first time found themselves running to Tokyopop for a manga book

couldn't I ever find girls like that in the clubs?

Courtney was in, picking up bedding from her corporate apartment, or

"Can I stay in your room for two more weeks?" Courtney asked Herbal.

sending e-mails to the financial expert Suze Orman.

"Sure," he replied. Herbal never had a problem with anything or any-

"Shitballs!" she called to Katya's brother. "Can you go back to my

one. While Mystery had been moping in his room, he was out helping Katya

apartment with the driver and get my DVDs?"

keep her brother entertained.

After he left, Courtney told Katya, "He's a nice kid, and kind of cute."

"It may be a month," Courtney called after us as we left the room.

“You know, he’s a virgin,” Katya said.

In the parking lot, Mystery climbed into the driver’s side of Katya’s car.

“Sure,” Courtney replied. She went silent, contemplating this piece of

He hadn’t spoken a word to her all day. She sat in the passenger seat and

information for a few moments, then nodded her head and told Katya, “I’d

slipped a dance mix by Carl Cox into the CD player. Her musical taste was

give him a mercy fuck.”

confined to house and techno; Mystery listened almost exclusively to Tool,

That night, Mystery returned. He had a stripper on each arm. They

Pearl Jam, and Live. That should have been a warning sign.

looked like they’d been working in the same dark club for twenty years; our

hundred-watt lightbulbs weren’t serving them well.

As we pulled out of the parking lot, Mystery’s phone rang. He turned

“Hey, buddy,” he said, as if he’d just come back from the grocery store.

the music off to answer it.

“Where were you?”

Katya reached over and turned the music on quietly.

“I went to a strip club and spent the night with Gina.”

Mystery angrily turned it off again.

“Hi,” said a horse-faced brunette on his left arm. She lifted her waving

And so it went: on, off, on, off—each twist of the knob with more

hand meekly.

venom than the last until, finally, Mystery slammed on the brakes,

“Well, dude, you should have called. It’s okay to have your little spat

screamed “fuck you,” and jumped out of the car.

with Katya, but Herbal and I were really worried. That wasn’t cool.”

He stood in the middle of Ventura Boulevard blocking traffic, with his

### *Chapter*



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He paraded the girls through the house, making sure he introduced

them to Katya, then sat on the patio with them.

Katya went about her business. She showered, she cleaned the daily ex-

plosion of peanut butter in the kitchen, and she did her special-effects-

school homework on Herbal’s face, giving him a lobotomy.

While Mystery’s stripper gambit had failed to make her jealous, it did

succeed in making everyone else’s respect for him dwindle further.

It was bound to happen. Katya eventually reached someone in the house.

She'd been hitting on all of us since her pregnancy scare.

It was Herbal who ultimately cracked. He was laid-back. He never lost

his cool. He liked to listen. He was modest and understated. In other words,

he was the exact opposite of Mystery. All that time he had spent with Katya

while Mystery was pouting or laying indolently in bed or sleeping with a

stripper out of revenge had affected him. He had developed feelings for

Katya. After watching her suffer through Mystery's manipulation and neg-

lect, he'd even begun to believe that he was more worthy of her.

"It's getting harder and harder to say no," he told me.

"Just ask Mystery. He's probably over her by now."

"Yeah. After all, he was cool with the whole Sima thing." (Sima was

Mystery's ex-MLTR from Toronto who Herbal had fooled around with.)

So Herbal asked Mystery. The answer was no. But that evening, after

fighting with Katya again, Mystery found Herbal in the living room. "We're

broken up," he said casually. "She's all yours."

They were words he would soon regret.

Within hours, Herbal had his dick inside her. Since Courtney was sleep-

ing in his bed, he fucked Katya in Playboy's room off the kitchen.

When Mystery returned home that night from the Standard, he went

to the kitchen for a Sprite. That was when he heard them. The moans that

had been his exclusive nightly serenade were being sung to another man. He

stood outside Playboy's door in shock, listening to them have sex. Katya

seemed to be enjoying it. Loudly.

Mystery walked into the living room and collapsed on the floor. The

blood drained from his face. Like his father's death, it affected him more

than he could have predicted.

Never underestimate your own capacity to care.

"I love her," he said, as the first tear trickled down his cheek. "I love that

girl."

"No you don't," I corrected him. "You said the other day that you hated

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her." The thoughts I'd been holding back for weeks came pouring out of

"Do you want to tell me about what happened last night?"

Mystery had

me. "All you like about her is her body. The only reason you're upset is be-

asked.

cause you feel rejected."

"Why should I? You basically gave me as a present to Herbal."

"No. I'm pissed at her for not loving me back."

“Did you fuck him?”

“She loved you more than any other girl I’ve seen you with. She sat with

“Well, let’s put it this way,” she had said, “I just had the most amazing

me in the hot tub one night talking about how scared she was to let go and

sex of my life.”

really love you. And as soon as she did, you became a cold, shutdown, mis-

It crushed him.

erable bastard.”

“I want to kill her.” He rolled onto his back and moaned like a dying

“But I love her.”

dog. “Logically, I know I’m being controlled by my emotions. But my logic

“You say that about every girl you sleep with. That’s not real love. It’s

is just 2 percent right now. I feel emotionally raw.” He clenched his bedsheet

fake love. It’s an illusion.”

in his fist. “I feel strange and empty, like after a shit.”

“No it isn’t,” he screamed at the top of his lungs. “You’re wrong!”

He rolled over and started sobbing again. “I feel shit empty.”

He stood up, stomped to his room, and slammed the door, splintering

I would have laughed if he were trying to be funny.

paint onto the carpet.

As he grieved, I kept thinking of one of Courtney’s lyrics: “I made my

He'd been so neglected as a child that the withdrawal of love pulled all

bed/I'll lie in it." Mystery had made his bed. And now Herbal was lying in it.

his emotional triggers, exploding the carapace of narcissism built by his

He raised his hands to the ceiling and screamed in his Anthony Rob-

childhood escapism.

bins voice. Suddenly, Courtney poked her head in the door. "Is it about me?"

As I walked back to my room, a scene from *The Wizard of Oz* sprung into

I can sleep in the front room if you want."

my head in which the Wizard tells the Tin Man, "A heart is not judged by

She could be so sweet.

how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others."

I walked into the living room and told Courtney what was going on.

I was looking forward to letting my dreams file away all my thoughts,

Katya was sitting on the patio outside, smoking a cigarette.

worries, and aggravations so I could start the next day fresh. But I was way-

"I feel so bad," Katya said. "Poor Mystery." She made sympathetic

laid by Courtney. She stood in my doorway, a sheaf of papers in her hand.

sounds for him— *awws* and *mmtns*—as if she were talking about her dog.

"You gotta get Frank Abagnale on the phone for me," she demanded.



Herbal shuffled to the table with his head slumped forward. He was

“He can fix this. And call Lisa and tell her I need to see her.”

silent, trying to think of something to say. Neither of them seemed to regret

“You got it.”

sleeping together. They just didn't realize that Mystery would take it so

I had no idea what she was talking about. I didn't know how to get in

hard. None of us did.

touch with Frank Abagnale (the counterfeit artist whose memoir inspired

Courtney lit a cigarette and told Herbal about a threesome she'd expe-

the movie *Catch Me If You Can*) or, for that matter, Lisa, her guitarist. But by

rienced and how sharing can be caring and how she ran away to San Fran-

now I'd figured out how to deal with Courtney's constant demands: Just say

cisco to join Faith No More and how the Suicide Girls was her idea and how

yes and do nothing. She'd forget what she wanted in a few hours anyway.

she tried to turn a groupie into an artist in Europe. Somewhere in her me-

In the morning, I checked on Mystery. He was sitting on his bed in his

andering speech there was a metaphor for Herbal's current dilemma-

robe, shaking and convulsing. His face was red and his eyes were full of

caught between his closest friend and the girl he was falling in love

tears. I'd never seen him like this before. When he was depressed in

with—but we couldn't find it.

Toronto, he'd simply shut down and become catatonic. This time, he

Just then, Herbal's phone rang. He answered it and, with a shocked ex-

seemed to be in real pain.

pression on his face, handed it to Courtney.

Evidently, Katya had come into his bathroom in the morning to get her

“It's Frank Abagnale calling for you,” he said. “I guess he got my mes-

sage.”

toothbrush.

## *Chapter*



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I left the three of them on the patio and called Mystery's sister, Martina.

“He's starting to crash again,” I said.

“How bad is it?”

“It started off like normal heartbreak, but this morning he went over

the edge. The situation seems to have triggered some kind of chemical reac-

tion. He's crying uncontrollably right now."

"Well, if it gets any worse, I'll get him a ticket back to Toronto. If you

The next night, Katya came home at 2:00 A.M. She was with Herbal and the

can put him on the plane, we'll take care of him when he arrives."

couple from New Orleans she sometimes slept with. Mystery pushed open

"You realize that if he comes back to Toronto, everything will be lost.

his door, sat on a pillow on the floor, and watched them as they drank in the

He's overstayed his visa here, so they'll never let him into the United States

common room. He was making an effort to hold himself together.

again. He'll have no chance of becoming a famous illusionist. And his

pickup business will be destroyed."

The woman in the couple was six feet tall, with a gym-taut abdomen,

brown hair hanging down to a well-sculpted butt, brand new fake breasts,

"I realize that. But what choice do we have?"

and a large nose that was next in line for the plastic surgeon's scalpel. When

"I'll try to handle it myself."

Katya leaned over and made out with her, Mystery's face scrunched up and

"Just send him home. Health care in Canada is free. We can't afford to

reddened. If he'd just held onto Katya a little longer, he could have had his

take him anywhere in the States—especially if they institutionalize him.”

elusive threesome. Instead he was confined to his pillow, watching Katya

“Let me try. If it gets worse, I'll send him back to you.”

laugh with the couple, watching Herbal sit there with a self-satisfied grin,

Watching Mystery's relationship with Katya unfold had been an eye-

watching the girls change into bikinis and prance out to the hot tub, watch-

opener. He invited her to move in. He married her. He got her not-pregnant.

ing Herbal join them.

He ignored her and resented her. He gave Herbal permission to sleep with

Katya had given Mystery her love, and now he was paying for tossing it

her. He was no one's victim but his own.

in the trash. Whether intentionally or not, she was rubbing her bisexuality,

In the meantime, ever since the *New York Times* article, half a dozen re-

her youth, and her happiness in his face.

ality TV executives had called Mystery—including the producers of *Ameri-*

By morning, Mystery's sanity had decomposed further. When he wasn't

*can Idol*. VHI had even sent him a contract for a show in which he turned

crying on the couches, he was patrolling the house, trying to make sure

losers into Lotharios. The stardom Mystery wanted so desperately was his

Katya and Herbal were apart. If he couldn't find them, he'd call her.

for the taking. But he wasn't calling anyone back.

Whether she answered the phone or not, the result was the same: Mystery

"This has happened before," Martina sighed when I told her about the

would fly off the handle and destroy whatever was within arm's or leg's

reality-show offers. "Every time he gets close to making it, he breaks down

reach. He pulled several bookcases to the ground; decimated his pillows,

and throws it all away."

leaving feathers strewn across his room; and threw his cell phone against

"So do you mean ..."

the wall, snapping the apparatus in half and leaving a deep black dent in

"Yes," she said. "He's actually scared of the success he wants so badly."

the plaster.

"Where's Katya?" he'd ask Playboy.

"She's shopping for clothes on Melrose."

"Where's Herbal?"

"He's, um, sort of with her."

And then Mystery's heart would twist and his face would fall and his

eyes would leak and his legs would give out from under him and he'd make

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some bizarre evolutionary justification for it all. "It's selfish genes," he'd

and he started talking about killing himself and I got him a Xanax from

say. "It's the nonexistent potential baby punishing me for leaving."

Katya and I put him in my car and I took him to the Hollywood Mental

When Herbal returned from shopping on Melrose with Katya, I warned

Health Center and he tried to run away twice and he wanted to hit on the

him, "You're being tooled. She's using you to get back at Mystery."

therapist but couldn't.

"No," he said. "It's not true. We have real feelings for each other."

Six hours later, he left the clinic with a package of Seroquel pills in his

"Well, can you do me a favor and just try not to see her until Mystery

hand and another Xanax in his system. I'd never heard of Seroquel before,

gets better? I'm going to ask her to leave the house for a while."

so when we returned the house I looked at the pamphlet that came with it.

"Fine," he said, with some reluctance. "But it's not going to be easy."

"For the treatment of schizophrenia," it read.

That night, I took Katya and her brother to the movies. Plan A was to

Mystery took the pamphlet from my hands and looked it over. “They’re

get her out of the house and away from Herbal so that Mystery didn’t get

just sleeping pills,” he said. “They’ll help me get to sleep.”

any worse. Plan B was to fuck her in order to show Herbal that his connec-

“Right,” I told him. “Sleeping pills.”

tion with Katya wasn’t so special.

Fortunately, plan A worked.

“You are destroying Mystery,” I told her as I drove her back from the

theater. “You need to leave the house. And don’t come back until I say it’s

okay. This isn’t about you anymore. Mystery has a serious psychological

problem, and you’ve set it off.”

“Okay,” she said. She looked up at me like a child being disciplined.

“And promise me not to sleep with Herbal again. You’re hurting one of

my roommates, and you’re about to break the heart of another. I can’t

stand by and watch it.”

“I promise,” she said.

“The fun is over. You’ve made your point.”

“Okay,” she said. “I’m done.”

“Pinky swear?”

We locked pinkies.

I should have made her swear on something more serious.

Seduction was easy compared to this. Even if people were just pro-grams designed by evolution, as Mystery believed, they were apparently too complicated for any of us to truly understand. All we had figured out were a few simple cause and effect relationships. If you lower a woman's self-esteem, she will seek validation from you. If you make a woman jealous, she will become more attracted to you. But beyond attraction and lust, there were deeper feelings that few of us felt and none of us had mastered. And these feelings—for which the heart and the word *love axe*. just metaphors—were tearing Project Hollywood, a house already divided, further apart. And so it came to pass that Mystery scared everyone out of the house





STEP 10  
BLAST LAST-MINUTE  
RESISTANCE

## Chapter



*It was lemonade day at Project Hollywood. At least, that's what Courtney*

*Love had decided. Mystery was recovering, Katya was in New Orleans for six*

*weeks, and there were good vibes to be spread.*

WHAT IS SEXUAL IS WHAT

Cigarette hanging from her mouth, dropping ash onto her Betsey Johnson T-shirt, Courtney grabbed a giant mixing bowl from the cabinet.

GIVES A MAN AN ERECTION . . . . IF

She opened the refrigerator and scanned for liquids, snatching two half-

gallon cartons of lemonade and a quart of orange juice. She emptied them

into the mixing bowl and, when that overflowed, several pots. Then she

THERE IS NO INEQUALITY , NO

grabbed a handful of ice cubes from the freezer and dropped them into her

brew. Finally, she plunged her black-charred fingers into each vessel and

VIOLATION , NO DOMINANCE , NO

stirred. Juice sloshed onto the counter as ashes from the cigarette in her

mouth fluttered into the mixing bowl.

F O R C E , T H E R E I S N O S E X U A L

Stubbing her cigarette out on the yellow tile countertop, she looked

around frantically until she noticed an overhead cabinet. She swung the

A R O U S A L .

doors open and thrust her hands inside, sticking her fingers into four

glasses and squeezing them together to pull them out. One by one, she

dipped the glasses into the bowl and filled them. Then she grabbed the rest

of the glasses, any clean coffee mugs she could find, and a Pyrex measuring

cup, and sloshed lemonade into all of them.

— C A T H A R I N E M A C K I N N O N ,

In the living room, Mystery sat cross-legged on a couch, leading his

first pickup seminar since returning from the mental-health center three

*Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*

weeks earlier. He wore a T-shirt and denim overalls. His feet were bare.

Patches of unshaven hair dappled his chin, and his eyelids drooped lazily

over unfocused eyes. He'd been taking the Seroquel regularly and sleep-

ing out his depression. He was beginning to break through to the other

side.

“There are three phases to a relationship,” he told his students, speak-

ing in a torpor. “There’s a beginning, a middle, and an end. And I’m going

through the end right now. I’m not going to lie to you. I’ve cried three times

in the last week.”

His six students glanced at each other, confused. They were there *to*

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learn to get laid. But for Mystery this wasn’t just a seminar; it was therapy.

“I made this for you,” Courtney said. She thrust a mug of lemonade in

He’d been telling them about Katya for two hours now.

each of Herbal’s wet hands and dashed away. Herbal stood there silently.

“This is what you’re building up to, and it can be difficult,” he went on.

Ever since he’d promised to stop talking to Katya, he’d been drifting

“My plan for the next girl is to have a fake marriage again. The mistake I

through the house in a forlorn cloud of silence. Though he was too proud

made last time was letting Katya and her mother know it was a joke. Next

to admit it, his heart ached. He loved her.

time, I’ll have the wedding in the backyard. I’ll have an actor be the

As Mystery’s students broke for lunch, Courtney dashed past them and

preacher, and everyone except her and her parents will know we’re not really

up the stairs to Papa's room, leaving a trail of lemonade drops on the car-

getting married.”

pet. She burst through the door. Inside, Papa, Sickboy, Tyler Durden, Play-

One of the students, a good-looking man in his thirties with a crewcut

boy, Xaneus, and the mini-Papas were working on individual computers.

and a jaw like a block of cement, raised his hand. “But didn't you just get

Extramask was laying on Papa's unmade bed, reading the Bhagavad Gita.

through telling us how the fake marriage was a disaster last time?”

While staying at the house, Extramask had gotten bored and started read-

“I was just field-testing it,” Mystery said. “It's a great routine.”

ing Playboy's books on eastern religion, which had unexpectedly led him

Whenever Mystery returned from his depressions, his mental bearings

down a path of spiritual self-discovery.

shifted a little. This time there was an anger lurking beneath the surface,

“Courtney,” Tyler Durden asked as she distributed drinks, “can you get

along with a new bitterness toward women.

us on the guest list for Joseph's on Monday?”

Suddenly, Courtney came careening out of the kitchen. “Who wants

Courtney picked up the phone, walked into the bathroom with Tyler,

lemonade?”

and dialed Brent Bolthouse, the promoter who threw the Monday night

The students looked at her dumbstruck. “Here you go,” she said, forc-

parties at Joseph’s, famed for their tight guest lists and crowds of gorgeous

ing a glass on Mystery and another on Cementjaw. “What are you doing

wanna-bes. “Brent,” she said. “My friend Tyler Durden is a professional

here?” she asked. “You’re cute.”

pickup artist.” Tyler waved his hands frantically in a futile attempt to signal

“I’m a self-defense instructor,” he said. “Mystery is letting me sit in on

Courtney not to talk about it. “He picks up women for a living. It’s really

cool.” Tyler dropped his head into his hands. “Can you put him on the

the workshop in exchange for lessons in Krav Maga.”

guest list so he can come with some of his pickup artist friends and pick up

Courtney shot off to the kitchen and came back with two more glasses

chicks?”

of lemonade, then two more, and two more, until there were more glasses

than people in the room.

Courtney picked a strip of six wrapped condoms off the edge of the

sink and wrapped it around her wrist like a bracelet, then began exploring

“I think we’re set on lemonade,” Mystery said as she returned with two  
the bathroom. She poked her head inside the two closets—  
Papa’s infamous  
coffee mugs in her hands.  
guest bedrooms—that were on either side of the toilet.  
“Where’s Herbal?” she asked.  
“Let me ask you something,” she said as she withdrew from  
Tyler Dur-  
“I think he’s showering.”  
den’s closet, which contained a suitcase, a pile of dirty clothes,  
and a mat-  
Courtney dashed to the bathroom and kicked the door. “Herbal?  
Are  
tress on the floor. “Do you like women?”  
you there?” She kicked the door again, harder.  
On the other side of the bathroom’s slotted windows,  
Cementjaw  
“I’m showering,” he yelled back.  
dragged a sandbag along the brickwork of the patio.  
“It’s important. I’m coming in.”  
“I wasn’t a misogynist when I started this,” Tyler replied. “But  
you get  
She pushed through the door, ran inside, and ripped the shower cur-  
good and you start sleeping with all these women who have  
boyfriends, and  
tain open.  
you stop trusting women.”  
“What’s going on?” Herbal asked, panicked. He stood there  
naked, his

A side effect of sarging is that it can lower one's opinion of the oppo-

hair streaked white with shampoo. "Is the house on fire?"

## Chapter



35D

site sex. You see too much betrayal, lying, and infidelity. If a woman has

been married three years or more, you come to learn that she's usually eas-

ier to sleep with than a single woman. If a woman has a boyfriend, you learn

that you have a better chance of fucking her the night you meet her than

getting her to return a phone call later. Women, you eventually realize, are

just as bad as men—they're just better at hiding it.

"I got hurt a lot when I first started picking up," he continued.

"I'd

*Beyond Project Hollywood, the whole community appeared to have taken on a*

meet an amazing girl I really liked, and we'd talk all night. She'd say she

*dangerous, unstable edge. Field reports became not just about meeting girls but about*

loved me and was so lucky to have met me. But then I'd fail one shit test,

*getting into fights and being kicked out of clubs. Community members began living*



and she'd walk away and wouldn't even talk to me anymore.  
Everything

*vicariously through the drama taking place in Project  
Hollywood, as well as through the*

we'd built up over the last eight hours would just go down the  
drain. So it

*distinct writings of Jlaix, a shotgun-toting karaoke-singing,  
Elvis-looking PUA whom*

hardened me.”

*Tyler Durden and Papa had discovered in San Francisco.*

There are men in this world who hate women, who do not  
respect

them, who call them bitches and cunts. These are not PUAs.  
PUAs do not

MSN GROUP: Mystery's Lounge

hate women; they fear them. Simply by defining oneself as a  
PUA—a title

**SUBJECT:** FR—Jlaix's First Stripper (Drugs Sold Separately)

earned solely by the responses of women—one becomes  
doomed to derive

**AUTHOR:** Jlaix

his entire self-esteem and identity from the attention of the  
opposite sex,

not unlike a comedian's relationship to audience members. If  
they don't

I just flew back from Vegas, and I'm fucking exhausted. I was  
thrown out of a

laugh, you're not funny. So, as self-esteem defense mechanisms,  
some PUAs

karaoke bar last night for rolling on the floor and crying during  
the bridge of

developed misogynist tendencies in the process of learning.

Journey's "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart).”

Sarging could be hazardous to the soul.

But this post is not about karaoke. It is about fucking a stripper.  
So let's get

Outside the window, Cementjaw held the sandbag as Mystery  
flailed at

right to it, shall we?

it with long, limp punches.

I got into town on Wednesday afternoon and began drinking.  
Some guys

“Harder,” he yelled at Mystery. “I want to see more aggression!”

from work and I were staying at the Hard Rock, just like the  
characters on *The*

*OC* did in this week's episode. We got ejected from the Hard  
Rock Cafe for

making meat cocktails and daring each other to drink them. A  
typical meat

cocktail contained beef, bacon, beer, mashed potatoes, more  
beer, ribs, ice,

onions, mustard, A-1 Sauce, salt, pepper, Nutrasweet, and  
perhaps a little

vodka. After one of my co-workers puked on the table, we all  
went to the strip

club Olympic Gardens.

I was pissed because I wanted to sarge, not get some lame-ass  
lap

dance. I'm always saying what a great pickup artist I am to the  
guys from

work, and I needed to show them I wasn't just talking out of my  
ass. I'd been

training for this thing hard and was frankly a little nervous that  
I'd look like a

tool if I didn't pull on this trip. Furthermore, I don't like strip  
clubs because I

refuse to pay for sex of any kind. But I went along for the ride  
and sat there

with a beer while the guys had their fun.

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So this girl sat down across the booth from me. It turned out she  
worked

We got to the room and three bozo co-workers were in there,  
wasted. I

there, but decided to take the day off because there weren't  
enough customers

hurriedly pushed them out of the room, suggesting they go  
gamble. The chick

and there were too many chicks in the place. I started running  
routines on her

looked at the desk and said, "Someone's been doing coke here. I  
can tell. I'm

and busting her balls. My friends were looking at me like I was  
insane because

a stripper."

I kept calling her a dork.

I serenaded the stripper. I sang "On the Wings of Love" by  
Jeffrey

She kept saying, "You are so cocky!" and started really getting  
into me.

Osborne to her. I told her I wanted to cuddle, and we did and  
just talked for a

My friends watched this happen with their jaws dropped open. I  
told her we

while. I then told her I wanted to show her a trick. I got on her  
and initiated

were going back to our hotel and she should come and call some  
of her "hot

tonguedown. I fold her, “I wanna lick it,” and took off her pants. No panties. I

ho friends.” She got pissed that I called her a ho, so I instantly changed the

inspected her for sores, then began the licking. She had a clit piercing, which

subject. “Oh my God, my friend is so weird. She eats lemons whole, just like

I’d never encountered before. It clicked on my teeth weirdly. I put the fingers in

an orange blah blah.” And this made her forget. More routines —boom, boom,

after five minutes and licked her into submission. Then I said, “Too bad I have

boom. This went on for a while. We all left together.

whiskey dick!”

Outside, the manager was trying to get her to go back in and work. But I

She said, “It looks okay to me,” and I fucked the shit out of her.

pulled her away, and we got into a cab. She said, “I’m a stripper with a

I had never seen real tits this big on a chick that skinny. Oh my fucking

brain!” I ran Mystery’s “we’re too similar” on her, then Style’s Cs versus Us.

God, this was the hottest chick I’ve ever fucked: my first stripper and my first 9.

When we got back to the hotel, I told her we should drop her shit off in

I cuddled and snuggled with her afterward. She expressed shock at my many

my room. Up there, I did the cube on her. Then I told her, “When I did this on

injuries and scars. I kissed this little-ass, adorable-ass stripper  
mothafucka

Paris Hilton at the taco shop, she said her cube was as big as a  
hotel. What

tenderly and said, "I'm not an insane maniac. I'm a poser insane  
maniac. I'm

an egomaniac!" So now she thought I was hanging with  
celebrities and

just dealing with the absurdity of existence by shoving absurdity  
down exis-

models all the time, even though it actually happened to Papa.  
tence's throat."

I also did Tyler Durden's new stuff about having standards and  
said, "I'm so

She gave me her number and told me to call her.

sick of dating these chicks who do drugs all the time and have  
plastic surgery. I

I used the *My Little Pony opener* the next night. ("Hey. Do you  
guys

mean, don't get me wrong, I love to blow rails off a shitty dive  
bar toilet tank as

remember that shit *My Little Pony? Yeah*, well I was trying to  
remember, did

much as the next guy, but only once in while! I mean, you're not  
like that, are

they have powers? Blah blah.") By the end of the night, after I  
got thrown out

you?" She qualified herself. Then I asked her if she was a good  
kisser, and we

of the karaoke club, I was just going up to chicks and drunkenly  
bellowing,

kissed for a while. I stopped it and suggested we go downstairs  
for a drink.

“Maaaaah lil poneee.” I ended up getting thrown out of another strip club.

In the casino. I started running comfort routines, filling in the empty canvas

The last thing I remember is sitting up in my bed watching the TV, confused

of my life. I ran Supercuts, Summer of Ripped Abs, Balloons in the Park,

and screaming at nobody, “What the fuck am I watching? Is this *The OC*?

Stripper Babysitter, and My Cat Got Laid. They’re all stories from my life and,

What the fuck is this?” until I realized that it was just an episode of *Punk’d*

trust me, the titles are more interesting than the actual content.

where they were pranking *The OC* cast. Then I passed out.

We walked around the casino looking for my friends for a while. Then I

told her I was tired and needed to go to sleep, and she should come up and

—Jlaix

tell me a bedtime story and tuck me in. She asked, “What are we going to

do? Bad things? I’ve only known you thirty minutes!”

I said, “Sheesh! I hope not! I have to wake up early so you better not

keep me up! Besides, I have whiskey dick.” This shit is classic; you guys have

to use it.

## Chapter



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Gabby took a bite, then dropped the muffin back onto the plate.

I

couldn't figure out who had invited her into the house. Maverick wasn't

around, and she wasn't friends with anyone else here.

"I have to do some work," I told her. "But nice meeting you."

I figured she could find her own way out of the house. But she must

have taken a wrong turn. Mystery later discovered her sitting on his toilet.

The first time I saw her, she was taking a shit.

Both were such narcissists, I thought they'd repel each other like two

I opened my bathroom door and she was sitting on the toilet.

positive ends of a magnet. Instead, they ended up having sex.

"Who are you?" I asked.

She spent the next week at the house, sleeping with Mystery and cat-

"I'm Gabby."

fighting with Courtney after borrowing her clothing without permission.

Gabby was friends with Maverick, one of the many junior PUAs who or-

Like Mystery, Gabby's biggest fear in life was having no one around to hear

bited our house and appeared in our living room every weekend uninvited.

her talk, so she was constantly running around the house, gossiping, com-

She had the attitude of a beauty queen but the body of a sack of tomatoes. I

plaining, and getting on Courtney's nerves.

took a step back and started to close the door behind me.

One afternoon, as Courtney stood in the kitchen digging into a jar of

"Hey," she said, flushing. "This is a nice house. What do you do for

peanut butter with two spoons, she asked Gabby, "Aren't you ever going

work?"

home?"

Those words were an instant dealbreaker. Sarging in Los Angeles, one

"Home?" Gabby looked at her funny. "I live here."

develops a radar for women who are users. The less tactful among them will

It was news to Courtney, to me, to Mystery. The house attracted people

ask, within the first few minutes of a conversation, what kind of car you

like that. Eventually, it would expel them all.

drive or what you do for work or what celebrities in the room you're friends

Twyla was the next victim of Project Hollywood. She first appeared at

with in order to determine your social ranking and how useful you might



the house when a stripper Mystery made out with several years ago was go-

be to them. The more tactful ones don't have to ask questions: They look at

ing through a major depression. Having some experience in the matter,

your watch; they see how people respond to you when you talk, they listen

Mystery offered to give her advice one night while Gabby was out clubbing.

for indicators of insecurity in your speech. These are the signals that PUAs

However, the stripper came over drunk and with Twyla in tow. call subcommunication.

Twyla was no prize. She was a tattooed thirty-four-year-old Hollywood

Gabby belonged to the less tactful of the species.

rock-and-roller with weathered skin, a body as hard as her face, black hair in

As she washed her hands, she opened the medicine cabinet and in-

a bird's nest of dreadlocks, and a heart of gold. She reminded me of a Pon-

spected the contents. Then she stepped into my room and continued her

tatic Fiero, an old sporty model liable to break down at any moment.

exploration. "Are you a writer?" she asked. "You should write about me. I

When Mystery and Twyla started flirting, their drunk, depressed friend

have a really interesting story. I want to be an actress. And you know how

burst into tears. She cried in the pillow pit for a half hour, until Twyla and

some people are just born to be famous.” She snatched a pair of Ray-Ban

Mystery finally scampered off to his room. Gabby returned home that night

sunglasses from the top of my dresser and put them on. “Well, that’s me.

**and**, without a word of objection, crawled into bed with the two of them

Not that I’m special or anything. It’s just something you know from a very

**and** promptly fell asleep. Gabby and Mystery weren’t in love; they just

young age because people treat you differently.”

wanted each other’s shelter.

A rich man doesn’t have to tell you he’s rich.

That morning and the morning after, Twyla cooked pancakes for

As she chattered away, she grabbed a muffin from a plate on my desk.

everyone in the house. Since she didn’t appear to be leaving anytime soon,

Today had been muffin day. Courtney had run around the house giving

Mystery hired her as his personal assistant for four hundred dollars a

everyone plates full of more muffins than they could eat.

week.

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The more Mystery neglected Twyla, the more she began to believe she

PAPA: Cliff from Montreal has been staying in my room, and Courtney

loved him. He hurt her over and over by chasing different women, and she

came up and took four of his books and three pairs of his under-kept coming back for more. Mystery seemed to enjoy the tears; they made

wear.

him feel like he mattered to somebody. If Twyla wasn't crying in the house,

it was Gabby. If it wasn't Gabby, it was someone else. From the chrysalis of

Every problem had a solution; every dispute had a compromise; every

Mystery's latest depression, a monster was emerging.

ego had a way to be stroked. I hardly had time to sarge anymore. The only

Project Hollywood was supposed to be a way to surround ourselves with

new women I was meeting were the ones who came into the house. Keeping

healthy, helpful influences to better ourselves, our career, and our sex lives.

Project Hollywood from imploding was becoming a full-time job.

Instead, the house had turned into a vacuum for needy males and neurotic

females. It sucked in anyone with mental problems and scared away anyone

of quality. Between permanent guests like Courtney, Mystery's women, and

Papa's revolving door of new trainers, employees, and students, it was im-

possible to tell how many people were actually living in the house.

However, at least the way I rationalized it, I was continuing my learning

and growing process. I've lived and worked alone most of my life. I've never

had a strong social circle or a tight network of friends. I've never joined

clubs, played team sports, or been part of any real group prior to the com-

munity. Project Hollywood was bringing me out of my solipsistic shell. It

was giving me the resources I needed to be a leader; it was teaching me how

to walk the tightrope of group dynamics; it was helping me learn to let go

of petty things like personal property, solitude, cleanliness, sanity, and

sleep. It was making me, for the first time in my life, a responsible adult.

I had to be: I was surrounded by children. Every day, someone ran up to

me with a new crisis to be managed:

DABBY: Mystery's being a dick. He says this isn't my house, and I'm not

wanted here.

MYSTERY: Courtney took eight hundred dollars from my room. She

made it up to me by paying my rent, but her check bounced.

COURTNEY: That guy with his pants pulled up too high is bothering

me. Can you tell him to leave me alone?

PLAYBOY: Courtney has her urine in our refrigerator. And Twyla's

crying in my bathroom and won't come out.

TWYLA: Mystery's trying to mack on some chick in his room, and he

told me to fuck off. And Papa won't let me sleep in his room.

## *Chapter*



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minded me of masturbating as a teenager to Susanna Hoffs in the Ban-

gles video for "Walk Like an Egyptian." This girl was the epitome of rock

and roll.

"Yeah," I stammered. "I saw you briefly at *The Tonight Show*?"

"Before that. At that party at the Argyle Hotel where you were talking

to those twins the whole night."

I left the house for an hour to get some groceries. Only an hour. And when

"Oh, the Porcelain TwinZ." I couldn't imagine having forgotten her.

I returned there was a red Porsche spewing smoke in the driveway, a

She was so charismatic. Good posture is one of the things I find most at-

thirteen-year-old girl in the living room, and two pissed-off bleached

tractive about a woman, and this girl's posture screamed confidence. It also

blondes smoking on the patio.

screamed, "Don't fuck with me."

"What the hell is going on?" I asked as I kicked the door shut behind me.

"This is Mari," Mystery said.

I went back inside and asked Mystery about her. "That's Lisa, Court-

ney's guitarist," he said. "She's a total bitch."

"The cleaning lady's daughter?" We were never able to hold onto a

The girls were visiting because Courtney had planned to tape an maid. The task of cleaning a week's accumulation of dishes, overflowing

acoustic performance at our house for a British television program. But

trash cans, fast-food debris, spilt alcohol, and cigarette butts from a

Courtney was nowhere to be found, and Sam and Lisa were fuming. I sat

dozen guys and countless party girls was more than most could handle.

down to pacify her bandmates. I felt so small next to them.

Consequently, Project Hollywood tended to stew in its own filth for a

month or more between maids. The latest had set a record: two consecu-

I picked up a CD case that belonged to Lisa and thumbed through the

tive weeks.

discs. I was impressed. She had music by Cesaria Evora, a diva from the

Cape Verde islands. Her mournful songs, backed by a lilting Latin rhythm,

“The cleaning lady left the house for supplies, so I’m watching her.” He

are perhaps the best make-out music on the planet. As soon as I saw that

took a few strides closer to me. “She reminds me of my nieces.”

CD, I knew I’d met someone I wanted to get to know better.

It was nice to see Mystery acting somewhat normal again. An adoles-

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I dimly recalled what enabled me

cent in the house was a calming influence on him. As for the Porsche,

to meet and interact with women before I’d discovered the seduction indus-

Courtney had it brought to the house so that Mystery could drive her to re-

try: commonalities. Simply finding out that you have a passion for some-

hearsal. But Mystery had taken the car for a test run and found out the hard

thing another person also likes and respects is enough to fire that strange

way that he couldn’t rely on his magical intuition to teach him how to drive

emotion we like to call chemistry. Scientists studying pheromones claim

a stick shift.

that when two people discover they have things in common, pheromones

“And who are they?” I asked, pointing at the blondes.

are released and attraction begins.

“They’re in Courtney’s band.”

Moments later, Mystery joined us. He dropped into a chair and sat

I went out to the patio and introduced myself.

there for a moment, a vortex of neediness sucking up any stray pheromones

“I’m Sam,” said a slightly tomboyish girl with a Queens accent.

“I play

Lisa and I had managed to release. “I called Katya today,” he said. “And we

drums with Courtney.”

talked for a while. I still love that girl.”

“We’ve met before,” I told her.

He looked at Sam and Lisa, as if trying to select a target. “Do they know

“We’ve met before too,” sneered the other girl. Her Long Island ac-

about the drama with Katya?” he asked.

cent was so sharp that it startled me. She was two inches taller than me,

The girls rolled their eyes. They had their own drama to deal with.

her hair was pushed straight back over her head like a horse’s mane, and

“Well,” I excused myself. “I’m going to grab a burrito at Poquito Mas.

her large brown eyes were framed with thick black mascara that re-

Nice meeting you—again.”



I had to get away from there. I didn't want to be associated with the

from pickup artist to spiritual seeker reminded me of Dustin. Some people

madness—even if I was part of it.

spend their lives trying to fill a hole in their soul. When women don't ab-

I walked down the hill to Poquito Mas, where I found Extramask sit-

sorb that emptiness, they look to something bigger: God. I wondered where

ting at a table outside, reading a book as thick as his skull. He was wearing

Dustin and Extramask would turn afterward, when they discovered that

shorts, a headband, and a torn white T-shirt with a fresh sweat stain from

even God wasn't big enough to plug the hole inside.

the gym.

“Well, man, good luck on your journey. I wish I could say that I was go-

It was the first time I'd seen him out of the house alone in months. Ever

ing to miss you, but we've hardly even talked to each other for half a year

since meeting him at Mystery's first workshop, I'd felt like he was my

now. It's been a little strange.”

younger brother in this whole endeavor—though, since joining the Real So-

“Yeah,” he said. “That's my fault.” He paused, and his lips forced them-

cial Dynamics crew, he'd been more like an estranged sibling. I decided to

selves into a curvy smile. For a moment, the old Extramask was back. "I

make an effort to reconnect with him.

used to be an insecure bitch," he said.

"What are you reading?" I asked.

"So was I," I told him.

"*I Am That* by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj," he said. "I like him better

By the time I got back to the house, the TV producers from Britain had

than Sri Ramana Maharshi. His teachings are more modern and easier to

arrived, along with a prospective manager for Courtney and a stylist.

read."

"I can't work with her anymore," the stylist said when it became clear

"Wow—impressive." I didn't know what else to say; I wasn't particularly

that Courtney wouldn't be showing up in time for the shoot.

"Ever since

familiar with Indian Vedanta writing.

she's been doing drugs, she's become a nightmare to deal with."

"Yeah, I'm starting to realize there's more to life than just girls. All of

We hadn't seen any evidence of drugs in the house, but considering

this stuff"—he gestured up the hill to Project Hollywood—"means nothing.

Courtney's erratic behavior, perhaps Project Hollywood hadn't kept her

Everything means nothing.”

away from them as she had hoped. I felt bad for her. She was allowing the

I half-expected him to burst out in laughter at any moment and start

problems of the house to distract her from the real-life issues she should

talking about his penis, like the old days. “So you’re overarguing then?” I

have been dealing with. Perhaps we all were.

asked.

I awoke that night to see Courtney standing at the foot of my bed with

“Yeah, I was obsessed with it, but when I read your post about social ro-

a Prada shoe in her hand.

bots, I realized I was becoming one. So I’m moving out.”

“Let’s redecorate the house,” she said excitedly. “This will be our

“Are you heading back to your parents’ house or getting your own

hammer.”

place?”

I looked at the clock. It was 2:20 A.M.

“Neither,” he said. “I’m going to India.”

“Do you have any nails or tacks?” she asked. Without waiting for an an-

“That’s amazing. For what?” When Extramask had come into the com-

puter, she ran downstairs and returned with a box of nails, a framed painting

munity, he was one of the most sheltered people I'd ever met.  
He'd never  
for my wall, a throw pillow for my bed, and a smashed pink box  
t h a t looked  
even been on a plane before.  
like an old Valentine's Day present.  
"I want to figure out who I am. There's an ashram near Chennai  
called  
"This is *the* heart-shaped box," she said. "I want you to have it."  
Sri Ramanasramam, and I want to stay there."  
She picked up my guitar, sat on the edge of my bed, and played  
my fa-  
"For how long?"  
vorite country song, "Long Black Veil."  
"Six m o n t h s or a year, or possibly forever. I really d o n ' t  
know. I'm just  
"I'm going to a friend's birthday party t o m o r r o w night at  
Forbidden  
kind of rolling with it."  
City," she said, d r o p p i n g the guitar to the floor. "I want you  
to come too.  
I was surprised b u t not shocked. Extramask's sudden  
transformation  
It'll be good for us to get o u t of the house together."

## *Chapter*



“I’ll tell you what. I’ll meet you there.” I knew how long she could take to get ready.

“Okay. I’ll go with Lisa.”

“Speaking of Lisa,” I said. “There were a bunch of people waiting for

you here today and you were nowhere to be found. I think they’re pretty

upset.”

Her face clouded, her lips puckered, and tears dripped from her eyes.

“I’m going to get help,” she said. “I promise.”

I wore a white blazer over a black shirt emblazoned with a scrolling bank of

LCD lights that could be programmed with a message. I input the words

“Kill me.” I hadn’t been out sarging in at least a month and wanted the at-

tention. My expectations for Courtney showing up to Forbidden City were

low, so I brought Herbal along as a wing.

We had recently flown to Houston together to pick up the Project Hol-

lywood limousine, a 1998 ten-passenger stretch Cadillac Herbal had found

on eBay. Flush with the success of that scheme, Herbal had, against our bet-

ter judgment, put down a deposit to buy a wallaby at an exotic pets website.

On the way to the party, we argued about the practicality and humanity of

having a baby marsupial in the house.

“They make the best pets,” he insisted. “They’re like house-trained kangaroos. They sleep with you, they bathe with you, and you can take them for walks by holding their tail.”

The last thing we needed was a wallaby in the mix at Project Hollywood. The only bright side to the fiasco was that it made for a great opener.

We ran around the party asking everyone for their opinion on having wallabies as pets. Between the opener and my shirt, within a half hour we were surrounded by women. It felt good to flex our skills again. We’d been so absorbed by the drama of the house that we had forgotten the reason we’d moved there in the first place.

As a tall, stoop-shouldered girl who claimed to be a model pawed at my shirt, I saw a mane of bleached-blond hair sticking up out of the crowd. I looked closer. Though she was on the other side of the room, she seemed to glow. Her jaw was set, her face was chiseled, her eyes smoldered beneath a half-shell of heavy blue eye shadow. It was Courtney’s guitarist, Lisa. Next to her, all the wanna-be models and actresses I had been talking to seemed insignificant. She dwarfed them with her style and poise. I excused myself and ran up to her. “Where’s Courtney?” I asked.

“She was taking too long to get ready. So I came alone.”

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“I respect a person who isn’t afraid to show up at a party alone.”

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“I am the party,” she said, without blinking or smiling. I think she was

them think they had fun, and thus give Real Social Dynamics good reviews

serious.

in the seduction newsgroups. It was becoming a competitive industry.

For the entire night, Lisa and I sat side-by-side in a chair, the most pea-

Courtney seemed to have disappeared again. Maybe she’d been serious

cocked couple in the room. The party seemed to come to us, as if we exerted

the other night and really was getting help, or maybe she was off getting

into more trouble.

some sort of gravitational pull together. The couches around us soon filled

with models, comedians, reality TV has-beens, and Dennis Rodman. When

I took Lisa up to my room, lit some candles, put Cesaria Evora in the

the various women I had talked to during the night came by to flirt, Lisa

CD player, and went to my closet.

and I drew on their arms with pens or fed them shots of Hypnotiq or gave

“Let’s have some fun,” I told her.

them intelligence tests that they usually failed. This is what the PUA’s call

I pulled out a garbage bag full of old Halloween costumes: masks, wigs,

creating an “our world” conspiracy. We were in our own little bubble, where

hats. We tried them all on, taking photos with my digital camera. I was go-

we were king and queen, and everyone else was our plaything for the night.

ing to attempt the digital photo routine.

When a phalanx of paparazzi started taking pictures of Dennis Rod-

We took a photo smiling, then serious. For the third photo, the roman-

man, who was standing nearby, I looked at Lisa’s face, illuminated by the

tic pose, we gazed at each other. Her eyes seemed so happy. Behind that

flashbulbs. And out of nowhere, my heart awoke from its torpor and body-

tough exterior was vulnerability and tenderness.

checked my chest.

I held her eye contact and moved toward her for the kiss, holding the

When the party broke up, Lisa put her arm around me and asked, “Will

camera in front of us to capture it.

you take me home? I’m too drunk to drive.” My heart slammed again, and

“I’m not kissing you,” she barked.



then settled into a fast, arrhythmic throb. She may have been too drunk to

The words scalded my face like hot coffee. There was no girl I couldn't

drive, but I was too nervous to drive.

kiss within half an hour of meeting her. What was her problem?

Without waiting for a response, she dropped the keys to her Mercedes

I froze her out and tried again. Nothing.

into my hand. I called to Herbal and asked him to drive my car home. "I

It is in these moments that, as a PUA, you start to question the work

can't believe it," I told him. "It's on!"

you've done on yourself You begin to worry that maybe she sees the real

But it wasn't on.

you, the one who existed before the silly nickname, the one who wrote po-

I drove Lisa back to her place. I recognized the building: It was directly

ems about this exact situation in high school.

across the street from the Hollywood Mental Health Center where I had

I delivered a moving, impassioned performance of the evolution taken Mystery. When we arrived, she went to the bathroom. I lay down on

phase-shift routine. Somewhere in the distance, I heard a thousand PUAs

applauding.

her bed and tried to look relaxed.

Lisa padded out of the bathroom, looked at me, and then said, with a

“I’m not biting you,” she said.

withering look, “Don’t think anything’s going to happen between us.”

I wasn’t through. I told her the most beautiful love story ever written:

Damnit, I’m Style. You have to love me. I’m an mPUA.

“On Seeing the 100 Percent Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning” by

She changed, and we drove to my house to look for Courtney. All we

Haruki Murakami. It is about a man and a woman who are soul mates. But

found there, however, was Tyler Durden leading ten men in the living room

when they doubt their connection for a moment and decide not to act on it,

they lose each other forever.

through some sort of exercise that involved running around the couches,

She was ice cold.

yelling loudly, and giving each other high fives. Tyler had been experiment-

ing lately with a technique of physically pumping up his students’ mood for

I tried a hardcore freeze-out: I blew out the candles, stopped the music,

turned on the lights, and checked my e-mail.

a night out meeting women. He believed that whether or not they actually

performed better, the shot of adrenaline and camaraderie would make

She climbed into my bed, curled up under the covers, and went to sleep.

Finally I joined her, and we slept on opposite sides of the bed.

## *Chapter*



3GB

I still had one trick left: going caveman. In the morning, without a

word, I started massaging her leg, working my hand slowly up her thigh. If I

could just turn her on physically, her logic would disengage and she would

no doubt submit.

My intention wasn't to use Lisa for sex. I knew I wanted to see her

again, no matter what happened. I just wanted to get the whole sex thing

over with so we could be normal together. She wouldn't be trying to keep

I told Mystery about my frustration with Lisa as we sat in the hot tub one

anything from me; I wouldn't be trying to get something from her. I always

night. I'd turned to him so often in the past for advice on women, and

hated the idea that sex is something a woman gives and a man takes. It is

he'd rarely steered me wrong. Though relationship management was

something that should be shared.

clearly not his forte, he was flawless when it came to blasting through last-

But Lisa wasn't sharing. As I began to rub the warm crease where her

minute resistance.

thigh meets her pelvis, her voice rang shrill in the air like an alarm clock.

"Start stroking yourself," he said.

"What are you doing?" She smacked my hand away.

"Now? Here?"

We had breakfast together, and lunch, and dinner. We talked about

"No, next time you're in bed together, just take your cock out and start

Courtney and the PUAs and my writing and her music and our lives, and all

stroking it."

kinds of other things that I can't remember but must have been fascinating

"Then what?"

because hours passed in the blink of an eye. She was my age; she liked all the

"Then you take her hand and put it on your balls. And she'll start giv-

same bands I did; she said something intelligent every time she opened her

ing you a hand job."

mouth; she laughed at my jokes that were funny and made fun of the ones

"Are you serious?"

that weren't.

“Yes. Then you put your finger on your dick and put a little precum on

She spent another night with me. Nothing happened. I had met my

it, and put your finger in her mouth.”

match.

“No way. This is like that bad joke advice you see in movies, where the

After breakfast, I stood on the front stoop and watched Lisa leave. She

friend does it and the girl freaks out and the guy who gave the advice goes,

walked uphill, climbed into her Mercedes, lowered the convertible top, and

‘I thought you knew I was kidding.’”

pulled away. I turned around to climb the stairs. I didn’t want to glance

“I’m totally serious. You’ve practically had sex after that.”

back. I wanted to look cool, and not give her any more IOIs.

Three days later, after the bars closed at 2:00 A.M., Lisa dropped by my

“Hey, come here,” she yelled from her car.

house with Sam, Courtney’s drummer. She was wasted.

I shook my head no. She was ruining my exit.

We climbed into bed and babbled to each other for hours. “I don’t

“No, seriously, come here. It’s important.”

know what my problem is,” she slurred. “I never want to leave your room. I

I sighed and walked back down to her car. “I’m really sorry, don’t be up-

could just listen to you talk forever.”

set,” she said. “But I think I might have accidentally dented your limo when

She rolled toward me. “Forget I said that,” she snapped. “I didn’t mean

I was pulling out.”

it. Alcohol is like a truth serum.”

My body went cold. It was our newest and most expensive possession.

Now was my chance. Mystery’s words ran through my head, and I con-

“Just kidding,” she said, stepping on the accelerator and leaving me in

sidered the pros and cons of stroking myself and placing her hand on me.

the dust with a wave. I saw her blonde hair streaming over the side of the car

I couldn’t do it. Not because I was scared, but because there was no way

as she turned down Sunset, blasting the Clash.

it was going to work. Lisa would have laughed in my face and said some-

I had been played by her—again.

thing cutting like, “You might as well touch yourself, because I’m certainly

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not about to.” Then she would have told all her friends about the cheesy

computer, I wrote down all the patterns and routines I would use to combat

guy who started rubbing his dick in front of her.

her LMR. Now that I knew she liked me, I had the confidence to push this

Mystery wasn't always right.

thing to the end.

So we spent another platonic night together. It was driving me crazy. I

If she still resisted, then she clearly had intimacy issues and I'd have to

knew she liked me. Yet she wouldn't get intimate. I was teetering on the

be the one to LJBF her.

border of being LJBF'ed.

Her flight was scheduled to arrive at 6:30 P.M. As Herbal drove the limo

Maybe I just wasn't her type. I imagined her with tattooed, muscle-

past the Delta terminal looking for her, I mixed Cosmopolitans at the bar

bound, leather-jacketed Danzig types, not scrawny metrosexual guys who

in the back of the car.

had to take pickup workshops. She was killing me.

When the flight arrived, however, she wasn't on it.

For the first time since I'd learned the word one-itis, I had it. And I

I was confused, but not disappointed—yet. A PUA must be willing to

knew that I was doomed. No one ever gets his one-itis. He gets too clingy

change or abandon any plan when confronted with the chaos and chance of

and needy and blows it. And, sure enough, I blew it.

reality. So Herbal drove me home, and I left a message for Lisa.

The next night, Lisa left town to play a festival in Atlanta with Court-

When she didn't call back, I left another message and then waited all

night in vain to hear from her.

ney. She called three times while she was gone.

"Are you free for dinner when I get back?" she asked.

At five o'clock that morning, I was awakened by my cell phone ringing.

"I don't know," I told her. "It depends on whether you can behave your-

"Sorry to wake you up, but I need to talk to someone." The voice on the

self or not."

other end was a man's. The accent was Australian. It was Sweater.

"Fine, then," she said. "If you're going to be like that, I don't need to go."

Since I'd last seen Sweater, he had left the community and gotten mar-

I was just trying to tease her and bust her balls, like David DeAngelo

ried. I thought about him often. Every time someone asked if guys in the

community were learning these skills just to have sex with as many women

had taught me. And in doing so, I had destroyed the moment. I sounded

as possible, I pointed to Sweater as an example of someone who had gotten

like an asshole.

into the game for all the right reasons.



“Don’t be a troublemaker,” I said. It was time to be straightforward. “I

“I tried to kill myself today,” he said.

want to see you when you’re back. I’m leaving town for two weeks, so it will

“What happened?”

be our last chance to hang out.”

“My wife is expecting our first baby in ten days, and I’m miserable. I do

In the background, I could hear Sam speaking. “You’re talking to him

everything for her, but it’s not enough. She’s driven me away from my

like he’s your boyfriend,” she told Lisa.

friends. My business partner is leaving me. She spends all my money and all

“Maybe I want him to be my boyfriend,” Lisa said to her.

she does is complain.” He paused to choke back his tears. “And now that

So I hadn’t been LJBF’ed. I couldn’t wait for her to come back. I wanted

she’s having this baby, I’m trapped.”

her to be my girlfriend too.

“But you were in love with her. How can she just change?”

I spent the entire day of Lisa’s return plotting the perfect seduction. I

“No. The problem is that I changed. It was too hard to be that person

would pick her up from the airport in the limo. Herbal would drive, and I

who Mystery and David DeAngelo taught us to be. That person wasn’t a

would wait for her in the backseat. Then I'd take her to the Whiskey Bar at

good guy. And that's not the kind of person I wanted to be. I like doing nice

the Sunset Marquis Hotel—walking distance from Project Hollywood.

things for people. So I got her whatever she wanted. I sent her flowers three

Because women don't respect guys who pay for them but at the same

times a week. I tried it her way, but it didn't work.”

time are turned off by guys who are cheap, I went to the Whiskey Bar ahead

I'd never heard grown men cry as much as I had in the last two years. “I

of time, gave the manager \$100, and told him to make sure whatever we or-

sat in the garage today with the motor running and the windows up,” he

dered was on the house. Afterward, I planned to take her home. On my

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continued. “I haven't thought of suicide since 1986. But I just got to the

**I**

point where I was like, ‘Fuck.’ I didn't see any purpose in living.”

prayed. “We ask that you clear the energy of this house of all evil. Please

bring peace and harmony and friendship under this roof. No more tears!

Sweater didn't need to be saved. He just wanted a friend to talk to. He

And help me win my court case in New York and help clear up all my other

had pretended to be someone he wasn't just to seduce a woman, and now he

problems. I will work with you, God. I really will. Give me strength. Amen."

was suffering the consequences.

"Amen," we repeated.

"When I first got in the community, I wrote down everything I wanted,"

he said. "And now I'm living the life I imagined. I have the money, the big

The next day, a driver came and whisked Courtney to the airport to go

house, and the beautiful girl. But I wasn't specific enough about the beauti-

to New York. There, her prayers for herself would eventually be answered,

but the atmosphere in the house would only grow darker in her absence.

ful girl. I never wrote that she had to treat me with respect and kindness."

Courtney and Gabby, it soon became clear, weren't the cause of any prob-

Later that morning, Courtney returned to the house. I could hear her

lems: They had merely been the symptoms of something much larger that

screaming at Gabby in the living room.

was eating away at our lives.

I walked downstairs to discover Courtney carrying Gabby's bags out

of the house, and I found myself saying the same three words that seemed

to come out of my mouth every time I entered the living room:

"What's

going on?"

"Gabby got into a fight with Mystery, and she's moving out,"

Courtney

said. "So I'm helping her."

Courtney could barely conceal her smile.

"Did the rest of the band get back from Atlanta yet?" I asked,

trying to

sound casual.

"Yeah. They came home on an earlier flight."

I turned away quickly. I knew if I said anything in response, my

voice

would betray my disappointment.

After Gabby left, Courtney threw a bundle of sage on the coffee table.

"Let's clear the air in here," she said. Then she skipped off to the kitchen, ex-

plaining, "We need some rice for good fortune."

Unable to locate any rice, she returned with a package of jambalaya mix

and a bowl of water. She poured the jambalaya mix into the water, planted

the sage in the middle of it, and then ran to her room. She emerged carrying

a blue-and-white-checkered flannel shirt.

"This will work," she said. "It's one of Kurt's shirts. I only have three of

them left.”

She carefully arranged the shirt underneath the table, safe from harm,

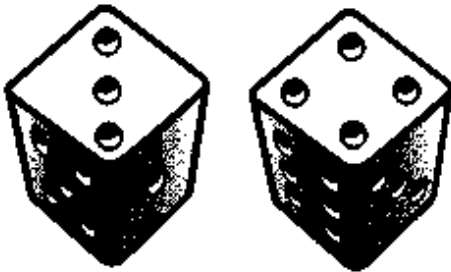
so that it could bring good energy to the house. After lighting the sage, she

sat Mystery, Herbal, and me down next to her makeshift altar, and we

joined hands. Her grip was bone-crushing.

“Thank you God for this day and all that you have given us,” she

### *Chapter*



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reading and then left them alone for a few minutes to get acquainted. When

I returned, I showed them home movies on my laptop and then began the

trusty dual-induction massage. It was all just a routine now, like the jealous

girlfriend opener or the best friends test. And it worked just as consistently.

Once the girls’ lips touched, they transformed from strangers to lovers.

It shocked me every time to see two women get intimate so quickly in such

That afternoon, Lisa left me a short voice mail. “Hi, it’s Lisa. I’m back. We

an unusual situation.

took an earlier flight.” That was it. No apology, no tenderness,  
no mention

of the plans she had completely blown off.

The night was as nasty as I’d anticipated. We tried every  
position we

I called her back, but she didn’t answer. “I’m leaving town in a  
few

could twist into, some more successfully than others. When  
Jessica I asked

me to come in her mouth, I obliged. She spit the wad into  
Jessica II’s

hours to go to Miami with Vision,” I told her voice mail. “I  
would really love

mouth, and they started making out passionately. It was the  
sexiest mo-

to talk to you before I leave.” It was an AFC message, and I  
never heard back

ment of my entire life.

from her. I checked my voice mail every day while I was away.  
Nothing.

I wasn’t a plower, like Tyler Durden. If she were interested, she  
would

But afterward I felt empty and alone. I didn’t care about them.  
All I re-

have called. I’d been blown off. And by the first woman I had  
felt something

ally had was a memory and a story. Every girl in my life could  
disappear and

never call me again, and I wouldn’t have cared.

for in a while. I figured she’d probably started dating someone  
else, some-

one who had been able to break through her LMR.

All the ten-night stands and threesomes in the world wouldn't be

enough to get me over my one-itis.

First I was angry at her, then I was angry at myself, and then I was just

The PUAs were wrong.

sad.

The PUAs had always advised that the best way to get over a one-itis is

to fuck a dozen other girls. So I went on a rampage.

I didn't want to end up like Sweater, anyway. I had almost let myself get

caught.

I went sarging every night in Miami, with more fire, drive, and success

than I'd ever had. I've never been a fan of one-night stands.

Once you've

gotten that close to someone, why throw it away afterward? I'm more a fan

of ten-night stands: ten nights of great sex, each one getting steamier,

wilder, and more experimental as two people grow more comfortable to-

gether and learn what turns each other on. So after I slept with each

woman, I mixed and matched them like jellybeans.

It was my reality.

The girls I was most looking forward to getting together were Jessica, a

tattoo-covered twenty-one-year-old I'd slept with a few times in Los Angeles,

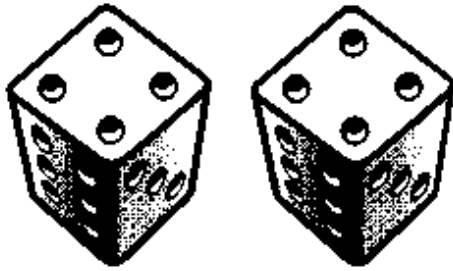
and another Jessica, who I'd met at Crobar. She was also twenty-one, but the

exact opposite of Jessica I. She was innocent looking, with a touch of baby

fat. I knew they both liked porn, so I thought things might get interesting.

After a drink at the hotel bar, I brought them up to my room for a run

### Chapter



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Men are not dogs. We merely think we are W

are. But, by believing *m* our nni ‘ ^ °CCaSl°n’ a C t as l f w e  
- mspJus to \* r ; ° ; ; ^ n a t ~ ^ a v e t h e a m a Z l n g p o w e  
r

commkment-andsoZr \* ^ ”

^^ m e n t e n d \* > & a r

Male sexuality may seem on the surface like it runs rampant in society-

there are strip clubs, porn websites, *Maxim-svyle* magazines, and titillating

advertisements everywhere. But, despite all this, true male desire is often

kept repressed.

Men think about sex more than they will ever let women, or even each

other, know. Teachers think about fucking their students, fathers think

about fucking their daughter’s friends, doctors think about fucking their



patients. And right now, for every woman with even an iota of sex appeal,

there's probably a man somewhere in the world who's touching himself and

thinking about what it would be like to fuck her. She may not even know

him: He may be that businessman who walked past her in the street or the

college student who sat across from her on the subway. And any man who

tells a woman otherwise is most likely doing so because he's trying to get in

her pants, or the pants of someone else within earshot. The great lie of

modern dating is that in order to sleep with a woman, a man must pretend

initially as if he doesn't want to.

Most appalling to women is the male obsession with strippers, porn

stars, and teenage girls. It is abhorrent because it threatens a woman's real-

ity. If all men really desire a woman like that, then where does that leave her

marriage and happily-ever-after fantasies? She's doomed to live them with a

man who really wants that Victoria's Secret model or the neighbor's daugh-

ter or that dominatrix in the videos he hides in his closet. As a woman ages,

an eighteen-year-old girl will always be eighteen. Love is dashed on the rocks

in the face of the possibility that a man doesn't want a person but a body.

Fortunately, this is not the entire story. Men are visual thinkers; thus

we're often deceived by our eyes. But the truth is that the fantasy is often

better than the reality. I had just learned that lesson. Most men eventually

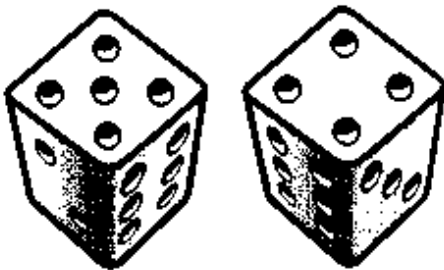
learn that lesson. Mystery may have thought he wanted to live with two

girls who love each other as much as they love him, but chances are they'd

get on his nerves, team up against him, and eventually make him just as

miserable as he'd been with Katya.

### *Chapter*



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**1**

KATYA: I flew into Los Angeles the day before, which Mystery doesn't

know, to rent a studio apartment and hang out with some friends

from New Orleans. I stayed in a hotel and called Herbal to talk, because at that point I really wanted to start dating him. The next

morning, I just showed up at the house and told Mystery my plane got in early so I took a taxi.

While I was in Miami, Katya returned.

I dreaded the day and the terror it would unleash in the house.  
But

HERBAL: When I came home from doing errands and saw Katya's

Mystery was looking forward to it like a birthday. He had it all planned out.

suitcase, I went into my room to mind my own business.  
How-

Because I was away, I have reconstructed the story of the disaster that

ever, Mystery and Katya came in and started talking to me.  
ensued from the accounts of those involved.

Then we went to Mystery's bathroom and Katya painted our

nails. She disappeared into Mystery's walk-in closet to get a  
Project Hollywood had reached a new nadir.

sweater, then Mystery went in. After five minutes, they  
were still

in the closet.

MYSTERY: I met a nineteen-year-old hottie named Jen at an  
after-

party at the house. I full-montied her, and it was amazing, like

MYSTERY: She called me into the closet and said, "I want to  
date

the shower scene in *9½ Weeks*. She had the softest, purest skin  
Herbal." I don't think she said it because she truly wanted to  
be

and the best ass I'd ever been with. And I was standing there  
with him. She just said it to bug me. I was being too kissy-kissy  
just looking at that ass and that skin thinking, "I deserve  
with Jen, and I believe that triggered jealousy in her. So I  
called

Herbal into the closet and told Katya, “Why don’t you say it to this.”

him?”

KATYA: Mystery called me every other day while I was in New Orleans,

trying to sweet-talk me. He said, “I have this beautiful nineteen-

KATYA: I really liked Herbal. We talked on the phone throughout my

year-old girl that you’ll love.” I asked him if he was giving her to

entire visit to New Orleans, and I enjoyed his personality. He was

me. He said, “No, we’re sharing.”

so easygoing, and he never disagreed with anything.

MYSTERY: Herbal and Katya were hanging out, hugging and kind of

MYSTERY: The idea wasn’t for Katya to be my girlfriend again, but to

awkward, so I said, “Why don’t you two kiss and get it over with?”

be a playtoy for Jen and me. My plan was to pick her up from

They did, and it instantly made me haywire. I didn’t expect that to

the airport in the limo, grab some food at the Farmer’s Market,

happen after so much time had passed. But, as David DeAngelo

and then go back to the house and do the dual-induction mas-

says, attraction is not a choice.

sage.

HERBAL: I ignored Katya for a l m o s t the entire m o n t h a n d a half she

HERBAL: T h a t night, we went on a double date. Mystery asked Twyla to

was gone, even t h o u g h she kept sending me text messages. Mys-

drive us in the limo to the Santa Monica Pier. I guess I was naive,

tery spent the whole time bragging a b o u t how he was going to

b u t I really t h o u g h t everything would be fine.

get a threesome with her, which was like a knife being twisted in

TWYLA: I couldn't believe Mystery had the g u m p t i o n to ask me to

my heart. I told Mystery repeatedly j u s t to ignore her a n d n o t

drive, to shove it in my face. He t h o u g h t he was this grand manip-

let her back in the house to avoid problems. But he w o u l d n ' t

ulator. And it made me disgusted with myself for even liking this

do it.

person.

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MYSTERY: Jen and Katya ended up making out with each other in the

blow-up. Jen saw this and said, "Just take me home." After that, limo that night. I have pictures of them sucking each other's tits she asked me never to call her again.

in a phone booth at the pier. But it was getting complex. The moment Katya became Herbal's girlfriend, the threesome was MYSTERY [Posted in Mystery's Lounge]: Be on the lookout for Herbal,

off and I didn't want Jen touching Katya anymore. However, Katya, and Jen. If anyone sees Herbal (easy to spot as he frequently

Katya was attracted to Jen, so she started talking trash about me peacocks) or his girlfriend Katya (a bi Russian 9.5, easy to spot) to her.

with Jen (a nineteen-year-old Mexican 9.5, also easy to spot), please

call Mystery so I may administer punishment to Herbal without

KATYA: Mystery kept saying he really liked Jen and not to make him

warning.

look like an asshole in front of her. I told him, "You guys are great. If anyone's going to put up with your shit, it's that girl." I

KATYA: He thought I was trying to turn Jen against him. But after that

was glad he had someone because I wanted Herbal.

car ride, she didn't want anything to do with me either. She thought I was lying by saying all that good stuff about Mystery. It

MYSTERY: Jen went home to San Diego for a week after that, and Katya

made me look like an ass.

called her every day. One night while Jen was gone, I had a six-foot-tall model in bed with me and was dealing with last-minute

MYSTERY: Herbal and I still had a business relationship. So we went

resistance. I was fingering her and getting jacked off, but I to Chicago together for a workshop. Because I'm fascinated by couldn't get any further. So during a freeze-out, I went to the the mind, I'd explain to him the jealousy I was feeling and we'd kitchen to get a Sprite. And I heard Katya having sex with Herbal

draw various boundaries on his relationship with my ex-girlfriend. The moaning triggered feelings of jealousy, and I started girlfriend.

crying. I couldn't stop, even though I had a girl in my bed. I went

back to my room and told the model how fucked up my life was.

HERBAL: On the last day of the Chicago workshop, Mystery and I went

So she said she wanted to go home. I was going to drive her, but to get food together. Mystery opened a four-set of girls next to us.

then Twyla started laughing at me.

During the sarge, he said, "Can you believe it? This guy actually took my ex-girlfriend."

TWYLA: I was sleeping in the pillow pit and Mystery walked by, upset.

He told them the whole story. I'd occasionally give my perspective, I kind of giggled a little bit because I was quite entertained by it tive, and he started getting really angry. He said, out of nowhere, all. At that point, I had to take it with humor, because if I "Katya is not allowed in my house ever again."

didn't, I was going to end up hurt again. Then he flew off the I said, "It's my house too. You created this situation."

handle and fired me. The girl he was with had to call a taxi

He said, "If I see her in the house again, I will end you."

home.

And I told him, "Do what you have to do."

KATYA: The next week, Mystery wanted to use my car to pick up Jen

MYSTERY: When we came back, Twyla had moved out of Project Hol-

from San Diego. On the way back to the house, Jen and I were lywood, quit being my personal assistant, and moved in with chitchatting and having fun. Mystery felt left out so he started Katya.

negging me.

TWYLA: Katya and I became friends. We bonded over talking about

MYSTERY: I felt that Katya was trying to steal Jen from me and share

what kind of a person Mystery was. She asked me if I wanted to be

her with Herbal. So I got pissed at Katya in the car, and we had a

her roommate. So I said, "Right on."

3BD

3B1

HERBAL: Eventually, Mystery and I compromised. I said that Katya

Herbal's mattress off the bed; he threw a flowerpot against the wouldn't spend more than half the week at the house. We shook wall; and then he opened Herbal's balcony door and started hands and had an agreement.

throwing my stuff into the driveway. He busted my bottle of

When I came back from Chicago, I had a week in Los Angeles



Kama Sutra oil. I was so pissed.

before going to Boston for a family reunion. I stayed at Katya's

MYSTERY: I said, "Don't come back here or else!"

apartment the entire week, just to be cool.

She said back to me, "Or else what? Are you going to kill me?"

KATYA: While Herbal was gone, I was helping Papa with his workshops.

And I said, "No. I love you. I will punish your boyfriend if you  
We finished late on Friday night, went to Mel's, and then came  
come back. Tell him to control his girl."

home and sat in the hot tub. I had to be up in the afternoon and

KATYA: I went upstairs to look for Papa, but he wasn't there.  
So I got in

look pretty. So he told me to sleep in Herbal's room. When I  
woke

my car and drove to my apartment. Five minutes later, Papa  
up, I saw Mystery.

called. He said, "It's not Mystery's house. My name is on the  
lease,

He asked me what I was doing in the house and I said, "Papa  
and you're my guest. I'm going to pick you up right now." So  
he

and I were hanging out last night. We had fun."

snuck me back into the house.

Then I said, "I met one of your friends two nights ago."

He said, "Who did you meet?"

MYSTERY: Papa was breaking a cardinal rule. He was hiring  
my ex-

I said, "Sima."

girlfriend, who I trained, to be in his workshops, which was an

And he freaked out.

idea he'd stolen from me.

MYSTERY: When Katya told me in a very glib way that she had hung out

HERBAL (to Mystery, via e-mail): I have been told that my bedroom and

with my ex-girlfriend from Toronto, I was furious. I lost Jen because personal belongings have been "destroyed" because Katya was at

cause of her; I lost Twyla because of her; and now she was about

the house. I don't know exactly what destroyed means, but now I

to steal Sima, who was still an option.

do not feel safe in my own house. You seem to believe that the world revolves around you and that everyone else should bend to

KATYA: He ran past me and kicked Herbal's door off the hinges and

your wishes.

said, "Where's Herbal?" Then he ran back to his room, grabbed a

framed photograph of Sima, and threw it at the wall over Herbal's

MYSTERY (to Herbal, via e-mail): I don't want Katya here and that is so

bed. He said, "I don't want you in this house when your

final that there will be no need for you to reply to this e-mail in any

boyfriend's not here."

way. Nor bring up the subject again, for it will arouse my anger so

deeply that you will be thrown through glass. There will be no fur-

MYSTERY: I knew I couldn't reason with Katya and I couldn't touch her,

ther warning. If she comes around when you return, I will instantly

so I decided to frighten her. I kicked the door and told her I pound you—it will be fast, hard, unexpected, merciless, and repeti-

wanted her out of the house. She said, "This isn't your house." tive. If you come by and she isn't around, then we can safely live in

And I told her, "I pay rent. I live here. You're a guest, and your peace under the same roof. Either way, our business relationship is,

host is not here. This is not acceptable."

obviously, finished.

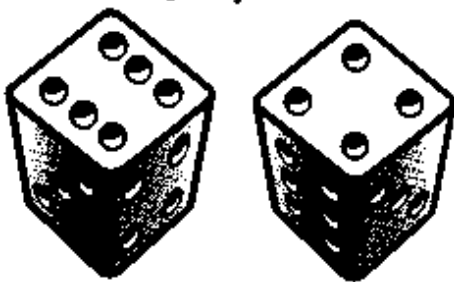
KATYA: Mystery started threatening that if he saw me in the house

TYLER DURDEN (via e-mail, to Mystery): You lost Katya for many rea-

again, Herbal would get hurt. He threw candles around; he flipped

sons, but to me it appeared as though you emotionally leached off

### *Chapter*



of her. You are needy and like a black hole sucking in attention. You can't handle not being the center of attention for even one minute. That is your tragic flaw. Don't offer your girls to your friends. Don't try to make a party girl into your girlfriend. And don't underestimate the consequences of bringing recently converted AFCs into our lifestyle.

My phone rang every day while I was in Miami. I'd pick it up, and it would

be Mystery or Herbal or Katya or Twyla or Tyler Durden. I even received

phone calls about Project Austin, which was also falling apart: The gas and

electricity had been shut off because the bills hadn't been paid, and the bed-

rooms were cluttered with candles, dirty clothing, and pornography. But

the only person I really wanted to hear from was Lisa.

When I returned to Project Hollywood, Herbal's room was in tatters.

There were holes in his wall; his door was propped up precariously against

its hinges; his mattress lay over his television set; and glass and dirt were

strewn across the hardwood floor.

From the perspective of a pickup artist, all Mystery was doing was

strengthening Katya and Herbal's relationship by creating drama and a

common enemy. But Mystery wasn't thinking like a pickup artist. He was

unable to control himself.

That night, the doorbell rang. When Mystery answered it, he found a

well-muscled man in his twenties standing in the rain with an angry look

on his face. Katya's car was parked in front of the house.

"I'm Katya's brother," the man told Mystery.

"I don't think so. I know her brother."

"Well," he said, stepping past Mystery and into the house. "I heard you

threatened to kill her. And that's not going to happen."

"I never threatened Katya." Mystery sized Katya's friend up. He was

shorter than him but definitely stronger. "I threatened Herbal."

"Well, if you do anything to her, I will personally crack your skull wide

open."

Mystery never responded well to provocation. Just like during our argu-

ment in the car at the Trans-Dniester border, Mystery snapped. The veins in

his neck leaped to attention; his face ripened; he grew an inch.

"You want to go?" Mystery yelled. "Let's go then, because I'm ready to

take this thing all the way."

"Fine," Katya's friend said. "Then step outside. I don't want to get

blood on the carpet."

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"No, let's do it right here. I want blood on the floor. I want something

to remember you by."

plateau, beyond just women. I hoped we would be greater than  
the than the sum

In the periphery of his vision, Mystery spotted a cluster of large  
rocks

of our parts.

But rather than creating a mutual support system, we had  
created *Lord*

he'd brought back from the beach and painted into runestones.

He reached

*of the Flies.*

for one, prepared to smash his adversary's head in, then quickly  
changed

Something had to be done to resolve this. My faith in these guys  
-and this

his mind. He took three giant strides to Herbal's already-  
decimated door

community-was hanging by a thread.

and kicked it to the ground again.

"Come on then," Mystery yelled. "I'm not making any  
apologies for

what I'm about to do."

He grabbed a bookshelf and pulled it over.

Katya's friend saw the gleam of madness in Mystery's eyes—  
and in a

fight the insane generally have a competitive edge. "You don't  
have to kick

doors down and shit," he said, backing off. "All I want is the  
dog, man.

Katya sent me to get her dog."

The guy scooped Lily into his arms, and Mystery paused and  
looked at

him. The threat was gone. The Cortisol, the adrenaline, the  
testosterone—all

those hormones that were rushing through his body—began to ebb. His

brain returned to logical mode. “Why didn’t you say that in the first place

instead of threatening me in my own home?”

The guy stood next to the door, befuddled, with Lily cradled in his arms.

“Do you need food for Lily?” Mystery asked.

“Um, yes. I guess.”

Mystery walked to the kitchen, grabbed Lily’s bag of dry food and sev-

eral cans of wet food, and gave them to his would-be attacker.

On the way out, the guy dropped some cans on the steps.

Mystery

bent down, picked them up, handed them to him, and then patted him on

the back.

“Respect,” he told Katya’s friend, using the line we’d appropriated from

Ali G to use in the field.

I walked upstairs, collapsed on my bed, and stared at the ceiling.

Why was I here? It wasn’t just about my envy of Dustin anymore.

Along the way, I had gotten caught up in the social network and bond-

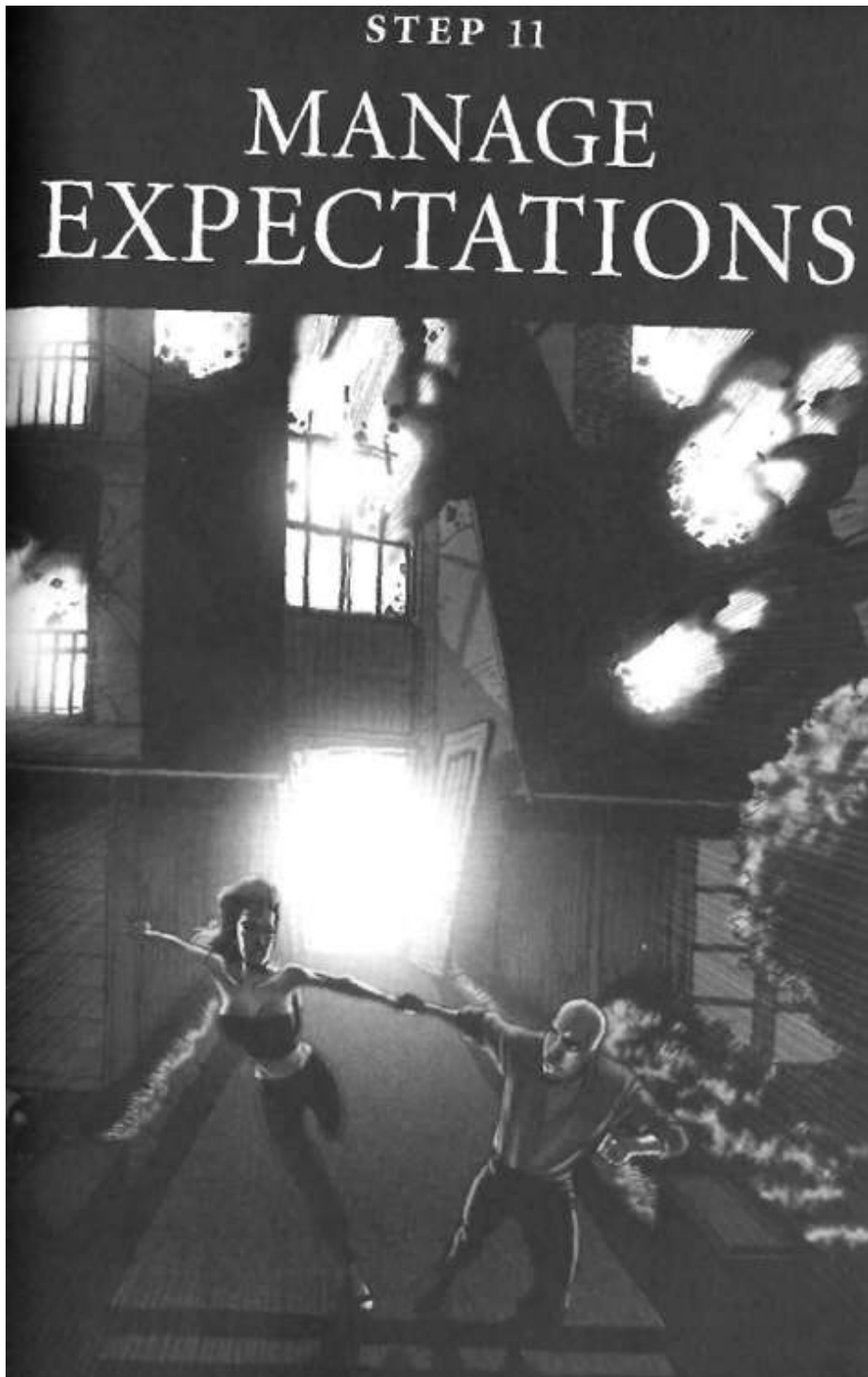
ing rituals of the community—in the idea that we were the supermen of

the future, the smoothest who would inherit the earth from the strong,

the sole owners of the skeleton key to the female mind. I had moved in

with these guys because I thought we had all the answers. I imagined

working together to bring all the other areas of our lives up to a new





*Chapter*



NOT THAT IT WAS BEAUTIFUL,  
BUT THAT, IN THE END, THERE WAS  
A CERTAIN SENSE OF ORDER THERE;  
SOMETHING WORTH LEARNING  
IN THAT NARROW DIARY OF MY  
MIND.

.....  
—ANNE SEXTON,

*"For John, Who Begs Me Not to Enquire Further"*

Mystery and Herbal sat facing each other on opposite couches, their arms

folded across their chests. It was not only a defensive position, but also a

stubborn one. Between them stood Mystery's Krav Maga instructor and

Roadking, a PUA who worked as a bodyguard. Herbal had refused to set

foot in the house without someone there to protect him from Mystery.

The other permanent residents—Papa, Xaneus, Playboy, and me—sat on

a third couch perpendicular to them. Tyler Durden didn't attend because

he claimed to be a guest, although he'd been living in Papa's closet for

months now.

We had called a house meeting to resolve the dispute between Mystery

and Herbal once and for all.

We allowed each to present his side of the story without interrup-

tion. Mystery said he would not allow his ex-girlfriend to set foot in the

house again. And Herbal said he would move out if his girlfriend couldn't

come over. It took each of them half an hour to convey these simple

points.

"Now, normally, I would just say that Herbal should move out if he

wants to be with Mystery's ex-girlfriend that badly," I said, trying to play the

role of peacemaker that had been foisted on me. "However, Mystery, you've

damaged house property and threatened a tenant's well-being. You have

neither apologized for your actions nor repaired the damages." Herbal's

door was still lying on the floor, the dents were still in his wall, and his room

still looked like a tornado had hit it. “And it makes us very reluctant to re-

ward bad behavior by letting you get your way.”

“I purposely left Herbal’s room like that as a demonstration of what I

will do if I see Katya in this house again,” Mystery said sullenly.

“It was a

perfectly acceptable means of showing that I was willing to enforce my

rules.”

One of the problems with the PUA community was that it presented in-

flexible standards of behavior that men were supposed to follow in order to

win a woman. And chief among them was the idea of being an alpha male.

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The result was a bunch of men who’d been kicked around most of their

lives. He was the same blank, introverted shell I had first met in Toronto.

lives trying to act like their former bullies, leading to immature behavior

His passion was no longer pickup; it was Real Social Dynamics. Instead of

such as Mystery’s.

going to seminars on meeting women, he spent most of his time flying

“If I may say something?” Roadking interjected. “Herbal here broke an

around the country to marketing and business seminars.

important rule.”

“Mystery disrupts my workshops,” Papa continued. His voice was dis-

“And what’s that?” Herbal asked. There was no anger or resentment

tant and monotone, echoing from somewhere deep inside his head. “He

in his voice; only the red rings around his eyes betrayed the emotion he

damages the house. And I’m worried he’s going to harm me.” felt.

“What are you talking about? He wouldn’t do anything to you.”

“It’s the rule of bros before hos,” Roadking said.

“I have nightmares that Mystery is coming into my room with a knife.

“No,” Mystery said. “I’d like to agree, but sometimes it’s hos before

I’m getting locks put on my doors because I’m scared he’ll break in.”

bros.”

“That’s ridiculous,” I said. “He’s not going to hurt you. That’s your

Herbal cracked a smile for the first time that afternoon: He and Mys-

own issue: You need to learn how to deal with aggression and confrontation

tery actually saw eye to eye on something.

rather than just avoiding everyone and trying to kick them out of the

Strip away the community bond and the seduction business interests

house.”

that united us, and what was left? Six guys chasing after a limited subset of

But no matter what I said to dissuade Papa, he kept repeating  
the same  
available women. Wars have been fought, world leaders shot,  
and tragedies  
sentence—"I will not live in the same house as that guy"—in a  
robotic voice,  
wrought by males claiming territorial rights over the opposite  
sex. Perhaps  
as if he'd been programmed to say it.  
we'd just been too blind to see that Project Hollywood was  
doomed from  
"Have you ever stopped to think," Playboy finally asked me,  
"that the  
the start by the very pursuit that had brought it together.  
only reason you're defending Mystery is because he's your  
friend?"  
After three hours of go-nowhere debate—during which Papa,  
oddly,  
Perhaps Playboy was right. I was giving Mystery special-  
circumstances  
didn't speak once—we asked Mystery and Herbal to give us  
some privacy to  
treatment, because he had brought me into the community and  
because  
talk amongst ourselves and come to a house decision.  
the house had been his idea. None of us would have been here  
without him.  
They both agreed to accept whatever we decided.  
But he had screwed up. He had made his bed. I needed to  
consider what was  
When we entered Papa's room, there was a flurry of activity.  
Several fig-  
best for the house.

ures darted into his bathroom and shut the door. I hadn't seen his room in

"But," I said. "I'd still like to find a way to solve this without anyone

nearly a month. The carpet was barely visible beneath six convertible black

having to leave the house."

foam chairs that had been unfolded into beds. On top of each was a pillow

"We'll trust whatever you decide," Papa said. "You're the house leader.

and bedding.

Everyone looks up to you."

Where were the people who slept here? Who were they?

I found it strange that Papa, who was so adamant about having Mys-

We folded the beds back into chairs, sat down, and prepared to reach a

tery leave, was putting the decision in my hands. For the next two and a half

conclusion. That was when Papa spoke for the first time.

hours, we discussed possible compromises. The more we talked about it,

"I will not live in the same house as that guy," he said.

the more complex the dilemma seemed. There was no solution that was go-

"Who?" I asked.

ing to satisfy everyone:

"Mystery!"

Papa wouldn't live in the house with Mystery.

Papa's hands trembled from either hatred or nervousness. He was a dif-

Mystery wouldn't live in the house with Katya.

difficult person to read. He hadn't been arguing in months, and much of the

And Herbal wouldn't live in the house without Katya.

progress he'd made after working so hard to improve himself had disappeared.

Someone had to go.

## *Chapter*



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"All the problems in this house can be traced back to one source," Playboy-

boy said firmly, "and that source is Mystery."

I looked at Xaneus. "Do you agree with Playboy and Papa?" I asked him.

"I do," he said. He too seemed to speak from somewhere deep in his

skull, as if he weren't really present. He was turning as robotic as the rest of

them. "I think Mystery needs to go."

We called Mystery and Herbal into the room to give them our decision.

They sat on the edge of the step leading up to Papa's bed.

Having come up

with the only possible compromise for a complicated dilemma, I was proud

of myself—mistakenly, it would turn out—for exercising my newfound lead-

ership skills in a Solomon-like manner.

“Herbal,” I began. “Katya will not be allowed in the house for two

months. After that, if you’re still dating her, she may return to the house.”

Herbal nodded.

“Mystery, you have two months to get over Katya and find yourself a

new girlfriend. In addition, there will be a zero-tolerance policy for violence

in this house. If you threaten anyone’s life, attack anyone, or damage prop-

erty, you will be asked to leave the house immediately.”

Mystery didn’t nod.

“So basically you’re saying you want me o u t of the house and that bitch

gets to replace me,” he snarled.

“Well,” Playboy said. “There’s always t h e chance Herbal and Katya will

break up in that time.”

“I don’t see that happening,” Herbal said.

Mystery threw his arms into the air. “Well, then you guys are kicking

me out.”

“No,” I said. “We’re giving you two m o n t h s to come to grips with your

emotions.”

I was trying to help him. But he refused to be helped.

“If you give me at least two weeks notice before you leave,” Papa said,

“I’ll refund your full deposit and find someone to fill the room.”

Papa was happy. He was getting his way.



Mystery's forehead creased; his head twitched involuntarily.

"You real-

ize," he said, "that Papa is trying to get me out of the house because he's in

competition with me. This is not about Mystery versus Herbal.

It's about

Mystery Method versus Real Social Dynamics. I gave Papa his entire busi-

ness model. I told him to harness his sex drive and become a businessman.

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He's even charging fifteen hundred dollars now for boot camps where he

had bonded with this big blubbering genius. Perhaps it was really shared

teaches my material." Mystery glared at Papa; Papa stared right through

emotion and experience that creates relationships, not seven hours of rou-

Mystery. "And now that he doesn't need me anymore, he wants to move me

tines followed by two hours of sex.

out and turn my room into a twelve-person dorm."

"You need therapy," I said. "You need treatment or counseling or some-

At the time, I thought Mystery was in denial, that he was still refusing

thing. You can't just keep doing this to yourself."

to take responsibility for his actions. "It didn't have to turn out like this," I

"I know," he said. His eyes filled with tears as viscous as mercury. He

told him. “Every step of the way, you’ve made bad decisions, and now you

balled his hand into a fist and hit his head self-castigatingly. “I know. I

have to live with them. We’re not even kicking you out. You’re deciding to

fucked up.”

leave.”

Mystery folded his arms across his chest and looked at us disdainfully.

“Can’t you see that the actions you think are alpha-male ways to solve a

problem actually prevented you from getting the outcome you wanted?” I

continued.

“It was a tactic designed to keep Katya out of the house, and it worked,”

he maintained. “She hasn’t been back since.”

I lost my cool. It was time for him to wake up and take a good look at

himself.

“You need some tough love,” I said, raising my voice for the first time

all meeting. “You’re the best illusionist I’ve ever seen, yet you haven’t taken

a single step toward your ninety-minute show—or any show, for that

matter—since I’ve met you. Your pickup business is a mess, and your former

students are raking in all the money that should be yours. As for your love

life, ever since Katya, you’ve driven away every girl you’ve slept with. I would

not recommend a girl ever dating you. You are a financial, mental, and emotional mess.” With each sentence I felt like a weight was being lifted off my

chest. “You have nothing: no health, no wealth, and no relationships. And

you have no one to blame but yourself.”

Mystery dropped his head into his hands. His shoulders started shak-

ing. Big Mystery tears rolled out of his eyes. “I’m a broken man,” he cried.

“I’m broken.”

The wall of sophistry and self-deception that had been propping him

up came tumbling down. “What should I do?” He looked at me. “Tell me

what to do.”

Tears began leaking out of my eyes. I couldn’t help it. I turned and

faced the wall so Herbal and Papa wouldn’t see. The tears ran faster. Despite

all of Mystery’s flaws, I still cared about the guy. After two years in the se-

duction community, I still didn’t have a girlfriend, but for some reason I

*Chapter*



MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

make small talk or pretend to enjoy it. I wanted to be alone with Lisa. I

wanted to connect with her.

When the first drip of sweat rolled down my forehead, I jumped up. I

couldn't take it.

"I'll be right back," I said. I needed to sarge—not because I wanted to

pick up women, but because I wanted to get into a positive state and talka-

I walked out of Papa's room and left the house. I had a headache. It had

tive mood. Otherwise I was going to just crack sitting there so awkwardly.

been a long day.

As I ordered a drink at the bar, I smelled lilacs behind me. I turned

As I started down the hill to grab a burrito at Poquito Mas, a black Mer-

around to see two women in black evening dresses. "Hey guys, let me get

cedes convertible whipped around the corner and began climbing the hill.

your opinion on something," I began, with a little less enthusiasm than

Inside were two blondes.

usual.

The car screeched to a halt in front of me, and a voice yelled my name

"Let me guess," one of the women said. "You have a friend whose girl-

from the driver's seat. It was Lisa. My heart skipped a beat.

friend is jealous because he still talks to his ex from college.”

She wore a red Diesel jacket with a wide rainbow collar that made her

“Like, every guy keeps asking us that,” her friend said. “What’s the

look like a cross between a supermodel and a racecar driver. I was unshaven,

deal?”

wearing sweatpants, and frazzled from debating with my roommates all

I grabbed my Jack and Coke and shuffled out to the smoking patio—

day. I felt so many emotions at once: embarrassment, excitement, resent-

the site of my pickup battle with Heidi Fleiss. With some trepidation, I de-

ment, fear, joy. I didn’t think I was ever going to see her again.

livered the spells opener to a two-set sitting on a bench.

Fortunately, they

“We’re going to get a drink,” Lisa yelled. “Do you want to join us?”

hadn’t heard it.

“What are you doing here?” I tried to keep my cool and appear unfazed

“Hey,” I said afterward. I really wasn’t feeling it, but I wanted to push

by her sudden reappearance.

myself to be talkative. “How long have you guys known each other?”

“Going to the Whiskey Bar.”

“About ten years,” one of the girls said.

“Didn’t you just pass it?”

“I could tell. I have to give you guys the best friends test.”

“Yeah. I came by to ask you to go with us. Do you have a problem with

“Oh, we know t h a t one already,” she said politely.  
that?”

It had finally happened: T h e Sunset Strip was sarged out.

A touch of attitude. I still liked her. She was a challenge. She didn't let

The c o m m u n i t y h a d grown large a n d reckless; too many competing

any sarcasm, neg, or cocky funny get past her w i t h o u t a verbal smackdown.

businesses were teaching the same material. And we h a d saturated more

“Let me change,” I said, “and I'll meet you there.”

t h a n just Los Angeles. PUAs in San Diego, Montreal, New York, San Fran-

I slipped on a pair of Levi's Red jeans with fake cat scratches down the

cisco, and T o r o n t o h a d been reporting the same problem lately: They were

front a n d a military-collared b u t t o n - d o w n shirt I'd b o u g h t in Australia,

r u n n i n g o u t of fresh girls to sarge.

a n d ran down the hill to join them.

I walked back to Lisa a n d her friends. “I'm wiped out,” I told Lisa. “I'm

I was anxious to talk to Lisa a n d find o u t why she'd disappeared after

going to head home. But I'm driving to Malibu tomorrow to surf. You and

Atlanta. But when I arrived, Lisa a n d Sam were at a table with two stocky,

Sam should join me. It'll be fun.”

heavily tattooed rockers. They were the type of guys I had  
imagined Lisa

She looked up at me, and we connected for the first time all  
evening.

dating. I sat between them, dwarfed by ink and hair dye.

For three extraordinary seconds, the rest of the club  
disappeared. “Yeah, all

As they gossiped about local rock scenesters I neither knew  
nor cared

right,” she said. “Sounds cool.”

about, an overwhelming anxiety took hold of my body. I didn’t want to

“Great. Meet me at the house at noon.” Connection over.

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When I returned home from the Whiskey Bar, Isabel was waiting for

subservient to male authority figures. Once they grow up, a certain subset

me. I was never going to get any sleep.

of them—many of whom end up in Los Angeles—move through the world

“Didn’t I tell you to call first before dropping by?” I asked.

psychologically stunted, constantly dumbing themselves down in the pres-

“I left you a message.”

ence of the opposite sex. They believe that the techniques they used to ma-

There was nothing wrong with Isabel. Five years ago, I would have

nipulate their fathers will work just as well on the rest of the world, and

given up writing for a year just to sleep with a girl like that once. But she of-

often they’re right. But Lisa wasn’t a doormat designed by the expectations

ferred nothing. She was all holes: ears to listen to me, a mouth to talk at me,

and desires of the men in her life. She lived the advice that most women



and a vagina to squeeze orgasms out of me. We weren't a team; we were just hypocritically give to men; She wasn't afraid to be herself. a distraction for each other, a way to feel less lonely for a few hours in a big, Mystery was silent for once. He cleared his throat; announced, a little uncaring world. We never had conversations; we had conversations, where too loudly, "I'm busy"; then turned away to continue typing. I was sure he we just filled empty space with words. At least, that's what I thought. But was posting in Mystery's Lounge, letting off steam after the previous day's sometimes, simply through the act of having sex with a man, especially if house meeting. that man is a little more emotionally distant than she'd like him to be, a Before we left for the beach, I showed Sam and Lisa the photos I had woman can develop feelings. She can start wanting more. taken the first night Lisa slept over, when we had played dress-up with the "Are you still seeing other girls?" Isabel asked in the morning, rolling wigs. on top of me and looking aggressively into my eyes. "Look at that," Sam said when she saw the photo of Lisa and me star-

It was a loaded question with only one right answer. I gave her the

ing into each other's eyes, just before we didn't kiss. "I've never seen Lisa

wrong one—the honest one. "Well, I met a girl named Lisa, who I'm devel-

look so happy."

oping feelings for."

"Yeah," Lisa said, her lips spreading into a toothy smile. "I guess you're

"Well, you're going to have to choose between her and me." right."

In the past, I used to fall for ultimatums. But I'd since learned that ulti-

Sam ran upstairs to use my bathroom while Lisa and I loaded the surf-

matums are expressions of powerlessness, empty threats designed to try to

boards into the back of the limousine, which doubled as my surf car. As we

influence a situation someone has no control over.

drove to Malibu, I noticed Sam leaning over the seat divider to whisper

"Just by asking me to make that choice," I said, "you're setting yourself

something to Lisa, which wiped the smile off her face in an instant.

up to be the loser."

"What is it?" I asked.

She dropped her head onto my shoulder and cried. I felt bad for her.

They looked at each other hesitantly.

But that's all I felt.

"What?" I persisted. I really wanted to know. I was sure it was about me,

An hour after she left, Sam and Lisa arrived. Mystery sat at the computer,

and I was sure it wasn't positive.

typing furiously. He looked up at Lisa, who was wearing a Juicy Couture

"It's not important," Sam said. "Just girl talk."

linen pullover with the hood over her head, and tried to negate her. "What

"Urn, okay."

kind of get-up is that?" he asked. It was the only way he knew how to relate

When I surfed in the past, I usually hung out close to the shore, riding

to a beautiful woman.

the smaller waves while the more experienced surfers paddled further out

Lisa slowly scanned Mystery's get-up. He was wearing a robe, boxer

shorts, black toenail polish, and slippers. She gave him a withering look

for the big ones. I thought I was better than them because I got more waves.

shorts, black toenail polish, and slippers. She gave him a withering look

But after helping Sam and Lisa get comfortable on their boards, I paddled

and sneered, deadpan, "Right back at ya, babe."

out with the expert surfers to try and catch a big wave. Lisa was neg-proof. Next to her, other girls seemed like incomplete hu-

As I waited, I looked on with envy as the surfers on the inside  
—closer to

man beings. For most of their childhood, females are  
conditioned to act

shore—caught wave after wave. After twenty minutes, the  
water finally swelled

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behind me and I began to paddle. As a wall of blue grew in my  
peripheral vi-

“That’s great, but kind of weird.” There was something I’d  
been mean-

sion, my body tensed: I wondered if I could handle a wave this  
big. It grabbed

ing to discuss with Tyler Durden for a while now. “I’d like to  
talk to you

my board with a crack, like pealing thunder, and I leapt to my  
feet. The blue

about paying a small rent or part of the utilities. You’ve been  
living here for

stretched far overhead. I cut through the open face all the way  
to the top of the

months now, and we made a rule the day we moved in that  
long-term guests

wave and maneuvered to shore. I felt alive, exhilarated,  
ecstatic. I didn’t know I

should contribute to the house.”

could do it before: I didn’t think I had the knowledge and the  
skill to take a

“Sure, man,” he said. “Just bring it up with Papa.”

wave like that. For the first time since junior high, I felt like  
writing poetry.

His words were agreeable, but not his body language. He shifted his

As I triumphantly carried my board to the beach, I realized it was time,

head uncomfortably while he spoke, as if he didn't know where to look,

with girls, to take the big waves and stop messing with the mushy little in-

then wheeled around and left. He always seemed to go unnaturally out of

side ones, to go for the best rather than the most. I deserved it.

his way to make sure he wasn't actively involved in any house issue, drama,

When we returned home, I pulled Lisa aside.

or meeting. Behind his smile I sensed something—not unlike what I'd felt

“I'd like to take you out for sushi on Saturday,” I said.

when I'd kissed his girl in Las Vegas. By asking him to pay rent, I'd become

It was so AFC of me. I was asking her out on a date.

a threat to him.

She hesitated for a moment, as if she were deciding the best way to let

I took my food to the office area of the house, turned on my computer,

me down easy. She pursed her lips and squinted. Then, finally, she spoke.

and checked Mystery's Lounge. I wanted to read the masterpiece Mystery

“Okay, I guess.”

had been so furiously working on that afternoon.

“You guess?” I couldn’t remember the last time *I’d* asked a girl on a

date, and she was giving me attitude about it?

“No, it’s just that ” She stopped herself. “Never mind. Yeah, I’d love

to go. I was wondering when you were finally going to ask.”

“That’s better. I’ll pick you up at eight.”

The girls left, and I went to the kitchen to saute a chicken breast. The

remains of countless meals made by scores of guests had congealed into a

black crust that coated the stovetop. As I waited for my food to cook, Tyler

Durden came in through the patio door, wearing running shoes and a

Walkman. He lifted up his T-shirt, examined a roll of baby fat on his belly,

and took his Walkman headphones off.

“Hey, man, I heard what happened with Mystery,” he said.

“I’m really

sorry about how things turned out. Let me know if I can do anything to

help convince him to stay in the house.”

“He’s very stubborn. I doubt there’s anything you can do.”

“If he leaves, there’s no Project Hollywood anymore,” he went on. “I

guess it would sort of become the RSD mansion.”

“I guess so.” I scooped the chicken onto a plate and grabbed a fork and

knife.

“By the way. I bought a Style shirt on Melrose today. It looks just like

something you would wear. I have to show it to you.”

## *Chapter*



4D3

‘Nuff said.

—Mystery

P.S. If I move out, I will be selling my bed. I’ve only slept with ten girls on it so

it’s very clean. It’s a California king-sized bed. The price is \$ 9 0 0 cash and

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery’s Lounge

does not include comforter or sheets.

**SUBJECT:** Mystery Moves Out

Here is a list of who’s been bedded on the bed:

**AUTHOR:** Mystery

1. Joanne the stripper

I will likely be moving out of Project Hollywood next month because it is no

longer a suitable place for me. The invasive social environment has made liv-

2. M a r y the blonde model

ing here uncomfortable.

As far as lifestyle goes, Project Hollywood is a bust. I don’t see living here

3. The hot bartender from the Spider Club

to be a positive experience for anyone. If and when my overpriced bedroom is

made available, your unsavory roommates (Save Style) will, at some point, un-

4. Sima the ex-girlfriend from Toronto

dermine your happiness. This is something they have demonstrated on more

than one occasion.

5. Katya the \*&%!

In my specific case, aside from the issues with having a competing busi-

ness running out of the same home I live in (one of many breaches in trust be-

6. G a b b y the gabber

tween Papa and me], house members think that it's appropriate to intervene in

my private sex life. This is an intolerable situation for me. I've been told that my

7. Jen the nineteen-year-old hottie

ex-girlfriend, w h o has demonstrated numerous times that she is untrustworthy,

will be allowed back in the house in two months.

8. Vision's cousin (I know, but I still enjoyed her)

If she comes back (which Papa hopes), then this forces me out of the

house because I do not want such a toxic person near my friends or me. Un-

9. Twyla the personal assistant

less the restraining order Katya is threatening to file against me keeps her out of

my house, such involvement in my personal affairs will likely cause irrevocable



10. The six-foot tall model I scared a w a y (third base only)  
bitterness.

As for those who say I need psychological help, the greatest  
solution to de-

I think that's everyone. It's a great bed. Firm. Eleven happy  
people.

pression is not paying some stranger to listen to you or taking  
drugs, which is just

a short-term fix for when things hit rock bottom. The long-  
term fix is a positive so-

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

cial environment filled with friends who will listen and share  
your challenges. That

**SUBJECT:** Field Report—Mystery Meets His Future W i f e

is what Project Hollywood was supposed to be. If anyone  
would like to talk to

**AUTHOR:** Mystery

me openly about the situation and why I do not endorse living  
here, call me. I

don't want anyone else to get ripped off and hurt as I have  
been. Know the cul-

I have met my future wife. And I have decided not to tell you  
about her. She is

ture before making any decision to move here.

that important and that classy. She is my dream girl (at least I  
think she is so far)

## Chapter



4D4

Unlike the last girl, I will not make her public. This time I will start from

scratch and not undermine my relationship by sharing it with you guys. I will be

more loyal to her than to you because the bro's before hos ethic only applies if

you think of the girl as a ho.

Here is all you need to know: I met her briefly when I was in Chicago, do-

ing my last workshop with Herbal. I met her for seven minutes and then number-

Mystery sulked through the trash-strewn house in his robe, telling anyone

closed. We have spoken on the phone since for hours and hours. I love her

personality. A n d , yes, body- and face-wise, she is a 10. I have talked with her

who would listen about the former student who was stealing his business

mom on the phone, and she likes me too. This girl is coming to Los Angeles to

and the bitch who ruined his life. Any attempt to get him into therapy was

visit me for a week. I bought her a flight. My family will be arriving the same

dismissed with a long-winded explanation of how his emotions and actions

week and they will meet.

were evolutionarily justified. The window of vulnerability and honesty that

Though we have only been in each other's presence for seven minutes, I

had opened when he broke down in the house meeting had closed. His

predict that I will marry her, live with her, and possibly have kids with her. H o w

frame had reasserted itself; his mind had rebuilt the tortuous walls separat-

is that for a prediction, huh? From the world's greatest pickup artist.

ing rationalization from reality.

You won't see her winging my workshops because I will refrain from ex-

Though he wasn't upset with me, I felt guilty. The compromise that

exploiting her unless she wants to help out for shits and giggles. She is untouch-

was effectively pushing him out of the house had been my decision. So

able to this paltry gang of misfits. She isn't a party girl like the last five girls.

much for my Solomon-like wisdom.

She may look like one (mmm) but she is perfection, at least to me. My friends

To make matters worse, Katya was twisting the knife. She'd given her

will meet her soon.

landlord sixty days notice, and planned to move into Herbal's room once

As for all the other PUAs, stay a w a y from her because you know I bite.

she was allowed back in the house. Her revenge, then, was complete.

That Friday, I drove with Mystery to pick up his sister, mother, and

Love,

nieces from the airport. They piled into the back of the limo and sur-

Mystery

rounded him with the love he so desperately craved.

We then headed to the United Airlines terminal. Mystery had one more

guest coming in for the week: Ania. She was the girl he'd met in Chicago,

the one he'd claimed online would be the future Mrs. Mystery, the ultimate

rebound. One of Mystery's specialties in sarging was what he called hired

guns, such as bartenders, strippers, shot girls, and waitresses. Ania was a

coatcheck girl at the Chicago Crobar.

We pulled outside the terminal and waited. "Get ready to meet my fu-

ture wife," Mystery announced to his family.

"Don't scare her away like the last one," his mom chuckled. She seemed

to have learned that the secret to surviving the stresses her husband and

children had put on her was to never take anyone or anything too seriously.

Life was an in-joke between her and God.

We recognized Ania the moment the automatic doors opened, reveal-

ing a short woman with bottle-blond hair, a bosom disproportionate to

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her body, and a shrunken-apple face that betrayed, like Patricia and Katya

his mother had unintentionally summarized Mystery's entire approach to

before her, Eastern European origins.

meeting women: the indirect method.

Mystery greeted her, grabbed her bags, and brought her to the limo. Out-

Martina knitted her eyebrows and shifted her weight on the couch.

side of a meek "hello," Ania didn't say a word during the entire trip home. In-

"His depressions get worse every time," she sighed. "He was never violent

stead, she sat passively and listened to Mystery. She was just his type.

before."

She may not have been a party girl like Katya, but Ania came with her

"Well, I remember one time when he was angry, he slammed a door and

own baggage, which arrived unexpectedly at the airport the next day. His

killed his pet rat,” his mother said. “But I never saw him get mad about any-

name was Shaun.

thing else. Even when the cat died, he just said, ‘That’s life.’”

On Saturday we discovered Shaun standing outside the house, dialing

“What I think is happening,” Martina said, “is that with our father

Ania’s cell phone every five minutes. Ania had never told Mystery she was

gone, he’s starting to realize that Dad was never as bad as he remembered.

engaged. And, clearly, she had never told her fiance she was flying to Los

So now he’s allowing himself to be more like Dad.”

Angeles to visit a pickup artist she had met at work. Shaun had evidently

I reflected back on my conversation with Mystery at the Trans-Dniester

checked her *voice* mail, discovered messages from Mystery, and decided to

border. He’d made his dad out to be a monster. “So your dad wasn’t as bad

fly to L.A. to confront his rival.

as Mystery always said?”

The irony wasn’t lost on Mystery. “I understand what Shaun’s going

“The problem is that they were too similar,” Martina explained. “Dad

through,” he said. “I’m like Herbal to him. He wants to kill me and take his

could take over any room he walked into. He was very charismatic but also

woman back.” He paused for a moment and adjusted his posture into what

very stubborn. They never got along. Mystery would always do things to

would have been an alpha male pose if he had any pectorals. “I’m going out

antagonize Dad. And Dad, instead of acting like an adult, would blow up

there to talk to him.”

at him.”

As Mystery swaggered outside, I waited in the living room with his sis-

“We’d have to put them on opposites sides of the table,” Mystery’s

ter and mother. We sat on the upholstery—so filthy now even the stains

mom cut in, “and if one so much as looked at the other wrong, a fight

were stained—that was the backdrop to the tears, girls’ bottoms, and house

would break out.”

meetings that had been consuming my life for months. I felt a need to es-

“And now that Dad’s gone,” Martina said, “Mystery needs someone to

cape this trap I had set for myself; this trap Mystery kept setting for himself;

the traps we all constantly set for ourselves, over and over, and never seem

take all his anger out on. So Katya has taken the place of his father. She’s

to learn from.

become the villain responsible for all the messed-up emotions he's feeling."

Now was my chance to bring up the question I'd wanted to ask ever

"You realize," I told them, "that Mystery is just building himself up for

since Mystery's breakdown in Toronto, the question that would free me of

another fall with this girl."

the inexplicable obligation I felt to save him from himself.

"Yes," his mom said. "He thinks it's all about the girls, but it's not. It's

"So what do we do?"

about his low self-esteem." Only a mother could reduce a person's entire

We talked it through for a half hour. The answer, Martina finally de-

ambition and *raison d'être* to the one basic insecurity fueling it all.

cided, was to let him run free; to give him a chance to make something of his

"What worries me is the violence," I said. "He's starting to think that vi-

talent and genius; to give him time to quest after two 10s who will love him

olence is a solution to these problems, and it's a dangerous way of thinking."

as much as they love each other. And to hope that he made some progress to-

"Butting heads with someone never works," his mom said. "I always say



ward his life goals before the next crash, or the crash after that, or whichever

that you don't have to do the direct approach. You can just go around be-

crash would be so destructive he'd have to return home for good. He was

cause there's always a back way."

walking on quicksand with helium balloons in his hands. In that respect, he

"Now I know where he got Mystery Method from." In three sentences.

was like all of us, except the air in his balloons was escaping faster.

## *Chapter*



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We cut our discussion short when Mystery strode into the kitchen.

"Done," he said. "I had a long talk with Ania's fiance at Mel's. I told him

it was too late for him to fix things with her. Ania is now my girlfriend, and

we are in love with each other. This is turning out to be the best pickup in

the history of Mystery Method."

Martina gave me a knowing glance. Mystery's mother crossed her arms

over her chest and chuckled to herself.

I picked Lisa up at 8:00 P.M. and took her to a Japanese restaurant called

He slammed a tape recorder down on the kitchen counter. “I recorded

Katana. It was one of the toughest dinners of my life. We’d spent so much

the whole conversation,” he said. “Do you want to hear it?”

time together already that I literally had no more material left. I was forced

“No,” I told him. I’d had enough drama.

to be myself.

Besides, I had a date with Lisa to keep.

“There’s something I’ve been meaning to ask you,” I said as the heat

lamps on the restaurant patio scalded our scalps and the sake warmed our

stomachs. The question had been giving me insomnia for weeks. “What

happened to you after Atlanta? We had plans and you broke them.”

“You were rude on the phone,” she said. “And I didn’t think we had def-

inite plans anyway.” So it had been her version of cat-string theory, punish-

ing me for bad behavior.

“I was being cocky funny. I wanted to see you.”

“Whatever. You were rude. You were being too-cool-for-school and so

laid-back and aloof about things that it was a turnoff. I thought, ‘I can get

anybody, and all of a sudden this guy is acting like Mr. Cool?””

As we talked, I tried to figure out why I liked this girl so much, why af-

ter meeting so many people she had become my obsession. A cynical part of

me said I was simply falling for the female equivalent of the tactics we use.

The secret to making someone think they're in love with you is to occupy

their thoughts, and that's what Lisa had done with me. She had blown me

off and rebuffed me physically while stringing me along with just enough

encouragement to keep me chasing her.

On the other hand, I wasn't a plower. If a woman I didn't care about

had played this hard to get, I would have given up long ago. Of course, it

was also possible that my obsession came from a misogynist, alpha-male

streak I'd accidentally contracted as a side effect of sarging. Lisa was fiercely

independent, someone I looked up to rather than down at. So perhaps the

caveman in me just wanted to sleep with her and, thus, conquer her.

And then there was always the remote possibility that she had managed

to touch a part of me that I kept hidden from everyone, even myself. It was

a part of me that wanted to stop thinking, to stop searching, to stop worry-

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ing about what everyone thought of me and just let go and be comfortable

My brain leaped up and slapped itself. I had been careless: I'd forgotten

and free and in the moment, the way I felt surfing that big wave in Malibu.

to throw away the condom I'd used with Isabel. So that's what Sam and she

And every now and then, when Lisa and I both dropped our defenses, I felt

were whispering about in the car on the way to Malibu.

like that with her. I felt alone, together.

"So then why did you agree to go out with me tonight?"

We drove back to my house. Lisa slipped into a white T-shirt and box-

"You asked me out on a proper date. And you were a little nervous, so I

ers, and we lay in bed as we had so many times before—under the covers, on

figured you must really be into me."

separate pillows, heads turned toward each other, but no part of our bodies

I propped myself up on the pillows. I was about to say the most AFC

touching.

thing of my life. "Let me tell you something. The pickup artists have a word

I wanted to continue our conversation from dinner. I wasn't trying to

they call one-iris. It's a disease that people get when they become obsessed

seduce her anymore. I just needed answers.

with just one girl. And they never end up with this girl because they get too

“So what made you drive up the hill the other day to see me again?”

nervous around her and scare her away.”

“While you were gone, I realized how much I missed you.” I loved

“So?” she asked.

watching her lips part over her front teeth when she talked. It made me

“So,” I said. “You’re my one-itis.”

think of salmon on rice. “My friends were making fun of me because I was

We were looking each other in the eyes now. I could see hers sparkle. I

counting down the days until you came home. I actually went grocery shop-

knew mine were sparkling. It was time to kiss her.

ping while you were gone so I could cook you food. I don’t know why.” She

There were no lines, no routines, no evolution phase-shift—I’d tried

hesitated and smiled, as if she were offering information she’d never

them all unsuccessfully anyway. I leaned in. She leaned in. Her eyes closed.

planned to divulge. “I bought a fresh piece of swordfish and had to throw it

My eyes closed. Our lips met. It was just like I'd always thought a kiss was

away because it went bad.”

supposed to begin.

A warm flush of confidence filled my chest. So I still had a chance with

For hours, we lay there making out and dissecting the connections and

this girl.

misunderstandings of the past few weeks.

“But it’s too late,” she said. “The window was open with me, and you

While Lisa slept in the morning, I crept downstairs with my phone

blew it.”

book. I called Nadia and Hie and Susanna and Isabel and the Jessicas and

David DeAngelo would have said to go cocky funny here.

Ross Jeffries

every FB and MLTR and other acronym I was seeing and told them I had

would have said not to buy into her frame. Mystery would have said to pun-

started spending time with someone I wanted to be faithful to.

ish her. But I had to ask: “How did I blow it?”

“So you’re choosing her over me?” Isabel asked angrily.

“First off, you didn’t call me when you came home from Miami. I had

“It’s not an intellectual choice.”

to go to you.”

“Is she better in bed or something?”

“Hold on. I thought you were blowing me off. You never even called

“I don’t know. We’ve only kissed.”

while I was away.”

“So you made out with some girl,” she said, with a weak attempt at a

“Well, your voice mail said you were out of town and you weren’t re-

cruel laugh, “and you want to get rid of me now.”

turning calls, so I didn’t leave a message.”

“It’s not that I want to get rid of you. I’d still like to see you, but as a

“Yeah, but I would have returned your call. I wanted to hear from you.”

friend.” I could hear the word pierce her heart like a dagger, as it had my

“Then you came to the Whiskey Bar and hardly talked. And the last

own heart so many times before I’d joined the community.

straw was when we went to your house to go surfing. I told Sam I was start-

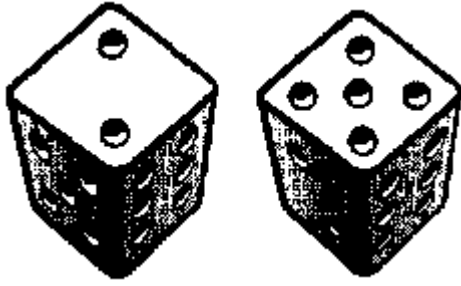
“But I love you.”

ing to like you again and she said, ‘Get over it. When I went up to his room

How could she love me? She needed to go fuck a dozen other guys to

to use the bathroom, I found a used condom on the floor.’”

get over her one-itis.



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“I’m sorry,” I said. And I was.

There is a downside to casual sex: Sometimes it stops being casual. Peo-

ple develop a desire for something more. And when one person’s expec-

tations don’t match the other person’s, then whoever holds the highest

expectations suffers. There is no such thing as cheap sex. It always comes

with a price.

I had violated one of Ross Jeffries’s only ethical rule of seduction: Leave

Steam rose from the water into the starless L.A. sky as Mystery and I sat op-

her better than you found her.

posite each other in the Jacuzzi. He draped one pale arm around the edge of

the hot tub, and with the other took a birdlike sip from a glass that con-

tained an orange liquid and ice cubes. It seemed like a cocktail, which was

strange because Mystery never drank alcohol.

“I gave Papa my notice,” he said. “I’m officially moving out next month.”



He was abandoning me, just like he had during his breakdown in

Toronto. Now I would be stuck living with the happy couple who had

forced him out and the clone army being built in Papa's room,

"But you're letting your enemies win," I said, picking a cigarette butt

out of the Jacuzzi and dropping it into an empty glass. "Just stay here and

hold your ground. Katya wouldn't dare set foot in the house if you were

here. Make a stand. Don't leave me alone with these guys."

"No. The anger and resentment I have is very great—great enough for

me to move out so that I don't have to see them ever again."

He took another small swallow from his glass. "What's that you're

drinking, by the way?" I asked.

"It's a screwdriver. I think I feel a little tipsy. You know, I've never been

drunk before. I always avoided it because I didn't like my father. But now,

with him gone, I figure it's okay to try it."

"Well, dude, now is a bad time to start. You're unstable enough as it is.

You don't need to add alcohol to the mix."

"I enjoy it."

As usual, I was wasting my breath.

He took another sip, with a flourish this time, as if he were doing some-

thing glamorous and cool. "So Isabel stopped by here looking for you last

night,” he said.

“That’s annoying. I tried to be clear with her about Lisa.”

He leaned forward, stirring the foam in the water with the bottom of

his glass. “You haven’t even had sex with Lisa yet. So why not just have Is-

abel on the side? It’s a shame to lose a body like that.”

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“No way, dude. I want to do this right. I don’t want to lie in bed next to

I went up to my room, showered, and paged through a copy of the me-

Lisa, feeling guilty for something I can’t tell her about. It will break the

dieval legend *Parsifal* I had recently bought. People often read books to

trust we have.”

search for themselves and find someone who agrees with them. And, right

I leaned over the edge of the Jacuzzi and dipped my hand into the pool.

now, the nature of *Parsifal* agreed with me a lot more than the nature of the

It was just as warm as the hot tub. Someone had left the heat on again. Our

scorpion.

gas bill was going to be astronomical

As I interpreted the legend, it’s the story of a sheltered mother’s boy

“Do you know the story of the frog and the scorpion?”

Mystery asked.

who meets some knights and decides he wants to be just like them. So he

“No, but I love analogies.” I jumped into the pool and treaded water as

goes off into the world, has a series of adventures, and progresses from leg-

Mystery leaned over the edge of the hot tub and recited the story.

endary fool to legendary knight.

“One day, a scorpion stood on the side of a stream and asked a frog to

The country, at the time, has become a wasteland because the grail king

carry it to the other side. ‘How do I know you won’t sting me?’ the frog

(who guards the holy grail) has been wounded. And it just so happens that

asked. ‘Because if I sting you, I’ll drown,’ the scorpion said.

Parsifal is led to the grail castle, where he sees the king in terrible pain. As a

“The frog thought about it and realized that the scorpion was right. So

compassionate human being, he wants to ask, “What is wrong?” And, ac-

he put the scorpion on his back and started ferrying him. But midway

according to legend, if someone pure of heart asks that question of the king,

across the stream, the scorpion plunged its stinger into the frog’s back. As

he will be healed and the blight on the land will be lifted.

they both began to drown, the frog gasped, ‘Why?’”

However, Parsifal does not know this. And as a knight he has been

“The scorpion replied, ‘Because it is my nature.’”

trained to observe a strict code of conduct, which includes the rule of never

Mystery took a triumphant sip of his screwdriver, then fixed his gaze

asking questions or speaking unless he is addressed first. So he goes to bed

on me as I floated in the pool beneath him. He spoke slowly and deliber-

without talking to the king. In the morning, he wakes to discover that the

ately, like the Mystery who’d first told me to snap and shed the boring skin

grail castle has disappeared. He has blown his chance to save king and

of Neil Strauss. “It is your nature,” he continued. “You are a pickup artist

country by obeying his training instead of his heart. Unlike the scorpion,

now, You are Style. You’ve bitten from the apple of knowledge. You cannot

Parsifal had a choice. He just made the wrong one.

go back to the way you were before.”

When I walked through the living room to get a drink from the

“Well, dude.” I took a couple strokes backward. “That’s very cynical

kitchen, I saw Mystery nursing another cocktail in front of the TV. He was

talk from a guy who’s talking about marrying and having children with a

watching a video of *The Karate Kid* and crying. "I never had a Mr. Miyagi," he

girl he just met."

sobbed, wiping tears off his reddened cheeks. He was drunk.

"My dad didn't

"We're polyamorous," he said. "As a result, we have to cheat on our girl-

teach me anything. All I wanted was a Mr. Miyagi."

friends. And if that threatens our relationships, so be it." He emptied his

I suppose we were all searching for someone to teach us the moves we

drink and held his temples, as if fighting off a dizzy spell.

"Never underesti-

needed to win at life, the knightly code of conduct, the ways of the alpha-

mate the power of denial."

male. That's why we found each other. But a sequence of maneuvers and a

"No." I couldn't look at him. I wasn't going to let him ruin this. "I don't

system of behavior would never fix what was broken inside.

Nothing would

need any more advice."

fix what was broken inside. All we could do was embrace the damage.

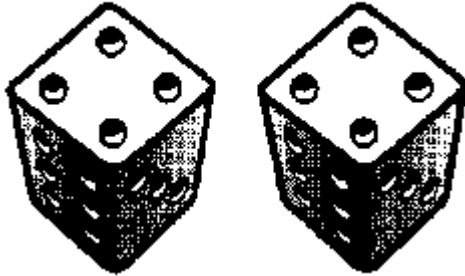
I climbed out of the pool, threw a towel over my shoulders, and walked

into the living room. Xaneus, Playboy, and Tyler Durden were sitting there.

As soon as I entered, they walked up to Papa's room without even acknowl-

edging my presence. It was odd behavior, but nothing unexpected after living in Project Hollywood this long.

## *Chapter*



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the lack of emotional foreplay: I neither cared about nor really desired her.

And I'm sure she felt the same. It was just entertainment. Sex with Lisa was

not entertainment. It was not about validation and ego-gratification, as

with all those pickups I'd been so proud of. It was about creating a vacuum

where nothing else existed except the two of us and our passion. It made the

rest of existence seem like a distraction.

Lisa and I spent the next day together, and the day after that, and the day af-

And then, one afternoon, just when I'd forgotten all about her, Court-

ter that. I kept worrying that I was going to ruin it, that we were spending

ney returned. She pulled up to the house in a limo and leaped out, looking

too much time with each other, that she was going to get tired of me. Rick

radiant in a blue dress and white shawl.

H. had always said, “Give her the gift of missing you.” But we couldn’t seem

“There’s blood flow to my pussy again!” was the first thing she ex-

to part.

claimed.

“You are so perfect for me,” she said as we lay in my bed for the fourth

“Did you land that director you were chasing?” I asked.

night in a row. “I’ve never had sex with a guy I liked this much before. I’m

“No. I got a new man in New York. And it’s going to be his fault for

afraid I’ll *get* attached.”

making me a slut, because now I want it all the time.”

Beneath that tough exterior, she was scared. All her push-pull wasn’t a

She danced toward me, light like a ballerina.

pre-planned psychological tactic; it was her heart warring with her head.

“Well,” I said. “We had a bet about your director crush.”

Perhaps the reason she’d been so reluctant to open up was that she was pro-

“That’s right. I guess I lost.”

tecting something fragile inside. Like me, she was afraid to actually feel

“So that means I get to choose the middle name of your next child.”

something for somebody else—to love, to be vulnerable, to give someone

She smiled and stared at me expectantly, as if I were supposed to just

else control over her happiness and well-being.

select one on the spot.

When I slept with all those other girls, I just had sex with them once a

I shuffled through a list of possible names in my head. “How about

night—and, *if* I liked them enough, a second time in the morning. But

Style?” I finally decided. “I’m going to be retiring the name anyway, so I

something amazing happened with Lisa when we had sex for the first time.

might as well pass it on.” I thought about the idea for a moment. It was re-

After I had an orgasm, it didn’t go down. It remained, as the old Extramask

ally a stupid moniker. Then again, her daughter’s middle name is Bean.

would say, rock-hard and luscious.

She squealed and gave me a bone-crushing hug. “You know, I’ve found

I did it with her a second time.

you sexually intriguing these last few months,” she said.

“Feel it,” I said afterward. It was still ready to go.

I swallowed and prepared to tell her about Lisa. Before I opened my

We did it a third and a fourth time that night, and it never went soft. I

mouth, however, she continued. “But I heard all about you and Lisa. I think

couldn’t understand it. My dick, which I had thought was a completely



that's great. So some good came out of having me in the house after all?"

mindless animal desperate to stick itself in any hole, actually responded to

"Yeah. For you too, I hope."

emotion. It had feelings too. And it wasn't just built-up anticipation. It

"I don't even want to think about what went on in that house."

stayed up through three or four orgasms every time Lisa and I made love.

"Well, you look great. Getting laid has done wonders for your complex-

We fucked in cars, in alleys, *in* restaurant bathrooms, and in the vending-

ion."

machine room in a hotel hallway, where a maintenance man caught us and

"Well, that and rehab."

tried to extort twenty dollars from me.

She winked at me and smiled. Her prayers had been answered. She was

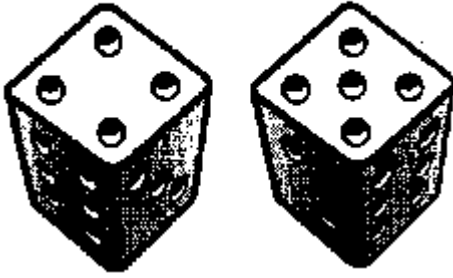
When I'd gone impotent in the bathroom with the porn star, perhaps it

normal again.

didn't have anything to do with the whiskey. My body was responding to

"I'm going to get out of your hair and live at the Argyle hotel until I get

## Chapter



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my daughter back, which should be very soon,” she said. “I came by to give

you the money I borrowed from Mystery.”

She handed me a check and bounded back into the limo. As I watched

her leave, she unrolled the window and yelled, “And this one won’t bounce.”

I was really going to miss her.

A few days later, Lisa and I went to the Scientology Celebrity Center. We

hadn’t become Scientologists; we liked our income too much. Tom Cruise

Ghosts.

had kept his word and sent me an invitation to their annual gala. It was one

We were just phantoms, drifting invisibly through a putrefying house

of the most star-filled events I’d been to in Los Angeles.

that hadn’t seen a maid or repairman in months.

After dinner, Cruise, clean-shaven in a perfectly pressed black tuxedo,

Mystery wasn’t talking to Herbal. Herbal wasn’t talking to Mystery.

walked toward the table. His approach was hypnotic: There was no doubt in

Papa hardly spoke to anyone. And for some reason Sickboy, Playboy, Xa-

his walk, no effort in his smile, no intricacy in his intentions. I stood to

neus, and all the other Real Social Dynamics worker bees had stopped in-

shake his hand, and he clapped my shoulder forcefully. I kept my balance.

teracting with Mystery and me. Even the junior PUAs who hung out in the

Barely.

house—Dreamweaver, Maverick, and other former students—didn't say

“Is that your girlfriend?” he asked, looking Lisa up and down in a non-

hello when I passed by. If I tried to engage them in conversation, they were

lecherous way. I couldn't imagine him ever being lecherous.

“You didn't tell

curt. They wouldn't even look me in the eye.

me how gorgeous she was.”

The only person who spoke to everyone was Tyler Durden.

But inter-

“Thanks. I can't remember ever feeling this fulfilled by someone.”

acting with him was never a conversation; it was an interrogation, like

“So you got tired of picking up women?”

someone might have with an actor who wanted to play him in a movie.

“Yeah, after a while it started to feel like filling a bucket with a hole in it.”

“I really want to ask you something,” he said one afternoon as he

“Exactly,” he exclaimed. “Cameron Crowe and I, when we were doing

emerged from the kitchen with Sickboy. I’d always liked Sickboy. Despite

*Vanilla Sky*, would talk about what a one-night stand is and what a fuck

the name, he was a well-raised, mild-mannered New Yorker.

buddy is. And when you kind of get down to it, those things are a false inti-

“What do you have that enables you to get Lisa?” Tyler Durden asked.

macy. And they’re unsatisfying. In a real relationship, sex means more. You

“Because I go out every night and work so hard on myself, and I know that

just want to keep going, and you want to hang out all the time and talk

I couldn’t get her as a girlfriend.”

about life. It’s very cool.”

What was amazing about Lisa was that despite her roughness, she was

“Yes, but the problem is that I don’t want this to be the end of my jour-

one of the most generous women I’d ever been with. She’d make my bed

ney in this subculture. It just reaffirms society’s message of monogamy and

every morning; she’d cook meals and bring them up to my room when I was

true love conquers everything and all those Hollywood happy endings. It

working; and she rarely came over without a small gift—a tube of Origins

seems so cheesy.”

face cleanser, a bottle of John Varvatos cologne, a copy of *Henry IV} Part I I’d*

“Who says it’s cheesy?” Cruise asked, his eyes narrowing and his hands

been looking for. Perhaps I had found my Caresse.

reaching out to attack me with a friendly gesture. “You know what? I got

“I guess I have life experience,” I told him. “All you do is sarge every

past that. Since when is it cheesy to be in love?”

night. You’re only working on one aspect of yourself. It’s like going to the

He had AMOGed me again.

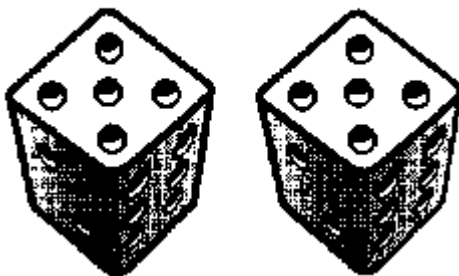
gym every day and just doing bicep curls.”

His brows knitted, and his mind began turning rapidly. For a moment,

he appeared to take the advice to heart. Then he rejected it, and his eyes be-

gan to blaze. If it wasn’t hatred they contained, it was at least resentment.

## *Chapter*



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He resented me because I still didn't see him as an equal,  
because he still

wasn't cool in my eyes, because he couldn't pick apart the idea  
of coolness

to a subset of behaviors he could model. Lisa dated me  
because, to her, I was

cool. Tyler Durden would never be cool.

He chewed my ear off for ten minutes about how good he was  
in the

field now, and how he didn't need routines anymore to get  
IOIs, and how

celebrities always tried to get him to go to parties.

**MSN GROUP:** Mystery's Lounge

Finally, he turned to walk up to Papa's room. Sickboy  
remained be-

**SUBJECT:** Field Report—Life at Project Hollywood

hind, standing next to me. "Aren't you coming?" Tyler asked  
Sickboy, nod-

**AUTHOR:** Sickboy

ding his head upstairs as if something important were  
occurring there.

"I just want to say good-bye to Style," Sickboy said.

For those w h o don't know, I've been sleeping in Papa's  
closet at Project Holly-

"You're leaving?" I asked. I was surprised Sickboy was even  
acknowl-

w o o d . Today was the best day I've ever had here, despite all  
the crazy drama

edging my presence.

that has been going on.

The door to Papa's room slammed lightly overhead. Sickboy looked up

I woke up earlier than usual and went surfing in Malibu with Style and his

nervously.

girlfriend, who is really an amazing person. Seeing how cool they get along is

"I'm out of this whole thing," he said.

really inspiring. He's one of the few people I've met in the game who has

"What whole thing?"

something great to show for all the effort he's put into it.

"This house is toxic." The words burst out of him, as if they'd been

The surfing was amazing. I was so happy to go because I haven't gone

slowly forming inside like a blister. "There are so many cool things to do in

yet this summer. I recommend taking up the sport to anyone who's never tried it.

L.A., and all anyone wants to do is sarge. I haven't even seen the Pacific

As soon as you hit the water, your mind clears and it's almost impossible to

Ocean the whole time I've been here. These guys are losers. I wouldn't intro-

think of anything else. It's truly a relaxing experience.

duce any of them to any of my friends back in New York."

Afterward, we ate at a fish stand right at the edge of the Pacific Ocean

"I know what you mean. Lisa can't stand them."

and had a great conversation about music, friends, traveling, life, and careers.

“It’s a joke,” he continued. He sighed the tension out of his shoulders,

When I returned to the house, I did some work. Then I watched *The Lost*

as if relieved he’d found someone normal, someone who understood, some-

*Dragon* with Playboy, whom I’ve become good friends with. During the movie,

one who wasn’t entirely brainwashed. “They bring girls back to the house

Herbal and Mystery talked outside and settled their differences. Though Mys-

all the time, but the girls get creeped out and leave. Tyler Durden can

ystery’s still upset at Katya, he said he wouldn’t hold it against Herbal for falling

hardly get anyone to return his calls. I don’t think he’s been laid in two

in love with her. And Herbal said that if Mystery paid for the damages to his

months. Papa’s had sex with probably one girl in the last year. Mystery can’t

room, he’d forgive Mystery for his behavior. Thank God. It’s good to see this

hold onto a girlfriend to save his life. And when Xaneus came here, he was a

thing ended in a sane way. Mystery will be moving out of the house tomorrow

cool guy. But now he seems fake. All he talks about is sarging. You’re the

anyway, which I think is a shame.



only guy I want to model. You have a great lifestyle, a good job, and a cool

At about 2 : 0 0 A.M., Playboy, Mystery, and I sat in the main room smoking

girlfriend.”

a hookah, listening to music, and talking about our goals in life.

Flattery will get you everywhere. “I’ll tell you what. I’m going to give

I didn’t have a single conversation today about sarging, pickup, or the

Lisa a surfing lesson tomorrow. Why don’t you join us? It’ll be good for you

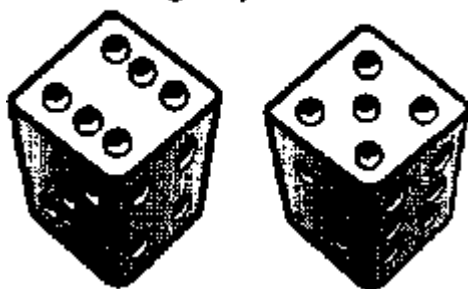
community. My day was filled with real conversations with real friends. I didn’t

to get out of the house and see the ocean.”

need to fuck some L.A. bimbo from the Saddle Ranch for validation. In fact, I

didn’t do a single set all day.

### *Chapter*



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These are the days that make life worth living. These are also the days that

will miss when I move out of Project Hollywood.

-Sickboy

I sat uselessly in the living room and watched Mystery pack the last of his possessions: the platform boots, the ridiculous peacocking hats, the pin-striped suits he no longer wore, the lunch box with his picture emblazoned on the front, the hard drives filled with lesbian porn and episodes of *That 70s Show*.

I couldn't help feeling that maybe we'd made the wrong decision.

"So where are you going?" I asked.

"I'm moving to Las Vegas. I'm going to start Project Vegas. I've learned

from my mistakes here, and Project Vegas will be bigger and better. There

are hotter women in Vegas, and great opportunities for doing casino magic.

I'm going to fly my brother-in-law to Vegas to record his songs, with me

singing. Imagine"—he ran his hand along the air as if reading a line of type—

"the world's greatest pickup artist releases an album of love songs. Who

wouldn't buy that?" Mystery's manic sense of possibility was back. "Ania

will be living with me there. And, since you're my best friend, once I get it set

up, I'd like you to join me. We'll build it right this time. We will be in charge,

and we'll carefully screen everyone we move into the house."

"I'm sorry, man." I couldn't just follow him around every time he

fucked things up for himself.

“It’ll be Mystery and Style, just like the old days,” he persisted. He

opened the front door of the house and carried a suitcase onto the landing

as he delivered one of the many great aphorisms that he used to turn defeat

into triumph. “Where there’s a problem, there’s an opportunity.”

“I can’t go through this again.” The words, apologetic, came out accu-

satory.

“I understand,” he said. “Sometimes events turn sour, and we follow

bad threads in our lives. I want you to know that, even though we haven’t

seen eye to eye lately, I will always be your friend, for life and a day. You

don’t have to manage your relationship with me. Enjoy your girlfriend, and

we will always have time to hang out together. You are the most important

man in my life.”

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My face swelled and my eyes tingled with the first flush of tears.

“That’s part of it,” he said. “But a bigger part of it is that no one in this

“Try n o t to queer t h a t u p , okay?” he smiled weakly, choking back emo-

house likes you. Everybody thinks that you're a snob and that you're re-tion himself.

sponsible for a lot of trouble in this house, because you talk about people

A cab pulled into the driveway and honked, and Mystery slammed the

behind their backs." Though these were strong words coming from Tyler

doors shut on Project Hollywood. The blank whiteness of the door wavered

Durden, who had never said a cross word to my face before, his voice wasn't

in the mist of my eyes. I felt like I was losing a piece of myself. For a moment

venomous. He spoke almost obsequiously, as if he were trying to give me

ment, I couldn't figure out which of us was the bigger fool.

constructive advice from one PUA to another. "I'm just saying this because

Within a week, Katya had moved into Herbal's room and Papa had

I'm your friend, and I don't want to see what happened to Mystery happen

moved two PUAs into Mystery's old room. One of them was Dreamweaver,

to you."

a former student of mine; the other one I'd never met before. Papa planned

I didn't know how to respond because I was so taken aback. I had no

to move a third PUA into Mystery's closet. With the influx of new, younger

idea the other guys in the house felt that way.

residents, Project Hollywood looked more like a frat house every day,

“Yeah,” he went on. “Did you notice how Extramask used to be your

though most frat houses were cleaner.

friend, but then he started avoiding you? Well, that’s because he didn’t trust

Without Mystery sitting in the living room, ready and willing to share

you. Dreamweaver told me he hates your guts. Maverick hates you too.”

the details of his latest drama with whoever passed by, the lack of communication -

I thought about what he was saying. Maybe he was right. The enthusi-

nication in the house became even more uncomfortable. Whenever I

as I had brought to my first encounters with fellow sargers had dissipated

walked through the living room, I’d find new roommates lying on their bel-

as I saw routines sold instead of shared and perfectly normal men turn into

lies on the carpet, playing video games. They never looked up or said a

creepy social parasites. So, though I was always friendly to everyone, maybe

word, even when I greeted them. They weren’t PUAs; they were vegetables. If

they were picking up on the fact that I was growing disillusioned with the

someone had told me two years ago that this was the lifestyle I had to look

community.

forward to, I would never have joined the community. I would have realized

On the other hand, as Juggler had always pointed out, people tended to

that those who live by the joystick are doomed to die by the joystick.

feel comfortable around me. I'd always been friendly and easy to get along

At Papa's twenty-fourth birthday party, not a single woman showed

with, even before I'd joined the community. I had no enemies, or so I

up—let alone Paris Hilton, who, needless to say, had never come to party at

thought.

Project Hollywood as Papa had hoped. His only friends were PUAs. And, for

When I left the room after another hour of talk, my head was spinning.

some reason, they all ignored me. I couldn't understand it.

I couldn't understand why these guys, who I'd spent the better part of two

In the week that followed, Tyler Durden, who'd never been directly hos-

years getting to know, hated my guts. What had I done?

tile to me, started writing posts attacking me online. I decided it was time

The answer, I soon found out, was nothing.

to have a talk with him about everyone's strange behavior in the house. I

navigated through the overflowing trash bags in the kitchen; walked

through the backyard, where just a small puddle of sludge lay at the bottom

of the hot tub; and knocked on Papa's back door.

I found Tyler Durden sitting at a computer, posting on the seduction

boards.

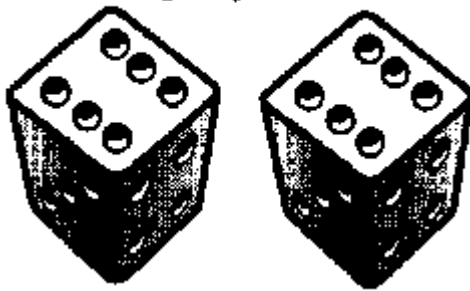
"I want to talk to you about what's been going on lately," I said. "Every-

one in the house is acting weird—even weirder than usual. And you seem to

have a chip on your shoulder. Are people pissed because I've been hanging

out with Lisa too much and not going out sarging?"

### *Chapter*



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they're pushing you out. They want to make the whole house an office and

dormitory for Real Social Dynamics."

"I don't understand. How could they have pushed Mystery out? He dug

his own grave."

“But don’t you see how they helped it along? How Papa invited Katya

to sleep at the house and then brought her back after Mystery kicked her

When I saw Playboy in the living room packing his books into boxes, I

out? They were baiting him.” Each sentence Playboy spoke was like a strip

asked the usual: “What’s going on?”

of gauze being removed from my eyes. “Everything Papa said in his room

“I’m moving out.”

during the house meeting, he was instructed to say by Tyler Durden. He’s a

First Extramask, then Mystery, then Sickboy, and now Playboy. I was

follower. And I made a mistake by going along with it too. If I could do it all

on a sinking ship.

over again, I’d vote for Mystery to stay. This house was his project. Even if

“Do you have a few minutes?” he asked. “I want to get something off

his behavior was out of line, he had a right not to want his ex-girlfriend

my chest before I leave.”

here.”

Playboy brought me into his room and shut the door.

I had played right into their hands. They were such masters of social

“They’re trying to freeze you out,” he said.



manipulation that they had set up the meeting so I thought I was in

“Who’s trying to freeze me out?”

charge. Papa even kept calling me the house leader. And thus, they’d man-

“Papa and Tyler Durden. They’re using tactics on you.”

aged to make it my decision to kick Mystery out. So much for the whole

“What are you talking about? What do you mean by tactics?”

win-win idea.

“Wow, you really have no idea what’s been going on up in Papa’s room.

“They played me like a puppet,” I said, shaking my head in disbelief.

Tyler Durden is telling everyone to ignore you. He wants you to think that

“They played me, too. That’s a large part of the reason I’m leaving.

everyone hates you. He’s trying to make you uncomfortable in the house.”

Tyler Durden can get those guys to do whatever he wants. He’s not moti-

“Why would he want to do that?”

vated by girls. He’s motivated by acquisition and power.”

“He wants to take over. And he can’t have you here because you

How could I have been so blind? In Las Vegas, I had even told Tyler

threaten him.”

Durden point blank that he was the kind of person who liked to rise to the

This explained the head games Tyler Durden was playing the other day,

top of a situation by eliminating his competitors. And he had agreed.

the reason he was trying to make me think everyone was against me. He was

“All they do up in Papa’s room is hang out in the bathroom and plot,”

attempting to drive me out. He was running game on me.

Playboy elaborated. “Every word that comes out of Tyler Durden’s mouth is

“He sees you as a threat to his power because he can’t suck you in.

calculated. Every post he writes is to serve an agenda. That guy’s mind is all

You’re not weak like Xaneus,” Playboy continued. “He sees you as a threat

gears, turning and manipulating. He sees everything in life as a set. They

to his finances because you want him to pay rent. And he sees you as a

even talk about (guy sets’ up in Papa’s room now. They have routines

threat to his women because you made out with that girl he picked up in

worked out to make students give their workshops better reviews and rou-

Vegas. He thinks that if he lets his girls get near you, they’re going to lose at-

tines to control guys in the house. Every time someone new comes up to

traction for him.”

their room, they inoculate him against you.”

“He’s still upset about that?”

We had created a dangerous precedent by studying how to control social

“Yeah. But I think the main problem is that Tyler and Papa associate

situations in clubs. It had led to a mindset that everything in life was a game

you with Mystery, and he’s their competition. They have a gang mentality.

that could be manipulated to a player’s advantage with the right routines.

They think in terms of alliances. So they pushed Mystery out, and now

But there was one thing I still didn’t understand. “If what you’re saying

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is true,” I asked Playboy, “why was Papa avoiding me and Mystery before

“Totally. When Mystery was there, they did what they’re doing to you

there was even a plan to freeze us out of the house?”

now. Tyler Durden and Papa would say, ‘Don’t talk to Mystery; freeze him

“That came from Tyler Durden too,” Playboy said. “He didn’t want

out.’ Everything they do is a routine. The house meeting about Mystery was

Papa representing Mystery’s business as well as his, so he turned Papa

thought out for days. They’d constantly talk about how to get Mystery to

against Mystery as soon as you guys moved in. Then, once Mystery and

move out so they could take control of Project Hollywood. The house is

Papa started bickering, he told Papa to avoid you guys completely and use

part of their business plan. I had to leave. I can't be around that shit."

the back door to enter the house."

In the days that followed, I talked to Maverick and Dreamweaver. They

So many connections were firing in my head as Playboy spoke. All the

both told the same story: Mystery and I, supposedly the best players in the

weirdness that had been taking place in the house since day one had been

community, had been played. The worshippers were smashing their idols.

orchestrated by a little man in the closet, the wizard of Project Hollywood. I

felt like such a chump.

"The biggest mistake you and Mystery made," Playboy concluded, "was

having Papa move into this house."

There was a lesson here, perhaps the last one this community would

teach me. And that was always to follow my instincts and first impressions.

I hadn't trusted either Papa or Tyler Durden when I'd first met them. I

found Papa spoiled and robotic, and Tyler Durden soulless and manipula-

tive. And though they'd made great leaps forward when it came to fashion

and game, Mystery was right: The scorpion can't deny its nature.

Yet, at the same time, Mystery and I weren't entirely blameless. We had

used Papa as a patsy to sign the lease and pay for the most expensive room.

We had never attempted to befriend him or treat him as an equal.

When I was checking e-mail later on my computer in the office area of

the house, I noticed a program called Family Key Logger. I would have ig-

nored it if it weren't for the paranoia I'd developed as a result of my discus-

sion with Playboy. So I Googled the name of the program.

When I saw the

results, anger swung through my body like a wrecking ball. Someone had

installed software that was capturing every word typed on the keyboard and

storing it in a text file. The computer was intended as a shared resource so

that residents and guests could check the Internet. This meant that who-

ever had installed the program now had everyone's passwords, credit card

numbers, and private e-mails.

Unbeknownst to me, there had been a war going on in the house from

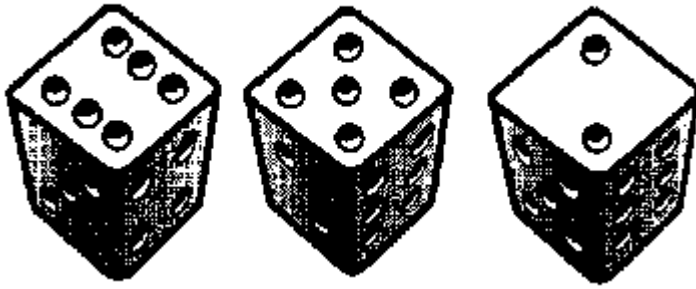
the moment we'd moved in.

Afterward, I called Sickboy in New York. I wanted a second opinion.

“Does that match your experience?” I asked after telling him every-

thing Playboy had said.

### *Chapter*



thinks they're inadequate, then that ache goes away and the idea that we're

not a person of value disappears to some extent.

**And what about those people who don't get rid of their sense of inadequacy?**

They become obsessed with sleeping with more and more women. And

There was one pickup guru I still needed to meet. I didn't want advice from

that's a problem.

him on how to pick up girls; I wanted advice on how to stop.

Then there are the kinds of guys who need to be in therapy sessions. I

Everyone in the community had mentioned his name. He was a sort of

can't tell you how many people I've seen in bad clothes say, in a nasal voice,

spiritual presence that hung over the pickup world, a mythological figure

“Eric, I can’t seem to pick up girls.” I tell them, “You need new clothes, bet-

like Odysseus or Captain Kirk or an HB11. He was Eric Weber, the first

ter posture, and a speech therapist.” All these things are evidence of deep in-

modern PUA, the writer of the 1970 book that started it all, *How to Pick Up*

ner psychological wounds.

*Girls*, and the subject of the movie with the same name.

I met him in a small post-production studio, where he was editing a

*The phone rings. He answers it, speaks for a few minutes, then hangs up.*

film he had directed. He definitely wasn’t peacocked; he looked like a

middle-aged advertising executive, with gray hair, a starched shirt but-

That was a girl I picked up thirty-eight and a half years ago—my wife. I was

toned up too high, and featureless black pants. Only his eyes, which

actually researching the book right around the time I met her and used a

sparkled with energy, gave evidence that his youthful daring had not yet

line on her. She walked past me in a bar and I said, “You’re much too pretty

been extinguished.

to let get away.” I thought this tough New York chick would be mad. But

she said, “You think so.” I couldn’t get rid of her after that.

**Are you aware of the seduction community?**

I am. But I look at it with the sense of being imitated. Part of what came

**So how did you actually conceive of the book?**

along after my book was repellant to me. I don't believe in doing things that

I had a friend who was a copy trainee with me at Benton and Bowles. One

twist and turn a person. I was never interested in conquering women in a

day we both looked through the window of the El Al office next door and

despotic way. I was interested in finding somebody to love. However, I

noticed a girl working there. She was Mediterranean and gorgeous, like a

didn't stay passionately interested in seduction. I felt like there were too

Botticelli. The next day, he saw me and said that during his lunch break

many other things I wanted to do.

he'd followed her to a deli, where she got a sandwich, and then sat down in

the park, talked with her, and made a date to have dinner that Friday.

**What made you get over it?**

The next week, he came in and said that she was a virgin. He had to run

I lost interest after getting married, gaining more confidence in myself, and

out and find a tin of Vaseline because she was so tight. That's what gave me



realizing that accumulating dozens of notches in my belt wouldn't cure my

the idea of doing a book on picking up girls. I got interested in his brazen-

existential despair. What also helped was having two daughters who have

ness and his ability to turn talking to strangers into a comfortable, everyday

occasionally accused me of being sexist, which I am mildly, I guess.

thing. I was very shy and unconfident growing up. I wrote about pickup be-

cause I couldn't do it, and I really, really wanted to be good at it.

### **What was your existential despair?**

I think the existential dilemma is: We're social animals, so we all wrestle

### **Was there any precedent for it at the time?**

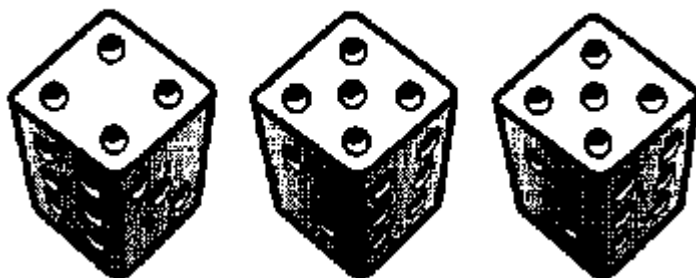
with a sense of inadequacy. But when we realize that we're not as inade-

In the mid-sixties, life was changing radically in America. Women had just

quate as we thought we were, and when we realize that everybody else also

started taking the pill; the Stones and the Beatles had hit; Bob Dylan was

### *Chapter*



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becoming popular. A whole counterculture was taking shape.  
Life was very

suddenly wildly erotic.

In the forties and fifties, if you grew up in your hometown,  
you met

people at church socials or were introduced by an aunt. But in  
the sixties, all

these people were moving out of their parents' homes into  
their own apart-

ments in the city. They lived alone without the conventional  
means of

meeting. So singles bars became popular. And people needed  
new tools to

At 2:00 A.M., Lisa burst into the house, making her nightly  
drunken en-

meet strangers.

trance. She stomped up my stairs, shedding her purse and  
clothing on the

way, and leaped onto my bed wearing nothing but a beer  
bottle.

**What do you think is the difference between naturals and  
guys like us**

"I'm attracted to you in every way," she blurted.

**who need to learn analytically?**

"Really?"

I think that naturals have the psychological power to do it.  
Toward the end

"Do you know what all the ways are?"

of my singlehood, I found a boldness that was shocking. I  
developed the

"Urn, maybe."

courage to tell a woman after a glass of wine, “I’d like to fuck you.” There

“Do you want me to name them?”

are some women looking for you to be bold and a leader. It took me a long

“Sure.”

time to learn that.

“Emotionally, physically, and mentally.”

“That’s a lot of ways.”

Something strange happened to Eric Weber when the conversation veered

“I can elaborate.”

toward naturals and tales from the field. He came to life. The spark in his

“Okay. Let’s start with the physical.” That’s probably the area where I

eyes brightened. For a half hour, we swapped stories and theories about the

still needed the most reassurance.

game. For all his talk of marriage and happily ever after, beneath the surface

“I love your teeth, and your mouth especially.” I listened for hesitation

still seethed that awkward guy who was envious of his friends’ success with

or doubt. There was none. “I love how broad your shoulders are and how

women.

narrow your hips are. I love the hair placement on your body. I love the

After we talked, he showed me a scene from the movie he was editing. It

color of your eyes, because they're the same as mine. I love the shape of your

was about a pale, bald, unemployed middle-aged man shopping a terrible

nose. I love the indents on the side of your head.”

screenplay and sponging off his ex-wife, who was now married to a hand-

“Oh my God.” I flipped on top of her and grabbed her shoulders. “No

some, successful man.

one has ever complimented me on my head indentations before. I love

“Is that screenwriter in the movie the way you really see yourself?” I

them too.”

asked as we walked out of the building together.

I laughed, a little too loudly, at the ridiculousness of what I'd just said.

“That's the inner me,” he admitted. “Inside I sometimes feel pathetic,

And then I confessed everything to her. I told her about the last two years of

awkward, and unloved.”

meeting players and learning about the game. I told her about the AFCs and

“Even after all the confidence you acquired as a pickup artist, a hus-

PUAs, the FBs and MLTRs, the IOIs and AMOGs.

band, and a father?”

“I would love to have you dress super-hot one day,” I said, caught up in

“Well,” he said, opening the door to his car, “all you can do is put on an

the excitement of the game I had helped invent, “and then go to a bar. And

appearance of confidence sometimes. And after a while, others will start to

I’ll practice AMOGing all the guys who try to hit on you.”

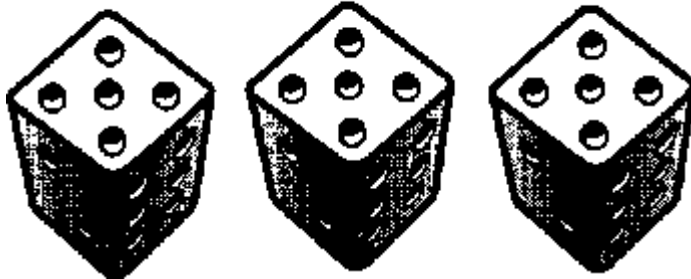
believe it.” He grabbed the door handle to pull it closed. “And then you die.”

She rolled me off her, so that we were facing each other on our sides,

*Slam.*

our faces an inch apart. “You don’t need to take their advice,” she said, her

### *Chapter*



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breath intoxicating and intoxicated. “Everything I like about you, and

everything that makes me think you’re rad, is all the stuff you already had

before you met those PUA guys. I don’t want you wearing dumbass jewelry

and Pee-wee Herman shoes. I would have liked you before all that self-

improvement shit.”

From outside, we heard the sounds of men climbing the hill, flush with

the excitement of another night out almost getting laid. “All the things you

Herbal was the next to go.

learned from the PUAs almost made us not come together,” Lisa continued.

I saw him from my bedroom window, stuffing his robot vacuum

“I want you to just be Neil: balding, nerdy, glasses, and all.” cleaner into a U-Haul van.

Maybe she was right. Perhaps she would have liked the real me. But she

“I’m going back to Austin,” he said with a wan smile when I ran out to

never would have had the opportunity to meet him if I hadn’t spent the last

talk to him.

two years learning how to put my best foot forward. Without all that train-

He was the last person I expected to abandon the house.

“Why? After

ing, I never would have had the confidence to talk to and handle a girl like

all you went through with Mystery, you’re going to leave?”

Lisa, who was a constant challenge.

“I just feel like the house has been a failure,” he said. “No one hangs out

I needed Mystery, Ross Jeffries, David DeAngelo, David X, Juggler, Steve

anymore. The RSD guys stopped talking to me when I started working for

P., Rasputin, and all those other pseudonyms. I needed them to discover what

Mystery, and Papa keeps moving in guys I don't really like." was me to begin with. And now that I had found that person, brought him

"What's Katya doing?"

out of his shell, and learned to accept him, perhaps I had outgrown them.

"She's moving to Austin with me." I suppose if Katya were using him

Lisa sat up and took a sip from the bottle of beer she had brought up-

solely for revenge, she would have dumped him by now.

stairs. "Everyone was hitting on me tonight," she giggled. Modesty was

"Um, by the way, what should I do when your wallaby arrives?"

never her strong suit. "I hope you realize that you are dating the most fabu-

"I've already arranged to have it sent to Austin."

lous girl in L.A."

Watching Herbal pack his possessions into the moving truck, I was

In response, I wordlessly pulled open my bottom dresser drawer,

struck by a much more profound sadness than when Mystery had left. With

grabbed two large manila envelopes from inside, and brought them to the

Mystery, I had lost a friend and former mentor. But I had thought that per-

bed. I turned the first envelope upside down and dumped its contents onto

haps without the drama, the house could unite. However,  
between Tyler

the comforter. Hundreds of paper scraps, matchbooks,  
business cards,

Durden's plotting and Herbal's imminent departure, Project  
Hollywood

cocktail napkins, and torn receipts spilled out. Each one  
contained the

was truly dead.

handwriting of a different girl. Then I emptied the second  
envelope onto

Outside of Papa and Tyler Durden, everyone seemed to be  
waking up

the bed—full of more of the same—until there was a small  
mountain of pa-

from the spell the community had cast on them. Even Prizer—  
the sarger

per scraps. They were all phone numbers I'd collected since  
taking that first

who had lost his virginity in Juarez—had stopped selling his  
pickup DVD

fateful workshop with Mystery.

course and become a born-again Christian. In his last post, he  
warned,

"I know you are," I finally answered her. "I've spent two years  
meeting

"Snap out of your trance and stop handing your salary over to  
a bunch of

every girl in L.A. And out of them all, I chose you."

losers who are only able to seduce gullible guys. There's more  
to life than

It was the most beautiful thing I'd said in a long time. And,  
after I



sarging.”

spoke it, I realized it wasn't entirely accurate. If there was anything I'd

If the stupidest sarger of us all had outgrown the community, what was

learned, it's that the man never chooses the woman. All he can do is give her

I still doing here?

an opportunity to choose him.

Behind Herbal and me, a beer bottle shattered on the street, scattering

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fragments of green glass everywhere. I looked up and saw a teenager with a

sleep in. They had quit their jobs; they had dropped out of school; they had

dyed-blond Eminem crewcut and a white tanktop sitting on our steps.

left their hometowns for this.

“Who's that?”

I sat in the living room in my boxer shorts and watched them as they

“I don't know,” Herbal said. “He's been staying up in Papa's room.”

worked. They were diligent. They were efficient. They were automatons.

I was alone here now. It was just me in my bedroom against the borg in

Wordlessly, they set up three bunk beds with matching sheets, blankets, and

the rest of the house trying to force me out. I was tired of fighting. I was  
mattresses. Herbal's room was being converted into a barracks to house this  
tired of being disappointed in people. I didn't need to be here anymore. Be-  
growing army. The troops would be sent to the Sunset Strip nightly to do  
sides, I had a girlfriend.  
battle-armed with my clothes, my stories, my mannerisms- while the gen-  
Still, I couldn't help thinking, "If I was so smart, how did Papa end up  
erals in the bathroom plotted the last stages of their conquest of the com-  
with the house?"  
munity. Even Mystery's Lounge would soon be theirs, with Mystery himself  
Lisa answered that question as we lay in bed together that night.  
purged.  
"Because you didn't want the house," she said. "It's not a life. It's a sub-  
There was nothing here for me now.  
culture you dipped into. How could something be good that's based on a  
I returned to my room, pulled several duffel bags off my closet shelf,  
false reality and a learned behavior? Walk away. These guys aren't helping  
and started packing. Hanging over me were rows of peacocking garments: a

you anymore. They're holding you back.”

fuzzy purple vest, a pair of tight black vinyl pants, a pink cowboy hat.

Watching *The Wizard of Oz* as a child, I was always disappointed when

Stacked on the floor were dozens of books on flirting, NLP, Tantric mas-

Glinda the Good Witch told Dorothy that she'd possessed the power to re-

sage, female sexual fantasies, handwriting analysis, and how to be the jerk

turn home since the moment she had arrived in Oz. Now, twenty years later,

women love. I wouldn't need any of those where I was going.

I understood the message. I had possessed the power to leave the commu-

It was time to leave the house, and the community, behind. Real life

nity all along, but I hadn't reached the end of the road until now. I still be-

beckoned.

lieved that these guys had something I didn't. Yet the reason all the gurus

latched on to me—the reason Tyler Durden wanted to be me, even though

he hated me—was that they thought I had something they lacked.

We were all searching outside ourselves for our missing pieces, and we

were all looking in the wrong direction. Instead of finding ourselves, we'd

lost our sense of self. Mystery didn't have the answers. A blonde 10 in a two-

set at the Standard didn't have the answers. The answers were to be found

within.

To win the game was to leave it.

Even Extramask had discovered that. After staying at a Vipassana med-

itation center in Australia and an ashram in India, he was coming home to,

as he put it in an e-mail to me, "the way things were before."

In the morning, I was awakened by noises downstairs. Three new re-

cruits for Real Social Dynamics—replacements for Playboy, Sickboy, and

Extramask—were hauling boxes from Ikea into Herbal's room. Like those

who came before them, they were former students turned interns and em-

ployees, working for free in exchange for pickup lessons and a closet to

## GLOSSARY

*Below is a list of pickup terms and acronyms used or referred to in this book. Some are*

*words coined by the community; others come from hypnosis and marketing jargon; and*

*others are common words that have been appropriated by pickup artists. The definitions*

*below pertain solely to each word's use in the context of seduction. Wherever possible, the*

*person credited with coining the term has been cited.*

*AFC—noun [average frustrated chump]: a stereotypical nice guy who has no*

pickup skills or understanding of what attracts women; a man who tends to en-

gage in supplicative and wimpy patterns of behavior around women he has not

yet slept with. Origin: Ross Jeffries.

**AMOG**— 1. *noun* [alpha male of the group or alpha male other guy]: a socially

comfortable male who competes with a pickup artist for a woman or inter-

feres with a pickup artist's game. Origin: 01d\_Dog. 2. *verb*: to remove a poten-

tial male competitor—through physical, verbal, or psychological tactics—from

a group of women. *Also*: *outalpha*. Origin: Tyler Durden.

**ANCHOR**—1. *noun*: an external stimulus (a sight, sound, or touch) that triggers

a specific emotional or behavioral response, such as a song that makes one

happy because it's reminiscent of a positive life event.

Anchors are used by

pickup artists to associate themselves with a woman's feelings of attraction. 2.

*verb*: the act of creating an association between an external stimulus and an

emotional or behavioral response. Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

**ASD**— *noun* [anti-slut defense]: the maneuvers some women make to avoid tak-

ing responsibility for initiating or agreeing to sex; or in order to avoid appear-

ing slutty to the man she is with, to her friends, to society, or to herself. This can

occur before or after sex, or it can prevent sex from occurring.  
Origin: Yaritai.

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## GLOSSARY

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*BF*—*noun* [boyfriend].

other, less interesting men in the club. *Antonym: DLV*  
*[demonstration of lower value]*.

**BF DESTROYER**— *noun* [boyfriend destroyer]: a pattern, routine, or line a

pickup artist uses with the intention of seducing a woman who has a boyfriend.

**DOGGY DINNER BOWL LOOK**— *noun*: the entranced expression a woman gets

in her eyes when she is attracted to a man who is talking to her. *Also: DDB. Ori-*

**BITCH SHIELD**— *noun*: a woman's defensive response to deter unknown men

gin: Ross Jeffries.

who approach her. Though her reaction to an opening line may be rude, this

does not necessarily mean the woman herself is rude, or even impossible to en-

**ELICIT VALUES**— *verb phrase*: to draw out, through conversation, what is im-

gage in a conversation.

portant to a person, usually with the intention of reaching a deep inner desire

that motivates them. In terms of seduction, eliciting values may help a man de-

**BLUR**— *verb or adjective*: an occurrence in which a woman stops returning calls,

termine that a woman who says she is looking for a rich husband is actually just

although she was initially interested in the man phoning.

looking for a feeling of safety and security. *Also: EV.* Origin: Richard Bandler and

**BUYING TEMPERATURE**— *noun*: the degree to which a woman is ready to make

John Grinder.

intimate physical contact with a man. Unlike attraction, a high buying tempera-

ture generally appears and fades quickly. To maintain a woman's level of physical

**FALSE TAKEAWAY**-see *takeaway*.

interest over a longer period of time, a pickup artist attempts to pump her buying

**FALSE TIME CONSTRAINT**-see *time constraint*.

temperature with fast-paced routines. Origin: Tyler Durden.

**FB**—*noun* [fuck buddy]: a woman with whom a man engages in casual,

**CALIBRATE**— *verb*: to read the verbal and nonverbal responses of a person or

consensual sex without an emotional attachment or relationship expecta-

group and accurately deduce what they are thinking or feeling at that moment.

tions.

Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

**FIELD**— *noun*: any public place where a pickup artist can meet women.

**CAVEMAN**— *verb*: to directly and aggressively escalate physical contact, and

progress toward sex, with a consenting woman; predicated on the idea that early

**FIELD REPORT**— *noun*: a written account of a pickup or a night out picking up

human beings did not use intelligence and words but instinct and strength to

women, usually posted online. *Also*: *FR*. Other types of reports include an OR

mate. *Also*: *to go caveman*.

(outing report), LR (lay report), FU (fuckup report), and TR (threesome report).

**CHICK CRACK**— *noun*: any spiritual or psychological subject that appeals to

**FIELD TEST**— *verb*: to experiment with and perfect a pickup tactic or routine

most women but does not interest most men, such as astrology, tarot cards, and

on a number of women in different social situations before sharing it with

personality tests. Origin: Tyler Durden.

other pickup artists.

**COCKBLOCK**— *noun and verb*: a person who interferes with or hinders a pickup

**FLAKE**— *verb*: an occurrence in which a woman cancels or does not show up to

artist's game, whether accidentally or on purpose. A cockblock can be a friend

a planned meeting.

of the woman, a friend of the pickup artist, or a complete stranger.



**FLUFF**— *verb*: to make mundane small talk, typically between two people who

**CRASH AND BURN**— *verb*: to be directly, and often rudely, rejected or turned

away by a woman or group one has just approached. have just met; common subjects include where one lives, what one does for

work, and general interests and hobbies.

**DAY TWO**— *noun*: a first date. *Also*: *second meeting*.

**FMAC**— *noun* [find, meet, attract, close]: a rudimentary, sequential model of

pickup. Origin: Mystery.

**DHV**— *noun or verb* [demonstration of higher value]: a routine in which the

pickup artist displays a skill or attribute that raises his worth or appeal in the

**FRAME**— *noun*: the context within which a person, thing, event, or environment

is perceived. Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder. estimation of a woman or group; it is intended to make him stand out from the

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**FREEZE OUT**— *verb or noun*: to ignore a woman to make her seek validation;

**LJBF**— *verb or adjective* [let's just be friends]: a statement a woman makes to a

usually used as a technique to counter last-minute resistance.

man to indicate that she is not sexually or romantically interested in him. One

can hear an LJBF speech or get LJBF'ed.

**FULL-CLOSE**—1. *verb*: to have sexual intercourse. 2. *noun*: sexual intercourse.

*Also: fuck closed-close, or ! close. Origin: Mystery.*

**LMR**-*noun* [last minute resistance]: an occurrence, often after kissing, in which

a woman who desires a man prevents him, through words or actions, from pro-

**GROUP THEORY**—*noun*: the idea that women are usually accompanied by

gressing toward more intimate sexual contact, such as removing her bra, put-

friends, and to meet her a man must simultaneously win the approval of her

ting his hand down her pants, or penetration.

friends while actively demonstrating a lack of interest in her. Origin: Mystery.

**LSE**- *adjective* [low self-esteem]: used to describe a woman who is insecure

**HB** —*noun* [hot babe]: a term used by members of the seduction community to

and tends to engage in self-effacing or self-destructive behavior. Origin:

refer to attractive women. When discussing a specific woman, it is often fol-

MrSex4uNYC.

lowed by either a numerical ranking of her beauty—such as HB10—or by a nick-

name, such as HBRedhead. Origin: Aardvark.

**LTR**—*noun* [long-term relationship]: a girlfriend.

**HIRED GUNS** — *noun*: female employees in the service industry who are gener-

**MANAGE EXPECTATIONS-verb:** to let a woman know before sleeping with

ally recruited for their attractiveness, such as bartenders, waitresses, shot girls,

her roughly how committed a relationship one intends to have with her, so that

and strippers. Origin: Mystery.

she does not expect too much or too little.

**HOOK POINT—noun:** the moment in a pickup when a woman (or a group) de-

MLTR-noun [multiple long-term relationship]: a woman who is part of a

cludes that she enjoys the company of a man who has recently approached her

harem, or one of many girlfriends a pickup artist is currently seeing and sleep-

and doesn't want him to leave. Origin: Style.

ing with. Ideally, the pickup artist is honest with his MLTRs and informs them

that he is seeing other women. Origin: Svengali.

**INSTANT DATE— noun:** the act of taking a woman one has just met from one

venue to another in the same day, typically from a bustling environment to one

MM— *noun* [Mystery Method]: a school of seduction started by Mystery that fo-

more conducive to getting to know each other, such as from a bar to a diner or

focuses on indirect group approaches. Origin: Mystery.

from the street to a cafe. Origin: Mystery.

**MODEL— verb:** to observe and imitate the behavior of another person, typically

**IOI**— *noun* [indicator of interest]: a sign a woman gives a man that indirectly re-

someone who possesses a trait or skill one wishes to acquire.

Origin: Richard

veals she is attracted to or interested in him. These clues, generally unintentional

Bandler and John Grinder.

and subtle, include leaning toward a man when he speaks, asking mundane ques-

**MPB**— *noun* [male pattern blindness]: some men's inability to recognize that a

tions to keep a conversation going, or squeezing his hand when he takes her

woman is attracted to and interested in him until after she leaves and it's too

hand in his. *Antonym: IOD [Indicator of Disinterest]*. Origin: Mystery.

late to act on it. Origin: Vincent.

**IVD**— *noun* [interactive value demonstration]: a short routine intended to hook

**MPUA**— *noun* [master pickup artist]: a player who excels at the game, and whose

the attention and interest of a woman one has just met by teaching her some-

skills put him in the top 1 percent of the seduction community.

thing about herself. Origin: Style.

**MYSTERY'S LOUNGE-noun.** a private, members-only online forum where

**KINO**— *verb* [from kinesthesia, noun]: to touch or be touched, generally with

many of the leading pickup artists in the community exchange techniques,

suggestive intent or the purpose of arousal, such as hair-stroking, hand-

photographs, and field reports. Origin: Mystery.

holding, or hip-grabbing; precedes actual sexual contact.

Origin: Ross Jeffries.

**NEG**— *noun*: an ambiguous statement or seemingly accidental insult delivered

**KISS-CLOSE**—1. *verb*: to kiss or make out, with passion. 2.

*noun*: a passionate

to a beautiful woman a pickup artist has just met, with the intent of actively

kiss or makeout. *Also: k-close or \*close*. Origin: Mystery.

demonstrating to her (or her friends) a lack of interest in her.

For example:

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“Those are nice nails; are they real?” 2. *Verb*: to actively demonstrate a lack of in-

**PATTERN**— *noun*: a speech, usually scripted, that is based on a series of neuro-

terest in a beautiful woman by making an ambiguous statement, insulting her

linguistic programming phrases designed to attract or arouse a woman.

in a way that appears accidental, or offering constructive criticism. *Also: neg bit*.

Origin: Mystery.

**PATTERN INTERRUPT**— *noun*: an unexpected word, phrase, or action per-

formed suddenly in order to halt a person’s auto-pilot response before it’s com-

**NEWBIE MISSION-noun:** an exercise designed to help shy men overcome

pleted, such as cutting off a woman who's talking about her ex-boyfriend and

their fear of approaching women. The newbie mission involves spending a day

quickly changing the subject. Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

in a public area, such as a mall, and saying "hi" to every woman who passes by.

**PAWN**—1. *verb*: to approach and talk to one group of people in order to meet a

**NLP** —*noun* [neuro-linguistic programming]: a school of hypnosis developed in

woman or group adjacent to it. 2. *noun*: a person one approaches in order to

the 1970s based largely on the techniques of Milton Erickson. Unlike traditional

meet a nearby woman or group. A pawn can be an acquaintance or stranger.

hypnosis, in which subjects are put to sleep, it is a form of waking hypnosis in

Origin: Mystery.

which subtle conversational cues and physical gestures are used to influence a

person on a subconscious level. Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

**PEACOCK**— *verb*: to dress in loud clothing or with flashy accoutrements in or-

der to get attention from women. Peacocking items include bright shiny shirts,

**NONCONVERSATION**— *noun*: a conversation in which one person isn't paying at-

light-up jewelry, feather boas, colorful cowboy hats, or anything else that makes

attention to what the other person is saying, generally due to lack of interest or

one stand out in a crowd. Origin: Mystery.

being distracted. Origin: Style.

**PHASE-SHIFT**— *verb*: to make the transition, during a one-on-one conversa-

**NUMBER-CLOSE**—1. *verb*: to obtain a correct phone number from a woman.

tion with a woman, from ordinary talk to slower, sexually-charged talk, touch,

Note that giving a woman one's own number does not constitute a number-

or body language; intended to precede an attempt to kiss. Origin: Mystery.

close. 2. *noun*: a woman's phone number, obtained during the course of a

pickup. *Also*: #close. Origin; Mystery.

**PIVOT**— *noun*: a woman, usually a friend, used in social situations to help one

meet other women. A pivot serves many functions: she provides social proof,

**OBSTACLE**— *noun*: the person or people in a group whom the pickup artist

she can create jealousy in the target, she can make it easier to open difficult sets,

does not desire, but whom he must win over in order to run game on the

and she can brag about the pickup artist to his target. *Also*: *wingwoman*.

woman in the group he does desire. Origin: Mystery.

**PROXIMITY ALERT SYSTEM**-noun: the state of being aware of a woman or

**ONE-ITIS**— *noun*: 1. an obsession with a girl whom one is not dating; pickup

group of women who are standing awkwardly nearby in hopes of being talked

artists believe that such an extreme fixation on one woman significantly lowers

to. Generally, the woman will have her back to the pickup artist, so as to make

a man's chances of dating or sleeping with her. 2. a girl with whom one is ob-

her presence there seem accidental. Origin: Mystery.

sessed. Origin: John C. Ryan.

**PUSH-PULL**— *noun*: a technique used to create or increase attraction, in

**OPENER**— *noun*: a statement, question, or story used to initiate a con-

versation with a stranger or group of strangers. Openers may be envi-  
which a man gives a woman indications that he is not interested in her

ronmental (spontaneous) or canned (pre-scripted); and direct (showing

seconds—such as taking a woman's hands and then dropping them as if you  
followed by indications that he is. This sequence can take place in a few

romantic or sexual interest in a woman) or indirect (not showing interest).

don't trust her yet—or over time, such as being very nice during one phone

**OUTALPHA**-verb; see AMOG.



conversation b u t then very distant and abrupt during the next one. Origin:

Style.

**PAIMAI**—**noun** [pre-approach invitation, male approach invitation]: a nonver-

bal action or series of actions meant to induce a woman or group to notice a

*RAFC-noun* [reformed average frustrated chump]: a seduction student who

man and passively express interest in meeting him before he actually ap-

has not yet become a pickup artist or mastered the skills offered by the com-

proaches her. Origin: Formhandle.

munity.

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**REFRAME**— *verb*: to alter the context through which someone sees an idea or

**STALE**— *verb* or *adjective*: an occurrence in which the phone number of a woman

situation; to change the meaning a person attributes to an idea or situation.

is no longer an effective means of making plans with her, usually because too

Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

much time has lapsed between interactions and the woman has lost interest;

may also be used to describe a woman who has lost interest in a pickup artist.

**ROUTINE**— *noun*: a story, scripted conversation, demonstration of skill, or

other piece of prepared material intended to initiate, maintain, or advance an

**STYLEMOG**— *noun* or *verb*: a subtle set of tactics, mannerisms, backhanded

interaction with a woman or her group. Examples include the best-friends test,

compliments, and responses used to keep a pickup artist dominant in a group.

the evolution phase-shift, and the ESP value-demonstration.

Origin: Tyler Durden.

**RSD**— *noun* [Real Social Dynamics]: a company specializing in pickup seminars,

**SUBCOMMUNICATION**— *noun*: an impression, message, or effect created by a

workshops, and products started by Papa and Tyler Durden.

Origin: Papa.

person's mannerisms, dress, or general presence; an indirect, nonverbal form of

communication generally perceived better by women than men. Origin: Tyler

**SARGE**—1. *verb*: to pick up women, or to go out to try and meet women. 2.

Durden.

*noun*: a woman who has been picked up. Origin: Aardvark.

**SUPPLICATE**— *verb*: to put oneself in a servile or inferior position in order to

**SARGER**— *noun*: a person who picks up women; a member of the pickup com-

please a woman, such as buying her a drink or changing an opinion in order to

munity.

agree with her.

**SECOND MEETING**— *noun*: a first date. *Also*: day two.

**SYNESTHESIA**— *noun*: literally, an overlapping of the senses, such as smelling

**SET**— *noun*: a group of people in a social setting. A two-set is a group of two peo-

a color; in seduction, a name given to a type of waking hypnosis in which a

ple; a three-set is three people, and so on. Sets may contain women, men, or

woman is put into a heightened state of awareness and told to imagine pleasur-

both (in which case they may be referred to as mixed sets).

Origin: Mystery.

able images and sensations growing in intensity. The goal is to arouse her

through suggestive, metaphorical talk, sensations, and imagery. *Also*: hyper-

**SHB**— *noun* [super hot babe]: an extremely attractive woman. *emperia*.

**SHIT TEST**— *noun*: a question, demand, or seemingly hostile comment made by

**TAKEAWAY**— *noun*: a pickup technique in which a man who has approached a

a woman intended to gauge whether a man is strong enough to be a worthy

woman and is getting along with her leaves—for as little as a few seconds or as

boyfriend or sexual partner. If he takes the question, demand, or comment at

long as a couple hours—in order to demonstrate a lack of neediness and in-

face value, he fails and generally loses the opportunity to move forward in his

crease her attraction to him. *Also: false takeaway.*

interaction with her. Examples include telling him he is too young or old for

her, or asking him to perform an unnecessary favor.

**TARGET**— *noun*: the woman in a group whom the pickup artist desires and is

running game on. Origin: Mystery.

**SHOTGUN NEG**— *noun*: a type of neg used in a group situation with a woman,

intended to amuse the group at her expense. Origin: Mystery.

**THREE-SECOND RULE**— *noun*: a guideline stating that a woman should be

approached within three seconds of first seeing her. It is intended to prevent the

**SNIPER NEG**— *noun*: A type of neg used to embarrass a woman while talking

man from thinking about the approach too much and getting nervous, as well

one-on-one with her. Origin: Mystery.

as to keep him from creeping the woman out by staring at her for too long. Ori-

**SOI**— *noun* [statement of intent or show of interest]: a direct comment intended

gin: Mystery.

to let a woman know that one is attracted to or impressed with her. Origin: Rio.

**TIME CONSTRAINT-noun**: to tell a woman or a group of people that it is nec-

**SS**— *noun* [Speed Seduction]: an NLP-based school of pickup founded by Ross

essary to leave them soon. The purpose of a time constraint is to lessen a

Jeffries in the 1980s. Origin: Ross Jeffries.

woman's anxiety that a man she has just met will hang around her all night, or

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that she is expected to have sex with a man upon entering his house. *Also: false*

*time constraint*. Origin: Style.

**TIME DISTORTION**— *noun*: originally a hypnosis term referring to a subject's loss

of awareness of how much time is passing, it also refers to the pickup technique of

making a woman feel she has known a pickup artist longer than she really has. Ex-

amples of time distortion include taking a woman to several different places over

the course of a night or having a woman imagine future events and adventures to-

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

gether. *Also: future pacing or future events projection*.

**TRANCE WORDS**— *noun*: the words a person emphasizes or repeats when

speaking, indicating that they have a special meaning to the speaker. Once a

pickup artist knows a woman's trance words, he may use those words in con-

versation to make her feel a sense of understanding and connection with him.

Where are they now?

Origin: Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

In the time since this book was written, enough has occurred in Project

Hollywood and in the lives of the characters in this book to warrant a sequel.

**TRIANGULAR GAZING**— *verb*: a technique used directly before attempting to

However, a synopsis will have to suffice. My story is done. Let the credits roll ...

kiss a woman, in which, while making eye contact, a man takes several short,

Thanks to Mystery, who followed through on his plan to move to Las Vegas

suggestive glances at her lips.

with his girlfriend, Ania. They live together in an apartment on Las Vegas Boule-

**WBAFC**— *noun* [way-below average frustrated chump]: a man who is extremely

ward. He finally found a worthy business partner, Savoy, who has turned his fi-

unsuccessful with women, usually due to awkwardness, nervousness, and lack

financial life around. He now runs workshops nearly every weekend. The price is a

of experience.

staggering \$2,250, but from what I've seen, everyone leaves happy. His first

friend in Las Vegas: David Copperfield, who saw the article on the community in

**WING**— *noun*: a male friend, generally with some pickup knowledge, who assists

the *New York Times*, contacted Mystery and now talks to him almost daily. How-

one in meeting, attracting, or taking home a woman. A wing can help by keep-

ever, Mystery has yet to succeed in talking Ania into a threesome.

ing a woman's friends occupied while the pickup artist talks to her, or by talk-

Thanks to Tyler Durden and Papa, who soon fled Project Hollywood them-

ing to the woman directly about the pickup artist's positive traits. *Also:*

selves. After several more PUAs came and went ignominiously from the house,

*wingman.*

they moved a new age couple into Mystery's room in exchange for the right to

WINGWOMAN-noun: see pivot.

use the couple's New York apartment as a base for workshops. Hare Krishna

devotees of the new residents dropped by to pay tribute almost daily—offering

**WOOD**— *noun*: useless; a waste of paper; generally used to describe a woman's

song, dance, and psychic battles in the Project Hollywood living room. But when

phone number when she gives it to a pickup artist freely but is unlikely to call

Tyler Durden went to Manhattan to run a weekend workshop, the person living

him back when he phones.

in the couple's apartment wouldn't allow him to teach there. In the meantime,

**YES-LADDER**— *noun*: a persuasion technique in which a person is asked a se-

according to house residents, a struggle for control of Project Hollywood began.

ries of basic questions designed to elicit positive answers, increasing the likeli-

The truth about what happened next may never be known. The new age

hood that the person will also respond in the affirmative to a final, open-ended

couple contend that Tyler Durden and Papa skipped out after local authorities

question. For example: “Are you spontaneous? Are you adventurous? Would

tried to deliver a summons charging them with running a commercial business

you like to play a game called the cube?”

in a residential zone. Tyler Durden and Papa maintain that the Project Holly-

wood rent was simply draining too much company income. Either way, a

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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month and a half before the eighteen-month lease was up, Papa, Tyler Durden,

matters pickup-related, and his research and website were instrumental in put-

and the rest of the pickup artists living in the house suddenly packed a U-Haul

ting the glossary together. And to Cliff, the other pillar of the community, who

van and left. They moved into an apartment complex a block away from Lisa

recently brought hundreds of students and several dozen instructors to Mon-



and the mental care facility where I took Mystery. Tyler Durden lives there with

treasure for his first annual pickup artist convention.

his new girlfriend, and Papa continues in his quest for Paris Hilton. He feels he

Thanks to Sin, who married the woman he liked walking on a leash in At-

is getting close. The pair continues to run Real Social Dynamics and receive ex-

lanta. I recently had the honor of meeting her; you'd never suspect it.

traordinary testimonials from students.

Thanks to Britney Spears, who also got married. Twice. And to Tom Cruise,

Thanks to Project Hollywood, which is now inhabited by an eccentric new

who recently announced his engagement and wasn't afraid to proclaim his love

age couple and a wonderful cleaning lady. She calls herself the Cleaning Bud-

from the rooftops. Every time I have to make a tough decision, I ask myself:

dha, and she lives in my old bedroom.

"What would Tom Cruise do?" Then I jump up and down on the couch.

Thanks to Herbal and Katya, who remained together for six months in

Thanks to Dreamweaver, who is now writing screenplays. Shortly before

Austin. Herbal lives with his wallaby, Shaniqua, in the house he owns there,

publication of this book, he was diagnosed with brain cancer and brought to

where he is training to beat the 100-meter dash record for a bet and offering a

the hospital by Maverick. The father of Versity, one of the members of Mystery's

reward to anyone who can successfully master the sleep diet. Katya returned to

Lounge, is a top cancer surgeon, and has offered to help. Dreamweaver, you are

New Orleans, where she is working as a model and makeup artist. Her brother

one talented, creative person, and our prayers are with you.

became a born-again Christian and has not had a symptom of Tourette's in over

Thanks to Grimble, who devoted himself full-time to marketing his seduc-

a year.

tion e-books and audio courses; to Twotimer, who left Los Angeles to attend

Thanks to Sickboy and Playboy, who were not able to leave the seduction

graduate school; to Vision, who recently became the godfather of Versity's

world behind when they returned to New York. They now run a company to-

child; and to Sweater, who is in the process of separating from his wife.

gether, Cutting Edge Image Consulting, which offers audio programs, work-

Thanks to the community itself and to the hundreds of friends I've made

shops, and e-books in image enhancement and dating.

over the last two years. May you all find what you're looking for—in love and in

Thanks to Dustin, the king of the naturals, who is still living in Jerusalem,

life. Some of you may fret that I've given the game away. But don't worry: There

where I was unable to attend his wedding to a Rabbi's daughter.

will always be a way for a man and a woman to meet and have sex. And whatever

Thanks to Marko, who is now engaged in Belgrade. He tells me that he re-

that way happens to be, all of you will find it.

jected the advice of the PUAs and wooed his fiancée over a period of several

Thanks to Caroline, Nadia, Maya, Mika, Hea, Carrie, Hillary, Susanna, Jes-

months with poetry, flowers, and proper dates. They plan to move to Chicago

sicas I and II, and all the other amazing, unique women who became part of my

and start a family together.

life. Call me, and I'll explain everything.

Thanks to Ross Jeffries, who eventually ended his rivalry with Mystery. He

Thanks to all the rest of the gurus: David DeAngelo, whose mailing list has

dated a nurse briefly and is now back in the field sarging, making, he says, ma-

grown to an estimated 1.1 million names and who is now offering women ad-

major breakthroughs in helping guys overcome their fear, shyness, and old habits

vice on how to catch and keep men; Rick H., who moved to Romania to pursue

of thinking. He has been branching out from NLP, and exploring more spiri-

his latest business and romantic adventures; Steve P. and Rasputin, who are

tual ideas for personal transformation with a heart awakening instructor and a

sharing their techniques in a video series. Thanks also to Swinggcat and David

yoga teacher.

Shade.

Thanks to Courtney Love, who has resolved her court cases and managed

Thanks to everyone who allowed me to reprint their posts and field re-

to stay out of the tabloids so far. She is happily living in her own house in Los

ports. Juggler, who has put his comedy career on hold to expand his seduction

Feliz with her daughter and working on a new album with Billy Corgan and

business and complete his e-book, is living with his new girlfriend, a fitness

Linda Perry. She says that she wants to play Katya in the movie.

trainer and marathon runner; he still likes Barry Manilow. Extramask, who sep-

arated entirely from the community to focus full-time on starting a comedy ca-

Thanks to Formhandle, who has thanklessly and tirelessly kept this com-

reer and a weekly live show. Jlaix, who found the bisexual girlfriend that

munity running. His Fast Seduction website remains the clearinghouse for all

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Mystery has always dreamed about and has detailed their adventures in a series

of careening field reports that are worthy of their own book.

Thanks to Judith Regan, who accused me of attracting her thirteen-year-

old daughter on page six of the *New York Post*, She was joking, I think. And even

if she wasn't, I'd forgive her. She supported me in this whole crazy adventure

from day one, and has been not only a publisher but also a patron saint.

Thanks to the rest of the staff at ReganBooks, particularly my [insert hyper-

bolic adjective here] editor Cal Morgan, who was so excited to meet Lisa after ed-

iting the book that when he saw her he was too tongue-tied to speak a word.

Thanks also to the long-suffering Bernard Chang, Michelle Ishay, Richard

Ljoenes, Paul Crichton, Cassie Jones, Kyran Cassidy, and Aliza Fogelson.

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about a highbrow topic. And thanks to Anna Stein and the rest of the staff at

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the other Project Hollywood.

Thanks to Fedward Hyde, my humble correspondent, for research assis-

tance, and for sesquipedalian e-mails worthy of a Joyce.

Maybe not James Joyce,

but at least Dr. Joyce Brothers. (You've been Stylemogged.)

Thanks to Lovedrop,

who created the original Mystery Method course handout. And

thanks to Sue

Wood, who patiently transcribed tape after tape, which was no easy feat consider-

ing the many hours of hypnosis and house meetings contained therein. Thanks

also to Laura Dawn and Daron Murphy for laboring through additional tapes.

Thanks to my many self-improvement instructors, among them Joseph

Arthur (for voice lessons, infinite wisdom, and an eye-opening Esalen retreat)

and Julia Caulder (for teaching me Alexander Technique and letting me watch

her sing Wagner at the Los Angeles Opera).

Thanks to everyone who read early manuscripts, among them Anya Ma-

rina, Maya Kroth, M the G, Paula and Hazel Grace, Marg the mean babysitter,

and my brother, Todd, who now has images in his head that he'd rather forget.

Finally, yes, Lisa and I are still together. And though I've learned everything

there is about attraction, seduction, and courtship in the past two years, I

learned nothing about maintaining a healthy relationship.  
Being together has  
required a lot more time and work than learning to pick up  
women ever did,  
but *it* has brought me far greater satisfaction and joy. Perhaps  
that's because it  
is not a game.

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