

## First Date

The knocking came fast and loud, more like a pounding on the door.

Joe Cushman stopped in front of the door.

"Yeah, who is it?"

With one last pound a voice called out: "Open the Goddamn door, police."

Slowly, Joe opened the door. The lead man outside pushed it open. Joe backed away, watching as the two men entered his apartment.

"I'm Detective Williams and this is Detective Marsten. We need to ask you a few questions. Mind if we come in?"

The door closed behind them as Joe looked at their badges.

"Looks like you already did. Now, what the hell do you want?"

"Do you know a Jonathon Francis?"

Joe shook his head.

"Do you know of him?"

Joe thought a moment, but shook his head again.

"Where were you last night until this morning?"

"I went to a New Year's Eve party, got home around two, maybe two-thirty or so. Been here since. Why?"

"I know Jonathon Francis."

All three men turned to look where the voice came from. Allison Rodgers stood in the bedroom doorway dressed in Joe's shirt and apparently nothing else.

"Why do you ask?"

"Jonathon Francis was brutally beaten sometime during the night and we were given this address to find out why." Detective Williams took charge.

Allison Rodgers let out a scream. "NO. Who? Why?!"

Joe turned to her, but someone grabbed his arm. Joe's anger building.

"This address? Who gave you this address. What the hell is going on?"

"First, tell me who you are."

"Joe Cushman. I live here. My apartment. Who the hell sent you here?"

Detective Williams looked at the woman.

"You said you know Jonathon Francis? How?"

Allison Rodgers walked into the room and stood next to Joe, still shaking. She swiped her phone before answering or looking up.

"I said, how do you know him?"

She showed Detective Williams the phone. The screen showed a text from Jonathon, time stamped 1:45am January 1, that stated: "Thanks, Happy New Year to you as well. Sorry for the mess I caused. Have a good life."

The text above it showed Allison had texted Jonathon, Hope you have a Happy New Year at 12:10am. His text apparently a response to her.

"As you can see," she took a deep breath, "he texted at 1:45am." She cleared her throat. "Jonathon and I went out, sort of, off and on for about a year. I only found out late last October he was married. We ended it beginning of November. Give me another moment, you really need to see this text."

Allison took a deep breath as she scrolled through her phone, turning the phone to Detective Williams. The text read: "Listen you slut, whore, bitch, if you contact my husband again I will beat your ass. Stay away from him and do not contact him ever again. If you do, you can kiss your ass goodbye. The wife."

"She sent you that?"

Allison nodded and pointed to the number attached. "It's hers."

"How long you been here lady?"

"Allison. My name is Allison. I have been here all night."

"That right, Cushman?"

"Allison and I met at a New Year's Eve party last night."

"My best friend Becky, talked me into going." Allison pointed.

"A friend of mine talked me into going as well." Joe nodded. "How I met Allison. She was getting over an old boyfriend." He stopped and looked at her. "Was that him?" She nodded. He looked back at the detectives. "I was still grieving the death of my long time girlfriend."

"Death of your girlfriend, explain," Detective Marsten interrupted.

"Last summer, my girlfriend and two of her friends were returning home from a concert and were killed in a head on collision with a wrong way driver. All three were killed instantly, but the lady wrong way driver survived. Alcohol level triple the limit. Still alive as far as I know. That detective said it could take a couple of years before it goes to trial."

Joe rubbed his hand across his face to gather himself.

"Anyway, I met Allison at the party. We began to talk and spent most of the night together, commiserating in each other's troubles. At the end of the night I offered her a ride home in my Uber, but she asked if she could stay with me for a while longer, maybe continue our conversations some more. I liked the idea, said okay, invited her up. And. Well, here she is."

"So, she spent the night?"

"Did you two have sex?" Detective Marsten eyed Allison up and down.

Joe looked at Marsten. Allison angrily responded.

"None of your Goddamn business, whether we did or not."

Detective Marsten started to speak, but Detective Williams stopped him.

"So, to clarify, Allison, you did spend the night here with Joe?"

"Yes."

"Detective, why are you here?" Joe held on to Allison.

The two detectives looked at each other. Detective Williams spoke softer.

"As I said before, Jonathon Francis was brutally beaten up pretty bad earlier and his wife gave us this address. Said, we would find who did it, here at this residence."

"Who, me? I told you I don't know the guy."

"Not you, Joe. Her. Allison."

"Allison?"

"Yeah." Detective Marsten interrupted. "She said the broad that was doing her husband, attacked him when he broke it off and we could find her here, banging some other asshole now."

"Broad? What, are you still in the sixties,? Broad? What the hell, Marsten?"

Marsten looked at Allison. "Actually, the wife said slut, whore bitch, but I thought I would clean it up for you. What's wrong with broad?"

"What do you mean, banging some asshole?" Joe yelled.

"Hey, hold on." Marsten raised his hand in the air. "The wife said that not me. I'm sure the wife was referring to Allison screwing around with a some other guy besides her husband."

Allison started to move toward Marsten, but Joe held on to her.

"Wait? How did she know I was here? I just met Joe. How could she possibly know where I was?" Allison waved her hand in the air. "She must have followed me here. I'm so sorry, Joe. Detective, Joe and I have been together since around 9:30 last night, never leaving each other's sight, and we came straight here afterwards. We haven't been out since we got here around two-thirty. And yes we did have sex. So yes, Marsten, I was screwing another guy, as you so delicately put it. There, are you satisfied now?" Allison paused, took a breath. "It just happened. I mean" She looked at Joe. "Well, it just happened, nothing was planned" She gave a death stare to Detective Marsten.

"Just like that?" Detective Marsten protested. "You just met the dude."

Joe flashed back. They were sitting on the sofa together. She had her shoes off and her legs tucked up under her. She slipped toward Joe and laid her head on his shoulder. A moment later she looked up. Joe bent down and kissed her. She kissed him back ...

Allison interrupted Joe's thoughts, her voice louder.

"No, not just like that. We. Ah. Hell, what dose it matter. You'd never understand, Marsten. Just think what you will. A piece of shit like you will anyway. Christ."

Detective Marsten tried to respond, but Detective Williams waved him off.

"It wasn't like that at all." Joe protested. "Allison is right, Marsten, you would never understand and think the worst anyway. What is wrong with you?"

Detective Williams sighed deeply and waved his hand in the air.

"Alright, enough, we'll take you at your word for now, that you were both here all night, but give me your full information and both of you sign a statement acknowledging what you just told us."

Joe and Allison both nodded. Each quickly wrote up a simple statement.

Williams took the papers and nodded again. "We'll be in touch."

They both watched as the detectives walked out the door. Detective Marsten turned and looked directly at Allison, but just nodded. She stared right back at him. When the door closed, Joe turned to Allison. She fell into his arms, holding on to him. He held her tight. The knock came a couple of minutes later.

"Now, what the hell?" Joe let go of Allison and angrily approached the door, fully expecting the detectives to be back with more questions. Annoyed, he swung the door open wide and barely missed getting hit with a crowbar. The crowbar smashed into the door splintering the panel. The second swing smashed a picture on the wall throwing glass everywhere. The woman holding the crowbar paused a moment to look around and when she spotted Allison her rage accelerated. Raising the crowbar over her head, she started for Allison, screaming hysterically.

"You slut, whore, bitch, I'll teach you not to mess with my husband."

Joe had ducked down and crawled forward just in time to trip her up. The woman fell to the ground, the crowbar flying in the air, barely missing Allison. Joe leaped on the fallen woman working his knee into her shoulder blades and wrenching her arms backward.

"Allison, call 911. Hurry. I can't hold her too much longer."

Allison dialed the number, but at the same moment the two detectives rushed in followed by two uniformed officers. They pushed Joe to the side, struggled to contain the woman and finally got a pair of handcuffs on her. The two uniformed officers raised her up and literally dragged her along the floor out of the apartment.

"You two okay?"

Joe nodded. Allison stood frozen, the crowbar at her feet. It had bounced on the floor straight toward her, hit the wall and came to rest at her bare feet. Joe went to her and held her. She stood frozen, but finally let go, started to sob and buried her head into his shoulder. The two detectives waited for her to calm down. Joe spoke very softly, still shaken.

"Detective Williams, why did you come back up?"

"While we were up here, one of the officers spotted a car parked erratically. He went to check on it, ran the plates, discovered the car belonged to the wife. When we came down he told us it was hers, we rushed right back up."

"No shit? Thanks." Joe said softly. "Thank you for the blind luck."

Allison looked up. "Thank you."

"Get dressed please. You two need to come with us back to the station. We'll need full statements from each of you about what just happened here. Are you sure you are both okay? Need to run by the hospital first."

"No," Joe waved him off.

Detective Williams looked at Allison. She shook her head and went into the bedroom to get dressed. Joe waited outside. She emerged, dressed in the clothes from last night. Joe smiled and went in to get dressed.

At the station, they were directed to an interview room along with the two detectives. Once again they went over their original stories and with overwhelming emotion they recounted the horrifying ordeal they just experienced. Detective Williams continued to pepper them with additional questions. Detective Marsten continued to press them about having had sex. Finally, Allison had enough.

"Jesus, Marsten, what more do you want to know? How big he is? What it felt like inside me? Damn, if you so desperately need all the gory details, I can draw you a fucking picture. How many times are you going to ask if we had sex."

We are two consenting adults and if we chose to have sex with each other, that is none of your Goddamn business. Now lay off, or I'm walking out of here."

Allison stood up. The door opened and an older woman entered.

"I'm Lieutenant Chris Jaden. I thought I would sit in for a bit, if you don't mind. Detective Marsten, I believe we have established these two had sex last night, also obviously irrelevant. I believe past time to move on. No further questions are needed in that direction. Detective Williams please continue."

Detective Williams looked at Marsten for a full minute before he nodded and continued. A short time later, Detective Williams picked up the evidence bag wrapped crowbar from the table.

"Allison, I believe you were lucky she didn't hit you with this. We also believe this is the crowbar used on her husband, presumably by her. As you can see there is blood on the curved side. Based on the text you showed me, it may have happened shortly after. Either she saw the text or he told her, we may never know for sure, but something sure set her off. I need to ask, why did you send the original text, if you two were broken up?"

Allison looked at him. "Would you believe me if I said I didn't know. I was sitting there alone. Joe went to get us fresh drinks and I. I don't know. I just did. Are you saying, I caused all this."

"Allison, I assure you," Detective Williams spoke softly, "if anybody caused this, it was Jonathon, he knew better. He was the one already married and he must have known how his wife would react if she found out. I believe the wife was already out to get you, she may not have seen the New Year's text, but simply knew you were the other woman."

Marsten chuckled. Everyone in the room gave him a dirty look.

"Sorry. Allison, I agree with Detective Williams, this is all on the wife. I would bet this wasn't the first time he stepped out on her. She should have just dumped his ass the first time. No, you simply got caught up in their mess."

"Thank you, Detective Marsten, so kind of you to say that."

Detective Williams selectively gathered the papers in front of him and tamped them together.

"Well, I believe that is all we need for now. Both of you will probably have to testify at a trial, if there is one, about her attempt, to cause each of you deadly

harm. We'll be in touch. You are both free to go. I'll have an officer bring you back to the apartment for now."

Detective Williams grew quiet and took a deep breath.

"Allison, I had an officer check on your place and unfortunately the wife got there first. We really don't know when, but if you were gone last night, I would imagine any time between then and when we came to the door. Or, worst case scenario, she knew you were not there. I'm sorry to say your place has been trashed, stuff broken to pieces and most of your clothes ripped to shreds."

Detective Williams cleared his throat.

"All your underwear was thrown into a pile at the front of your building and set on fire."

Allison sat there horrified.

"Allison, I shudder to think what might have happened to you, if you had been there. I mean the rage. Well, give us a couple of days to finish up and we'll get your place back to you. Joe, are you okay with her staying with you for now? Allison, are you okay there? Do you have another place to go?"

"Sure. Yeah. No problem." Joe nodded. "If that is okay with you, Allison? I mean, I'll take you wherever you need to go."

"With Joe is fine," Allison nodded, "until I can sort things out."

"Well you two, I'm sure sorry this happened. We may need to ask a few more questions before this is over. If either of you remember anything else be sure to give me a call." He handed each of them his card.

"What about Jonathon?" Allison quietly asked.

"Right now, still in the hospital." Detective Williams responded. "Doctor wanted to keep him for observation. His face is pretty messed up, but doc says it should heal okay, might have a scar or two."

"Thanks detective. That sounds hopeful."

"Allison, we can only hope for the best. I'll let you know I here different."

They all got up and silently left the room.



Joe and Allison were driven back to his apartment.

The door panel was splintered and the door uneven, but workable for now. Detective Williams had a tough time closing it before they left. Joe forced it back open, worked it closed again and cautiously guided her past the broken glass. He grabbed a broom and dustpan to clean up as best as possible.

"Joe, I'm so sorry for dragging you into all of this. I had no idea, please believe me. I mean, it was my own stupid mistake to get involved with a married man. I swear. I didn't know he was married. And when I did find out, I ended it. Joe, I'm so sorry." Allison began to cry. "I'm so sorry, Joe." She stood shaking. "I can't believe she did this to him. Even with what he did, He didn't deserve it. Joe, you must know I was never in love with him, or anything like that, but we did have some good times together. He didn't deserve to suffer a beating. It was over between us. Once I realized he was married, I ended everything between us. What I told you last night was true, he is an ex-boyfriend. I still can't believe she did that to him. I'm so sorry I caused all this." She started to cry really hard.

Joe walked over and held her tight.

"It's okay we'll figure this out. I understand. You're right, he didn't deserve it, but the wife did this. Just like Detective Williams said, none of this is your fault. Just know, I'm here for you. Whatever you need. Surely, you can stay here until your place is ready. I'll take the sofa, you can have the bedroom. We'll be fine here. After they are done, we'll go over and clean up your place together. We'll make it all better. I promise. We will go together. I'll help anyway I can."

Allison nodded and held him closer. Another sob racked her body. She suddenly straightened up.

"My clothes. I don't have any clothes. I don't have anything."

"Allison, it's okay. You can wear something of mine until the stores open tomorrow. Besides, you sure would look cute in a pair of my boxers."

She forced a smile and let out a small laugh.

"Really? You don't mind? I mean after what I just put you through? My God, she tried to kill you with that crowbar and you still want to help me? Still want to be with me? Why? Joe, do you really mean it?"

"Sure do. After the night we just had, how could I not. What a ride. Besides, I really do enjoy being with you. Let's try to make this work somehow. I

know it is hard right now, but what do you say. I promise you, we can work this all out together. What do you say?"

Allison nodded. "Okay, I'd like that very much. Let's see where this goes. But, I need to do something first.

Allison removed her dress and kicked off her shoes as Joe watched.

"I've been wearing those since last night, I needed to get out of them. I hope you don't mind, I'll put your shirt back on if you do."

"No, of course not. Please, make yourself comfortable."

Allison smiled, looked down at herself and took a deep breath.

"Joe, after that detective was so hung up about us having sex, I thought maybe, we need to give it another go. Maybe, take notes for the next round of questioning. Are you up for this? Sorry, no pun intended." She let out a laugh. "I think we might have to do this quite often between now and the trial. We may have to go into greater detail next time. You know how Marsten is. He wants all the gory details."

Allison stood there in bra and panties and reality set in.

"I don't even have any underwear, just what I have on. Detective Williams said she burned the rest. I suppose I could rinse these out." She held her hand over her bra and the other hand on her panties.

Joe smiled at her. "You look fine to me as is.

"Joe, thank you for rescuing me in more ways than one. Please know, I'm here for you, would you like me to shower first?"

Joe took two steps, lifted her into his arms and carried her into the bedroom laying her onto the bed. "Should we start taking notes. I mean."

"Maybe we should practice more first." She reached for him.

The knock on the door scared the hell out of both of them. Allison quickly grabbed the shirt she had on previously and quickly wrapped it around her. Joe jumped up and stood frozen for a moment. The knock came again, soft not threatening, but still nerve racking. Joe walked across the room and stood in front of the door. The knock came again. Joe worked the door open and quickly stepped back, ready to dodge anything that may be coming at him.

A disheveled man stood there with an unlit cigarette hanging from his lips. He had a tool caddy at his side and wore a tool belt filled with tools.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

The man removed the unlit cigarette, pinched a piece of tobacco from his tongue and wiped his hand across his shirt.

"A Detective Williams called and said you needed your door fixed immediately. Told him it was a holiday and he asked if I knew what immediately meant. Well, here I am. So what happened. Wife lock you out?"

"What? No. We were attacked. Oh never mind. The panel is splintered and the door is hard to close now."

The disheveled man looked it over. "He called me out for this? Well, I'm here now." He picked up a new panel and stepped inside.

Allison peeked around the door frame of the bedroom. Joe noticed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm going to have a shower."

Both men looked at her.

A little over an hour later the man finished, motioning Joe over. He opened and closed the door several times. "Seems to work okay now." He put the unlit cigarette back between his lips and held a lighter in the other hand, ready to engage first opportunity. The cigarette flopped up and down as he talked.

"Someone will be here next couple of days to paint. Well, you have yourself a good rest of the day, I sure as hell won't."

The disheveled man left.

Joe shook his head, closed the door and locked it. He raced into the bedroom and saw Allison standing there in a pair of his boxers and nothing else. She turned to face him.

"They fit okay, might be a new look for me. Now I need a top and some pants." She walked over to him. "Joe, I'm sorry to ask, but I'm really hungry. Think maybe we can get something to eat first, then maybe after we can practice some more?"

Joe smiled at her, retrieved a pull over from a drawer, and selected a pair of shorts from the closet, with a casual belt.

"Here, these should work."

She took both from him, but hesitated a moment before slipping the pullover on. "Sorry, I really am quite hungry. You sure?"

"Sure, let me shower and we can go to the dinner at the corner. They are open all the time, I'm sure they will be today. We can get some breakfast."

She held on to his shirt. "Joe, about earlier, you know, before we were interrupted. The offer is still good. We probably do need the practice. And, I'd sure like to keep practicing with you. Thank you for rescuing me. I feel safe in your arms. I know you are wondering, who is this Broad and what did I get myself into? Sorry, couldn't resist Marsten's slur. I'm just a girl who screwed up and fell for a married man. I swear, I didn't know. But, I'm here now with you. It has been a wonderful evening. Well, there was a moment there, but being with you sure has been more than wonderful. You are so kind and patient. Anyway, I don't know where this is going, but I sure would like to find out."

She leaned forward and kissed him. Joe embraced her as he returned the kiss. She softly pushed him back.

"You can have all you want later, but I am really hungry and I desperately need some coffee, please."

Joe began undressing and headed for the bathroom. He found her wet bra and damp panties hanging on the towel rack. It brought a smile to his face as he stepped into the shower, savoring the hot water.

Allison stood there in the pull over and boxers, a smile formed. She sat on the bed. When Joe emerged with a towel wrapped around, he looked at Allison.

"Joe, I owe you my life. If you would rather, you know, first, I'm willing to eat later, I mean."

"Allison, as tempting as that sounds, how about we go eat first, then we can pursue whatever comes next. Besides, we may need the energy for our many practice sessions."

Allison let out a small chuckle and pulled the shorts on while Joe dressed.

"Ready?" Joe stood by her side.

"Shoes. I only have my dress shoes."

"Right." Joe rummaged in his closet and found a pair of high tops. he also gave her a pair of heavy socks. "It's just up the street, you should be okay in those."

Joe waited and watched as she pulled the socks on and slipped into the high tops, smiling all the time.

"Okay Joe, what are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking, how much fun it will be to slowly take my clothes off of you, shoes, socks and all, right down to the boxers."

"You are, huh? Then what?"

"I'd tell you, but we need to eat first, so you'll just have to let your imagination fill in the rest."

Joe opened the door. "You know, Allison, I'm trying to decide, would this be considered our first date, if you can call it that, or are we there yet?"

"Joe, let it always be our first date, because I don't want this first date with you to ever end."