

## Chaos - Two Weeks in August

### The Endless Night – Kicked Out of a Second Hotel – excerpt

I upped the ante, pretending to have a heart attack on the sidewalk outside of the hotel. I really threw my heart into it, so to speak, ending the performance by lying motionless for over a minute. For the first time in my life, I gave a completely authentic acting performance, something I'd never achieved in any of my acting classes. They didn't buy it. Ironic, I thought, that in this town famous for acting, I should give my best ever performance to a disinterested party of three.

I tried a couple of other tricks: I lay for a while in the centre of the road. It was surprisingly comfortable, and I contemplated the idea of falling asleep. But apart from being restful, it was not moving me towards my goal of getting the police involved, since there was no traffic. Then I walked down the street, peering into office-building lobbies to see if I could find a security guard whom I could persuade to call the police. I did persuade one guard to unlock his doors and talk to me. I explained to him that the hotel down the street was keeping my car keys and my credit cards; could he call the police for me? He just looked at me uncertainly, and then made as if to close the door. I stopped him and ask what I would have to do to get him to call the police. He locked the door on me; so I ran across the street and calculatedly kicked the plastic sheeting covering a large poster on the side of a bus shelter repeatedly, as hard as I could. I watched him go back to his desk. He did nothing.

The situation was Kafkaesque. Here I was, in my own city, my boyfriend presumably asleep in my bed (or lying awake worrying about me), my car right in front of me, yet no means of finding shelter for the night. And since I was more tired than I'd ever been in my life, shelter was all that I craved. The only line I wouldn't cross was that I wouldn't pull Ben into the situation. And in any case, even if I had wanted to involve Ben, I had neither my cell-phone, a quarter, nor the energy to trudge the streets in

search of a payphone, even if there was a single working payphone in downtown Los Angeles, which I doubted.

One final resort came to me as I suddenly remembered, belatedly, that I'd left the car unlocked when I'd dropped it at the valet. My money clip – bought at Vuitton just today, or rather yesterday, now hours and hours ago – was in the car, holding hundreds of dollars. I could load my luggage onto one of the hotel luggage carts, along with the many bags of shopping I'd acquired earlier in the day, push the luggage cart to the curb, and wait until dawn when, presumably, taxi cabs would appear. It was far from an ideal solution, but it appealed to me because it would at least foil Weasel.

Because, in the past, I'd never considered myself physically courageous, the current situation - as I knew it would unfold - showed me more than anything else how much I'd changed recently. I knew this final confrontation would end in a fist-fight, and I relished the idea. I knew exactly what was going to happen. I pushed the luggage trolley towards the car; the three security guards inserted themselves, inevitably, between trolley and car, but I kept on moving; when the trolley hit them, they launched at me. Unlike during all my fist-fights at high-school, my physical coordination did not desert me. I had the intense satisfaction of seeing my large fist land squarely on Weasel's jaw. But I was outnumbered; I was also incredibly exhausted; more important, one of them was tall, young and strong. I was soon immobilized face down, and I stopped resisting. But Weasel hadn't had enough: for a couple of minutes he stood on the nape of my neck and continued to punch me. In other words, on Omni Hotel property, where my possessions had been effectively stolen from me by Omni staff, one of their employees assaulted me with the intent of harming me while I was restrained by two others. As I lay there, face-down, I now knew, finally, where the most immediate source of money was going to come from: this was a law-suit in waiting.

He left his foot there, pushing my face into the ground, until the LAPD finally arrived. As a formality, since the hotel had called them, I was arrested, cuffed, and put into the back of the cruiser, while the police talked to the security guards. I watched

closely, and could see the looks of perplexity on the faces of the two policemen. I imagined the security guards were having a hard time explaining why they'd kept me from my property.