



Vic/Tim



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To my wife, Melinda, and daughter, Maribeth.

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THE BEGINNING ENCOUNTER

SOMETIMES WHAT LOOKS like bad people is only good people in bad situations. So what can we say about Vickie Newsome, an advertising executive who is single except for her two cats, Stone and Jones. She named them after one of her first ad sales on a show by the same name. She leaves work as she does most days, not traveling to clients or researching for her job. She plans to make it a quiet evening of watching reruns and wondering what ad could have been put in that show long ago. She makes her way out of her office building and hikes down the street to a local corner grocery to pick up a few things. It is snack night and her night to jump off the diet, if only for a bit. She makes her way back to her car to put her items in the trunk and decides to drop in the bookstore across the street to see what is new. She tends to get lost in these bookstores, so much to discover. She wanders the aisles of self-help books

to cooking and to romance novels. A book catches her eye, titled *Short Stories Not from a Real Writer*. The simple book title draws her attention as she picks it up. She is a little aware that someone else has taken notice of her. A mysterious and unseemingly suspicious-looking man begins to watch her from corners and small openings in bookshelves. She looks around as if something beckons her to pay attention to her surroundings, but she continues happily looking around. She picks up a few more books and leaves, as it is getting late.

The man follows and gets into his car to continue the pursuit. Vickie arrives at her house in the suburbs remotely, opening her garage door as the man passes by turning the corner. She made a small mental note of him passing. He must live around here, that's why the car seemed to go wherever she went when coming home. She leaves the garage door open as she carries her goods into the house.

The man sees she is inside and sneaks his way into her garage and hides behind a cabinet so she will not notice him. She grabs her final things and closes the trunk of the car as the garage door lowers. As it closes, her security light automatically comes out outside when dark. The man watches as the light extinguishes from the garage door closure. He waits patiently for a long time so that her guard will be down. He listens for the TV in her house to eventually go off. He knows the longer he waits, the

more neighbors will go too. Thoughts race through his mind of doubts about what he wants to do. However, the urge is strong and the adrenaline is pumping in his anxious state. It is like a drug, for this is something he had fantasized numerous times in his head, but his emotions have convinced him to make the fantasy real. He is scared yet excited and knows there is no going back after this. It runs through his mind like a car in a circle with no place to park as he keeps hearing her shuffle around her house. Finally, it is getting quiet as he hears her walking up the stairs. He makes his move to the garage house door, noticing it is unlocked. Vickie is showering and preparing for bed. The man has made his way up the stairs and takes position in an adjacent room waiting the right moment for him to surprise his victim.

Vickie dries off after a short shower and changes into a long t-shirt. The man's heart begins to beat faster as the moment has come. He has not done this before but has rehearsed it many times in his head. He is no killer but pulls his steak knife out that he acquired from her kitchen for intimidation. She is sitting on her bed reading now. He thinks to himself, *Okay, Tim, this is it.* He begins to have second thoughts about his life and why he is doing this, but the obsession to control another human being is too much of a high for him. Chemical responses in his brain from the excitement are like a drug and he begins to feel powerful.

He summons his courage and bursts out, quickly overtaking Vickie and putting the knife to her throat. He covers her mouth immediately and tells her not to make a sound. She stares intently at him and down at the knife. Tim tells her to comply with his wishes and she won't get hurt. He then tells her that he is going to take his hand off her and she must take her clothes off. He asks her if she understands as, and she nods slowly yes. He releases her and she slowly stands up to lift her shirt off. She then looks behind Tim and says, "Thank God you are here."

Tim quickly turns to see who is behind him and no one is there. Turning back quickly, he is kicked in the chest hard by Vickie, knocking him against the clothes drawers. By this time, she has grabbed his hand with the knife and turned his wrist, forcing him to drop the knife on the floor. He panics and begins to try to make a break for it as he labors to breathe from the kick. However, she is too quick for him and pushes him against a wall corner. He falls back, stunned.

By the time he gets up, she has a short wooden stick about three feet long and cracks him across the back as he makes it to the stairs. He tumbles, hitting the wall at the bottom. Looking up in horror, she is running down the stairs with a look of fury on her face. He runs to the fireplace and picks up a poker to defend himself, but she has already deflected his thrust and hits him in the arm with

the stick, causing him to drop the poker. He is badly hurt, and she cracks him again across the temple of his head. He is dazed and slowly gets up, seeing everything fuzzy. She is standing there hardly out of breath and staring at him like a lion about to finish its kill. He pleads with her to do no more and he will gladly go to jail. Like out of a martial art movie, she spins around and lands her foot across his sternum, knocking him backward again on the ground. His speech is slurred as he quietly begs, "No more, no more," then blacks out.

Tim wakes up and he is sitting on a chair as he looks over and Vickie is sitting in the chair in front of him smoking an e-cigarette. His eyes grow large wondering what is next. He pleads with her to let him go and he has learned his lesson.

Vickie says, "You know, I was a rape victim before when I was a teenager. It nearly destroyed me. I felt suicidal because I thought there was something wrong with me. I had a hard time with relationships with men as I grew up. I went to a lot of therapy and it cost a lot, not just in terms of money, but life. All because a man wanted to have sex with someone other than his own wife. I understand more than you might think about how men tick. Some are weak and have very little control like you. So since the time of my attack long ago, I have earned three black belts and work out regularly. Because I know that it could happen again.

I trained and prepared for the day that someone like you would attack me. I know you perverts are not diminishing in numbers, you are growing. Now you have the internet and easy access to porn and other shock images to tantalize you. But what happens when that is not enough? You guys have to carry it further into the real world. It is like a line that you cross and the line moves further. Blame it on hormones or bad childhood, but the fact is you types have no restraint. You travel further into depths of depravity rationalizing that it is now normal and okay. Before you know, it won't just be rape but murder to get your feelings nurtured. Well, I am going to teach you about being violated. I am going to show you what it is to have your life ruined. You are going to know what it is to be a victim, Timothy. I have copied your driver's license, I know all about you now. Amazing, the same internet that feeds you maniacs can also give me all the information about you that I could possibly want. This will be therapeutic for both of us. Well, more for me. And I know there is nothing you can do because if you try to get me in trouble, your fingerprints, even DNA from your ass whooping, is all over my place, especially the knife you threatened me with. So go now and let us begin this learning experience for you. Go ahead. I said go!"

He stares in horror that he is trapped in a nightmare he can never leave. She has him and he knows his only chance is to comply and maybe she will leave him alone.

Tim gathers up all the strength he can and carries himself out of her house as she stares at him. He looks back and says, "I'm sorry."

Vickie says, "Well, I am sorry too, Tim. See you around."

Tim gulps as he leaves. He walks very slowly and staggers back to this car. He leaves for home.

ESCAPE FROM VICKIE

TIM DRIVES HOME to his subdivision about forty-five minutes away. He walks up to the door, barely hanging on and rings the doorbell. His wife answers and asks him in horror what happened to him. She helps him inside and his daughter age eight asks her mother, Lana, if daddy is okay. The mother assures her everything is okay and tells her to go back to bed. Once they are alone, Lana asks Tim what happened. She was worried he was so late. Tim says that he had car problems and while he was looking at his car, a gang of kids beat him and took his wallet. Lana responds that they should call the police right away.

Tim says, "No, they know where I live and said if any trouble with the law happens they will come after us. It is best to just leave it be."

Lana says, "I told you about your late evening excursions. I know you need time to yourself, but I wish I knew

what you needed. We all have needs, you know. Need to stop peeping tomcatting around.”

Tim looks at her with a horrid face as she says, “Sorry, that was mean. I don’t mean to make light of this.”

Tim nods yes as Lana doctors him and helps him to bed. He lays down and tells Lana, “I love you and I am thankful you are in my life.”

Lana smiles. “What would you do without me? For one thing, you need to take better care of yourself. What if something happened to me?”

“I hope not, I need you to keep me out of trouble.”

Tim smiles as Lana replies, “I can’t do that for you, honey. Besides, it’s not like you are likely to get in trouble on purpose.” She nurses his wounds as he starts to drift off to sleep. Lana whispers to herself, “What did you get yourself into?”

BACK TO WORK

TIM HAS TAKEN the rest of the week off to recover. The following Monday, he arrives at work less bruised and in better spirits. He tells a story of how the gang attacked him. His fellow coworkers tell him he is lucky that he only lost his wallet and not his life. Tim is called into his boss's office and he asks him if he is okay otherwise. Tim is surprised and asks why. His boss explains there has been a collection agent calling all week wanting to know your whereabouts because of some debts you owe. Tim explains it must be a mistake because he has no outstanding debts. His boss tells him that he should then deal with this as soon as possible because as he knows a schoolteacher is supposed to set an example at school for his students.

Tim says, "I am sure it is identity theft from the attack I had."

Tim moves to retrieve the days of phone messages left by the collection agent. He looks down and the agent's name is Vickie and the name of the collection company wrote down is "Vic/Tim Time To Pay Inc." He goes to a nearby phone and calls the phone number which comes back as an operator for the victim abuse line for battered and raped women. He hangs up and crams the messages into his pocket. The bell rings for school and he rushes to his class.

Tim storms into his classroom and the class laughs. One of the junior high kids proclaims, "You're late, Mr. Jenkins. Were you out peeping through people's windows?"

Some of the students in the class give a big "Ooooh."

Tim looks up at the student and says, "Why would you ask a silly question like that?"

The student replied, "It is a joke that our guest speaker made about you being gone. She said you must have been out being a peeping Tom."

"That is a not a funny thing to say about a teacher especially in these days, you can't even joke about such things."

"Sorry, Mr. Jenkins. It seemed funny when that Vickie lady said it."

Tim's eyes grew big and he stared for a moment at the student. Then Tim asked, "What guest speaker? When?"

"Yesterday she was here for career day. She talked to us about the advertising business. She used you as an example for the whole hour practically."

“What else did she say, like what examples did she give?”

“She just talked about different types of people, you know. Like normal people and weirdos. Oh, yea, like she said that she had to understand people’s issues like rapist and so forth. She said that everyone has little devils that tug at them, begging them to do bad things. Her job is to appeal to the bad in people without driving them over the edge and stuff.”

“Well, I don’t know how you remember that so well when you can’t seem to remember sentence structures.”

The student laughs and responds, “Well, if you were a blonde babe like she was then I would remember everything. I wouldn’t mind being a peeping Tom for that!”

Tim turns around from the board and assertively responds, “Don’t ever talk about peeping Toms or rapist in my class again, understand?”

The student quietly responds back; “Sure thing, Mr. Jenkins. Like I said, I am sorry.”

Tim turns around and begins writing on the board and talking about grammar as the students look at each other bewildered and smirking.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

TIM LEAVES SCHOOL at the end of the day and wanders to his favorite bookstore out of pure habit, as if his brain is on autopilot. He starts combing through the books on literature and a feeling begins to drape over him as he realizes that this is the store he first saw Vickie in. He begins to calmly but briskly leave and sees Vickie outside the bookstore on a patio side cafe table staring at him. He looks around and walks over to her table to sit down.

He says, "Look, you got me good with the beating, and the collection agent thing, and the guest speaker thing. Just leave me be and I will seek help. I beg you to leave me alone now."

Vickie puts down her book and looks at him for a moment then leans forward. "Tim, Tim, I haven't even gotten started yet. Don't you know that? It is over when I say

it is and not before.” She leans back in her chair with a look of disgust.

Tim looks around, very bothered. “You know what, you are harassing me. That stunt you pulled in school as a guest speaker. Really? I could go to the police, you know.”

She smiles at him and reaches into her purse. She pulls out a ziplock bag with the knife Tim left behind at her house he used to threaten her. The bag, marked in black bold letters, says “Exhibit A.”

“Go ahead and call the police. Then you can explain how your fingerprints are all over this knife and at my residence too, or don’t you remember that? Go back to your life. I have a lot in store for you.” She gives a slight smile that seems to cover pain. Tim is horrified, almost in tears as he clumsily gets up to leave but can hardly take his eyes off her, when she says, “Oh, you should read this short stories book. It is pretty funny and sad. You can get a lot out of books you know.” Bewildered by her attitude, he leaves.



Tim arrives home and tells his family he is not hungry as he goes upstairs to lie in bed. His wife comes up later and starts to comfort him. She says, “Honey, I know you have been through a lot. More than any person deserves. Try to

rest and put it all behind you.” She kisses him and tends to their daughter.

He can only stare off into the wall as if the wall is miles away. He is reviewing the whole predicament eyes focusing and defocusing on the ceiling patterns. Tim comes out of the shower and sees blood all over the bed trailing to his daughter’s room. He runs frantically as he sees his wife and daughter stabbed to death and the knife he used at Vickie’s is still in his wife’s chest. He turns and looks to his left and Vickie is there and runs toward him. Suddenly, the alarm clock is buzzing for him to wake up. He gets up and looks over to see his wife sleeping. He walks over to his daughter’s room and stares at her sleeping. He always gets up much earlier so he can jog before breakfast, but today he just spends his time looking at his family back and forth till they wake. He finally breaks away and begins to get ready for work, passing by his chair and table and seeing a book laying there, the very same one Vickie was reading outside the bookstore. He picks it up and flips the pages.

“Ah, you got yourself another book, I see. Is it good?” his wife asks.

He turns and says, “Yes, quite.” He puts it down and leaves.

STICKY VICKIE

IT IS TUESDAY and everything seems uneventful all the way through Friday. He feels good after a good day at school. The class is happy about it being the end of the week. He stops and gets a couple of roses, one for each of the women in his life. He feels that maybe finally Vickie has given up on him.

As he walks in the door to his home, he sees Vickie has his daughter in a headlock. He immediately storms in the living room, demanding to know what she is doing here. Vickie stops to let go of his daughter, Tanya.

Tanya and Tim's wife look back at Tim intently. Lana asks, "What is wrong, dear? Vickie was just showing Tanya how to defend herself against attackers. You know there are a lot of rapists and child abductors in the world."

Tim, confused, asks, "Vickie is teaching her this?"

His wife replies with a smile, "I'm sorry, honey. This is Vickie. She runs a home business on the side teaching self-defense right in your own home. She stopped by a while ago and was giving us some free lessons."

Vickie stands up and holds her hand out to shake Tim's. Vickie says, "Need to work on your grip there, Tim, kind of weak. Bet I could take you in a fight. But, wow, you have a strong parental feeling. I can tell you cherish this little girl of yours. I am sure you want her to know how to defend herself against attackers. Lots of perverts out there, you know, and you don't want her to grow up with memories like that. What do you think, Tim, what should they do to people like that?"

Tim replies, "Maybe punish them, I guess, but some maybe are just sick, you know, in the head."

"You're right, Tim, sick. But even dogs are put down for attacking people and the dog is just under the influence of instinct."

"Well, well, well, yes, but wouldn't a class somewhere be more appropriate?"

"You are absolutely right, Tim. I am an associate martial arts teacher down at Sato's Karate Gym. Here is a card, why don't you come down with your family and I can teach all of you some pointers, for free, of course. My way of saying sorry for this intrusion into your home."

Tim looks around trying to grasp an excuse until his wife says, "Sounds great! We will be there tomorrow night as you suggested earlier."

Tim is speechless as Vickie looks at him and says, "Don't worry about bringing a knife, we have some rubber ones to practice with. You know most home intruders bring a knife because it is quiet, unlike a gun, especially if their intention is to rape. Usually it is robbers that bring a gun because they want to scare a person as much as possible. You got to know these things, Tim, in case someone wants to do harm to you and your family. When you come down tomorrow evening, I will show you exactly what I mean by that."

Tim's heart is racing as the innuendos never cease, it seems. Lana asks Vickie if she has read this short stories book her husband picked up. Lana had read it and found it interesting, telling Vickie that Tim gave her a book on their first date.

Vickie says, "Hmm, that is good to know. I have seen that book by the way. In a way it kind of changed the course of my life. How about you, Tim?"

"I think that book has set a lot in motion."

Vickie smiles and says good-bye to the rest as they warmly say good-bye back. Tim just stands there listening to his wife close the front door. As she passes, she says, "She is a nice lady. Did you know she was attacked twice by rapists? Once as a teenager and another time not long ago. She

said she was able to beat the last guy pretty well till he got away. I tell you, I would hate to be on that woman's list. Did you have a good day today, dear?"

Tim snaps out of his semihypnotized state and says, "Fine, yeah fine." He goes to help with dinner.