

Gabrielle Queen

translator: Martyn Fogg

I REALLY  
LIKE YOU



## • 1.

I would never have imagined meeting you, out of all the boys in my life.

You're different - special, I would dare to say. I never noticed you, not as a man.

I have never loved kissing.

The first time someone tried to insert his tongue in my mouth, I kicked him between his legs. When another tried the same thing, I dropped him even before starting a relationship.

I couldn't stand French kissing.

But you arrived.

At the start, we didn't even like each other. Or rather – I didn't like you at all.

I thought you were a bullying prick who only loves to be in charge.

Ruthless. You wanted money, to earn money, you didn't care if the people working for you killed themselves doing it, almost ignoring their rights.

You were hard - headed, but you also tried to be honest and fair with us. I have worked so hard that I have almost ruined my health. But I coped. I tried to look beyond your bullying and all - powerful aspect, beyond the continuous mistaken interpretation of my actions, sometimes.

I knew that you had a lot to do - perhaps if you were like you were it was not completely your fault, after all you Italian men are so much led by women that sometimes it seems to me that you are losing your true personality and identity in order to please and indulge them.

I wanted that work at all costs, therefore I held on, with clenched teeth. I put up with shouting and criticism – fair and unfair. In the end, I earned your respect, perhaps also a bit of affection and admiration. I had really given my all, the success of your firm was intermingled with my sweat, with a piece of my heart.

Until that day, the lift was stuck for an hour, with the two of us inside.

What a fright! Me and the boss, suspended between the tenth and eleventh floors of the building! I was shaking in front of you, I respected you but you were my little personal nightmare. I wanted to spend the least time possible

in your presence; imagine what a pain in the ass!

You did everything to calm me down - luckily, I don't suffer from claustrophobia. Waiting for help I lay down on the floor - I was so tired and couldn't bear wearing my high heels any longer. You told me to take off my sandals, but I couldn't, not in front of you.

In the end, after having chatted about this and that, you sat down beside me, our knees touching in that small space.

Goodness! just on that day I had chosen a miniskirt and sheer stockings! Sometimes he looked at my legs - I wanted to die of shame and embarrassment.

Good heavens! I didn't even know if you were engaged or not - at times there was some gossip circulating about your colourful love life, but, honestly, I had never seen you with a woman and I couldn't have cared less.

At a certain point, after having discussed all the problems regarding the work, we didn't know what more to say to each other.

You were very nervous, you had the mobile phones right in the office next to the lift and every so often you heard them ring. Bollocks!

I, instead, was calmer, I tried to see the positive side: after all, I hadn't had a break for almost nine hours of uninterrupted work.

I took off my glasses rubbing my tired eyes. I tried to calm you down as much as I could.

I even touched your arm - the most familiarity that I could allow myself without showing I meant something else. I half-joked saying that it was a well-earned rest but you were so nervous that it made it difficult to joke with you.

Finally the technician arrived, freeing the lift. We were safe and sound; I secretly thanked God that I was not trapped in it alone, your presence had kept me company and cheered me up.

"Even the big boss is a human being" - I said to myself.

From then on, I anyway thought I should have used the stairs.

The following day, just arrived in the office, there was waiting for me on my desk - a lovely Murano glass vase, with a red rose in it!

It was very beautiful, I smiled, upset and curious, I smelled it and stroked the petals, asking myself, amazed, who had made such an unexpected gesture.

Then I found a little note hidden in the first file on my desk: “Thank you for having kept me company, yesterday - I should marry you”.

No signature.

What???

Whom had I kept company with the day before???

Racking my brain, I reached the only reasonable conclusion: it was you!

The rose was a thankyou for having helped you overcome the difficult moment in the lift - but - was it something more?

What should I expect from the most eligible bachelor in the firm, at whom practically all the women made eyes.

Perhaps I had been the only one to treat him with discretion and professional coolness, always.

Some days went by, nothing happened apart from the daily grind.

All OK, but as soon as I had a free moment to check my Facebook messages, I almost fell off my chair: on my Facebook page, there was a shared message from you, a quote from someone I didn't know: “The foolish vanity of a man is to be always a woman's first love; women instead have a much more subtle instinct. Their foolish vanity is to be the last love of a man, for eternity”.

Oh! My God!

But, was it a little joke?

I never allowed you to say or send me such things -

I had stopped breathing -

I mean, the big boss who writes such a “declaration” to one of his female employees, and on his public profile where everyone can read it!!!

Perhaps I was exaggerating, but in my mind and in my heart a bottomless and unlimited pit was opening up, like a flash of lightning hitting a rock; it splits it in two with fantastic force.

My heart was opening up to innumerable possibilities, with the same speed as a flash of lightning -

I was - I was losing -

## • 2.

After a few days, silence came to my office like in a tomb - you've got red eyes, your hair's dishevelled, you fix me with a hardness that scares me a bit - you seem more distraught than usual. I don't know what's happening to you, but I try to appear calm and professional, as always.

In the meantime, I have not posted any reply on Facebook, I am still waiting for you to cancel the post off my profile, declaring it an error. You ask me for a file, I hand it to you and in the process our hands touch, it must have happened thousands of times before, I don't know why it's different now.

In a moment of distraction, I feel your breath on my cheek and I have a shock when your lips touch my neck, trembling - also your hands are shaking.

I am really stumped by the improbability of the situation.

Am I perhaps dreaming?

My heart stops the moment when, encouraged by my immobility, you take hold of me gently round my waist and your lips press more resolutely onto my neck - your hot tongue follows, you explore my sensitive skin causing me shivers all over - Why am I immobile like as if I had died??? I have never felt anything like it - never such a shock, such alarm, such emotion. I like your perfume, nice and clean - and, above all, what you do to my skin - you make me go crazy, but it can't be that, a part of me knows only too well that it's a very big mistake.

It's impossible that the most eligible bachelor in town tries it on really with me! But who do you take me for??

Before the absurd passion gets the upper hand over my reason, I go away shakily, pushing the desk between us like an obstacle.

You apologise, breathing heavily and go away.

I collapse, shaking, on the chair, my legs won't support me anymore. I am trying to understand something, but what, what is there to understand?

Perhaps it was stress that made us give in for a moment, a unique episode that will not happen again.

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