

Oh man, she's funny. Bubbly and energetic; what a great date. Ben was so into her; he swore he could physically feel the mood change as she went to from telling a story to laughing at one of his. They'd met up at a craft brewery after work, then on to a little dinner of shareables, and now he awaited her return from the movie theatre's washroom, their tickets in his hand.

The night was going great. Ben didn't have any expectations of anything other than great conversation, which had flowed through the hours in droves. Despite that, there was a definite sense of sexual anticipation in the air. He'd noticed it back at the brewery, and it almost felt like pheromones... Like, it wasn't in her eyes or her movements or her voice; it was just... there. In the air. Like the summer warmth and blackened sky right before a lightning strike. You couldn't really put your finger on it until the lighting flashed; and then – after the fact – you knew what it was you had been noticing.

But this? This felt different, and distinct. Like sex, only without the physical cues. Exciting and seductive, but thick and reclusive. Weird.

They went in the theatre, talking quietly and giggling together; which turned into outright laughter when they saw they were the only two people there. Ben could only think of one other time that had happened in his whole life – being alone in a movie – but he knew it was a special thing. What a cool story he'd have to tell, tomorrow! Since it was an uncommon event, they did something uncommon themselves: they sat in the front row. With a couple of empty seats between them, and the concrete floor stretching out to the screen, they chatted and waited for the trailers to start. Even though they were alone, they whispered (I mean, it's still the movies, after all).

Ben had always been good at seeing the tiny facets of a person's behaviour. Like, their posture when they were nervous, or their blinking when they were angry. And he kind of loved watching those little clues turn into other little clues as a conversation went on. How nervousness could melt into laughter (accompanied by the relaxing of the shoulders), or how friendliness could stiffen into frustration (accompanied by darting eyes). It's not a big deal, but he saw these minute things, and appreciated them. And he liked that about himself, too. Tonight? She was relaxed and carefree. The corners of her mouth never lowered, even when she wasn't smiling. Her eyes darted around animatedly, as though she was having too much fun to be able to commit to locking eyes with him. And her hands touched each other a lot, sometimes rubbing and sometimes tapping, and he could tell that she sensed that strange tension in the air too.

But overall? And right now? They were making a wonderful memory; comfortable and together, and enjoying the night.

At some point the coming attractions had finished and the movie had started. Ben didn't know exactly when—he was enjoying watching her face being lit up by the changing colours of the film's projection. But he'd guessed they were about, oh, ten or twelve minutes into the show. And then the room got just a little colder.

A trio walked into the theatre, and even though they were approaching Ben from behind, he could almost picture them in his mind. They were loud, but not exactly obnoxious. They were just too... comfortable... to be speaking so openly in this dim light. Too confident and too at ease. His date had stiffened a little when this group's conversation had entered the room, and Ben didn't know what exactly to do. This empty cinema's magic spell had been broken. But the sexual electricity was somehow still there.

The trio kept walking down the aisle, and carousing just a little too loudly. A man and two women, by the sound of it. There was no malicious sense of threat coming from them, but Ben definitely felt awkwardly vulnerable. Sitting at the front of a long space meant that someone had a long walk from the entrance to you, and your back would be to them the whole time. And, somehow, like a great big magnetic pull, Ben knew what was going to happen next. He was right. The trio sauntered right down to the front row, and sat between him and his date.

The man sat next to Ben, and the two women sat on either side of his date. Ben, man, woman, date, and other woman. There was a distinct flash of irritation and fear in Ben, and he knew this wasn't going to end well. Shit. What was he supposed to do? What could he do? He didn't know. Shit. On top of that small amount of panic, there was a clear heightened sense of energy in the room now. The two women were chatting animatedly with his date, but the only person Ben could see was the man to his right. It was too dark to see much else.

He wore a new-ish leather jacket. Like, not the kind that was scuffed and covered in patches, but sort of fashionable and European or something. And the man himself could actually be described exactly the same way. He had a youthfulness to him, and it didn't look like he was from around here. His hair was dark, his grin was perpetual, and he was easily the most confident man Ben had ever seen. At ease in this gloom; a man who had a horrible plan and who knew how to realize it. He was almost twitchy in his movements, and he kind of acted like a cat that was about to pounce. He was clearly keyed up over something. In the first, say, thirty seconds that Ben had seen of him, he'd been biting his lip, grinning kind of uncontrollably, and shifting his eyes all over the place, watching everything but the movie. And it was in that first thirty seconds that Ben realized that he'd seen this man before. And in that realization, the panic and fear and terror became a real-life lump in his throat.

His date, on the other hand, was handling her two pests pretty well. You wouldn't say that she enjoyed the two women sandwiching her in and chatting her up, but she seemed to be containing herself. Maybe she was sweating too.

And even with all of that, (what the fuck?), that sexual energy almost thrummed in the air around them all. Given this horrifying intrusion, it could only be the thrill of being hunted and of fight-or-flight; but Ben bet anything that his date felt it too, and didn't quite know why.

The man shifted in his seat and asked Ben if he was enjoying the movie.

"It's, uh, it's alright. It's supposed to be pretty good."

"I've seen this one." The man replied. He twitched and turned, facing Ben, and had a distinctly sensual desire in his eyes when they met his. He looked Ben up and down in one fell sweep, and bit his lip again. It was dark, but Ben noticed him exhale – sort of a sigh – as well.

This guy's looking at me like I'm a steak being walked to a diner table, and he's fresh outta prison, Ben thought. Shit, it's not far from the truth. Shit.

"Your date's cute, though, I haven't seen her before." The man added.

Ben was trying to think clearly (what the fuck does "haven't seen her before" even mean?) but was having trouble even controlling his breathing. It was ragged and shallow, and he was swimming in a memory of the worst night of his life. The night he'd only barely gotten away from a living nightmare. It was odd, though, that he'd mostly forgotten that night. Had he repressed it? That doesn't sound likely – now that he recalled it, it was far too horrible to have simply forgotten – but the electricity in the air had brought it back, screaming. That syrupy anticipation was there in his nightmare too, and he couldn't stop the rush of intimate details that flooded his mind now.

Try to think clearly? Fuck, he might as well try to float off his chair. It wasn't going to happen.

The man saw Ben's terror and was even more energized by it. His right leg started bouncing up and down, the way nervous people do (or the way people with lots of pent-up energy do) and he leaned forward and back and forward again in this front-row seat. He even lifted a right hand and touched Ben's cheek. This man was insatiable, in that moment... yet his hunger was about to be fed. His eyes relaxed a little and went from starved to seductive; almost as though he knew he'd won complete control.

Ben recoiled a little at the touch, and the man's eyes flashed annoyance, if only for an instant. But, again, Ben could notice these things. Right now he was sort of wishing that he

couldn't. That irritation disappeared immediately, and the man's resolve seemed to have set. Kind of like how you fail to swat a fly, and quickly allow yourself a feeling of determined acceptance—you'll strike it down in a moment, so no need to get upset. And it's only a fly, after all. Not worth being upset over. You'll have it soon.

Ben couldn't think of the right way out of this. He knew what was coming – he'd escaped it once before – and his brain was bursting from his skull, trying to find something to save himself. His date too, if he could manage it, but he had no ideas. His memories were swimming in blood, and he couldn't see a way out, for all the red.

The man leaned closer to Ben, his eyes all intent and the air palpable with desire and climax.

Ben knew he couldn't lie his way out, so he did something else. He told a truth.

"Oh, you, uh, you don't have to do that."

"Oh?" He barely slowed his approach.

"Yeah, s-see, I've partied with you guys before."

The look on the man's face completely changed, but from what to what, Ben would never quite be able to describe. There was definite relief in the way his bated breath turned to a tremulous exhale, and there was definite thrill in the way his eyes burned a hot ember of ownership. All of this was in a quarter of a second, and the man's lips brushed Ben's, wet and hot, as though he were seeing a lover at the end of a long day.

The man had dropped all pretence, comfortable with who he now knew Ben to be.

"Mmmm, perfect..." which sounded more like a single word, in the heavy breath that carried the sound. It was so dark, but his animalistic intent was clear.

Ben had leaned back, trying to avoid the man's mouth. My God, their lips had touched. He lost his control and just blurted out:

"No, no. Please just, just let me go. Don't do this. Don't kill me. Us."

Even in the theatre's gloom, Ben could see the carnivorous posture stiffen, equal parts disappointment and annoyance. The man clenched his jaw, the muscles in his face knotting, and his slow, deliberate eyes shot around the darkness. His breath wasn't silky now, but huffy and bothered. He was sitting more upright, all of a sudden. If Ben didn't know any better, he'd say the man had lost his boner.

"Dammit, hunny, I wish you hadn't said that."

Ben tried to stand; well, he tried to start the chain of muscle movements that ended up with him standing, but he got nowhere. The sexual vibration that was dripping from the air was gone, replaced by a heated heaviness that he couldn't lift. The man had already leaned in and sunk his fangs into Ben's neck, but nothing felt as cathartic nor as painful as it could have. All Ben thought he felt was sharpness – a razor-sharp piercing in his muscles – and he knew that the vampires who targeted him on that horrifying night, all those years ago, had coincidentally targeted him once again tonight. They must have followed him from the brewery to here, hunting and stalking and cornering him into the thick, dizzying darkness.

As he tumbled silently into a wide-eyed, breathless numb state, he wondered if his date was alright. She had been so funny that night, and he thought of the corners of her mouth as she smiled without smiling. He'll always remember that about her.