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Celebutantes

Ruthanna Hopper and Amanda Goldberg

thursday

82 hours, 3 minutes, 58 seconds until the Oscar for Best Cinematography is handed out.

chopin's Nocturna CD streams through the Bose speakers in my shower stall. Nanny No. 9 said it always helped her when she was having man issues, and I have enough of those to fill the Hollywood Bowl. I have to face an ugly truth: I'm still in love with SMITH. No! I will not let this happen. Better switch the soundtrack in my head to South Pacific. I'm lathering up my peppermint shampoo to wash that man right out of my hair. Suddenly a slender hand switches the curtain aside and turns off the spray. Oh God, I'm going to be Janet Leighed in Psycho and I never even got to kiss George Clooney.

A scream freezes in my throat. But it's not a butcher knife that passes before my eyes, along with my so-called life; it's a newspaper.

"How do you explain this?" Kate says, shaking Page Six at my face. Oh no. The photo of SMITH and me kissing at LAX last night. It's HUGE. Norman Bates would have been a relief. "Which part of 'I don't have time to fly you to Pennsylvania and check you into the Menninger Clinic did you not understand?"

"Jesus, Kate!" I scream, "You scared the crap out of me! I'm going to be in post-traumatic shock for the entire day!"

"Well, join the shockfest. I was doing breakfast at the Chateau with James Cameron. We were going over the casting list for Titanic 2: Love Floats when I saw this." She rattles the offending photo at me again for emphasis.

"How can James Cameron do a sequel to Titanic when the ship sank and everyone died—including Jack?" I point out.

"Did you go to their funerals?" Kate glares at me. "I didn't think so. Now stop changing the subject. What happened to the Lola who was going to conquer Oscar Week and swear off actors forever? How could you do it?"

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"It was a drive-by kissing. Like one of those freak L.A. accidents. It's not my fault. I gave SMITH the Simon Cowell line and everything. The whole thing happened faster than Kristin Cavallari's fifteen minutes."

"Who?"

"Exactly," I say.

Kate grabs a towel and wraps me in it, pushing me down next to her onto the ledge of the tub. "Lola, this is absolutely forbidden. You are not going back there with him. You're better than that. I need you to promise."

"I—I—" I contemplate promising with my fingers crossed behind my back to avoid incurring more of Kate's Tony Soprano wrath. But I can't lie—not to Kate. I take a deep breath. "Kate, you don't understand," I say, putting my head in my hands, not really understanding it myself. "I love SMITH. I just do. You've never been in this kind of relationship. All you're looking for is Mr. Right For Tonight."

"And you call this a relationship?" she says, shaking that damn Page Six picture in the steamy air yet again. I'm about to grab it out of her hands and flush it down the toilet. But I stop myself. The truth is I want to take a closer look at it once she's gone. "This is the guy who sent his freaking assistant to dump you. He doesn't even write his own dialogue when he's talking to you. Jesus, Lola, he annihilated you and I had to pick up the pieces. He doesn't get to have an All Access Pass to you again. Do you understand me? SMITH is not coming back in." Kate starts pacing around the bathroom, tossing her chocolate-covered mane, her olive skin dewy from the misty bathroom. "You're the perfect example of why I don't get involved. You're beyond losing your identity to these men; you've never been able to find it because you get so lost in them."

It stings because Kate's probably completely right. But aren't I just a little bit right too? "Love doesn't make a person weak, Kate. It's okay to have feelings. And it's okay to be vulnerable. It's not going to turn you into a Desperate Housewife like your mother."

"And it doesn't make me your father, Lola. My career is the most important thing to me. I'm not going to make the mistake your father did by pretending that I'm capable of love and then failing." A shadow creases her face, then just as suddenly, it's gone.

Silence and steam fill the bathroom. I listen to the drip-drop of the shower. The years of our friendship, all that Kate and I've experienced growing up together, plays like a slide show in my head. I feel a surge of affection for my old friend, tough guy act and all.

"It seems like the last time you actually had a feeling was for my brother—and we were sixteen."

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"Yeah, and he went off to college and dumped my ass. I was devastated," Kate says in a falsetto I never knew was in her range. "I decided then and there I'd never do that again."

"Whoa. Kate. Why didn't you ever tell me that Christopher ruined you for your whole adult life?"

"Jesus, Lola, don't be so dramatic," Kate says, snapping back to her usual tenor. "Those feelings were a waste of time then. And they're a waste of time now."

"Hey, Kate," I say softly. "Maybe you should waste some time now and then."

Kate rolls her eyes. "I give up. Don't say I didn't warn you." She fossicks around in her caramel tote and pulls out an envelope. "I guess you can open this. I was going to burn it, but go ahead. It came with those peonies by the front door, which I assume are from SMITH and which I refuse to bring in."

I tear open the envelope. Kate reads it over my shoulder: "You look so good next to me" he's written on the clipping from the Post, and he's scrawled a heart around our picture. "It's a good thing we're in the bathroom. I think I may be sick," Kate says.

"I think it's kinda sweet," I say.

"Yeah, if selfish and self-centered is sweet," Kate says. Her cell trills. "Thank God. My assistant to save me from one more emotional thought." She clicks on the speaker. "What is it, Adam?"

"Kevin Dillon's publicist called from Cedars to let you know that Kevin's just out of surgery."

"Messenger the Dennis Dugan script to him at the Steven Spielberg wing at Cedars and tell him Universal needs an answer by Monday," she orders.

"Shouldn't you send flowers or something too?" I ask.

"It's not like he had a kidney transplant; he had his appendix removed."

I throw Kate a look. "Fine. Adam, deal with the flowers. Who else?"

"Your sister called to see if you'd changed your mind about going to her rehearsal dinner tomorrow night."

"Tell her I can either pay for the rehearsal dinner or I can go to the rehearsal dinner—she can take her pick." I throw Kate another look. "Oh, okay. See if you can schedule a call with her for this afternoon and Adam, you know the order—clients, colleagues, family."

"Right. Will called. He has to go to St. Tropez Tanning at three p.m. so he wants you to pick up his cousin from the airport."

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"Another cousin? Tell him to call Nanny 911. On second thought, Adam, you go."

"Will specifically said he wants you to go and he'd like you to bring her a box of red velvet Sprinkles cupcakes."

"Remind me how much ten percent of five million is." Click. Kate snaps her phone shut and gives me an aggrieved look.

"I gotta go. I've officially reached my emotional limit for the week."

"Oh, Kate, I love you." Kate rolls her eyes and squirms stiff-armed out of my hug. We walk to the front door, where my eyes stray to the ginormous bouquet of delicate pink peonies waiting just outside.

"Oh, go ahead," Kate says. "I know that if I throw them in the trash, you'll go fishing them out anyway." She hands me the super-sized vase of flowers from SMITH, but she could just as easily be referring to the men in my life. "I'll see you at the Gagosian gallery tonight." Gagosian's having a retrospective of Robert Graham's work and Cricket's one of his models. Anjelica Huston must be one secure wife, because Cricket—and all the other forty-nine models—posed nude. "Do you think if I buy one of Robert's sculptures Anjelica will sign with me?" Kate says as she walks toward her Porsche. "And tell SMITH I'll call The Enquirer and tell them he has a small dick if he hurts you again." I can't hear her say it as she starts the ignition of her Porsche, but I can read her lips as she pushes on her aviator sunglasses. "And I love you too."

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