

I Marry A Sociopathic Surgeon

MY NEIGHBORS AT THE HOTEL 17 WERE FREAKY. BUT IT WAS CONVENIENT AND cheap. An icy wind rushed me out the entrance that Friday morning, encouraging me to get to work on time.

Nobody smiled on the Uptown train, but the strangers weren't nasty like my ex-girlfriend who rode with me on the office elevator.

I slumped into my cubicle and stared at the empty inbox and blank calendar on my desk. The bank executives were away until Monday.

I left a note on my supervisor's desk saying I didn't feel well, then headed to the liquor store at Grand Central Station for two half pints of Winslow whiskey.

A swig of whiskey on the downtown train soothed my hangover. The rest of the bottle helped my cafeteria breakfast go down easier.

One big sip from the second bottle prepared me for the weekend. The frigid wind blew me toward Mickey's Bar on the corner of Warren and Greenwich Streets. It was the best cheap bar in lower Manhattan, with drinks only \$1.25.

Ace, the lone bartender on weekday mornings, welcomed me into the empty bar.

"Good morning, Sonny. Let's shoot some pool before the lunch crowd gets here," he said.

We were midway through our third game when a tall Caucasian woman interrupted us to order a drink. Her Harris Tweed jacket matched her long, dark brown hair. She sat at the far end of the bar and ordered a Scotch on the rocks.

I bought her a second round and introduced myself. Sara said she was meeting a guy she'd met earlier that week.

The bar stools filled with office workers, but Sara didn't talk to anyone.

I flashed my most charming smile. "Care to step outside for a joint?"

"Sure, I don't think my friend is coming anyway. But we can't smoke on the street. Let's sit in my car," she replied.

Her license plate read "MD." Why would a medical doctor drive to a bar? Then again, most Manhattanites, myself included, didn't even own a car.

We passed the joint in silence until Sara said, "Sometimes people think I am a nurse. I hate that."

"Is that so bad?" I asked.

Sara sucked in a deep breath before bellowing in the voice that once called cows home at her family's dairy farm.

"I graduated from medical school! I worked hard for my degree. I can't stand nurses. I love bossing them around."

She turned to face me. "I can't stand most so-called doctors either. The only real doctors are MDs. Why do podiatrists, chiropractors and optometrists get to be called doctor? They're useless on their own. When a patient gets sick in their office, they send that patient to me!"

Sara paused to catch her breath. "PhDs are the worst! What did they do to become doctors? They read some books. That's it! Do you think someone who reads a few books deserves to be a doctor like me?"

She shook her head in dismay before continuing. "Psychiatrists are real doctors at least. They understand medicine and know mental illness is a biological disease. You treat diseases with medication. When a psychiatrist asks about your family, she's only interested in your genes. Right?"

Her voice rising, she jabbed her finger into my chest. "Who cares about your childhood? Does anyone care if your daddy loved you?"

"It's none of your business," I said.

Sara grinned. "Fair enough. But psychiatrists cure the mentally ill every day with drugs. They train for years to recognize different illnesses and treat them.

Psychologists think they treat people by talking to them. Some of their patients get better on their own. The rest of them realize it is a waste of time. They either stop going or kill themselves. The smart ones see a psychiatrist, and get better.

We have hundreds of teaching hospitals, full of mentally ill patients we can use for practice. Nice, safe patients. They sign papers, so they can't sue you.

I wanted to be a psychiatrist. But it's a seven-year residency and patients don't improve quickly. In surgery, you're done with a patient in two hours. In psychiatry, it could take two years. I did a six-week psych rotation as an intern. I loved it. Don't you think I'd make a great psychiatrist?"

I was too stunned to respond. I sneaked a look to make sure my door was not locked before I nodded.

Before I could react, she grabbed my neck and mashed her lips against mine in a sloppy kiss. I forgot my germophobia and slipped her some tongue.

Sara shoved me away and wiped her mouth with a tissue. I was still searching for a witty reply when she started the car. "Put on your seat belt. I'm taking you home."

Sara lurched out of her parking space. She made an illegal U-turn, then an illegal right onto West Street, under the condemned West Side Highway. Sara raced the taxis, my half-pint bottle bouncing against my chest. At a red light, I took a swig and offered it to her. She sipped and gave it back.

"Sorry, if I scared you. I'm a pilot. Pilots like to drive fast," she said.

I finished the bottle while I pictured a naked Sara turning off her plane's engines. We glided through space, until she climaxed or we crashed.

My nightmare ended when Sara pulled over. "Let's get more liquor. Please get rid of the bottle. I don't drive with empty bottles in my car."

There was no litter basket, so I flung the bottle 400 feet onto the empty West Side Highway. We waited for its crash.

Sara patted my head and bellowed, "Good shot!"

She swerved around a homeless man and his shopping cart. How many people became vagrants after a psychologist's lousy treatment? I bought two quarts at the liquor store.

Sara lived in a one bedroom apartment on the first floor of a brownstone. A spinet piano and convertible couch filled the living room. Her open bedroom door revealed a bare mattress and alarm clock on a wooden floor.

Sara kicked off her shoes. "Make us drinks and get over here."

I filled two glasses with whiskey and joined her on the couch.

"Take off your shoes. No shoes in my house," she ordered before sipping her drink.

I asked, "Don't you have a TV?"

"I don't need a TV. I have you," Sara replied.

That weekend we decided to get married and have two kids. On Sunday, we packed the contents of my hotel room into her car.

I grew accustomed to Sara's bellowing and orders. Six days after meeting, we married at the Municipal Building. Our first married activity was a walk to Mickey's Bar.

Mickey's was closed. A large sign on its front window said it would reopen in a month as a health club.

Sara and I were the last couple to meet at Mickey's. We belonged together.