

Sunday Story

My boyfriend and I usually reserved Sundays for something special. We'd take a special short trip, for instance, to the wine country or to the beach. Saturdays were usually busy with errands and chores. But, Sundays were for relaxing. Saturday night we'd go out to a movie or something, and I'd stay over at his place for the night. This habit emerged over two years of dating and was, more or less, expected. But this weekend was different. Chuck called Saturday morning and said he didn't want to get together since he wasn't feeling well. He didn't sound sick, and I smelled something rotten—but it wasn't his health. Over the past few weeks, he seemed more distant. When I questioned him about it, he said nothing was wrong. Now I expected the worst.

I spent Saturday night in utter depression and despair. I was sure he was with another woman. I imagined them together in all sorts of sordid ways. Around midnight, I took a drive up to his house, but it was all dark. I don't know what I expected, maybe another car in the driveway or something. There wasn't. I couldn't even be sure if he was home since he parks in his garage. I just didn't know what to do with myself.

I moped around my apartment all day Sunday. I called his house at midday, but there was no answer. I became even more suspicious. But then I thought I was being silly. That if he was sick he just didn't want to answer the phone. How could I know what was true? In the evening, after dark, I decided to drive up to his place again. This time I dressed all in black: sweats, hat, glove, and shoes. Since it was mid-February, it was cold and I didn't look out-of-place with all those clothes on.

Chuck's house sits on an acre of property in the Santa Cruz hills. The back of the house faces a country road and a horse pasture, so he has unlimited view of the hills from his bedroom sliding glass doors. The road isn't well traveled so he rarely keeps the drapes closed. He likes waking up in the morning to the sunshine and open view of green hills. Rhododendron bushes border most of his property, obscuring most of the house from view from the road. But, from the right angle, one can see clearly into the bedroom because it's wall-to-wall glass sliding doors.

When I drove past the house it was all dark. I doubled back and turned onto his street to check out the driveway—no car. His street is a cul de sac because there's only three houses on it, so I was anxious to get out of there for fear of being seen. I decided to park my car on a side street, just around the corner and out of sight from the main road. It's a short walk to his house from there since his house and property take up the whole area between the two streets. Dressed in black and equipped with binoculars, I surveyed the area quickly to be sure no one was out jogging, or any cars were winding down the road. One could see quite a distance down the road, so I was assured of having enough time to walk to his house without being seen. I walked along the jogging path just inside of the rhododendron shrubs. It was a dark night, so I felt fairly well concealed, and there were no houses on the other side of the road—just miles of open hills and pastures.

Even though the house was dark, I thought I'd wait a while to see if something developed. I had nothing better to do but think depressing thoughts. I sat down by a large persimmon tree and mulled over his exact words from Saturday, trying to glean glues. As I sat there in the chilled night air I saw two pairs of headlights winding down the road. I watched as they approached. The first pair turned right onto his street and the second pair followed. From the dark, through the shrubbery, I couldn't tell the kind of car, color, or anything else. Within minutes lights went on in his house. My pulse quickened. I waited like a spy on a mission. Two forms appeared in his bedroom, not clearly visible from the back-lighting from the hall. They embraced—a woman! She began undressing and he lit a candle—OUR candle—and fiddled with the CD player. He started helping her undress. She took something from her hair and it tumbled down her back. I was madly trying to focus my binoculars with thick, gloved fingers. I finally whipped off the right glove for some fine tuning. Steam was breathing from my nostrils and mouth, clouding my view. Once my eyes adjusted to the dim light, the candle light proved sufficient for a voyeur to get an eyeful.

I felt a lump slide from my chest into my feet. I pulled myself up from the ground and away from the sordid scene too real to watch. They were boldly making love without closing the drapes. My feet drug along the ground as they moved me to my car. As I approached, I saw a figure in jogging sweats stop by my car on the driver's side. It was a man and he opened the car door. I stopped in my tracks. He saw me and seemed startled.

"This your car?" he demanded.

"Y-yes," I stammered, confused.

"Give me the keys and you won't get hurt." I had left them in the ignition in case I needed to make a quick getaway. I couldn't be sure from the dark, but he appeared to be holding a gun. I stayed my distance and told him the keys were already in the ignition. He jumped in and drove away. Only then I realized that my purse was in there.

Standing in utter darkness at about 9:00 at night with no car, miles from anyone I knew—except Chuck—and dressed like a burglar, I could barely comprehend my predicament. I certainly couldn't go to Chuck's and ask to call the police. I was 18 miles from home, too far to walk. As I stood there in blank confusion, a patrol car drove slowly by. It stopped just up the road, hesitated a moment, then backed down the road to where I stood, riveted like something growing out of the ground.

RESPONSE #1: POLICE OFFICER

An officer shown a spot light on me and asked what I was doing out alone after dark. I decided some semi-honesty was the best policy.

"Oh, officer, I'm so glad you came along just now. My car was parked right over there and I was out for a run. When I came back to my car a man with a gun told me to hand over the keys. I was scared to death—especially when I saw the gun. So, I handed him the keys and he drove off. Just like that! With my purse and everything still in the car."

"What are you doing running up here? Don't you think it's a little dangerous to be out in such a desolate area after dark? Where do you live?" He kept the light on me all the while. I could feel sweat rolling down my back and chest.

"Well, I live in San Jose and I don't like to run on pavement with all the car exhaust, uh, so I come up here." I felt like I was in a lineup.

"You come up here after dark?"

"Uh—well, yes. After work, it's dark and stuff." That was lame.

"Today is Sunday. You work Sundays?" I didn't think I'd better lie about that.

"Uh, no. But, tonight I just needed to get away from all the noise of the city. I wanted to come here for the silence. It's so peaceful up here."

"You'd better get in the car. I'll drive you to the station so you can file a stolen car report." They did an investigation of sorts on me at the station and I learned that he suspected me of burglary in the area. It seems there was someone routinely burgling the houses up there, a guy in jogging clothes. They hadn't been able to catch him because he looks like someone out for exercise. When the officer spotted me, he'd just received a call about a burglary. He saw me dressed as I was and thought I might be the culprit. Well, things got all cleared up, but looks like the guy got away with my car. I called my mom for a ride.

RESPONSE #2: MY MOTHER

"Hi Mom. I know it's kind of late. Are you in bed already?"

"Well, yes, but not asleep yet. What's going on?"

"You're not going to believe this, but—uh, my car was stolen. Can you come get me and take me to my place?"

"What? Where are you?"

"At the Santa Cruz police station. Can you come get me?"

"Of course. What happened?"

"Later, Mom! Come get me and I'll tell you in the car."

"Oh, of course. I'm on my way." I gave her directions. She got there within an hour since she had to come from Fremont.

"OK, tell me what happened. You're not far from Chuck's, why didn't you call him?"

"Uh—oh, well," I hadn't thought of that. "Well, Chuck and I had this big fight today. We were at his place and he left in the evening. He was fuming around the house and said he needed some fresh air. I waited for him, but around 9:00 I decided he wasn't going to be back until late, and I needed to get home. Besides, I didn't want to get into another fight with him when he did come back. I turned off all the lights in his place and left. I was walking to my car in his driveway and a man in jogging clothes ran up to me. He stuck a gun at me and told me to give him the keys and he wouldn't hurt me. I handed them over and he drove off."

"You didn't scream or anything?"

"Mom! Get real! I wasn't about to get the guy angry and get shot. I went back into Chuck's and called the police. They came and got me."

RESPONSE #3: MY BEST GIRL FRIEND

"Oh, that scum bag, Chuck. I'm finished with him, the two-timer."

"Wow, what happened," Marina said drooling to hear the rest of the story.

"Well, we had this big fight."

"What was the fight about?"

"Oh, the usual. He's been acting like a jerk lately. I asked him if he's been seeing someone else and he blew up. He started accusing me of stuff—I think he's looking for an excuse to breakup. You know how it goes."

"Boy, do I. So, then what?"

"Well, I was feeling pretty bad so I decided to go up to his house Sunday night to see if we could make up. He wasn't home. I decided to leave him a note. I went to my car to get some paper and some hulking brute in jogging clothes ran up to me. He stuck a gun at me and told me to give him the keys. Like an robot, I handed them over and the creep drove off."

"So, what time was all this?"

"I dunno. About 9."

"And Chuck never came home? Where was he?"

"That's what I want to know. I had to go to a neighbor's house and call the police. They sent up a patrolman to pick me up."

"Why didn't you use Chuck's phone—you have a key to his house." Marina gets exasperating sometimes with all these details.

"Marina! You think I'm gonna just go into his house when he's not home and we're having a big fight?"

"Oh, yeah. I see."

RESPONSE #4: CHUCK'S BEST FRIEND

"Here I am all depressed and I go up there to sit in my car and do some serious thinking and look what happens. That rat. You're not going to believe what happened."

"OK, go on. I'm listening."

"Well, I don't know what's been going on with Chuck lately. He's been pretty cold and won't talk to me. He called to say he didn't want to get together this past weekend cause he wasn't feeling well. I didn't really believe that, though."

"Why not? Maybe that's all it was and you're just being paranoid."

"Come on, Dave. A woman has intuition. I knew it was something else. So, I was pretty down all weekend. I decided to go into the hills for some silent meditating. You know how peaceful it is up there where Chuck lives. I really can't find another spot to drive to where it's so remote and so pretty."

"Yeah, it's kind of a perfect spot for solitude."

"I had to drive by Chuck's place and saw that all the lights were out."

"Maybe he was sleeping. People go to bed early when they're sick."

"Maybe. But I called him during the day and the phone machine went on. Anyway, as I sat in my car thinking, I thought I'd write him a note. So, I wrote him a real nice poem, instead. I felt kind of funny driving to the house to drop off the note, so I thought I'd walk from where I had parked. I mean, what if he came driving up as I was there. I dunno. I didn't like the idea of it. So, I thought it would be better to walk. That way, I could hide if I needed to. And it's a good thing I did."

"Why, what happened."

"Well, Chuck came driving into his driveway just as I approached the house, so I jumped behind the pine tree at the side of the house. Another car was right behind his. It was a woman, Dave. Just as I suspected. He had been with another woman—the worm."

"Really? He hasn't said anything to me about someone else."

"Can you believe it, Dave? I stood there dumbstruck. They went into the house and I headed for my car. I had to walk passed the back side of his house to get to my car, you know how it's situated. Anyway, as I walked by the I could see them in the bedroom—they were undressing one another! What a louse! I'm just devastated, Dave. Why did he have to lie to me?"

"Gee, Bunny, I'm sorry to hear this."

"Well, this isn't the worst of it. As I walked to my car feeling really depressed, this smelly behemoth in jogging clothes runs up to me and demands my keys. He shoves a gun in my face and said if I said a word he'd blow my head off. You can't imagine how petrified I was. So, of course, I gave him the keys. He jumped in my car and drove off. How do you like that? First my boyfriend stands me up, lies to me, then I catch him boinking another woman, and then this mangy rat sticks a gun in my face and steals my car! God, I'm coming unglued."

"Gosh, you poor thing. Do you want some company or something?"

"Oh, Dave, that sure would be nice."

RESPONSE #5: CHUCK

"You have a lot of nerve lying to me," I fumed at him over the phone

"What are you talking about?" He acted innocent.

"Oh, because of you, I got my car stolen and almost killed."

"Just what are you ranting about, some more of your exaggerations, I suppose."

"Right. Play innocent. I came up to your place to see if you were OK, but you weren't home. I thought you were supposed to be sick. Since I was up there, I decided to enjoy the peacefulness of the area and I parked on the side street. While I waited, I composed a poem for you. Instead of driving around the corner to your place to put it in your mail box, I thought I'd walk the short distance. It was a nice brisk night and I wanted the air. But you came driving up just as I approached your place. But you weren't alone, were you? No, there was another car following you. I was caught off-guard and so I jumped next to the pine tree in your side yard to wait and think. I stood there a moment and decided to go back to my car. It seemed pointless to give you a poem when some other woman just drove up with you."

"How do you know who she was. She could have been my mother, or my sister, or an insurance agent."

"Oh really? How do you explain going to bed with her then?"

"What are you getting at?"

"I saw the two of you. I had to walk back to my car, which meant I had to walk passed the back of your house. Your bedroom drapes were wide open. I could hardly miss the view." I heard a groan on the other end. "How do you explain that? I saw you and her undressing one another, and.....well, I was so embarrassed.....I just walked on and didn't even watch the rest. I'd seen enough."

"You have a lot of nerve spying on me."

"Go to. As if things weren't bad enough. As I walked up to my car, some creep in jogging clothes ran up and stuck a gun in my stomach and demanded my keys. He yanked them out of my hand and pushed me. I fell on the pavement and he drove off. My purse was in there and everything. I couldn't come to you for help, now could I?" I heard him mumble something about the jogging bandit. "You bastard. You lie to me, break my heart, I get my car stolen, and then I nearly get killed because of you."