

PLAYING WITH FIRE

I have always said and still believe, the devil is a beautifully sexy woman with the stamina of a 20 year old. And, she can talk anyone into anything at all! She's the reason we all love to play with fire and the reason Alfie Doyle was facing the cliffs overlooking the George Washington at the Hudson River.

He hadn't counted on her being as evil as she was stunning, nor had he ever had a moment's thought that he was going to lose this one. His game was to make everyone else lose. He was always the winner, always on top.

Facing the 180 foot drop to the cold watery death-scape below, lyrics from a familiar song floated out of Alfie's

subconscious like an iPod at top volume, ..."I've been searching for a way out too. And somebody... somebody's looking for you." It was the song playing that night in the bar. He hadn't been paying much attention to the DJ, but the words caught his attention as did the little red dress. He remembered the song because her timing when the last line was sung struck him as strangely apt. He wanted to be found that night.

A gust of cold October air pelted him in the face and he had to blink hard to shake the tears welling in his eyes. The lights streaming across the George Washington from here looked ant-like, small and insignificant. He felt like one of them now.

Recalling the first night they ever spent together and the red satin sheets and crushed black velvet sofa sent a different type of shiver up his spine, but after Teddy, facing her one more night would be pure evil. He could not get his imagination to conjure up a single image that frightened him more, not even the headless body of Teddy laying in the bed next to her. It was just not possible to be more scared than he was now.

Given the choice, the river seemed like the best way. A

head shot could miss and they could save him. A hanging could go wrong too and he would be unable to speak the rest of his life. No, this was the only way. Nobody would ever find the body.

He had no idea how he had gotten here, to this very spot overlooking the GWB or how something as innocent as a missed call could have turned out so badly but, as he prepared himself for the very short flight into eternity, he could not help but smile at the last three weeks of his life. He had made some damn good choices and slept with the hottest woman on Earth, literally. The sex alone almost made the rest of his life worth it but not Teddy's. He hadn't gotten even a single moment of sex out of her before she killed him.

The sound of heels on gravel snapped him back from the red satin bedroom sheets and the feel of her mouth on him. First in pleasure then in pleasurable pain as she bit into the skin. She said she wanted to taste his blood and he laughed off the joke rolling in his head about vampiric first dates and badly written fiction. He had definitely smoked too much weed and seen too many movies, but he thought to question why this woman wanted to sleep with him.

His life had never been cliché' before that point in late October overlooking an icy cold death, so why the hell would it be one now? Alfie stepped an inch closer to his fate. The loose gravel chuffing and spilling out over the blackness; it sounded inviting, almost.

"And where do you think you're going, Stud?" The voice was ice on a crystal goblet.

"I was thinking of taking a few days off. We've been side by side non stop since that night in the bar. Well, tonight was Teddy's turn, wasn't it?" His thick, almost caricatured New York accent was even strong when he was scared. She smiled and he knew he had gotten her attention.

"A guy needs a recharge from time to time, Babe. I was gonna leave you a note but then I figures I would see you on the other side, no?"

Alfie was strangely calm considering his current predicament. She was quick; he hadn't counted on that. There wasn't enough time to be nervous, not now.

"Speaking of disappearing, Doll, how in the hell did you get up here without making a sound? I didn't see the car approach and I know you walk from The Upper West Side in them heels." Alfie pointed at her feet.

"So you finally figured it out, have you? They say all the pretty ones are as dumb as rocks. I guess you are proving a lot of people wrong tonight, Lover."

Alfie blinked and she was suddenly holding a lit cigarette in her right hand. The smoke curling out of her mouth into the breezy October Sky. She hadn't been smoking when she arrived.

"Why don't you come back in my direction? I have my new Jimmy Choo's on. I don't really want to chase after you unless I have to." Her tone was the only playful thing about this evening.

"I really don't want to have to, Baby. Come back and let me make it up to you." She smiled and Alfie felt his direction begin to reverse.

For a moment, he thought about her exquisite figure and

that alluring smile that stopped people cold when she walked into a room. He could feel himself starting to take notice of her body again. He laughed out loud, a short stiff sound that lacked almost all humor. Alfie's mind raced about, looking for a reason. Now that he was here on the edge, he needed a reason why she killed his best friend. Before he went, this had to make more sense.

"Like you did to Teddy?" Alfie laughed again, this time the sound was louder, more determined to be something other than fear.

"What's so funny, Baby? Tell me a joke." She exhaled again allowing smoke out through her mouth and nose obscuring her eyes for a moment. The break gave Alfie enough presence of mind back to ponder this unanswered questions.

"You wouldn't get it, Doll face. It's one of dem private things." He looked up in time to see her expression darken, just for a split second, then back to beautiful again.

"Tell me, Alfie, before I lose my good humor. You don't want that, do you? She smiled again, playing with him. Alfie

said nothing but she continued as if he had asked the question in his mind.

"Teddy didn't understand the thing between us. He got tiresome and I lost my good humor with him. It didn't end well, although I am almost sorry you had to see him like that in the end. I was trying to be subtle, baby, but he lost his head at the last second." She said in giggling tones.

"You see Toots, my mother caught me messing with a gal or two back in the day. She used to say I didn't know asses from elbows." He laughed again.

"She caught me one night when I thought she was out playing Bingo with the Ladies Auxiliary. The Girl and I was rockin' and rollin so hard, I never heard her come home." Alfie looked at her with a brilliant smile and he told her the joke.

"She always told me this ting was gonna get me in with the devil one day." Laughing again, he pointed at his crotch. Tears were welling in his eyes from the wind as he waited for her to lose it.

"Baby, cmon over and let me see for myself. That little monster of yours always gets my attention. Shouldn't let it go to waste in that cold river." She pouted and he felt his jeans tighten a bit more.

"Let me help you with that thing?" She giggled and inhaled sharply taking in smoke from a cigarette she hadn't even brought to her lips. The glamour of her was wearing off, the closer he got the truth and to his own death.

He could almost taste her perfume now. A mixture of poison and sex, all playing on her skin like moonlight on river water. She was animal lust on two legs and she was deadly. As she began to move forward, Alfie's smile vanished but not his erection.

"Stay right there, Adriana." Alfie commanded with a sternness he didn't feel. In fact, the only thing he felt was an ache in his groin and a need to wrap his arms around her waist. He would have let jump into his arms and slide down his chest, placing his in her breasts, just to inhale her scent. He would have ripped her dress off right there and continued on as if nothing happened tonight.

He struggled against the thought of her, moving back another small step. She was persistent though, taking her tiny little steps forward, closer to catching him before he could end this nightmare. Alfie's will was giving out as his desire to have her increased. The weight of her, the smell of them together was maddeningly close and he was ready to give in.

Adriana moved closer, not speaking a word, just holding out her hand. She wanted him to come to her, wanted him to give in completely of his own free will. That would have made the entire betrayal sweeter for the taking. Alfie could see it in her eyes; a blazing, laughing impish grin danced between those electric blue balls. She was going to win! He could feel his will draining, it was nearly spent now and she was going to have him!

A crow flew past the cliff's edge, cawing and making him jump. Alfie could hear every flap of the birds wings, the wind through each of its slick black feathers as it passed by them. Time had slowed to a movie-like crawl now. The crow went on its way to doing whatever crows do at night.

Alfie felt the things shift just then. She had looked up at the crow, only for a moment, but that was enough to break her

concentration and give him his out.

Alfie took the chance to escape before he completely gave in. He turned, inches from the edge, and ran as hard as he could.

The journey had been long, but this trip was shorter than he expected. At once, the club where they met, the weeks of dining and fast cars and money being spent for privacy and for exquisite sex were all playing through his head in rapid filmstrip-like progressions. No sounds, just the feel of each touch, each night together. The caresses and embraces; the nights living out every one of his fantasies all flashed by him now, but the scenes and the his surroundings were all quiet and windless. He felt the sensation of falling all around him as his memories played out and then a sudden stop into nothingness but the smell of her perfume and clean silk. Alfie had jumped to his death.

"God damn you, Alfie!" She spat as she approached the cliff's edge and looked out over the blacked flat glass surface of the river. She looked up and spotted the crow about half a mile beyond where she had seen it and uttered some greasy guttural word that sound dirty.

The crow glided along some unseen thermal current for a moment longer. It let out a single loud and painful caw then dying instantaneously, the dark body retaining its wing-spread shape as it plummeted toward the river.

Adriana smiled as she watched the bird's corpse dip below her sight line. She was thinking of Alfie and how he had taken her by surprise again. It was the reason she was so attached to him now. He had surprised her that night in the bar. She couldn't read him like the others or control him but was drawn to him. He was something of a challenge.

She had come across his kind before, descendants of the old times, warriors of the light who always kept her and her kind at bay. It wasn't often though that she came across one that had 'gone bad', straying from the light and playing the game without any rules or anyone looking out for him.

Ordinarily killing his kind out of hand would have been easy but this one seemed different, special somehow. She wanted to push him, play with him and see just how far gone he really was.

Back at the cliff's edge, she looked down into the darkness. She hadn't thought he was man enough to jump. Counted on the fact that they would be back in her apartment right about now having incredible sex. He wasn't gone yet, though. If all had gone according to her plan, she would be seeing him again soon.

"What a bitch!" She trailed off, speaking to nobody. She was exasperated beyond belief and ready to kill again. In fact, the crow was hardly enough to settle that rage but she supposed it would do for now.

"So much for undying devotion." She said as she turned from the cliff without giving it another thought. All that time and effort, nearly wasted on a man who would rather die in a river, than for her.

"They used to cower in fear; do anything I wanted. How I miss the smell of all that fear." She inhaled deeply as she walked back to the Hudson Greenway, crunching through dead autumn leaves in her blistering red Jimmy Choos.

The car, an onyx black Camaro with red pinstripes running its length, was sitting where she left it. It was running but nobody would have seen it even if they had driven right through it. The sight of her car and the thought of Alfie gave her a deep pang of sexual need. All those memories...

Her attention wasn't on the car now, but on her guest. Someone had 'made the journey home', as they do say where she's from and it was time to get him back. She couldn't wait much longer.

Adriana, ruler of all things dark and evil opened the car door sat down, but instead stepped through a gateway into a place very few ever get to see while alive; it was her bedroom.

"To take one's own life, such a bold statement from one of the fallen." The lights in her Boudoir were low, giving off just enough of a glow to see a bed, pillows and a body.

In the end she had nearly lost him when he somehow made a run for the cliff's edge. The last leap was magnificent as he bore down on the end of his life and eternity in hell. She wondered if he knew what his fate was to be once he had taken

that leap? It struck her as odd that he was trying so hard to get away. She smiled to herself.

"Little bastard, almost ruined my day and my shoes." She growled out loud. "Its a good thing I always get what I want. Isn't that right Alfie?" She smiled and turned the lights up, looking at Alfie's shocked expression as the light blinded him for a moment.

Laying on a life-sized replica of her red Jimmie Choo heels was Alfie Doyle; card shark, ladies man and former suicide. Dressed and ready to party.

Alfie was still alive, although how? He felt for every nerve ending in his body, waiting for the scream of pain that he thought accompanied a death like this but there was none. In fact, all he could feel was silk sheets and crushed velvet pillows. His arms began to ache and he realized they were cuffed to the shoe shaped bed.

"I know you would tell me how beautiful and sexy I am if you could. Hell, you would even thank me later as we made love, but I took the liberty of gagging you. There will be plenty of

time for you to compliment me. After all, we have an eternity in here to share our feelings. She winked at Alfie and giggled. The sound having the same effect on his drive as it always did.

"I see you have a lot of questions, Baby. I know I would but they can wait. I will answer the one that's the most pressing. How did you get lucky enough to end up here, in my bedroom? For eternity?" She giggled again as she moved closer to her side of the bed, shedding clothing along the way.

"Well, Alfie, you died when you jumped. Its that simple. Once you take your own life, it belongs to me and I can do whatever I want with it." She trailed off, letting the truth of what he had done hang in front of him for just a moment.

"I get to keep it and this," she waved her hands around the space, "is what I am doing with it." Her smile was bright white and clearly joyful.

Alfie began to thrash and pull at his chains, trying desperately to get away from this woman, this devil, once and for all. He couldn't believe he had been so foolish.

"I see not every part of you is against another night in the sack with the queen bitch herself." She laughed, stroking at his crotch in his pants. Tearing them off in strips with each touch.

"I'm gonna do this a lot, too." She said as she grabbed his manhood and squeezed.