

Alan Semrow

Beach House

It was after our Sexaholics Anonymous meetings at St. Mary's when Sam and I would go back to my place. This whole ordeal started with a simple a desire: to remove myself from the dull existence that I had come to know so well. At the time, I worked a nine-to-five job as a bank teller. You know, standing there, waiting for the next guy to come in with a five-hundred dollar check. You smile at him and you ask him how his day is and he tells you that it's been good; the weather's really nice. You type in a few numbers and then you ask him if he'd like his balance. He doesn't, so you tell him to have a nice day. You do all of this, while thinking to yourself how much you really hate this day.

You smile at the people and you ask about their stupid days for eight hours. And then you put on your jacket and go home. You do a few push-ups, shower, make dinner. You grab a beer from your white refrigerator, sit down on your orange pleather couch and watch the latest episode of "Breaking Bad." You get on your iPod and slide yourself into some app that could potentially hook you up with another gay man for the evening. And, if there is a willing and able man, you fuck him. And, if there isn't, you fuck yourself and then fall into a dismal, mundane, ridiculous stupor. You, sitting there half-drunk on your couch while the people on the TV are having way more fun and the people outside your little apartment window are getting all the attention they deserve.

For me, Sexaholics Anonymous just sounded like a more interesting way to end my day. To be able to sit there and watch people talk about their pitiful lives. That sounded like it might just spice things up for me. And, at the beginning, it did, but it wasn't until Sam came along with all his baggage that things really

started to take a turn. During an unfortunate visit to the shoddy Laundromat down the road, I came across a Sexaholics Anonymous ad and that started everything.

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At the middle point in my first night's session, the mediator, Jenny K., told us to stand up, to stretch, and to find someone new to talk to. Seeing that it was my first night, everyone was new and so, naturally, I stood there like a dead person and waited for someone to approach. Sam came to me.

All my life, I've gotten nervous talking to men like Sam. He embodies masculinity in this way that you only feel sorry for yourself for not being able to mimic. Sam stood tall and muscular, but, apart from that and the blatant confidence, there was something missing. You could tell by his brown, dead eyes. That first night, Sam was the one that started talking first. He asked me what made me decide to start coming to the meetings. I took a moment to really think about the appropriate word. How do you explain your stupid life? What's the one word that really just sums it all up? "Complacency," I said. "Complacency."

Sam nodded in agreement. "I guess same here. And my wife makes me do this."

I laughed. *Wife*. Sam might have had a wife, but *that*, nowadays, doesn't mean much. Almost instantly, I could tell Sam was a homosexual. It's call gaydar and it's worth mentioning that, on this first night, Sam was also sporting a 2008 Sheryl Crow Tour t-shirt. "Do you get anything out of this?" I asked.

"I get to get out of the house for a few hours, I guess," Sam said. "I mean, that's really what I've been getting out of this it seems. It's a source of entertainment." Sam nodded his head downwards and lowered his eyelids so that it looked as if he was so very intrigued by his own sandals.

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Because society gives us the excuse that it's "such a lonely life," this is really how it works in the gay world. You meet someone that is decent looking and not a total psychopath and then you go have sex with him. It's called fuck now, talk later. If the fucking is alright, the talking might be and maybe something special will transpire. If the talking sucks, you let a man loose. You tell him you have to get up really, super early. You tell him you have a knitting class at seven.

After Jenny K. released us post-"prayer," Sam and I walked out to the church parking lot where we located my 2001 Toyota. There, I put my balls on the line and turned to Sam and said, "I'm gay."

Sam shook his head in disagreement. "I've never been propositioned like this before."

“You can trust me,” I said. “Trust is what Sexaholics Anonymous is all about, right?”

Sam made sharp eye contact with me and said, “My life’s been a lie.” My hand grazed his left arm and, with that, we were in my Toyota, driving to my cheap, embarrassing apartment. Sam’s immediate trust in me was admirable, but also not much of a surprise. Once you have a boner, not much else matters until you cum. Hence, AIDs.

During the surprisingly not awkward drive, Sam talked about feelings, which seemed strange coming from such a manly man, but, of course, I welcomed it. While twiddling his thumbs, Sam said, “Tracy, my wife, she wanted me to go to these meetings in order to learn that, you know, our marriage wasn’t all about sex.” Sam took a moment and gulped at his own saliva, “See, a couple of months ago, I got tested and found out that I was sterile. After that, Tracy lost all interest and faith in the marriage. She saw me as this libidinous asshole worth nothing. She didn’t think it was okay for me to come home after work and ask her to let me fuck her in the ass. Not saying I thought it was alright either, but I didn’t see her as a person anymore. I don’t know if I ever really did.” Sam gulped again. “You just have to go with it, I guess. Me, in this this car right now, this is me trying something new. Going with it.”

This turned me on. A man and his raw emotions.

“You do realize though,” I said, “that by doing this right now, you’re already taking up the life you were meant to lead. You’ve had the opportunity all along to divorce this Tracy person and to become who you’re supposed to be. Now, I guess, in some way, you’re finally facing the opportunity.”

Sam’s finger roll stopped. He looked down and then back up at me with glazed eyes. “We own this beach house. It’s been in my family. I, I can’t lose that house to a divorce.”

“Get a lawyer, man! That was your Porsche parked back at the church, right? Seems like you have money.” I was beginning to look at Sam as if he were the most naïve of creatures. Sometimes you see this in the men around you. You see how oblivious they are to simple, simple fixes. Sure, I bet Sam could replace a furnace filter real quick, but he sure as hell seemed to have no idea as to what was going on in his life.

Sam shook his head defeated. “Can’t lose the house, dude. It’s my life. All I know.”

“Maybe sometime you should show it to me. Let me be the judge as to whether or not this beach house should be causing such anxiety.” I pulled my Toyota into the parking lot outside my apartment and looked at Sam. I said, “Do you really want to do this?”

Sam gave off a muffled chuckle and said, "I'm gay, Max."

After rolling around on my Hunter green comforter for a good hour and a half, Sam and I caught our breaths and smoked a few Marlboro Lights while listening to Sheryl Crow's debut album. "Did you like that?" Sam asked me.

"I did," I said. "You'll get better with time, though."

Clearly hopeful, he asked, "With you?"

I grinned and replied, "I assume."

Sam took a drag from his cigarette and turned onto my bare right arm. "This is how the gay thing works, huh?"

"Sometimes. I don't know. I suppose I'm intrigued by you and your story."

"So you're using me?" he asked.

I giggled. "Not in the least. I think we're more similar than we even realize yet. And maybe that's just because we're both in the process of running from the monotony of the straight and narrow. And there's no reason why we can't do it together."

"You're extremely trusting. It's very off-putting, Max."

I rolled my eyes. "I seriously have nothing to lose. And you don't either. Let's face it; I'm your only viable option right now. I'm your opportunity to escape everything you've been covering up. And so I'm pretty confident that something will build off of this. I understand how men work. Sex opens people up and you're still here." I took another drag, exhaled, and said, "I bet we could make a promise right now and be satisfied."

With a flat tone, Sam said, "A promise."

"To stay together. People are way too consumed by what is supposed to happen in a relationship. That's what hinders it. I think you're cool, Sam, so I say we just say fuck it and fuck the way relationships are supposed to happen and just make the promise now."

Sam leaned over my prostrate body and smushed his cigarette out into the ashtray. He looked at me with seemingly fulfilled brown eyes and whispered, "I promise you."

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Sam and I continued to attend the Sexaholics Anonymous meetings for three more weeks. There, we listened to people talk about the various diseases they had acquired. The many hookers they had paid. The lives they had ruined. How this chick, Rhonda H., had been through five abortions and once paid a guy one hundred dollars to give him a blow job. She said she just wanted to feel the warmth of a hard cock in her mouth and to taste the saltiness of hot, white cum as it slid past her tongue and down her throat.

At the end of the night, Sam and I would find each other. I'd drive my Toyota back to my place and we'd enter my tiny, sad apartment where we'd fuck and then discuss the lives we were meant to live and the people we wanted to become. Very quickly, I felt like a relationship was forming. I felt like Sam was the antidote I needed to begin again, but in a much more enthralling fashion. It was all very strange, because I hadn't been in many relationships and hadn't ever really felt this way, but it was happening and I think Sam knew it was happening. We were different people, looking for the same thing. In the morning, I'd kiss him goodbye and drop him off at St. Mary's where he'd get into his Porsche and drive home to his wife.

I didn't ask Sam what Tracy had been thinking while he was away until odd hours of the night, but something in me did wonder. All Sam really seemed to want, in addition to my friendship and a dick in his ass from time to time, was to not break Tracy's heart, but she didn't deserve to be left waiting. I knew this, but tried my best not to think about how he was betraying her. Truth is, I liked having Sam at my place and I liked having a friend in him, but I did feel bad for Tracy. I did.

During a break in one of our Friday SA meetings, Sam finally told me that he had told Tracy the truth. "She said she wants to meet you," he said to me.

Taken aback, I simply asked, "Why?"

"Not sure, man," Sam replied. "I don't ask many questions." The nonchalance of his tone in this moment was almost insulting, but I still followed through, because I was also a man. I was also naïve and much more naïve than I would have ever thought.

That night, after the invitation from Sam, I made my first trip out to the beach house by myself. The air whistled past my ears, thin and warm. From my stereo boomed Sheryl Crow's *The Globe Sessions*. Nervous wouldn't have been the appropriate word, but interested was more accurate. Once you dive into a situation head first, you don't really have the option to be timid any longer.

The closer to the coast I got, the sparser the housing became. Here, you had houses. Houses with a lot of land. A lot of rich people, putting up the façade that everything in their life was really very special.

As I slowed to the side of the street, I gazed up at a masterpiece. This was no Frank Lloyd Wright design; it was something better, even more brilliant. White. White and modern and clean-cut. Sam and Tracy's beach house was paradise in its own right, but sometimes we run even from paradise.

I walked up to the white gate and pressed the green button. A sound sparkled through. "Is this the infamous Max?" A voice sweet yet smoky. It's at times like these, when you're about to come face to face with the apparent enemy, that you let go of all potential nervousness and simply face your fate.

My finger touched the green again and then I heard the buzz. The white gate opened and there I stood in front of a marble set of twenty, maybe twenty-five steps leading up to a door made of translucent glass. Solar light guided me on my way to what looked like some sort of heaven. Next to me, flora, the most exotic of flora. Bright colors, orange and red and purple.

At the glass door, I rang the bell. Within five seconds, I was in front of Tracy. She wore a red summer dress printed with the occasional Bird of Paradise. It wrapped tightly around her thin and tall figure. On her head was an orange, brimming hat and below that hat was a face that would have looked most appropriate in the pages of *Vogue*. Tracy's eyes were painted with severe, bright colors and her lips glistened with a thick, dark red stain. Ladies and gentlemen, here we have the embodiment of femininity. She said, "I'm Tracy" and shook my hand.

"Max," I replied.

"Come on in, Max." The welcoming attitude was disconcerting, but I had no time to be afraid. This was me facing something important. I, at least, could reckon that.

Tracy led me into a foyer brimming with white and beige and taupe. Above me beamed a crystal chandelier that must have cost at least ten grand. And, in front of me, were two circular staircases that led to the second floor. What I was witness to was a house that beautifully combined contemporary design techniques and luxurious, romantic tradition.

"This is amazing," I muttered.

"Yes, I know, Max," Tracy said.

Tracy led me into a kitchen full of windows and stainless steel. There, at the island, sat Sam. In front of him, a dirty martini with two olives. As I entered, Sam didn't look up at me.

"How do you keep this place up?" I asked him.

Still not focusing on me, he said, "Maids. Gardeners. They come in and out all day. My family is richer than you could ever understand."

Tracy narrowed her eyes at her husband and then turned back at me. "Do you want something to drink?" she asked, her eyes now sparkling at me with bizarre kindness and courtesy.

I said I'll have what Sam is having. Tracy nodded and removed herself from the room and into what I presumed to be some sort of a butler's pantry.

I sat myself next to Sam at the island and whispered, "How fucked are we?"

"Just wait," he said without lifting his face from the view of the drink.

It's no secret that three drinks opens people up and so this is how it ended up going for us. For about an hour, Tracy, Sam, and I sat in awkward silence until the alcohol took hold and blossomed us up into much louder personalities.

While seated in a living room made from the angels—a living room with a huge, ridiculous fire place and a white, grand piano that I presumed no one here could play—Tracy asked the first question, "So, Max Gloor, you've been fucking my gay husband?"

I stared past the piano and to a portrait of Sam and Tracy on their wedding day. She stood in a decadent, almost theatrical, white dress, smiling with hope and gleaming with beauty that brushed against the artificial. And he stood next her, looking driven and proud and as if that day was the first day of the rest of their lives. I turned to her with a drunken glare, took another sip of my martini, and replied, "I suppose those are the facts."

Tracy began to chuckle quietly until the chuckle soon turned to laughter which became more and more uproarious before becoming too much. Too creepy. It transformed into a high-pitched howl. After catching her breath, Tracy said, "I guess everyone has their something."

Tracy and I both looked to Sam who, at the moment, had his head down and was thumbing at his left earlobe. "Why am I here?" I asked Tracy.

Tracy took a gulp from her martini and turned to me with a bizarre amount of energy. She smiled, took a moment, and said, “You’re here to have sex with me.”

My eye line shifted again toward Sam who now looked half-dead. “What?” I asked. “What?”

Tracy reiterated, “You’re here to have sex with me. To give me a baby, because, turns out, my husband is sterile. He’s gay and sterile and, therefore, no good to me any longer. Max, you give me a baby and then you both can be forgiven. I’ll file the divorce and give up the house. It’s a win-win, really. We’ll all get what we want and we’ll all be able to move past this. As long as I get what I want.”

I shook my head in shame. “I can’t do this,” I said. “This is fucked up.”

“I’ve been forced to live a lie my whole life, Max. I deserve this. I deserve to get whatever I want in this situation. And this is what I want, what I’ve always wanted and so I will get my way. Otherwise, there will be consequences.” She took a sip from her drink and smiled. Tracy inhaled some air and said, “Give me what I want.”

It’s at times like these, when you’re so put off by the climate of the situation that you just say yes. I asked Sam, “Is this what you want, man?”

“*Man.*” Tracy laughed.

Finally, Sam looked up and replied, “Yes, Max. Go have sex with her.”

Eyeing him with a narrow, devilish gaze, Tracy said, “You’ll be watching, Sam,”

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Their master bedroom with its high ceilings and skylights bigger than a bread box, it was mine for the time being. Mine, Tracy’s, and Sam’s. Tracy was lying to the left of me topless and with a black thong on. Sam was on the other side, wearing only his boxer briefs. And, me, I was in the middle wearing nothing. Naked, for what seemed like the world to see.

Tracy grabbed my crotch and said, “You’re gonna have to be harder than this.” She laughed at me and, in a childish tone, said, “Did you have a hard day at the bank, honey? It must be really difficult to be on your feet that long, taking in all that money, all that money that you don’t have.” Tracy stared at me and smiled. “Are you too tired, faggot?”

I felt my face flush. In this moment, ah the anger I felt toward this cunt who would stop at nothing. It was gargantuan. I grabbed at her and dug my nails into her hips. “You wanna get fucked, bitch?” I asked. “Then you’re about to get fucked.”

Tracy moaned with delight as I rolled off her thong with my middle finger and threw her onto her back. She let out a high-pitched screech as I thrust as deep inside her as I could with my rock hard, pissed off cock. In that moment, I wanted to hurt her. I wanted to make her bleed. As my thrusts continued, she opened her wet eyes to offer a lingering, discontent gaze at Sam. In her agony, Tracy blew a kiss at her husband and then turned back toward me as I continued with my gusty penetration. Tracy whined, “You feel better inside of me than Sam ever did.”

The last thing I wanted to do was to look at the other man of this moment, but the skylights on the ceiling still made Sam visible. Him and his regret and reluctance and depression.

Tracy whimpered as she asked me if I liked fucking her. In response, I just nodded. She asked me if I liked my dick inside her cunt and I nodded again. She told me to tell Sam that I liked fucking her. I made brief eye contact with Sam whose dead eyes spoke to me like a past life. In gasps, I told him that I liked fucking his wife. As Tracy mounted her torso upward, Sam threw off his briefs and got in back of me. He spit on his hand, rubbed the juice on his dick and entered me from behind as I continued to treat his wife like the pillow she was. As Sam entered, I howled out several indecipherable words and found myself close to climax. As I began to cum, Tracy drew herself as far back from me as she could and bent her arm into a fist. As I came inside of Tracy, her fist shot forward at my face. What sounded out, first, was a harsh crunch and what followed was my deep, bellowing yelp. The blood began to flow as Tracy flaunted her reddened diamond ring and as Sam continued humping for about a minute longer, until finally cumming inside of my asshole.

The three of us removed ourselves and Tracy put herself into a fetal position. She told me that it was good for fertility. Tracy let out a quiet chuckle as Sam and I lay there, quiet and still, trying to catch our breaths. Me, with my bloody fucking face.

Tracy, in a chipper, girlish tone, said, “Thank you, Max.”

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Instead of talking to each other during the car ride back to my apartment, Sam and I simply allowed Sheryl Crow to speak for us. This was her personal album. The one about her heartbreak. The demise of her relationships. Her sadness, her loss, her desire. Her role in the many break-ups. Why she's still single.

I refused to look at Sam. See, we were for sure just going with it now. This silence was now. And it was so loud.

Sheryl Crow sang, *"Jesus love me, I know, for my mom told me so. I'm a loser at love. I'm a flower in the mud."*

The creepy glow of the overhead lights of my apartment only helped to enhance the surreal nature of the circumstance that we were trying our best to forget. I walked into my kitchen and opened my white refrigerator. Under the dull glow of the refrigerator's light bulb, I grabbed a beer from the top shelf and proceeded to drink it in one long gulp. After putting the can down, I walked back into the living area where Sam stood like a ghost. A quiet monster.

I drew a breath and screamed, "What in the fuck was that?"

Sam laughed for about two seconds and then focused his dead eyes on me. He said, "I'm not sure, but I guess we're free now. We can do whatever we want. We're free, Max. You get that, right?"

Me, with my solemnity, I replied, "I think I was always free."

Sam perched his left arm on his hip and said, "Yeah, well, I wasn't and you made a promise. I've fallen for you, Max. And it might only be because you're the best thing I've ever known, but that's enough for me right now."

I sighed for what was probably the hundredth time of the evening. "Are you sorry?" I asked.

"For what?"

I inched closer to him in the dull illumination of the room. I drew closer and closer until I could taste his breath. First, I pointed at my blood streaked left cheek and then lifted my hand onto his shoulder and said, "I guess nothing." And I was confident in that. It really was nothing. It meant nothing. And so we continue on until our days are no longer.

Sam kissed me as we sat down on the orange, pleather couch that had become plastered by our dried cum stains. I turned on the television and we got into a discussion about what we would have to do to escape our mundane, untruthful existences and to take the path we were meant to take. For now, only one

contingency was holding us back from packing up and leaving all we had come to know. And that was just the simple announcement. The word from Tracy. Was she or wasn't she. I'm not saying the whole ordeal didn't make me nervous, but the odd thing was that I really didn't care if I had knocked her up or not. Of course, the child wouldn't be mine, because I didn't want a child. I was no father. I never was a father. All I had given Tracy was what she had wanted all along. In return, I suppose Sam and me had gained her forgiveness and our right to leave everything behind. Sometimes, I wondered why we were even waiting, but ultimately decided to let Sam have the say in the matter.

Three weeks after my initial trip to the beach house, Tracy rang Sam on his cellphone and ordered the two of us to come out for the night. One night. Only one night. There, she'd tell us her news and she'd hand Sam the papers for divorce.

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Once again, I found myself mounting the marble stairs to the glass door, but, this time, with Sam following close behind. Sam turned the key and opened the door. The two of us slid past the double, circular, winding staircase and entered the living area, where Tracy was sitting at the white, grand piano that I'm confident she could not play. In front of her sat a glass ashtray and in her left hand was a Virginia Slim. She turned first toward Sam and then to me. Tracy said, "Welcome back, boys." Her eyelids floated downward as she turned herself back to the piano keys. Streaked down her face were particles of her yellow eye makeup. In this moment, she held a mixture both tragic and beautiful.

Sam and I walked toward the butt end of the piano. Sam waited for eye contact and, upon receiving it, said, "Let's just get this over with."

"The pee stick smiled at me and I don't know why," Tracy said.

Sam huffed. "You're being ridiculous. This is what you wanted, Tracy."

"Oh, is it?"

"And should you be smoking?"

She took another drag. "Maybe I should just get an abortion. How does that grab you?"

Sam said, "You're no longer making any sense. I'm not the father; Max isn't the father. You can do whatever you want, but hand me those papers before you do so."

Tracy glared at me and muttered, "Come into the kitchen. They're waiting for us."

In the stainless steel kitchen, Neil Young echoed out of some hidden stereo box. On the island sat a packet of papers. “Let’s go outside,” she said, pointing at the adjacent balcony that a wall of windows showcased with brilliance. “I want to maybe go for a swim.”

Tracy grabbed the papers and Sam and I followed her out onto the white balcony that looked over the sand that led to the ocean with all of its fish and grime and shit and silt and dust and filth. Tracy seated herself on a lounge chair in front of their kidney bean shaped pool and Sam and I followed suit, lowering ourselves onto a chair. Next to Tracy on a white-washed table was her large, brimming, orange hat. As she picked the hat up, Tracy asked me, “Do you know who made this hat?”

“No,” I whispered. “No I don’t.”

“It’s Michael Kors. It cost me a grand.”

“Well, it’s ugly,” I muttered.

Tracy propped the hat on her head and looked at Sam. “Sam, I’ve decided I don’t want this house.” She handed him the papers. “You can have the house. I don’t need the reminder of my retarded, false life.”

Sam took a deep, annoyed breath and said, “Well, I, I’ve decided I don’t want it, either, Trace. See, Max and I are planning to leave town once the divorce is started. This house isn’t important to me anymore. I know I fucked you over bad. I know it’s my fault that I allowed you to marry into something that was a lie and I am sorry. I’ll say that once and for all, but now I see that I have to begin again and keeping this place isn’t the way to do so.”

“You get the house. Do what you want with it. It’s been in *your* family.” Tracy stood up with all of her grace. Princess Tracy. Her back faced us as she plucked the straps from her white and yellow dress. The garment fell from her until what faced us was her bare back and bare ass and bare, shaved legs. All she had left on was the diamond ring and the orange, brimming, Michael Kors hat that cost at least a grand.

After blinking twice, Tracy was in the pool. Floating at the top was the only sign of Tracy’s existence: the orange hat—now, probably ruined—flowing along with the ripples of the pool.

The day was becoming colder and the clouds were becoming darker and rain was beginning to drizzle down on our scene.

Tracy surfaced for a large breath and didn't look at either Sam or me, either of the men that had once or twice been inside of her. She narrowed her eyes at the sky with its predictable downpour and I wondered if maybe she was aiming for it with her thoughts.

That night, instead of driving home, Sam and I made the mistake of staying with Tracy. I heavily protested the idea, but Sam insisted that staying was the right thing to do. Tracy didn't have any friends and so we needed to remain if only to make sure she didn't go completely insane. Naturally, what we quickly became witness to was a woman gone utterly mad. A woman who had lost all hope. All evening, she sat at the piano that she truly couldn't play, crying and smoking in silence, drinking her martinis until, drink after drink after drink, the glass became dry.

A child didn't deserve any of this. That I knew.

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The next morning, Sam and I woke together in the maid's quarters. Both of us, relatively hungover. We inched out into the kitchen where Neil Young was still whispering and no coffee was made. Sam pointed at the pot so that I got the point. As Sam crept out into the living room to, I assume, use the bathroom, I walked to the front of the machine and the canister of ground beans.

I filled the pot up and trickled the water into the mechanism. After this, I emptied the filter from the day prior and replaced it with a new one. Then came five scoops of crushed beans. I put the cap of the machine down and pressed the on button. The machine began to roar as Sam reentered the room with a piece of paper. In some sort of shock, he said, "She left."

I couldn't say a thing.

"Gone," Sam said. "She's gone." He proceeded to read the letter. Tracy had taken \$100,000 out of their account and had packed the Mercedes with all her clothes, make-up, and accessories. Sam muttered, "I guess we're really free now. Now, we can go out and redefine ourselves. This letter is our permission slip." Sam looked downward at his bare feet and said to me, "We need to put the house on the market pronto."

"You're the boss," I said. I poured two cups for Sam and me and then told him that maybe we should just go outside and talk about things. To get some fresh air.

Sam grabbed his mug and the two of us walked up to the door. Outside was a view of a pool no longer blue, but bright red like the dress Tracy wore the first day I met her. Floating on top, a naked corpse of a woman that had once embodied femininity.

Sam let out a loud gasp and fell to the ground. He crumpled like a piece of burning paper. Me, I continued to glare through the wall of windows at the gore of the scene of her crime.

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The coroners' results deduced that Tracy slit her wrists before going for her fateful swim. In the water, she bled out and drowned. In her stomach, were four sleeping pills and, in her womb, a zygote. After an unfortunate investigation, homicide was quickly ruled out as a possibility and suicide was given as the official reason for death.

Sam didn't want to stay at the house because he thought it would hinder him in his search for his true identity and I didn't want to stay mostly because, by that point, the notion of it only freaked me out, but I insisted that we continue to reside until it sold. An empty, blood stained pool, however, is never much of a selling point. It took time and it took empty offers, but I wasn't about to leave without this house getting paid the amount it deserved.

The day a couple from Baton Rouge proposed twenty million dollars, Sam and I accepted and decided to stay one last night.

It all started off simply enough. I made Sam a tough chicken dinner with wild rice on the side. He ate it like he enjoyed it, but even I knew better. I was a terrible cook, but at least I admitted to it. I felt at home, I suppose, but strangely so. After dinner, we began to drink. Our drink of choice that night was Long Island Iced Tea. I used all the top shelf liquors and created a mixture that, with the addition of fire, could really start something. Sam gulped it down like it had nothing in it. And I did the same, because I felt forced. The next drink rolled through us and that was when Sam finally opened up to me about his current feelings. He said, "How does somebody get over something like this? I, I killed her. I killed my wife. It's my fault. Entirely my fault."

I took a gulp and patted him on his left shoulder. "I guess you just have to look at it this way: it's all just a story. Just something we'll go out there and forget, you know, man. We continue on. That is what we do. We don't stay with the past, we move with the present and believe ourselves to be..." I went in for the tall

glass once again. “Blessed. Blessed. We’re all blessed if we choose to let ourselves be. We all have it alright if we believe so. Anything that holds us back, that’s just our problem. The world continues on. Round and around it goes. Now, Sam, we’ve got our excitement and we’ve got our opportunity to start over in life and to figure out how to just *be*.”

I lit a cigarette and passed it over to Sam. “Let’s go by the piano,” he said. With a third drink in hand, the two of us walked out into the open living room and sat at the white, grand piano that neither of us could play. Behind us, the picture of Tracy and Sam on their wedding day. It’s times like these when a wedding picture represents absolutely nothing.

Sam puffed at his cigarette and said, “I do love you, Max, you know. I do. I do love you. I’m glad we met.” He took another drag. “The sex, you know, it’s been great, but I hope you understand that you’re more than that to me and more than just a device needed to live my life. I genuinely like you and I want you in my life.”

I sniffled out a small chuckle and said, “Okay. That’s all I needed to hear.”

From his pocket, Sam lifted out a roll of single dollar bills and laid them across the top of the piano. “We have it all,” he said.

“That’s right, Sam.”

“We have it all, motherfuckers!” he screamed. And, with that, he spilled his brimming drink on top of the single dollar bills and proceeded to throw his lit cigarette onto the pile where the green money soon turned to fire. “Wow!” he yelled as he stood. “Those drinks were fuckin’ strong, man!”

I leapt up from the piano and screamed, “What the hell are you doing!”

Sam, with a wide smile, looked at me and shrieked, “Don’t worry! Run into the garage and get the thing of gas next to the Mercedes!”

I shook my hands in a rapid motion. “No way! This is fucking nuts! This is a twenty million dollar house!”

Sam stopped, dropped the smile, and pointed a tense finger at me. He eyed me as if he were my master and screamed, “Fucking do it!”

And so, out of my own disbelief, I did as told, my breathing becoming deeper and deeper. I sprinted through the kitchen and through the butler’s pantry and into the dining room to the laundry room which led

to the garage that held the can of gasoline. I grabbed it and ran back in, retracing my steps until I stalled in the butler's pantry where Sam was busy, loading up with as many bottles of booze as he could possibly manhandle. "Are you sure?" I huffed.

"Yes!" The two of us ran back into the living area where the flames were already starting to take hold of the piano that neither of us could play. The piano that would have been a truly intense addition to any Barbra Streisand concert. The alarms were ringing, but I hardly noticed.

"Pour it, cunt!" Sam yelled. As he threw the bottles to their breaking point at the optimistic fire, I poured on the explosive liquid. The canister quickly emptied as I stared at a huge photo of two people who once believed themselves to be happy, believed in that idea of what it is supposed to look like. I gazed at a picture of a woman who still believed in romance.

The fire raised and raised and raised until Sam told me it was time to exit. At the open balcony door, Sam ordered me to grab my keys. Sprinting again into the kitchen and so out of breath, I grabbed them and jingled them like a maraca. At the door, I stood in front of Sam, shook the keys once more, and kissed him. Sam grinned and said, "Let's go, man." The two of us ran outside and past the empty, dismal, stained pool. We ran down the winding staircase to the beach where we continued to run until our feet became matted by wet sand and then washed clean by the flow of the sea.

In the water, we stood and glared at the white beauty of a house that would soon be taken over by flames.

I smiled at him. "I fucking love you."