

# *The Waitress, the Man, and the Rose*

***Hits never hurt until they hit home***

## **Part 1**



The man walked casually into the restaurant, sat down at his favorite booth, and positioned the long-stemmed rose on the table where it would be easily recognized. He had been there for lunch a few times before. But today, it was the smile of a waitress that brought him back.

*Women love flowers,* thought the man. *Maybe this one will catch her eye.*

There was nothing special-looking about the man. He was short, plump, and dressed in a worn tee-shirt and blue jeans, and wore a worn-out faded baseball cap that almost covered his eyes. But what he lacked in appearance he made up for in confidence.

*I wonder if she's working today?* the man thought. *Ahhh, there she is.*

"That's a beautiful flower," said the waitress, as she placed the glass of ice water on the table. "It must be for someone special."

Having waited on the man in the past, the waitress remembered he was different than other men; courteous and respectful. She had seen her share of men, most of whom wanted more than dinner and a movie.

The man had vivid memories of the waitress from his previous visits to the restaurant, where he studied her every move. It was her innocent demeanor and smile that drew his curiosity. To her, she was simply being nice. But to the man, her smile was a sign that she was attracted to him.

"The rose," said the man, "is for you."

Somewhat taken aback, the waitress struggled for words. "Uh, how sweet and thoughtful. No one has ever brought me a flower."

"It's a token of my appreciation," said the man, smiling as he maintained eye-contact. "You're a breath of fresh air at the beginning of my day."

The man returned to the restaurant for the next two days and placed a long-stemmed rose on the table. Each day he waited patiently for the waitress' reaction.

"I don't know what to say," the waitress said. "It's so nice of you to do this. I'm just beyond words."

"That's okay," said the man. "I understand. Maybe I can call you sometime and talk?"

"Uh, sure. Okay," said the waitress. "Here's my cellphone number. But please don't give it out to anyone. I don't want to be called in the middle of the night by some weirdo; know what I mean?"

"No problem," said the man. "I'll keep your number all to myself."

The waitress jotted her cellphone number on a napkin. The man folded the napkin and slid it into his pants-pocket.

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During the next few days, the man and the waitress spent their nights together talking on their cellphones. The hours were filled with their likes and dislikes, past experiences and mistakes, and random confessions. The man probed the waitress with question-after-question, gauged her reaction to his comments, and listened intently for something, anything to use to gain her trust. In his replies to her, he was always better, nicer, smarter, and more understanding than the men she had previously known. The waitress was impressed.

And when the man felt the time was right, he took a deep breath and told the waitress, "I want you to move in with me."

Dead silence.

*Is she still there?* the man wondered. He was disturbed by the long silence on the waitress' cellphone. "I was just kidding. Hello?"

"Uhhh, I'm still here." said the waitress, caught off-guard and disoriented by the man's comment. "I'm still here. I'm just thinking about what you said."

The man breathed a sigh of relief. "I thought I might have hurt your feelings and you hung up. But I'm serious about this. I want you to come live with me."

Still disoriented, the waitress showed the man a sign of weakness and played right into his hands. "Do you think we've known each other long enough? I mean, I just met you a few days ago, and I'm not sure if..."

Interrupting, the man reminded the waitress of the previous conversations, and her desire for "freedom" and "independence" and "companionship."

"Well, yeah. You're right. I did say that. I'll think about it tonight and talk to you tomorrow." said the waitress, now in deep thought. "Meet me at the restaurant for lunch; my treat this time."

After their talk, the man gulped the last of his coffee, and stretched out on his pull-out couch. He was confident that he had popped the question at the right moment. *She'll move in with me. She'll do it. I know she will. But, I gotta go to work in two hours. If I'm late, again, I'll get chewed out by the boss, again.* He drifted off to sleep thinking about the waitress.

Although she didn't reveal her excitement to the man, the waitress busied herself for her new adventure. *Finally!* she thought. *I have a chance to leave home and be on my own. I can go anywhere and do anything! Yes! Yes!* She fluffed her pillows, turned on her side, and thought about her new-found freedom. *We'll make plans tomorrow at lunch, and mom and dad won't know a thing.*

As the waitress drifted off to sleep, a voice deep within her soul summoned a warning. Confused, she opened her eyes, looked around her bedroom for a few seconds, then turned to her other side and fell fast asleep.

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During lunch the next day, the man and the waitress made plans for her "escape" to freedom. When she expressed doubt about moving in with a "stranger," the man reminded her of their past conversations and her daydreams about "leaving the nest" and "spreading her wings" and "flying to freedom." He neutralized her concerned lack of confidence with funny little smiles, serious eye contact, and assuring words.

Acting as if he was frustrated and impatient, the man played his trump card. "Hey, this is a great opportunity for you *and* me. Both of us are desperate for the same things. Both of us are lonely. Right?" The waitress agreed. "Both of us need companionship. Right?" Again, the waitress agreed. "And, you want to be on your own without having to answer to your *mommy and daddy*. Right?" Again, the waitress agreed.

"You're right on all counts," said the waitress. With a perky smile and a shrug of her shoulders, she made a life-changing decision that would return to haunt her in the months to come. "Okay! I'll take a chance and come live with you. This is the biggest step of my life, and I hope it works out."

Noticing her doubt, the man moved quickly with words of assurance. "No need to worry. It'll work because we'll make it work. Everything is gonna be okay. Now, let's stop wasting time and make our plans."

The man had it all figured out. The waitress would go home, pack a few bags full of clothes, and meet him back at the restaurant within two hours. Then, she would follow him in her car to her new home away from home.

"But what about all my stuff?" asked the waitress. "I need time to pack my things and..."

Anticipating her concerns for her personal belongings, the man interrupted the waitress and expressed a sense of urgency. "Don't worry about all your stuff. We'll take care of that later. Besides, you moving out won't sit well with your *mommy and daddy*, so don't tell them where you are going, and don't let *mommy and daddy* change your mind. I'll call my boss at work and take the rest of the day off. You're making the right decision."

"Okay. Okay," said the waitress. "Don't worry. I'll go home and be back as soon as possible. I'm old enough to make my own decisions, and this a good opportunity for me to do it!"

Before they parted, the man asked the waitress for a hug and a kiss. "Uh, sure. I guess so." she said reluctantly, as the voice deep within summoned another warning. "But just on my cheek."

"I'll meet you back here within two hours," said the man. Please hurry, and don't let anyone change your mind."

As the waitress drove away, the man called his job and left a voice message on his boss' phone. She was livid. *Jobs are hard to find and he's about to learn the hard way. If he lays out one more time, he's fired!* she thought.

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The waitress knew her mother and dad would not approve of her moving out, especially on the spur of the moment. She rushed home, walked quickly to her bedroom, and hurriedly stuffed a few bags with regular clothes, shoes, work uniforms, toiletries, and an expensive porcelain doll her mother gave her years ago on her 18th birthday. While she was anxious to leave and fulfill her long-awaited dream, she prepared herself for an argument when her parents walked into her bedroom.

Perplexed, the waitress' mother asked calmly, "What is going on, dear? Where are you going?"

"Mom, I'm going to live somewhere else!" replied the waitress angrily. "And before you say anything, I'm old enough to make my own decisions! So, don't start crying and don't worry about me. I will be fine."

"But I don't understand," said the mother. "Will you be living alone or with a friend, or somebody else?"

Unable to deny her mother's intuition, the waitress stopped packing and turned to face her mother. Her cutting reply was the last thing her mother wanted to hear. "I will be living with a man!"

With tears now flowing, the mother's face conveyed her shock and horror. *This is a bad dream, she thought. This isn't happening.* She left the bedroom in utter disbelief, and walked the long hallway to the living room, hoping all the way that this was only a nightmare.

The father, still standing in the doorway of the bedroom, tried to remain positive and not reveal his emotion swelling at every breath. "So, how long have you known this guy? What is his name?"

"Long enough, *daddy*," the waitress curtly replied. "And his name is really none of your business. Like I told mother, I am old enough to make my own decisions. Anything else? I need to go."

As the waitress gathered her bags to leave, her father cupped his hands around her face, looked into her eyes, then said the words she had grown to cherish since her childhood. "Sweetheart, I love you so very much. I have always wanted the best for you. Yes, you *are* old enough to make your own decisions. But I fear this decision will return to haunt you in ways you cannot imagine. Please, let's at least talk about it before you go."

Pausing for a moment, the waitress looked into her father's loving eyes, now full of tears, and felt the tug of a voice deep down inside warning her to change her mind. She trusted her father. He had always been there for her, even during the most difficult times. In her heart she knew he was right, but if she stayed and talked to him, she knew he might change her mind.

The waitress hugged her father, tightly, and reassured him with an "I love you too." Her quick but gentle kiss on his cheek blended her tears with his.

On her way out the front door, the waitress avoided eye-contact with her mother. She figured leaving home would be difficult for her parents, but she didn't prepare herself for her feelings of love and concern for her mom and dad, now growing and intensifying with every beat of her heart.

As the waitress tossed her bags in her car, she paused for a moment and noticed her mom and dad standing together, arm-in-arm, drawing strength from each other. They were a witness to something never imagined in their wildest dreams.

*Oh! I almost forgot the framed picture of mom and dad on my bedroom wall,* thought the waitress. She ran by her mom and dad down the long hall to her bedroom, grabbed the picture off the wall, ran back outside, and placed the picture on the back seat of her car. After a brief but tight hug between the three of them, she rushed back to the restaurant to meet the man, who had been waiting impatiently, spying his wristwatch every few seconds.

*No dating. No getting to know each other. No falling in love. No engagement. No wedding. No questions asked,* thought the father, as he stood in the middle of the street and watched his little girl disappear down the long and winding road.

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The man's being an almost complete stranger really didn't matter to the waitress. To her, he was sweet, gentle, and kind. He treated her different than the men in her past. He projected a puppy dog innocence. Through him she would feel needed and important. Through him she would finally gain her freedom and independence from living at home with her parents.

Although the waitress felt no love for the man, through him she felt she would fulfill her deepest and innermost desire--companionship--and a final end to her loneliness. All it took to convince her was a smile from a stranger, encouraging words, and a few roses.

To the man, his seeing the waitress for the first time was fantasy at first sight. He thought about her day and night, and fantasized different scenarios, such as her moving in with him and spending time only with him. He listened intently to her words, and chose his words carefully. He played on her child-like innocence and vulnerability, and gave her a sense of worth and well being. He worked hard to capture her full attention. And, within a matter of a few days, he made her an integral part of his life.

As the man and waitress pulled into his driveway, the small voice she had previously ignored arose from the pit of her stomach, and settled in her throat. *Oh my goodness!* she thought. *Can two people live in that?! Surely he is kidding.* She remained in her car and wondered if she had made the right choices.

Noticing her hesitation, the man walked quickly to the waitress' car and spoke a soft demand. "C'mon, baby! Let's get you settled in!"

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During the next two weeks, the waitress' parents called and left messages on her cellphone, popped-in for surprise visits at the restaurant, and tried everything they could think of to maintain communication.

Growing tired of her parents' calls and unscheduled visits, the waitress demanded that they stop calling and leave her alone. She cancelled her e-mail account and blocked her parents from leaving messages on her cellphone. She didn't realize that in the aftermath of her leaving, she left her parents to sort through a mountain of confusion and worry, broken hearts, and incredible emotional pain.

But the waitress' parents didn't stop worrying, and the emotional pain of their daughter's leaving refused to go away. As far as they were concerned, their daughter's life and welfare was in jeopardy. Day-after-day, he mother would sit quietly and weep, while the father would pace the floor, angrily saying, "This is insane! I cannot believe this! Our daughter has moved in with a complete stranger! One minute she's full of love and hugs, and the next minute she hates us and disappears from our lives! The worry and pain is just too much!"

While the parents' knew their hands were tied legally, they set out to find as much information as possible on the man who worked his way into their daughter's life, outwitted her with smooth talk and a flower, and tore their family apart without batting an eye.

But the greatest pain felt by the father was thinking about what the man was doing to his daughter, behind closed doors. *My little girl...My beautiful little girl...I know what he's doing to my little girl.* The emotional pain he suffered was excruciating, far beyond any physical pain he had experienced.

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From day-one, the man wooed and cooed the waitress and overwhelmed her with kindness and concern. He offered her freedom and independence from those who claim to love her. He played on her innocence and overly-trusting nature, and took advantage of her deep-seated need for companionship. He had answers to all of her questions. He learned from past experiences. He depended on his ability to manipulate and control women.

In a matter of a few days, the man snatched the waitress away from her loving parents, and a long-stemmed rose helped him to accomplish that goal.

Little did the waitress know that she was nothing more than a pawn in a Chess game. Little did she realize that her very life would be in danger; for as beautiful as a rose is, it has thorns that sting and cut deep into the flesh.

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The waitress wasn't pleased with the cramped conditions of the man's one-man camper. Located in an isolated area outside of town, it was an older model, dirty and weather-worn on the outside. Inside the camper, everything from front-to-rear was compact. There was no air conditioner, only sliding and roll-out windows. The flooring was soft in areas and creaked with every step. The couch and bed pulled-out from the walls. The bathroom and shower area had a pungent odor, and was cramped beyond belief. And, from front-to-rear, the camper was hot, humid, and permeated with the rank smell of mildew.

*My bedroom at home is larger than this place, thought the waitress. Oh well, I made my decision and I will try to make the best of it. Besides, if I go back home now, mom and dad will probably say, 'I told you so.'*

But it was mom and dad who, when they called and popped in for visits, encouraged their daughter to come home. In her heart she loved her parents, and knew that if she needed them they would be at her side in a moment's notice. She thought about the look on her mother's face, and the tears rolling down her father's cheeks. Most of all, she remembered the last words her father spoke to her before she sped away from home and disappeared from his view. Sweetheart, *when you need me, call me day or*



*night, and I will be there. No man can take away my love for you. I love you.*

The waitress didn't share her thoughts about her parents with the man, nor did she complain to him about her new living conditions. He didn't know her parents, but he expressed his resentment for them on a regular basis. When he sensed she wasn't pleased with her new living arrangements, he reminded her he wasn't a good housekeeper, and that a little cleaning and scrubbing here and there will do wonders.

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At first, everything seemed fine. The waitress took everything in stride and made the best of the cramped conditions. She cleaned and scrubbed the camper from top to bottom, inside and out, and prepared meals on the small gas stove in the miniature kitchenette. She worked hard to make the camper her home, and even grinningly referred to it as her personal "sardine can in the woods."

On her off-days, she occupied her time by watching game shows on the portable TV--when the reception was clear, or sit outside the camper in a old weather-beaten plastic chair--when the weather outside wasn't hot and muggy. Since the man totally controlled her paychecks, she had no money to go shopping for new clothes, go to a movie, or get together with her friends.

And when she wasn't occupied with the daily routine, she thought about the way things used to be before her "escape" from home. She missed her mom and dad, but she was too proud to admit it out loud. She missed being at home, but she was too strong-willed to call her parents. But what she was forced to admit is that the newness had worn off and reality had set in. It was then that the waitress awakened to the fact that she was totally isolated from her family. Instead of the freedom and independence she had hoped for, she now lived in fear and dreaded to go to sleep at night. She was isolated out in the middle of nowhere. Gradually, her loneliness returned, but it was a loneliness she had never known.

While her waitressing job provided a bit of relief from the every day routine and boredom of the camper, she found herself crying for no reason at all. In her world of isolation, she had been subtly conditioned into believing that wrong was right and right was wrong.

At the restaurant, the waitress' manager and friends noticed the abrupt changes in her attitude and the sadness in her eyes. Often, they would ask the waitress, "What's going on?" and "Are you alright?" and "You look sad

today." But all the waitress would say is "I'm okay" or "Everything is fine" or "Please mind your own business."

But the waitress wasn't okay and everything wasn't fine. She was haunted by the words from her not so distant past, words that kept surfacing and resurfacing day-by-day and night-by-night. In her mind were the relentless echoes of her mother's tearful concerns, whispering, *We love you...Please don't leave...We can work everything out.* The echoes from her father's firm but loving words were sealed in her memory, *Sweetheart, you are in a dangerous situation...I am afraid for your safety...We pray for you everyday...We love you so much...Please come home...Everything will be okay...*

Shaking her head to clear her mind, the waitress tried to maintain focus on the important things: her job, the mounting bills, food, cooking three meals a day, cleaning the camper, mowing the grass, and trying to get along with the man she hardly knew and still didn't love. *It's hard to keep focused when there is too much to focus on,* she thought.

Although the waitress wouldn't dare admit it to the man, she missed her parents, terribly. She remember that last hug, when her mom and dad embraced her so tightly. Months had passed since she had seen or talked to them. Her thoughts of mom and dad and the wonderful times they shared together brought on a mixture of happiness and sadness.

But the comforting echoes of her parents' words wandering around in her mind gave way to the pain of isolation from her family, and her friends--many of whom had given up on her months ago. The emotional hurt she had endured thus far greatly outweighed the physical pain she was feeling in her body.

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In the past, the waitress missed work and called in sick for days at a time. Her doing so hid her shame, growing depression, and the physical abuse tattooing her body. But today, sunglasses would hide the black-and-blue bruises around her eyes. Heavy make-up would mask the bright red slap-marks on her face. A long sleeve shirt would cover the bruises from punches on her upper arms and back.

For months, the waitress endured and so far survived incredible fear and isolation, intimidation, strong-arm bullying tactics, filthy name-calling, punching, slapping, pushing, death threats, and fists punched through walls. The pain of her loneliness flowed from her eyes down her swollen cheeks, and fell slowly to the floor of the hot, smelly camper she called "home."

At times during the day, she would search her mind for answers and and try to reason things out. *Why is this happening to me? Is this how it's supposed to be? How long will this continue? He hits me and says it's my fault. It must be my fault,* she was convinced. *Today will be a better day,* she finally decided.

But behind the sunglasses, heavy make-up, and painted smile, she knew that today would be no different. In fact, it would be worse; for the man would lose his job over a senseless, angry outburst and a cowardly threat to his female boss.

As far as the man was concerned, laziness, a poor work ethic, playing tough-guy towards a woman, and losing his job was no big deal. After all, his waitress had a job and would take care of the bills, food, and gas for his car. He had lost jobs in the past for same reasons. For him, it was par for the course and a way of life.

*If she leaves and runs home to mommy and daddy,* the man thought, *I'll just find another waitress to take care of me and foot the bills.*

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"IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!" screamed the man's voice into the waitress' cellphone. "I LOST MY JOB TODAY BECAUSE OF A STUPID FEMALE! GUESS WHO'S GONNA GET IT AS SOON AS I GET HOME?!"

Darkness filled the inside of the camper. Mind-numbing fear entered the waitress' mind. The slamming of the car door outside triggered within her an immediate inner-defense mechanism she had come to know so well. She slumped down on the floor of the bedroom and backed herself into her "safe corner." She covered herself with pillows and blankets--anything to protect her already bruised and beaten body. Tears flowed from her bloodshot eyes down her swollen cheeks. Numbed by fear, her mind was protectively shutting down, reducing itself to a blurry, chaotic fog.

"He...He...He's going to kill me this time," her lips trembling with every word spoken. "He's...He's going to kill me."

The front door slammed so hard it shook the tiny camper from front-to-rear. and. The man entered the bedroom in a grinning, maniacal rage, struggling to remove his belt. With her whole body trembling in fear, the waitress tucked her face between her knees, interlaced her hands on top of her head, and prepared herself for death.

"You got fired from your job yesterday," the man spoke softly, "and you didn't think I would find out. "YOU'RE A WORTHLESS, STUPID IDIOT! YOU CAN'T EVEN HOLD DOWN A JOB WAITING ON TABLES! NOW, LITTLE MISS PERFECT, WHO'S GONNA PAY THE BILLS AROUND HERE?! NOT ME!"

The man's ranting and raving intensified as he prowled up and down the short hallway like an animal in a cage. He kicked and pounded the thin-paneled walls with his feet and fists. He cursed the name of the female manager who caused the loss of his job. He cursed the names of all the women who had betrayed him in the past. He searched his mind for an inventory of profanities to spew at the waitress.

"I GAVE YOU A HOME OUT OF THE GOODNESS OF MY HEART!" screamed the man. "I OFFERED YOU LOVE AND HAPPINESS BUT YOU TURNED ME DOWN! YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT THAN ALL THE OTHERS! YOU'RE GONNA GET IT REAL GOOD THIS TIME!"

The pounding continued. With every kick and punch, the man was relentless in his pursuit of hatred for the women in his past and everyone who had encountered his hair-trigger temper and fits of rage.

"WHO DO THESE BRAINLESS IDIOTS THINK THEY ARE?!" screamed the man. "THEY TELL ME I NEED HELP! THEY TELL ME I HAVE A 'SERIOUS PROBLEM' MANAGING MY ANGER! BUT IT'S THEM WHO NEED THE HELP, NOT ME!"

The man's words bounced in-and-out of the waitress' ears. She could hear dull sounds and noise, but could not comprehend their meaning. Her mind--now completely numbed from the constant screaming and pounding--had all but shut down. She knew the worst was coming.

And in the midst of her brainwashed stupor, her silent cries to the One Who she knew loved her the most were the last thoughts that penetrated the blurry fog of her numbed mind.

*God, I should have listened to mom and dad. I caused them so much grief and pain. I rejected them when I needed them the most. I wanna go home. Jesus, please help me. I can't take it anymore. Please stop him from hurting me. Lord, please help me. I wanna go home.*

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Throughout the night and into the next morning, the waitress bore the brunt of the man's pent-up anger and savage aggression. He screamed at the top of his lungs and called her filthy names. He stomped around the bedroom

like an uncaged bull looking for something, anything to destroy. He bounced the waitress' porcelain doll off the wall until it broke into hundreds of pieces, then stomped the remains into the floor. He jerked the framed picture of her parents off the wall, slammed it to the floor, and stomped the photos to a pulp into the carpet.

As the waitress' body trembled and heaved in terror, the man's anger escalated and spread to the small living room, where he pounded the living room walls with his baseball bat, cursing the waitress and the women in his past with every breath and swing.

"TAKE THAT!" roared the man. "TAKE THAT, AND THAT, AND THAT! "YOU'RE NEXT! You're...next" he mumbled to himself out of breath. *You...are...next*, he thought, before he passed out on the couch from sheer exhaustion.

The sudden silence awoke the waitress from her terrifying ordeal. *Did he go outside?* she thought, *Is he still in the camper?* she wondered. She remained in her corner and listened intently for the slightest noise. Minutes, hours passed by, she wasn't sure. She summoned her courage and quietly removed the protective pillows and blankets. *Where is he?* she cautiously thought. *Is he hiding and waiting for me to come out?*

Standing up to walk, her knees wobbled and shook from the fear and adrenalin still flowing through her body. Quietly, softly, she made her way across the bedroom and noticed her reflection in a desktop mirror that survived the man's all-night aggression.

*He didn't hit me*, she thought, as she focused her eyes on the mirror. She turned and pivoted from side-to-side, looking at her legs, arms, and back. *He didn't hit me*. She ran her hands across the back of her neck up to the top of her head. *I am alive! I made it through the night!* her thoughts screamed in her mind.

From front to rear, the camper was a disaster zone. Evidence of the man's out-of-control rage stretched from ceiling to floor, from one end of the camper to the other. Cautiously and methodically, the waitress moved slowly across the bedroom floor, examining every step with her bare feet. *Where is he?* she wondered. *What is going on?*

As she maneuvered her way through the nightmare of debris and needle-sharp shards of broken glass, her foot rested on the remains of the framed picture of her mother and father. Their once smiling faces had almost disappeared, and were now molded into the man's boot-print within the old and worn out carpet.

Careful not to make a noise, she sifted through what was left of the photo from the broken glass, and drew it softly to her breast. With a faint tap, tap, tap, the tears streaming from her bright red war-torn cheeks fell onto the photo in slow motion.

Then, she gazed upon the rose that the man had given her months ago, its delicate red petals stomped and crushed into the carpet, almost beyond recognition. She gathered up what remained of the rose she once held so dearly, and grasped its crumbled petals tightly in her hand.

*Lord, I wanna go home, she whispered in her mind. I need to go home. I can't do it by myself. Lord, help me get out of here. Please help me.*

The only entrance to the camper was the front door. *Sliding open the bedroom window will make too much noise, she thought. Besides, it's too small for me to climb through. But the front door is just five feet away.* Her not knowing where the man was, coupled with her shaky legs and ongoing fear, the front door seemed as if it were ten miles away. Her walk down the short but long hallway would prove to be the longest journey of her life.

*If I can just make it to the front door, I will be okay, she thought. Lord, please let the front door be unlocked.*

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In and of itself, the short hallway to the front door was an obstacle course. Insulation dangled from the holes in the ceiling; the medicine cabinet from the "one-man bathroom" laid in her path, smashed and dented beyond repair; the busted and ripped paneling hanging from the walls would make her escape difficult and hazardous; the sharp-edged broken glass would cut her bare feet to ribbons.

Stepping lightly and moving quietly over and around the debris, every step the waitress made was a step towards freedom; a true freedom she had once known, but took advantage of. Renewed with a sense of strength and courage, she whispered to herself, *One step at a time, over-and-over again.*

The man was still sound asleep on the pull-out couch in the living room. His dirty, sweat-stained tee-shirt betrayed his anger and outrage the night before. The living room, kitchenette, simulated wood cabinets, ceiling, and cheap wall paneling were damaged beyond repair. The baseball bat the man used to vent his anger laid on the floor busted in half, the result of the man's vengeance on the portable TV.

As the waitress gazed in disbelief at the carnage, she remembered the exact moment when the man smiled and gave her the rose. She remembered his kind, gentle nature. She remembered the man's willingness to provide her with independence from her parents and freedom to do whatever she desired.

*I know what it's like to be tied down to parents and their stupid rules, she remembered the man saying. You can't do anything to please mommy and daddy, and they're always watching out to make sure you're safe and be a 'good girl.' Whatta joke!*

Like a recording, the man's words continued in her mind: *And, when you leave home you'll find out real quick just how much your friends care about you. I haven't seen or heard from my friends...in years.*

As the waitress drew within arm's reach of the front door, she gazed at the man she once knew and tried to take care of. *He did give me a place to stay, she thought. He did say he was sorry for hitting me last week. He did listen to me and said he understood me better than anyone else. He was nice when he was in a good mood and when we had money.*

The man's words echoed in her mind again and again...*Baby, I'll be honest with you...I love you...You can come live with me...You won't have to worry about anything...I'll take care of you...*

She inched closer and closer to the man. Thoughts of doubt about her leaving him entered her mind. *He looks so innocent and helpless. Maybe I am the cause of all of this. No one really understands him but me. He didn't hit me last night. Maybe that's a sign that he's getting better.*

More than anything, the waitress wanted to kneel down next to the man and wrap her arms around his shoulders, as she had done so many times before. Feeling a strange but peaceful calm, she reached out her hand to touch him. But when the man's face turned to face hers, it revealed the all-too familiar sickening grimace she learned to despise. It was then when she remembered the very words he spoke to her during their cellphone talks many months ago.

*I've had some anger problems in the past...Nothing serious...I'm doing fine now...You have nothing to worry about...Don't tell your parents or friends...*

The memory of the man's words were deeply ingrained in the waitress' mind, and were an audible slap to her face. And for the first time, she came out her shell, stood upright, and vented her own anger. "YOU LIAR! she screamed. "YOU MANIPULATED ME! YOU HURT ME AND TOOK

ADVANTAGE OF MY TRUST AND INNOCENCE! YOU USED ME AND TREATED ME LIKE YOUR SLAVE! YOU STOLE MY MONEY AND TOLD ME MY FRIENDS DIDN'T LIKE ME ANYMORE! YOU MADE ME STAY IN THIS HOT, STINKING 'SARDINE CAN' AND, WORST OF ALL, YOU ISOLATED ME AND TURNED ME AGAINST MY MOM AND DAD!"

"And you know what?" she said calmly. "You will NEVER touch me again."

Now fully awake, the man rubbed the sleep from his eyes, sat up on the couch, and stared at the open front door to the camper. He knew what was coming, for he had been there before--same camper, same situation, and same beginning and end, but in another time with another waitress.

The man lowered his head as the familiar sound of the sirens pierced his ears.

As the handcuffs clicked around the man's wrists, he grinned and gave a snide look at the Deputy Sheriff. "Hey man, women are nothing but trouble. The world would be better off without them."

"No! You got it wrong, boy!" replied the Deputy Sheriff. "You are a coward who abuses women. The world will be better off without *you!*"

### **Epilogue...**

Mere words can't describe the reunion between the waitress and her parents. The tears and kisses and hugs flowed freely as they stood and embraced each other, tightly.

"Mom and dad," said the waitress, gently touching their faces, "I love you both so much. I was so blind. Please forgive me for the way I treated you. Can I please come home now?"

The waitress' mother, who was too emotional to speak, smiled and softly kissed the bright redness of her daughter's cheeks. The waitress' father, still teary-eyed but full of peace and joy, gazed deeply into his daughter's bloodshot eyes with a reply that warmed her heart. "Sweetheart, you never left home, because you were always in our hearts and prayers."

"Mommy and daddy," said the waitress, still in their tight embrace, "your faces are so beautiful. I will never doubt you again. Never. Lord, thank You for answering my prayers."

Today, the waitress became a new woman. As she turned for a final look at the smelly sweat box she once called home, she slowly opened her hand and



gazed at the remains of the rose, and allowed it to fall ever so gently to the ground.

**~~~~~**

*"The Waitress, the Man, and the Rose" was written by Bud Press, and is lovingly and respectfully dedicated to courageous women everywhere who have experienced and survived the indescribable terrors of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of a man.*

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## *The Waitress, the Man, and the Rose*

***Hits never hurt until they hit home***

### **Part 2**



**To the Reader:** We hear about domestic abuse and men battering women on a regular basis. But like the woman in the story, "The Waitress, the Man, and the Rose," until a family member or close friend steps into the dangerous path of a female abuser--and experiences the physical and emotional abuse first hand--we turn our backs on the issue and refuse to get involved.

While writing "The Waitress, the Man, and the Rose," I took the opportunity to talk with women who had experienced abuse at the hand of a man. Their emotional stories touched my heart and awakened me to the reality of domestic abuse nationwide.

No man has the freedom or right to abuse a woman. There is no excuse. Women are precious creations from the hands of God, and are to be loved, protected, cherished, and respected:

***An excellent wife, who can find?  
For her worth is far above jewels.  
Proverbs 31:10***

Physical and emotional abuse go hand-in-hand, and are spawned from the same source. Any man who abuses a woman is a coward in the highest degree. He should be locked up in prison for the rest of his cowardly life.

Times have changed, and danger may be lurking beyond the smiles, nice words, and pretty flowers. *Hits never hurt until they hit home.* Because of this, parents with daughters need to learn the warning signs of a female abuser *before* the relationship begins. At the same time, parents need to educate their daughters on the warning signs of a female abuser.

The internet is loaded with individuals, information, and organizations that stand ready to provide help and assistance to women, their families, and their friends. For further information, go to [Google search](#) and type in "domestic abuse".

Right now, there are real women who are suffering the effects of physical and emotional abuse by men. Right now, a woman is being intimidated and is living in fear. Right now, a woman is being bullied, humiliated, slapped, pushed, punched, kicked, and degraded. And, right now, a woman is nursing her wounds and covering the marks on her body to hide the truth behind her pain and sorrow.

~ If you are involved in an abusive relationship, stop what you are doing and **Dial 911** right now, and seek help. You are not alone. There are women who will listen and talk to you, and organizations that will gladly provide you with help and assistance.

~ If you are dating or living with a man who has abused women in the past, it isn't a question of **If** he will abuse, but **When** he will abuse. Therefore, get out of the relationship right now. Go home and return to those who truly love and care about you. Your doing so will save you and those who love you an incredible amount of grief, worry, and emotional pain.

~ If you are a single woman living by yourself, *never* date a man you don't know or haven't checked out thoroughly. Contact your local Sheriff's Department or law enforcement agency, and have them run a Criminal Background Check on the man *before* you get involved. Don't be shy. Ask questions. Talk to people who know the man. Check him out. The life you save may be your own.

Like the waitress' parents, I experienced a range of emotions, such as anger, frustration, sadness, and emotional pain. I am not ashamed to say that much of the story was written through my tears.

As difficult as it was to write the story, it is a story that needed to be told. I pray that God will use it for His glory, and that it will touch your heart and awaken you to the reality and savagery of domestic abuse.

Sincerely in Christ,  
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