

# The Stranger

by Aysha Aykut

The stranger smiled as he entered the large room and digested the scene. Perfect, he thought. He flicked his shoulder length, blonde hair and seated himself by the bar. He helped himself to a glass of punch and sipped it casually. No one would know - no one.

He took out a cigarette, lit it, and inhaled deeply. His dark eyes were deceiving, giving his face a look of macabre sensuality. His heart was pounding, it always did at this point in the procedure. He sat, enjoying the adrenaline surging through his body. A 'natural high' is what he called it. Who needed drugs when they could feel like this without them?

He stood up and walked through the crowd, taking note of the suggestive smiles and arched eyebrows from some of the pouting women. He nodded as a token gesture of politeness; good-looking as they might be, he had already decided on his target. He walked out onto one of the verandahs and breathed in the fresh, country air. Millions of stars shone brightly in the night-blue sky. Black trees rippled in delight to the gentle breeze.

His face was half obscured by the darkness but his menacing grin revealing pearly, white teeth, perfectly shaped, seemed to glow. He felt powerful indeed - very powerful. He thought about his previous conquests and laughed, self-satisfied. Poor things. Pathetic things. He'd really done them a favour. They wouldn't have made it out there ... No, he had helped them. A memory collided with his train of thought.

Only once had there been blood, he thought. The other times had been neat, clean, quick, and very easy.

He denied any thoughts that he was a misogynist. He wasn't ... he couldn't be ... no, he loved women. He frowned, one thing he must never do, question himself on any basis. A shudder of impatience swept through his body. He had the urge, the desire - again.

How many will it be after tonight?

The smile faded, replaced by a frown. He couldn't remember. Worry lines creased his dangerously handsome face and a number came to mind ... 11. He smiled again. Of course, how could he forget?

Lately, he'd been forgetting a lot of things. He'd even forgotten about one of the girls, just left her there, for anyone to find.

His thoughts were interrupted by a flash of light and a few sprinkles of rain. He tilted his head back and let the water trickle down his face. He screamed in delight and laughed.

"A mad laugh?" came an accusing voice. He turned around, no-one there. Who had spoken? A second or two and the realisation that the words were in his mind. "Damn it," he cursed out loud. "There I go again, questioning myself."

Approaching footsteps. He turned and saw her there. He recognised her instantly. She had come to him ...? Her beauty. Like the others she was blonde. He smiled, she smiled in return.

"Hi," she said in that silky, irresistible voice he'd heard so many times.

"Hi," he returned.

Silence. He didn't mind, but she looked uncomfortable. He let it go on a little longer, taking in her small, yet curvy figure. Her golden curls tumbling down her back, her wide mouth, full and sensual, and those eyes, violet as the sky at sunset.

"My name's Isabel," she said, again in that beautiful voice.

"He extended his hand, "Dear".

She took it and shook it with surprising force. Yet, her hand was small and delicate, just as she was. He could have crushed it. He noticed her nails and smiled, too good to be true. They were short, no scratches. Some earlier victims had long, sharp nails, their best defence.

"You're not from around here, are you?" she noted.

"No, I'm a city boy. Used to live out here though. Thinking of moving back."

She nodded. "It's a pretty spot, but it does get dull."

"I don't think it would bother me," he said, smiling. "I'm not really cut out for the city life."

She smiled with him.

"Besides," he continued, "there are such beautiful women out here."

She blushed and smiled again. He held her gaze for a long time. He could feel her coming to him. He knew she was interested - they always were.

"Would you," he began and paused for effect. He cleared his throat, feigned nervousness. "Would you like to dance?" She nodded, her face alight.

It would almost be a shame to kill her, he thought. For just a moment. The smell of power engulfed him, the need was growing stronger.

They danced close. An hour passed.

"Wow," he said, "you could go on all night."

She laughed.

"How about a breather?"

She agreed - enthusiastically. "Why don't we go for a walk to the pier? No-one will be there at this time of night."

"Sounds great."

She turned her back on him and led the way. He felt like laughing but he didn't, just in case. It was so easy. She was practically sacrificing herself. His mind thrilled as he planned the details.

Outside, the wind slapped their faces. She hugged herself.

"Cold?" he asked.

"Aren't you?" she retorted, playfully.

A nod, a grin. "Yeah, freezing."

They laughed together. He quickened the pace, his need to feel the power was growing. The pier lay ahead.

Silence. It was too cold to talk.

Anticipation.

She walked dangerously close to the edge. He followed. So easy, he thought.

He looked down at her and tilted her chin towards him. Their lips met, soft and sweet. They parted.

Now, he thought. The time is right. He stroked her cheek gently, letting the tension build. The power was his and he waited ... for the surge, for the intense power that was rightly his.

His hands rested on her shoulders. Slowly, so slowly, they inched upwards, to her silky neck.

Had he not been so engrossed in his own pleasure, he might have seen her eyes change.

He might have intercepted the quick and powerful push.

He might not have fallen

She watched him fall onto the rocks and angry waters below. She smiled and turned in the direction they had come. How many did that make? The contemplation pleased her when the number '11' floated to mind.