

ONE

"Excuse YOU, tramp." Henry muttered, shooting daggers at the car in front of him as he leaned on his horn.

The female driver in front of him heard the horn, saw his look and returned it with equal vigor. To add spice to her look, she flipped him off.

Which was basically what he'd done. Henry didn't know when exactly it had happened, but at some point the horn had stopped meaning "Look here! Pay Attention! Coming through!" and had started meaning "Screw you, buddy! I'm mad at you and I shall now utilize my horn as an expression of my impotent rage!"

Henry felt his face redden. He was *sick* of A-Hole drivers! He was going to show her!

He swerved out of his lane to the next one, cutting off a red Suburban. The Suburban driver leaned on his horn. *Screw you buddy!*

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Rage/Dexter Goad/2.

Henry hit the gas and sped past the woman who had cut him off. She was driving a light blue Ford Escort and she gave him a hateful look as she passed. She was actually an attractive woman, but his rage was so full that he didn't even notice on a conscious level.

When his Mustang was past her car, Henry swerved over without using a turn signal. The woman had to slam on her brakes to avoid a collision. Henry giggled with satisfaction as he charged away as fast as he dared lest a cop spot him.

Behind him, the woman in the blue escort leaned on her horn, the third expression of impotent rage in the last 60 seconds. Enraged, the woman increased her speed to catch up with the man in the Mustang.

A silver Lexus was the next car behind the woman in the escort. Inside the escort, the gloomily attractive passenger turned to the driver, who was a tall lean man in an impeccable Joseph Abboud gray suit.

"Did you see that?" Winona asked excitedly.

"I did indeed." Ivo Smith replied. "Want to have some fun?"

Winona's grin was all the answer he needed.

TWO

Henry didn't know he was being followed until he pulled into his parking lot six blocks down. The blue escort he'd gotten his revenge on swerved into the lot after him. As he parked, the blue escort parked behind him longways, trapping his car in the parking spot.

Henry got out curiously. That had been a woman in the Escort, hadn't it?

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Rage/Dexter Goad/3.

The first thrill of fear passed through him, as it always did when his paranoia kicked in and made him wonder if he had just made a dangerous mistake. For that matter, even a woman could have a gun, couldn't she?

What he'd done had been foolhardy beyond the chance of causing an accident. You didn't hear about road rage as often these days, but it still existed. God knows he'd been angry enough that it had been a good thing he hadn't been holding a bazooka when this woman cut him off.

The woman was out of the car and walking towards him, her face livid with vehemence. He relaxed a little now that he'd had a look at her. She was only five feet six inches tall. She wasn't rail thin but she wasn't more than twenty pounds overweight. And she wasn't holding a gun.

All right then. It had been reckless but he'd gotten away with it. A wave of relief washed through him.

"What the HELL was that back there!?" The woman asked, her beautiful blue eyes blazing with fury. She had stopped three feet in front of him.

Marie could scarcely believe she was challenging this man like this. She had never been so angry in her life, it was a rage all out of proportion with what this idiot had done. And here she was cussing out a man six inches taller than her. He wasn't fat but he had some extra pounds and his arms weren't sticks. He could easily throttle her. But at this point she almost wished he'd try so she could scratch out every eye in his moronic head.

"You started it!" The man sputtered weakly.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/4.

"What, this is third grade?" Marie spat. "You could have killed someone, unfortunately probably not yourself, and all you have to say is I started it?!"

Henry was starting to feel foolish. It was probably because he had at least expressed his rage ... albeit immaturely ... where this woman had not had the same opportunity. As he struggled for an answer, his eyes focused on her necklace. It was a blue crystal butterfly. It was gorgeous.

That made him think about the color of her car. He glanced that way and could just see the top of her purse. It was also light blue.

"What the hell is wrong with you? Are you impaired in some way?" She demanded.

Henry returned his attention to her face. She was wearing blue eye shadow. "You really like the color of blue, don't you?"

"What?" Her voice softened for the first time at this unexpected question.

"My mother was very fond of blue. She had shoes and purses matching in all the shades of blue." Henry remembered fondly.

The woman didn't answer, probably because she was trying to figure out if he was insane or just mocking her.

"I'm sorry." Henry went on. "That was very foolish, as you said. Very, very stupid."

It felt genuine, and Marie found herself relaxing at last. She had expected a confrontation, but this was even better. He'd heard her complaint and responded well to it. "Thank you for admitting it." It came out sharper than she intended but she didn't say anything to soften it. Screw his little feelings.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/5.

"Your welcome." Henry replied with the ghost of a smile.

"My name is Henry Defoe." He offered his hand.

Marie surprised herself by taking it. "Marie Osmond. And if you make ONE joke about my name I swear to GOD I'll get back in my car and run you over!"

This was a potentially inflammatory thing to say considering they had been at each other's throats just ten minutes ago. But Henry did smile this time as he shook her hand. "I wouldn't dream of it."

They were both surprised at how good touching each other's hands had felt, and only released each other because they didn't know the other felt the same way.

"So," Henry said, glancing behind him at the building he had parked in front of. "I guess I'd better get to work. I hope I didn't make you late for work?"

Marie glanced at her watch. "Oh no, I'm going to be late! I have to go. Look, I'm sorry for originally cutting you off. My cat got run over yesterday and it probably sounds stupid but I was ... I was crying about it while driving. And I was feeling silly for crying over a stupid cat and wiping my eyes and I DID look behind me but I guess I just didn't see you. I saw you after I got over but it was too late. Then when you honked at me, which always means 'screw you, lady!' I just ... I just flipped you the bird. I shouldn't have done that. I was in the wrong. I just wasn't thinking straight."

Henry stepped closer and actually took her forearms in his hands. "That's not silly at all, Marie. Pets are beautiful additions to someone's lives! When they die they leave a hole.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/6.

Love doesn't care if someone can think as well as humans can.

Love is love. Of course you were crying!"

Marie looked up at him, stunned. "Are you for real?"

He was feeling a little embarrassed now. He released her arms. "That's just how I feel. Sorry for invading your personal space like that, I just feel passionately about this. I had two dogs die during my childhood and I never knew it could hurt that much. I cried much longer than the next morning."

She studied his eyes and face for the longest moment. Then she gave a small chuckle. "You know, it's funny. Here I am flipping someone off, and they're acting like an immature jerk, and all the time they are someone this sensitive. I never would have believed someone who acted like you did would be capable of what you just said."

"I'll take that as a compliment. I think." Henry teased.

THREE

"He asked you out?" Tasha gushed later that afternoon.

"You flip him the bone and he almost kills you for it and then he tries to score with you? That is the craziest thing I've ever heard!"

Marie's face started getting pink. "I guess you had to be there. When you make it sound like that it *does* sound crazy."

Tasha's eyes narrowed. "You accepted!?"

Marie's face was now the shade of a firetruck.

Tasha's voice grew loud enough that everyone in the cubicle room was standing up and looking their direction. "You told that jerk yes?! I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH A SLUT YOU ARE!"

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Rage/Dexter Goad/7.

"Tasha!" Marie hissed. "I haven't been on a date in eight months! I haven't had a relationship in two years! I'm not a slut!"

Her friend's grin had eaten up her face. "YOU'RE GOING OUT WITH MR. ROAD RAGE, YOU SLUT!"

Marie ducked her face to see if there was room to crawl under her desk. There wasn't. She grabbed her large three hold puncher instead. "If you don't shush up I'm going to beat you to death with this!"

Mr. Boxum, their supervisor, appeared behind Tasha. "I'm sure we're all fascinated with how depraved Miss Osmond is, but perhaps you could still lower your voice below 120 decibels, Miss Carter?"

Tasha whipped around. "Sorry, Mr. Boxum."

"Or better yet, perhaps you could stun me by actually going and doing some work?" He added as he walked past her.

Marie spared her friend a final glare. "I think I'll beat you to death anyway!"

FOUR

"So how was the date with Miss Road Rage?" JR inquired a couple days later.

"It was awesome." Henry cooed. "I can't believe how much we have in common. We both like track and field events. We're going to see the World Championship tryouts next weekend! I've dated a dozen women the last couple years and none of them had any interest in this sport!"

"That's because you two are ten percent of the entire fan population." JR replied with a mock yawn.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/8.

"We also both love fried chicken, White Zinfidal, mashed potatoes without gravy..."

"And you both turn into psychopaths on the highway. A match made in heaven!"

Henry glared at his friend. "Jesus Christ, give her a break! Her cat had just died!"

"And what was your excuse for turning into Stephen King writes Mario Andretti?" JR wanted to know.

"Well, my alarm didn't work again so I had to rush through my morning preparations and didn't have time to make coffee. I was in a bad mood. Plus I'm an immature bastard."

JR nodded in a mock superior way. "So are we still on for basketball tonight."

"Sure, I'm not seeing Marie again until tomorrow." Henry supplied.

"Wow," his friend said more seriously. "This must really be good if you're seeing her three times this week and then this weekend too!"

Henry nodded agreement. "You know, it's funny. You pass people every day. Hundreds of people. Most of them you think little about and barely notice. If you think about them at all it is because you momentarily hate them because they've inconvenienced you in some small way. They bump into you, they step on your foot, they don't hold the door open for you, they don't thank you if you hold the door for them, they stink, they have a noisy kid, or they cut you off in traffic. But I never stop and think that each and every one of these shapes pissing me off are actually human beings.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/9.

They have all the feelings, history, personal relationships, loves, and hates that I do. Each one of these walk-on extras in the movie of my life is actually the star of their own movies. I think if I ever stopped to think that I wouldn't be such a jerk to them, even if mostly it is me mentally cussing them out."

JR made his eyes huge. "Christ, this is beyond serious! She's got you talking metaphysical! Can I be your best man?"

"Shut up." Henry said in mock irritation, despite the fact that his heart had leaped for a second at the thought of a wedding and Marie. It was way too early to even think about that, of course, but he could at least picture that with her. His other relationships hadn't worked in part because he *couldn't* picture that with them. "I'm just saying that imagine if she had kept driving instead of following me into that parking lot? My only thoughts and feelings about her would have been irritated rage. And now I can't get enough of her."

"It is funny how it works out." JR said, rolling his eyes.

FIVE

"So how long have we been dating?" Henry asked after they had been seated. They were sitting at the finest table Market Street West, Greensboro's most elegant restaurant, had to offer.

Marie, still looking around wide eyed at the impeccably dressed waiters, the fine china and crystal settings, and the first edition paintings on the walls, replied softly. "Ten glorious months."

"I agree. Getting to know you has been the richest experience of my life." Henry's face was feeling hot.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/10.

He had replayed this evening in his mind over and over for the last month and now that the time had come, he felt like the biggest goober on the planet. He felt like he was a bad actor in a B romance movie. "I love you, Marie."

She turned her full attention on his face. "I love you too, sweetie." Her already gorgeous face turned exquisite when she beamed at him like she was doing now.

"Love isn't strong enough, in fact. I adore you. I cherish you more than life itself." He went on, gaining confidence the more he talked.

"That's so sweet." She gushed. A waiter was approaching so she waved him off frantically because she didn't want anything to ruin this moment. "I've never felt this way about a man in my life. I adore you so much."

Feeling like he was outside his body, Henry got to his feet and knelt in front of her. The engagement ring was out of his pocket and held before him like tribute. "Will you make me the happiest man on Earth and marry me?" He'd planned to say much more but he couldn't stand the suspense any longer.

Everyone was watching them. Marie realized this suddenly and didn't care a fig. "YES!" She said louder than Tasha had ever screamed in their office. "Oh yes, Henry. I could never love anyone else!" She pulled him up into an embrace while their impromptu audience clapped politely.

Overcome with happiness, Henry pulled back from their passionate kiss to stare into the love of his life's beautiful blue eyes.

Blue. Her eyes were so beautifully blue...

SIX

"What the HELL was that back there!?" The woman asked, her beautiful blue eyes blazing with fury. She had stopped three feet in front of him.

"You star-..." Henry began but trailed off.

Their eyes met and they stared at each other in wonder.

"Marie?" Henry asked hesitantly.

"Henry." She said with more certainty.

He jerked his hand up to his face and checked the date on his watch. "It's August again! August 2003! That's not possible!"

Marie checked her own watch. "I don't -."

"Nothing has changed." A strange, cold voice informed them. They turned as one to see a tall lean man dressed in an expensive looking silk suit. Snuggling up to him was a shapely woman dressed in the highest dress allowed by law. her cleavage cut didn't allow much for the imagination either. "Only seconds has passed since Marie followed you into this parking lot. And your futures would have been very different than that glimpse I just offered you. You, Henry, would have cursed Marie and stormed off. You, Marie, would have keyed his car after he left and felt guilty for it for weeks afterwards."

"I don't bel-." Henry began.

"I would nev-." Marie said at the same time.

"Fine," the man interrupted. "Don't believe me. Believe instead that you've lived the last ten months and then you both somehow traveled back in time to the moment you met. Whatever floats your boat.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/12.

Come, Winona, I have no more time to waste on these mendicants."

Henry took a step to follow. "Wait!"

Marie took a step as well so she was right beside Henry.

The man turned back and raised one questioning eyebrow.

Henry glanced at Marie, found encouragement in her face, and said. "Thanks. Whoever you are and however you did that, thank you."

Marie took his hand. "Yes, thank you."

The man smiled. It was a cold, harsh smile, but it seemed genuine. "You're welcome. Good day." He led his trashy companion between two cars.

Marie and Henry looked after them silently for several minutes but the couple didn't reappear at the other end of the cars. They were gone.

Henry finally stepped back and regarded Marie shyly. "So."

"So." Marie replied, her face pink.

"I hear there's a track and field event this weekend." Henry sputtered.

She nodded. "I hear we had a great time at it. Except for when I spilled my depth charge size soda down your shirt."

Henry chuckled. "I hear that really sucked. But, hey, the guy said it was just a glimpse, not really our future. So maybe we can avoid that part of it."

She grinned mischievously. "You're assuming that was an accident!"

SEVEN

Ivo and Winona watched them continue their playful banter from the top of the office building.

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Rage/Dexter Goad/13.

"You're getting soft in your old age." Winona said in a disappointed voice.

Ivo shrugged. "Plenty more where they came from."

THE END