

Fascination's Fruits

"I really don't like that programmer of yours," Vivien declared.

"Why ever not?" Alan responded, "Estelle's very efficient and a pleasure to work with."

His wife's eyes flashed momentarily, "Perhaps too pleasant."

Alan frowned, "What do you mean?"

"Can't you see," she snapped in frustration. She's the type who lives for sex, and almost any man will do."

A puzzled look crossed his face, "How can you say that?"

Suddenly she laughed, "You're so naïve. If she lay naked in front of you you still wouldn't get the message." Still laughing, Vivien added, "She's the type of girl we used to nickname 'margarine' at school."

"Margarine?"

"Yes, she spreads easily."

It was a comment that was not lost on Alan. There was a side to him that he had never shown to anyone – certainly not Vivien. It was not naivety that made him appear oblivious to feminine charms, but shyness and a fear of rejection. It was undoubtedly this fear that had kept him a virgin until marriage - it certainly wasn't a low sex drive.

Vivien, by contrast, was confident and outgoing. Although she had occasionally played the field, ironically, when it came to sex, she was the more conservative one.

However, once having tasted sex, Alan was keen to make up for lost time and developed a fascination with it. He longed to be more adventurous but to his increasing frustration Vivien stuck to her 'in the bedroom, in the missionary', approach.

After their marriage settled down into a comfortable relationship, they began expanding their interests. Vivien had always been interested in guns and

shooting. Her father had been a member of the Springbok Bisley team while her brother was the local pistol-shooting champion.

Vivien decided to take up the challenge of combat shooting. To her instructor's amazement, this five foot nothing slip of a woman was a natural shot with a forty-five Colt. Her father had taught her to shoot from a young age and within six months of joining the club she had cleaned up the men in the annual competition.

Not long after this Vivien won the provincial championships and was chosen as a member of the Springbok team to compete in Australia. She was delighted at the prospect of representing her country and over the next few weeks practiced at every opportunity.

During this time, a problem arose between Alan and Vivien. Alan had become increasingly frustrated with Vivien as she thwarted all his attempts at more adventurous sex. Despite the lack of variety, the frequency of their sex life had been good from day one but lately it had begun falling off with Vivien frequently complaining of headaches.

Alan's frustration now knew no bounds and one afternoon, when Estelle asked him, "What's the matter?" the floodgates opened.

"It's Vivien," He confided, "She seems to have a constant headache these days. I don't know what's wrong."

"Perhaps it's got to do with her shooting? Perhaps the noise is getting to her?" Estelle volunteered in a 'tell me all' tone.

Alan frowned. "I don't think so."

Resting her arms on his desk, Estelle leaned forward, "Is there, perhaps, another problem?"

Two years of marriage, his frustration with Vivien and his increasing level of comfort with Estelle all combined to put his inhibitions aside. After all, he was spending more time with her than with Vivien - who seemed to live on the shooting range.

He hesitated for a moment, "I think I may have upset her."

"In what way?" she asked, cocking her head invitingly.

"She's so staid in her approach to sex . . ." His voice trailed off.

Estelle had been sexually attracted to Alan from day one and was frustrated that he seemed impervious to her subtle signals. Here was an opening, a chink, which she could build on.

"Frustrated with the same old boring positions?" she prompted, smiling disarmingly.

"Position. Full stop," he said, blushing slightly.

"So what are your fantasies?" she asked outright, leaning further forward on his desk and gazing dreamily into his eyes.

Alan was flattered. Vivien wasn't interested in his fantasies, she refused point blank to even listen, yet here was Estelle, inviting him to share them with her. The more he spoke, the more comfortable he felt with her.

Estelle had realized that she would probably have to make the first move. She now knew that he would respond to any advance from her.

Having subtly engineered her opportunity, Estelle took it. After the staff had left, she walked up behind him and played the fingers of one hand down his spine with practiced ease as she slid her other hand downwards over his bottom.

Tingles ran down his spine and he felt his legs weaken. From that moment he became putty in her hands.

The two of them were working on the development of hush-hush computer system and the pressures often took them into overtime.

With Vivienne in Australia these nights became pleasurable as from then on, their frequent trysts always took place in boardroom with all its conveniences.

Neither wanted any love or emotional involvement, they purely wanted sex. Estelle was only too keen to live out Alan's fantasies – and many of her own. It really was great fun – much better than the boring sex with most of the other men she'd been with, the majority of whom had been either clingy or just plain needy. With Alan there were no strings attached, it was pure sexual fun, with a capital F.

In Australia, Vivien didn't do as well as expected. Her headaches were beginning to affect all aspects of her life.

Over the next few months her shooting began to deteriorate and her headaches worsened.

Eventually, on the advice of her shooting coach, she saw doctor, who was a family friend of her parents and affectionally known as Fossil by the family.

Having listened to her symptoms and after questioning her in detail he said, "Viv, I want you to see a neurosurgeon right away."

"What do you suspect, Fossil?" she asked.

"Viv, I won't beat about the bush – you have all the symptoms of a brain tumour."

Vivien felt numb, unreal - it was as though she was someone else listening to these words.

Letting the implications sink in she slowly returned to reality and her non-sense attitude took over, "Right. Don't tell Alan or anyone else at this stage."

"I won't," he promised.

"Mrs. Henderson I'm afraid that your doctor's suspicions are correct," said the neurosurgeon surveying the brain scan. "There is a tumour and it's quite large. With your permission, I think we must start radiation or chemotherapy as soon as possible with a view to shrinking it. If this is successful then we can operate and remove it. Do you understand what's involved?"

Vivien smiled weakly, "Only too well. I've seen two friends walk this path, one with lung cancer and the other one with breast cancer."

"Good. Now I'm going to send you for some blood tests so that I can decide on the best range of treatments."

Two days later Vivien's family doctor telephoned and asked her to come around after visiting hours to discuss the preliminary results of the blood cultures.

"Fossil, you sound concerned."

"Yes, it is, and delicate," he said apologetically.

"Can it be worse than a brain tumour?" she joked.

He shook his head, "Viv, you are HIV positive."

Slowly the shock sank in. Somehow, this news was almost worse than the brain tumour. This had different implications. Estelle, she thought. Is Alan screwing her?

"Have you any idea . . ." His voice trailed off.

Nodding, Vivien leant back in the chair, all emotion and feeling draining from her body. Her head throbbed.

Of course, now it all fell into place. Alan's frequent late nights. Their home phone beeped when the office alarm was activated. She knew he was leaving the office – but the attraction that kept him late was not work, it was Estelle.

"Oh, yes," she said grimly.

Fossil looked at her. When he spoke there was admiration in his voice, "Viv, you are as stoical as your Dad."

She smiled, "I can hear his, 'Deal with it', ringing in my ears. 'No-one is interested in your troubles Viv; just get on with your life no matter how harsh'."

The next day was Saturday and while Alan went for his monthly haircut, Vivien took his office keys and had a duplicate set cut.

On Monday her doctor called again.

"More bad news" she asked numbly.

"I'm afraid so," he sighed, "The advanced cultures have shown that the tumour in the brain may be a secondary tumour."

After a few more tests and some x-rays, Fossil confirmed the terrible news, "Viv, the primary growth is in your lungs."

After a long silence she said quietly, "One tragedy after another."

Fossil thought that her stoicism had gone too far but then, she was her father's daughter – she would not break down before anyone under any circumstances.

Though the pain in her head throbbed as she tried to come to terms with the latest blow, her mind suddenly became icily clear. She had walked Brenda through her last days of lung cancer and it was not pretty.

"How much time have I left?" she asked in a matter of fact voice.

"I'm afraid not very long."

"OK," she said, after pondering a while. "If I said to you that I don't want any radiation, chemotherapy or operations – all I want is for you to treat any pain and nausea – what would you say?"

Fossil smiled kindly, "I would say that that was exactly what I would do for myself at this stage. I think it's the sanest option."

"I'm glad you agree," she said.

After thinking for a while she asked, "I have something to sort out tonight: can I call you tomorrow to discuss the pain killers, etc?"

"Of course," he nodded. "But if you have any nausea or pain before then, call me immediately."

That night Vivien decided to tell Alan about the brain tumour. But only the tumour.

He looked numbed when she told him. He looked like a man who neither knew if it was bad or good news that he had just received. He was utterly incapable of consoling her and appeared to be completely uncomfortable with the reality. In fact, he seemed like a total stranger.

Vivien was bitterly disappointed by this and amazed at the gulf that had opened between them. What had happened to the love, she thought. Perhaps it had never been there.

The pain in her head was throbbing again.

Looking at his discomfort, she was sure that he would seek solace in sex with Estelle.

The next evening, just after the staff had left, she rolled her car to a stop outside the office building. The light in Alan's office was on.

Quietly she slipped the keys into the dual locks of the front door and silently pushed it open.

Alan's office door was open a fraction and Vivien peered carefully through the crack.

What she saw aroused a mixture of disgust and revulsion inside her. She had never seen any blue movies, nor anyone engaging in sex on a desk.

A fierce jealousy began rising inside her spurred on by the pain pulsing in her head. Suddenly she became calm. Dangerously calm.

Taking her Colt from its holster, she flung the door open.

Their faces turned towards her. Numbed by the shock and surprise, they stared wordlessly at her.

She was the first to speak, "Get up," she said, gesturing with the Colt.

They complied and backed away from her.

"So - while I'm supposed to be going through radium treatments, hair loss and nausea you support me by screwing this slut."

Convinced Vivien was trying to scare them, she decided to call her bluff. "You need help. I'm going to press the panic button."

She turned and walked towards the nearest panic button.

"Don't be stupid," Alan said, taking a step forward.

Vivien swung the Colt towards him, "back off," she snapped and he stumbled backwards, grabbing a filing cabinet to keep his balance. There was an angry determination on his wife's face that he had never seen before and it filled him with a cold, clutching dread.

Calmly Vivien turned the Colt towards Estelle again. The bullet severed her spine instantly before tearing her heart to shreds.

Alan froze with fear.

Vivien sneered at him, "Look at that, that's what you gave up marriage for."

"You're sick," Alan stammered.

"What an unfortunate choice of phrase," Vivien snapped, wincing with the pain in her head and trying to fight off her rising nausea.

When he heard the shot, the security guard hit his panic button.

Vivien smiled sardonically as she heard the alarm.

"Did you think that I was going to let you screw your slut when I'm dead?" she smirked. "You know," she added, blinking hard to overcome the pain in her head, "I could have forgiven you for screwing her, after all I wasn't much fun with my tumour. But to have given me AIDS is unforgivable."

"What?" he blurted out.

"AIDS you Swine, AIDS!" Vivien spat at him.

She lifted the Colt and Alan began muttering incoherently through closed eyes.

Now she taunted him, "You snivelling bloody coward. Afraid to die? Are you?"

Alan heard the steps of the guard running down the passage. Driven by acute fear and self-preservation, he summoned up his last vestiges of courage and screamed, "In here, quickly."

"Suffer you bastard," Vivien taunted.

"No, no, Vivien, wait," Alan pleaded, raising his hands.

Suddenly his fear overcame him. His mind blanked and he clamped his hands over his eyes.

Half conscious, he winced as the sound of the Colt drowned the rapidly approaching footsteps.

"Oh my God," he heard a shocked voice exclaim - as if from far away - the words filtering through his slowly returning consciousness.

As his eyes opened and he began to focus, a wave of nausea swept over him and an animalistic, primal scream of terror gurgled up from somewhere deep inside his throat as he saw where the forty-five bullet had spattered the remains of his wife's head.

Ray Hattingh

How nature can turn a marriage . . .