



Success?

Chapter Nineteen

Stewart's emotions were in a whirlwind after his first date with Carol. He was elated and excited about the prospect of having his first complete sexual encounter with a girl he trusted and was attracted to, but about whom he really knew little. Although he had experienced hardships while growing up, he had been sheltered in comparison to Carol, who at his age had experienced a pregnancy, the emotional turmoil of an abortion, sexual encounters with any number of men, marriage and, most recently, the loss of her husband.

He also was fearful of the prospects of entering into a different kind of relationship with Carol, a girl he looked up to and admired, who he may not have chosen except for the fact their proximity in the workplace. Her experiences had propelled her to adulthood, while his were still those of a child, including his recent relationship and breakup with a woman who herself was immature in her expectations and understanding of life.

Stewart's anxieties continued through Sunday and into Monday morning when he came to work and took his seat behind Carol's drawing board.

He had arrived early and gathered the tools materials necessary to create

a flyer and an ad promoting the *Dark Shadows* trading card series.

Carol entered the office moments later, and Stewart's heart skipped a beat when she waved to him while entering and quietly made her way to her station. Nothing about her appearance had changed since the previous Friday. She was wearing jeans and a blouse, little or no makeup, and her hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

She retrieved some frisketed photos from the flat files near her table, stacked them on her desk, and reassembled her airbrush to be sure it was clean before filling its cup with thinned-down gouche.

Before she began working, she turned to Stewart and gave him a smile and a quick wink before opening the valve on the air tank that powered her airbrush.

From his position behind Carol, Stewart had difficulties focusing on his work, since he kept looking up at Carol and evaluating her figure, which was less than perfect, but still quite attractive. She wore "granny glasses," returned to style by John Lennon, which weren't flattering and made her appear older than her years. Despite these slight flaws, which had always existed, Carol had somehow become more alluring than she was the previous Friday, especially after the kiss she gave him and her provocative statement, "It'll be worth the wait," which kept running through his mind, often putting stress on the crotch of his chinos.

At lunch, those in marketing ate at the same table in the lunch room. Since Stewart's began working at the factory as a co-op student, Mishke had been hired, Mike had been replaced by Harry, and Doug now sat at the table with the other department heads, instead of with his staff. Carol sat next to Stewart, and asked everyone at the table about their past weekend. Two of the six employees in the department had been to the movies, both having seen the same movie on different days at the Brookline in Havertown: *Bullit* featuring Steve McQueen.

Carol shared with the group that she'd seen *The Odd Couple* at the 69th

Street Theater, and that it was worth the watch. Stewart remained silent as both movies were discussed. Jules had visited Longwood Gardens with his girlfriend of six months whom he met at a YMCA swim meet in Lansdowne. Neither Carol nor Stewart spoke of any contact they had shared over the weekend, and commented only on projects they were working on together.

Now knowing that Carol lived only a short distance from his home on Richfield Road, at the end of the day Stewart offered her an alternative to taking the bus, suggesting that he could easily pick her up and take her home from work.

Carol thought about the idea for a moment, and then declined the offer stating, “I enjoy reading on the bus, and I get my exercise climbing the hill to the factory and back down each day. I appreciate your offer, and I’ll certainly take you up on it in bad weather, when the bus schedule has changed, or if I’m not feeling well enough to walk.

“This doesn’t mean that I don’t appreciate your offer, Stewart. It’s just that it’s a pattern I’m used to, and one that provides me with some fond memories and solace.”

On Wednesday, Stewart received a letter from Whitney attached to a contract from the Fleer Corporation. The letter was typewritten on Whitney’s personal stationery.

Dear Stewart,

I hope this letter finds you well and provides a glimpse of what may become a boost to your career as a professional cartoonist.

A Comedy of Errors

The management of Fler has decided to take an offer I proposed and provide you with a two-year contract that will introduce your "Kafka" cartoons in 109 newspapers of the 1700 papers in their syndicate. As part of the consortium, you will receive a payment of \$5 per cartoon, per insertion over that period. "The Cargyles," which thus far remains untested, will be included in 39 papers at \$2 per insertion.

If and when during that period, more newspapers choose to include either of your strips or panels, you will receive \$2 additional payment per cartoon.

Your responsibility will be to produce at least four daily cartoons and one Sunday color panel per week, if any of the newspapers believe it advantageous, for which you will receive \$15 per insertion.

If at the conclusion of the two-year contract, any number of publications decide to discontinue your cartoons for any reason, Fler maintains the right to drop you from its network, and will release you from your contractual agreement, thus allowing you to either market your product to another syndicate, or to privately pursue agreements with publications on your own within or outside of the Fler network.

If Fler chooses to continue its contract with you, you will at that time have the right to renegotiate a new agreement with Fler based on the success, marketability and profits attributed to your efforts.

A Comedy of Errors

If Fler chooses to renegotiate the contract "Kafka," "The Cargyls," or any other cartoon panel or strip created by you and included in their existing portfolio, the syndicate then reserves the rights of use or resale of the cartoons in any way it chooses. Although your work will be credited ... If you choose to leave the syndicate for any reason, Fler, or its subsidiaries, can reassign your cartoon to their choice of another artist/writer in the future.

As your agent, I will receive 10% of the gross income paid by Fler to you while you remain under the initial contract. Since there is no guarantee that any of the newspapers in the syndicate will profit from the inclusion of any series, I have personally agreed to subsidize your funding, if necessary, for as much as \$25,000 each year during the term of your contract, and will only receive my management fee if your panels and/or strips are proven to be profitable to the syndicate and payments to the syndicate exceed the subsidized portion.

On a personal note, Stewart: the amount guaranteed to you in this two-year contract is greater than provided to any novice cartoonist in the industry. If you are capable and diligent with your pursuit, the amount you would receive may prove to be only a fraction of what you can expect to earn each year moving forward.

This will not be an easy task, but one that I, as a gambler, believe you have the ability to maintain.

A Comedy of Errors

Please review the contract with your attorney. If you have questions, please call or write me, and I will do my best to address any concerns you may have,

John

After reading Whitney's letter, Stewart attempted, without much success, to interpret the legaleze written into the contract. With Seiler's permission, Stewart used the company's copier to Xerox both the letter and the contract and personally delivered the package to his attorney's office early the next morning.

Stewart was currently earning \$110 a week at his job at the chewing gum factory. Fleer's offer guaranteed him nearly five times that amount. He realized that if he was to take on the commitment, he would have to give up the security he had as an employee, since in order to maintain the quality of his cartoons, it would require a full-time commitment on his part. The second reason for leaving was that Fleer, was a producer of Double Bubble bubble gum, and as such was a competitor of the Philadelphia Chewing Gum Corporation. Thus his employment by both companies would simultaneously be in conflict with any arrangement he had, or would have, by accepting Fleer's offer.

By the following morning, Stewart's attorney had looked over the contract and the letter, and had gotten back to Stewart. During their conversation, the lawyer was optimistic, but warned Stewart of reservations he had concerning his future dealings with Fleer after the two-year trial was ended.

"At this time it's common practice for a syndicate to own the rights to the cartoons it markets to the publications," said the attorney. "If a cartoon

is successful, it can mean millions for the syndicate from the licensing it receives from the newspapers as well as from compilations, promotional items, even the sale of a cartoon to a mega studio like Disney or Warner Brothers.

“Because of both the assumed generosity of Mr. Whitney, and his knowledge of syndication, in my opinion, you’ve been provided with an unprecedented opportunity to prove your worth while being paid a significant amount of money for your efforts.

“I therefore believe it is to your benefit to take the offer presented, but to be wary of changes moving forward, especially concerning ownership of your product and the licensing of your materials in the future.”

After Stewart posed a few additional questions, he was as assured as he could possibly be, that the contract and agreement with Whitney could be trusted.

After concluding the call, Stewart contacted his Uncle Russell and thanked him for his introduction to the attorney, after which he provided a brief synopsis of the agreement.

“I’m floored!” expounded Russell. “I don’t know how you did this, at this time, with your background, and at your age, but God has blessed you, Stewart. What did your parents think about the offer?”

“I haven’t told them yet. I owed you the first call, and want you to know that I’ll be paying you back for the attorney’s fees within the first two years, while my employment is guaranteed.”

“When will you start submitting your cartoons?”

“According to the contract, they want to begin integrating the *Kafka* series into publications by the first of the year. That gives me time to expand my output and also to get feedback from Whitney and others about the quality of my material. I’ll also soon have to hand in my resignation at the chewing gum factory, giving my boss Doug Seiler, enough time to fill my position. So I will be very busy for quite some time.”

“Sounds amazing, Stewart. I always knew you were a good kid, but never could have imagined your potential. In a way, you’re following in your parents footsteps... but might actually make some make money from your efforts.”

Stewart’s next call was to Carol, who sounded genuinely excited for him about the offer, but sorry he would have to leave his current position.

“So NOW we can celebrate,” said Carol.

Stewart wasn’t sure if that meant dining at a fancy restaurant, or perhaps more, but he responded affirmatively, “How about us going to the General Warren Inn? I’ve never been there for dinner, but I’ve heard it’s supposed to be quite good.”

“Is it a real Inn?” asked Carol.

“I believe it’s historic... from the 18th century,” answered Stewart.

“Does it have rooms, *you idiot?*”

“Oh, yes. I’ll check. I’m sure it does.”

“Then find out if there’s one available this Saturday, or the Saturday after, and we could stay the night... *together.*”

“I will. That will be great,” said Stewart, pleased, but somewhat flummoxed by Carol’s assertiveness.

“Maybe I’ve misinterpreted the concept behind your idea of our celebration?” asked Carol.

“No,” said Stewart. “I like you, Carol. And I would really like to be with you, whatever way you’d like. I just didn’t want to assume that the “celebration” of my contract with the syndicate is the same as my...you know.”

“I just thought that it might be nice to celebrate both things at once,” answered Carol, “since you mentioned an inn, a place where we could be alone...without parents.”

“That’s a very good suggestion. I’ll check it out and get right back to you.”

“Stewart...”

“Yes, Carol.”

“I’m not looking for a replacement for my husband.”

“I understand...”

“I don’t think you do understand, so I’ll make it clear to you. I’m not searching for a man to spend my life with. I’m just open to having a relationship that will satisfy both of our needs right now. You’re a nice guy who lost a good friend a year or so ago, and has gotten himself involved with a woman who’s clearly wrong for you.

“I miss having male companionship, and I miss having sex. At this point in our relationship, you’re no threat to me, unless you start feeling that you own me. My husband may have died, but I still love him. But now I’ve got to navigate my journey without him.

“If you can accept the fact that I’m not looking for a mate, but would enjoy the companionship of a person who has the right intentions, then we can perhaps learn from each other.”

“I’d really like that,” said Stewart.

“So let me know if the inn has a room we can stay in. This weekend would be good, since I’ve just had my period, and you won’t have to worry about that. Also, I’m still on the pill. Is there anything else you need to know?”

“No... I think I’m good with that.”

“By the way, Stewart. Congratulations on your new venture. I know you’ll be a great success.

“Call me as soon as you can confirm which weekend, so that I’ll be ready for more than just dinner.”
