

**Journal: June 2 for May 29, 1978**

**Somehow, from the address, I had expected a swankier upper east sixties location, cozy yet businesslike. As is often the case, what I envisioned didn't materialize. When I turned the corner and noted the addresses, my disappointment was palpable. The facades were all plain, as though to spite my dream of this latest Holly Golightly misadventure—even in this sleazy industry of flesh.**

**When I entered the downstairs hallway, I was hoping the address was a mistake, but *there* was the mailbox with said name to apartment 2S. Did I bother going up those stairs? The hall reeked of urine, and I feared the worst, so I walked outside to verify that the address was *indeed* correct, hoping that once outside, in fresher air, I might gain some self-respect and walk away before I regretted my actions. But the prospect of an exploit—to say nothing of making a quick buck, was too juicy to resist. Back in I went and held my breath until I got to the second landing.**

**There was apartment 2S. I could only imagine the creep on the other side of the peephole. My worst terror—a nasty dog or a crazy person, or both, ready to attack me, was no longer farfetched. I swallowed hard, grateful that I had taken Valium to ease my confidence if not my conscience. I rang the buzzer. I made sure my face was full on for the best possible effect through that fish-eye view of me.**

**The lock unlatched, the door opened slowly, names were acknowledged, spoken just above whispers. As I stepped inside, I saw the place was in *total* darkness but for candlelight—at three in the afternoon no less. Nothing fancy like candelabras or candlesticks. Here we had Woolworth specials, maybe even cheaper, the scented kind you bought by the dozen. The man had placed a few in religious holders, the tall red-glassed cylinders that suggested church. Or voodoo. Perfect, just what I needed as an ex-Catholic—tea and a séance with Carrie.**

**I freaked right about then. “Pretty dark here, uh?”**

**Mike—that was the name he had given me over the phone—answered with a simple yes. “Won't you please come in?”**

**“Can’t you turn the lights on? I ... I sort of like to see what I’m walking into.”**

**“No. I would not. Come in!”**

**“Well, I don’t think I’ll go in then ...”**

**That’s when Mike switched on the kitchen lights and told me to come in and go through the railroad.**

**The railroad?! My chest tightened again. The only railroad connection I could make was to slavery, underground or white; neither of which was comforting. When Mike clarified what a railroad apartment was, referring to the layout of rooms without hallways, it didn’t soothe me in the least. All I could think of was me getting further and further from a quick and easy point of exit. “Can’t we just have the interview here, in the kitchen?” I could have posed next to a frying pan; I was *so* keen on not moving any further.**

**“No. Now *come in.*” The exasperation in his tone left me no options.**

**I should probably describe Mike at this point. The man wasn’t fat; he was obese, with strawberry-blond hair and a sort-of-nowhere face. All his answers were pat, felt contrived. He went on about himself, an ex-priest psychologist, supposed confessor to Hoffa and Kennedy, of Swiss-American descent, with an inheritance to come at forty-five. On and on he went. His ludicrous claims reminded me of a portlier version of someone back in my Toronto days who was forever padding his life résumé.**

**There the two of us sat, him in his high-back chair, me on the sofa, as I tried to figure out a feasible escape. All I kept thinking was that he had some assistant in another room ready to overpower me if I tried to leave without his consent. After finishing the last few touches on his lengthy biography, Mike began to ask me mine. I kept it simple, lied, much like he had, unable to hide a slight tremor in my voice. “Sing, sing out, Louise!” was my only subconscious prompt.**

**The physical exam was brisk. I stripped while he checked me out, first sideways, backside, then front. When he had my cock in his hands and I was *obviously* not going to get aroused for him, I made some lame excuse that it had less to do with him and all to do with the nervousness of the “interview.” I got dressed without being asked.**

When it came time to fill out one of his employee cards, I bucked. By then I had reconsidered and wanted nothing of his silly enterprise. The business proposition was just as illegal now as it had been when I had called him up, and his connection to a larger outfit was never out of mind. The fear of being pulled into something I couldn't easily be let out of weighed heavily upon me. The man might have been a phony, a wannabe amateur pimp, but that mattered little when I considered the bridge I might be crossing.

Mike talked about all the young men in his stable, how any of them could and would service him on command. "Hey, more power to you!" I thought. I might have been inclined to succumb to his hard sell had I been hungrier, more destitute. Maybe then I would have jumped to get onto his payroll, get going on whatever system of tricking he had in place, but all I wanted now was to leave without pissing off big Mike.

*That's* when I heard the footsteps, when I *truly* panicked, fearing musclemen at the ready to help me reconsider my immediate life plans. Mike began, "I should warn you (uh-oh!) that my roommate's going to be dressed in white (oh God, Marathon Man!). That's because he's an orderly in a hospital." I couldn't tell if Mike said this because he saw how distrustful I was or just to help get my defenses down.

The roommate walked in, introductions were made, and *that's* when I earned my Oscar nod. I started up a conversation with both of them about the difficulties of moving to the big city and the struggles to survive, talking and talking, asking questions as though I hadn't really grasped what the Village Voice ad was all about. Like one of those fast-talking dames with snappy lines from Old Hollywood days. I was pleasant and polite and *ever so hyper* as I essentially bolted out of there, walking backward. I'm sure I scared the Doberman.

I was laughing, practically peeing in my pants, from the adrenaline shooting through my body, ecstatic to make my way to the subway in one piece, my legs weak and wobbly but wanting to do a jig at the same time. What had *that* been all about? Yes, the orderly roommate seemed legit, but he could just as easily have been the enforcer for whatever racket they had going on. *Had* I been in any real danger? If they were running an escort service, then surely they wouldn't have been beyond a little inducement when they thought the incentive necessary. I would never know.

**I can still see Mike sitting down as we entered the living room in almost total darkness, hearing him say, “I really don’t think you’re up to our level at this agency. I’ve got a mind to terminate this interview right now and send you to Gerry’s in Brooklyn.”**

**So, here I am with more of the same income anxiety. Do not pass go, do not collect two hundred dollars! I wonder where Gerry advertises for escorts in Brooklyn ...**