

Predators

“I don’t know – there’s just something about Gil. He is really flirty and tells me I have a nice ass. Since my ass is my biggest body part, I like that. Actually, made me wiggle it a little. But there is something strange, you know how you can just feel that?”

My friend Theresa said.” Keep an open mind, go out with him again and see what happens. How did you say you met him?”

“I met him online. His profile said something like *Just a down home country western singer*. Does that even sound like an ad I would answer?”

Our first date went from coffee to a Mexican restaurant in one of those 24-hour places where you could hear the staff arguing in the kitchen. On our second date, he told me he had two grown kids who hadn’t spoken to him for years.

I asked him, “Why?”

“Their mom poisoned them against me.”

By now I should know after many lessons learned the hard way, when to keep my mouth shut and my opinion to myself but no... I replied, “If you had a strong relationship with them, that wouldn’t have worked.”

I have been trying, apparently unsuccessfully, not to criticize men – they hate it, especially at the beginning.

I liked the timbre of his voice, had a Sam Elliott quality to it., a bit of a Texas accent, probably from his years of playing in a country western band. He laughed at my jokes and didn’t take offense when I teased him. He had a laid-back style and I could hear the smile behind his voice. He said things like,” I shore do respect the way you think. You are soffenin me up

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there girl. You are a woman after my own heart.” Maybe I had a secret desire to be the main character in a Hallmark western romance.

After many long phone conversations, we made another date (the third) the following weekend to have dinner and maybe a movie. Then I told him my rule. I have to go to the guy’s house first before he can come to my house. Gil understood. The way somebody lives reveals volumes about them.

When I began dating my last serious boyfriend and went to his house, he owned my ass. He had the most interesting and wonderful home and he had built it by hand himself. Rounded entryways and beautiful stained-glass windows he had crafted. The loft was amazing, with a wooden staircase up to it. There was a lush secret garden all around the house. I liked his house, his art, his books, his Navajo rugs, and his life. Too bad there was no room for me in that life.

A few years back I date a guy and his house creeped me out. His living room had one wooden chair, no artwork, and a dead plant. His “TV” room had an old plaid couch that smelled and looked like the ‘70s, that early American style my parents once had. The artwork, I use that term loosely, was pages out of a calendar framed in ready-made plastic frames. They were hanging in his hallway crookedly on already existing nails which didn’t fit the size or shape of the picture. That’s when I made the rule.

All this makes me sound very judgmental but a single girl dating on the internet has to be discriminating and have some standards.

“I am fine with you coming to my house. I have a mobile home.”

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I was sure it was one of those nice big double wides that looks like a house. There will be guitars on stands all around the house on oriental rugs and he would play for me while I sat with my bare feet tucked under me on his manly leather couch with a glass of nice wine and I would be mesmerized with his talent. There would be bookcases filled with books. It would be bright and sunny and welcoming. Probably have southwestern art or posters of country stars or beer ads. I never could have prepared myself for what it really was.

I broke my other cardinal rule, always let someone know where you will be and the address and time. Honestly, I just forgot to make that call.

Sunday evening came and I was to be at his house by 4:30. I arrived in Walton, turned down the street and into the “Jefferson Mobile Home Park”. After a few hundred yards and some cat calls, I rolled up my windows and locked my doors. I saw rows of rusted out trailers, junk cars in parts, patched up holes on roofs, trash everywhere, lots of guys in dirty t-shirts sitting on plastic lattice strip lawn chairs drinking Coors. I can turn around right now. I can tell him I have a headache or diarrhea. Don’t know why I didn’t.

Finally arriving at his trailer I saw the beige truck he had mentioned. Well it may have been beige in some year but now was old blood colored. Parking across the street I hoped my car would be safe. I walked toward his trailer through the mowed weeds to a set of broken stairs with brown greasy threadbare indoor-outdoor carpet worn through to the plywood. At the top of the stairs there was a table covered with car parts, a bucket of car oil, and boxes of junk. I knocked on the screen door. No one answered. I turned around and stared at the road and wondered if it’s like college, if your professor hasn’t shown up in 15 minutes, you can leave. I wasn’t going to knock again. Then the door opened behind me and Gil came out.

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“Well hi there good lookin’. Come on in.”

I entered a version of a man cave so literal it’s as if he invented the name. It was dark and all the windows were covered by either boards or cheap fabric. No light – no air. When my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I could see shelving full of boxes of stuff. I knew he repaired musical instruments so this wasn’t too shocking. What was shocking was that he said he cleaned the whole day before yet everywhere I looked there was ground in carpet dirt, grease, dust on all surfaces. The only furniture in the room was an old flowered loveseat. I sat down, I needed to. Gil sat next to me and put his arm across my shoulders.

“We are not there yet”, I said and he moved his arm. He laughed. We were never going to be “there.” We began the tour.

“This is the kitchen. I scrubbed everything for you. Those dirty clothes on the floor wouldn’t fit into the machine. This is my bedroom.”

There was a double bed with a quilt thrown over it and a broken mirrored headboard, TV in the corner.

We came back to the living room and headed off the other direction to see the other bedroom and bath. This bathroom was spotless and empty. No soap, no towels, no rug, no hairbrush, nothing. Looked like it was never used – except for an electric hair trimmer sitting plugged in on the counter. A chill went up my spine.

“Gil, why is it so dark in your house? You couldn’t open the curtains even if you wanted to.”

“I am a musician, I play at night. I have to sleep during the day. I need it to be dark.”

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We had already made plans to go to dinner. I didn't really want to but couldn't think of a way to beg off at this point and I didn't want to hurt his feelings. I offered to drive as frankly I was afraid if I left my car there it may be devoid of parts when I returned.

We drove to a restaurant he recommended a couple of miles away in a strip mall that looked stripped. It was already quite busy; we got the only table still open. He went to the restroom right away.

The last time we went out he came back from the bathroom and asked if he could sit next to me and I said no. He looked offended so I told him I prefer to look across at the person and see their face and eyes when talking.

This night, he sat down across from me and said, "Since you have been so honest and straightforward about yourself and your life I will be too. I had all my top teeth pulled years ago and a bridge made. All was fine until I got hit in the mouth at a bar gig and one of the teeth broke. When I went back to that dentist, the building was empty. I called the dental association to find out where he may have moved to and they told me there had never been a licensed dentist in Colorado with that name. Anyway, I had another bridge made for just the one tooth but I have to take it out to eat and I wanted to sit next to you so you wouldn't see the hole in the front."

He wrapped the tooth in a napkin and put it in his front pocket.

He stopped talking to me right after we ordered, and rebuffed all my efforts in a gruff manner. I had a pet fox years ago which would cuddle and love me until he was eating and then he would growl and become vicious and scary. Reminded me of that. He was borderline rude to the waitress and showed very little patience when some people a few tables over had a crying baby.

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After dinner about 6:30 we got in my car.

“I don’t want to go back to your house Gil. No offense but it is too dark and depressing.”

I wanted to go home, say something about not feeling well, but I didn’t.

“Ok would you like to go for a walk?”

“Sure.”

We went to the Platte River Trail. The street we turned on had an adult bookstore, Crystal’s lingerie store and a liquor store but that’s Walton for you.

“The River Trail is right down here.”

The parking area was surrounded by trees and bushes and it was pretty muddy. There were several other cars parked there. I pulled up under a tree. I put my phone in my purse and locked my purse in the trunk. I had no pocket big enough for my phone. All I kept were my keys.

We walked to a small bridge over a stagnant bog and turned onto the cement trail. There were a lot of people on the trail; bikers, hikers, families. We just ambled along for quite a while. He took my hand and I let him. There was a lovely breeze and I was actually enjoying myself a bit. Every once in a while, he would comment about the rotten, smell of the water. A couple of times he attempted to hold me close and I used the same line, “We are not there yet.”

We walked for what seemed a long time, probably a few miles, and came to a bridge over the river. There was a person in a wheelchair on the bridge, just staring down into the water below. As we approached him, he looked up but did not smile. He had these glossy black vacant eyes. We passed him and then decided to turn back as the sun was getting low. On the

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return, I asked him what he was looking at and he said sometimes there were fish jumping. I stood at that rail looking at the fetid water below and saw no fish.

Now the sun was in our eyes. I didn't realize how late it had gotten. Somehow the subject turned to sex; not really sure how that happened. I told him I would go very slow with anyone as I hadn't had sex in a really long time. He shared some stories of his first marriage claiming he hadn't told anyone before. I hear that all the time from guys. They just divulge all sorts of shit to me and then I am left with the responsibility of knowing it.

He began to share some strange sexual things he liked that I had never heard of before. I am no Snow White but I began to feel uncomfortable, told him so and dropped his hand pretending to fix my hair. I realized it was getting very dark and we had walked a long way back and hadn't seen my car.

He said, "I also like anal sex and other things anal."

"Nothing wrong with that. Maybe you are gay."

"I tried that. Don't like men that way."

"So, you like a finger up there?" What possessed me to continue this topic I will never know, morbid curiosity maybe.

He held up his fist and clenched his teeth and said, "No I like a whole fist up there."

I had heard the word fisting before, but I never had a discussion like this. It was getting darker and darker outside and in our conversation. It seemed we may be lost. I hadn't seen any people in a long time and suddenly a biker with his light on appeared. I jumped in front of his

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bike and asked him if he knew where the car park was and he said we had passed it a long time ago. He rode on.

Gil said, "I can see a neon sign for Crystal's up on that road and that is Washington."

He had known all along we had passed the parking area by about a mile. I had goosebumps. We turned around and I began to walk faster. By now it was not only dark but very isolated. How the heck did I get myself in this weird fix.

I said, "I have put myself in a very bad situation with a person I barely know."

He laughed it off. I thought of him and my situation differently. Then he picked up a big stick.

"What are you doing with that stick?"

"I may need it for predators"

"I really want you to put it down."

He didn't put it down. Now I was just plain scared and I could barely see the trail.

After a few minutes he said, "I may need to protect you from predators".

"What do you mean predators? What are you talking about?"

" People."

I looked up at the road I could barely see. We were coming up on one of many underpasses which had been ominous enough before but were now plain terrifying. We had stopped talking and I was walking very fast a bit ahead of him. If something happened to me

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here no one would find my body for weeks, I could be at the bottom of that smelly bog forever. I tasted tin in my mouth and knew it was adrenaline. I started talking to myself quietly.

‘You try to use that stick on me dude and I will shove it up your ass sideways. Bring it on – I will beat the living shit out of you. I am walking away from this. Go ahead just try it. I will kick your fuckin ass dude.’

I was thinking this so hard I was surprised I hadn’t said it out loud.

We went under the dark cement bridge and came out the other side and I saw the railing of the parking area.

Gil said quietly, “They will be people who may not necessarily think about doing something bad but when the perfect opportunity presents itself, they may take advantage of it.”

OMG! We got to the railing and I saw the car. It was pitch black and there were no other cars around, no people, no hikers, no bikers, no one. The car seemed very far away. The area was now so muddy that the mud caked on my shoes making it hard to walk or run.

I ran for the car stumbling in the dark and the mud, unlocked the doors before I got there. Gil was right behind me.

I yelled at him,” Drop the fucking stick!”.

He dropped it and as I started backing up, he jumped into the car. I wanted to leave him there but couldn’t think fast enough to decide how to do it or what to do, just wanted to get to the road.

Commented [V1]:

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I tore out of that parking lot with mud flying. My hands were clenched on the wheel and I was breathing hard. He was next to me very calm. Maybe he was going to do something or say something, maybe touch me or grab the wheel. I was going to die. Maybe I could run the car into something and then get out and run. No words were spoken and he never moved. I drove toward the trailer park. If he knew how afraid I was it may spur him on to do something, so I tried to act natural.

He said, "Wow that was a close one. Are you alright?"

What was a close one? No, I wasn't alright. Barely breathing, I was sure if he touched my hand, I would jump out of a speeding car. As I pulled into the trailer park he asked if I wanted to come in and use the restroom before going home. Yeah right dude and never leave alive.

I said a very firm, "NO."

He reached over as if to hug me and I shrank back against the window and said, "Don't touch me. Goodnight."

He reluctantly got out of the car and I quickly backed up leaving rubber and began the journey home. My hands were shaking all the way and I kept asking myself if I was overreacting. I was traumatized like someone had been trying to break down a door with me crouching inside. After I arrived home I wandered around the house for a bit in shock. I just dodged the biggest bullet of my life. He was going to hurt me but had changed his mind. He liked me and that would have been rude.

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