

The Mayor and the Pimp

“Mayor Jenkins is a fucking pig!” Kaye Dane screamed to the African paintings hanging in the empty elevator. She had to get out of City Hall, take a deep breath, and put the situation in perspective. This seething twenty-six-year-old, white woman with long legs and a curly mop of blond hair, had just walked out on the black Mayor of Washington, D.C. In 1979, in a tense racial climate, there might be consequences.

His nebbishy sidekick, Alan Jaffe, loyal, ready to take sides and swear to it, shook with indignation hoping to bluff her, to psyche Kaye into silent submission. But not Mayor Jamison Jenkins, spittle still slobbered around his churlish mouth. His five-foot-ten frame loomed larger, his freckled cocoa-brown face darkened, even his Afro seemed to stand on end.

She couldn't figure how this situation had gone so sideways when it was only about a phone. Prior to this, she'd have said that she and the mayor were simpatico.

Kaye, a Motorola sales manager, sold the mayor car phones for his fleet of government vehicles. She gave him solid discounts and he returned the favor making introductions for Kaye. In his cash register of things owed, he calculated Kaye had a debt.

Jenkins intended to use this influence. He wanted one of these cellular car phones the world was buzzing about. The technology blew away any other communication tool. But the FCC's two year performance and operation test,

administered by Motorola, limited the amount of people on the system. And everybody just had to have one. The mayor expected Kaye to use her pull at Motorola to get him one.

Jenkins called her up as soon as the announcement was made.

“Get me on this trial Motorola is running with the FCC,” he demanded.

“I’d like to Mr. Mayor, but the rules of the test are strict.” Kaye answered back.

“The FCC requires a cross section of all types of business, just two of each, though. And that includes government.”

“Well dammit, I’m the only Mayor of Washington, D.C.

“Yeah, but there are too many politicians already,” Kaye calmly told him. “This is D.C. man.”

There were scores of important people in Washington. The mayor is a lowly bottom rung. Until cellular got its approval, he’d have to stay B.C.

Before Cellular- B.C., in order to make calls from their cars, people used radio phones that communicated with local towers. A clunky handset settled in the console up front, and a big boxed radio screwed into the trunk. Kaye had installed several Motorola Pulsar IIs, a rather sleek version, into the mayor’s fleet. However, the system was marginal, dropped calls and frequent static rendered this a quasi-ineffective tool. But like the mayor, the power players in Washington could not be denied their status. Screw it they couldn’t always hear, they looked important.

Still, these car phones were the only game available and business boomed.

When Kaye pedaled her wares throughout the District, people were made to wait while

the Ambassador, the Prince (not the Artist Known As, damn), owners of companies and countries, met with her and tried out her radio phone nestled in the console between her car's smooth-leather seats.

Kaye, aware of the phone's cache, a veritable three thousand dollars' worth of dick extension, instructed her crew of stunning sales people, "Stroke the phone while you're explaining the features. Give him a minute, and watch him frantically grab it!"

Understanding man's urges put her region at number one in the country. Stroking for dollars. Yup, sex sells.

Still on the phone with the mayor, Kaye began to realize this call was going nowhere. Kaye's patience frayed.

"Mr. Mayor, I can't help you," Kaye said flatly. "The FCC is in charge of the rules."

"I don't want another old fashioned phone," the mayor whined. "Look girl, I know you can stretch the rules for me. I'm gonna hook you up with my man, Jarvis, aren't I? No doubt you got a debt to me."

Okay maybe. By making this introduction to Jarvis Monroe, a pimp, the mayor gave her entry into a world way over her head. This was "Gangsta- Land," and with those green eyes and suburban looks, Kaye was too white to even visit.

"Just make some deals and remember who gave you the business," the mayor said as he banged off.

Kaye called Jarvis to make an appointment for the next day. They met at the Hilton on Connecticut Avenue. Her reaction surprised her. She was at once attracted to him in a primal sexual way, and yet, repulsed by him. The man had to be experienced.

Skinny, Skanky, and long pinky finger-nailed (the better to scoop cocaine), Jarvis pimped a stable of mid-class hookers. Running jagged down his cheek, a long-curved scar cut exotically into his flat-black skin. His perfectly shaped teeth and soft, full lips softened his fierce visage. Kaye shivered when his hooded eyes examined her body as energy sizzled off his wiry, diminutive frame. This man pumped dark charm even when he was all business. Kaye was his business on that day. He wanted car phones, old style, as there wasn't a category for pimps on the FCC cellular test.

"I gotta keep tabs on my ladies," Jarvis said. "These phones will make it easy."

"Cool, how many do you want?" Kaye counted up the commission in her head.

This sale took her region over quota and she did okay, as well.

Jarvis understood status and branding. With this amenity he could entertain a higher class of john. The luxury impressed them, and they could check in with their wives on the fly to utter the number one statement that flew down the radio waves: "I'm working late tonight, honey."

"Put them in my Mercedes and the Jag," Jarvis said.

Kaye swallowed a groan. The electrical systems in these two particular makes, interfered with the signal and conversations often sounded like a spoon caught in a garbage disposal.

When Jarvis called Kaye, weeks after the phones were installed, she feared he was pissed about the service. Instead, he said, "I got some new bidness to transact witcha."

They met at his fourth floor walkup in Southeast D.C., a hardened slum. Inside, expecting gaudy, garish, pimp-luxury, Kaye saw and smelled a two bedroom apartment, a grimy kitchen, and a bathroom so filthy she'd pee her pants rather than use it. Yet, he had museum quality art on his walls. He was part low rent and part connoisseur.

"Come on K with a E," Jarvis said. "Let's roll, I gotta show you sumpin'."

Out-front of his building, he hopped on his Harley, then tossed a helmet to Kaye. She gracelessly sprawled her legs around the wide ass of the bike. He rode that hog like a Suzuki crotch rocket, tilting and speeding through D.C.'s exhaustive traffic.

They pulled up to a brownstone on Connecticut Avenue, dismounted, then entered a stodgy private bank. The gray-suited money brokers treated him like royalty at this bastion of exclusion and obsequiousness.

"I love the way they shuck and jive 'round here," Jarvis sniggered. "They scared shitless of me."

The banker, her head down in reverence to his accounts or plain fear, led them into the recess of the building. She brought the two into a room of safety deposit boxes, floor to ceiling, with a sliding library ladder, and handed a ring of keys to Jarvis.

"I electronically opened and signed for all of the boxes." the banker said. "Call me if you need anything, sir." She stepped out, quietly closing the door behind her.

He opened several cubbies loaded with jewels, cash, and drugs. Everything belonged to him. The raw abundance of presumably ill-gotten property had Kaye looking for the door out of there.

"Take sumpin' real pretty, K," Jarvis said "I like to show my women off."

“Whoa, is this the business transaction you wanted to talk about, that I’d be one of your women? Kaye asked. “I don’t want anything to do with all this.” she swirled in a circle to include the whole room.

“No, K, you don’t get me. I wanted you to see what’s mine. I need somebody with college. You got college, right?”

“I do.”

“I want you to run my bidness,” Jarvis said, “I gotta invest this room full of shit, man.”

Somehow, Jarvis figured Kaye’s liberal arts degree qualified her to run a pimp’s organization. He liked the savvy he saw in her. However, she didn’t believe she had the stones or the temperament for his line of work. Already in too deep with this bad-guy, she needed to rein in not dive in.

“I’m pretty certain you can get somebody more tuned into you,” she said. “But, I’ll think about it.”

They closed up, crossed Connecticut Avenue and planted themselves in the Hilton lobby. Over the next three hours, a parade of Jarvis’s brothers stopped by to talk with him. Kaye didn’t understand their street talk and hoped that would provide some future deniability.

“K, you don’t wanna know what those boys was sayin’.” She took him at his word.

Eight of the pimps, or drug dealers, or whatever they were, set up meetings to buy and install a phone within the next few days. Jarvis bought one for his wife, too. All told, it was a pimp-a-licious day.

The next week Kaye waited two hours at the installation shop. Jarvis didn't show. She called his apartment and his wife picked up.

"Jarvis is dead. Boo Man shot him," she said tonelessly.

Wait, which one was Boo Man? Was he one of my pimps sporting a new phone?

"How 'bout you put that phone in my car. Jarvis told me he paid fo' sure."

Oh yeah, Jarvis paid. He and his buddies paid in coochie or cocaine cash that had to be counted by hand, Kaye's manicured hands.

She called the mayor to tell him in case he hadn't heard. "Hello Mr. Mayor, did you hear about Jarvis?"

"Yeah, well, live by the street, die by the street," Jenkins said. "That man lived too close to the edge."

"I liked him," Kaye said.

Jenkins cut in, "Enough about Jarvis, Come see me. I want to talk cellular."

Once again, she reminded him that the government classification was still satisfied. He said to come anyway.

Stepping off the elevator at City Hall, Kaye landed in Africa. The art on the walls and the skins on the floor made it clear that Mayor Jamison Jenkin's domain had a jungle vibe. Faintly, a drum and chant could be heard from speakers camouflaged as bison horns. Women and men walked around in vibrant orange or red animal print

dashikis. The dramatic blackness served the purpose of displacing her. She always felt unwelcome and out of place at City Hall.

Kaye was escorted to the Mayor's Office. He sat waiting for her, chatting easily with his assistant, Alan.

"I want a cellular phone. Don't give me any shit. Get me on that damn test!"

"What, not even hello?" Kaye asked trying to keep it light. "You know there's nothing I can do about this."

However, she had a feeling he knew there was a way to finagle.

"I heard you got one for Teddy Kennedy and put it in that look-alike Chappaquiddick wreck he drives."

Damn, Okay. She knew she owed him. But she resented that he introduced her to criminals who sold women and drugs and got themselves murdered, even while being grateful for the business and adventure. But, to circumvent the test parameters meant a month of paperwork, dealing with the FCC, and selling the idea to her boss. Jenkins wasn't worth it.

"I can't do it," Kaye lied, perhaps too smugly.

Like a rattlesnake erupting from a tight coil, Jenkins lurched across the desk and grabbed her by the throat. Breathlessly, he spit out a string of really dirty cuss words.

And then...

"I raped white women like you during the riots. I'll be damned if a white bitch is gonna tell me what I can and can't have."

Kaye clawed his hand from her throat, wiped the nasty globs off her face, gathered her poise, and stood to leave.

“Fuck you Mr. Mayor,” she snarled. “You will never get one of these phones.”

She stormed out, down in that empty elevator, shouting at the tribesmen portraits and drove the hour north to Motorola. She needed to get her story on the books in case the man made her the bad guy in this, with Alan swearing to it.

Mayor Jamison Jenkins dabbled heavily in coke. His erratic and unlawful behavior had become common fodder for the newspapers. Kaye never thought to go to the press or the police with her story like the nebbishy assistant Alan feared. Jamison Jenkins acted ugly enough to enough people that he ultimately went down in flames in an undercover operation perpetuated by his inner circle, the FBI, and D.C. police. He pleaded out on charges of drugs and racketeering and spent a year in federal prison.

Upon his release, the Phoenix rose again to garner and unprecedented third term as the Mayor of the Capital of the United States.

But he never did get one of Kaye’s cellular phones.