Married Without Benefits

Walking into The Northern Gentlemen’s Club of Fargo, North Dakota, Doug knew that he was about to drastically change someone’s life. And it wasn’t his idea. In fact, he was still quite upset about it. The damn will had read specifically that he would receive no inheritance if he remained unmarried by his 30th birthday. And that was coming up fast.

Of course, he knew who he *wanted* to marry. But old Henry had made that clear in the will also; it must be a “heterosexual” marriage. Damn him. All those years, Doug had thought he had been so careful, and that old bastard had known all along.

In a small town it wasn’t always easy to keep secrets and it was harder to share a secret that no one wanted to hear. He learned that early; even before high school graduation. Doug always wondered if the recipient of his secret had been the one to tell Henry. After all, it was Henry’s daughter and Doug’s cousin.

Stacey had been left alone for the weekend while her parents went to New York. Doug’s Uncle Henry was a very successful trader on Wall Street and had to make the trip every quarter to attend to business affairs. This particular time was the first time they left Stacey home without a babysitter, but Doug, her senior by two years was employed to stay at the house with her. They said because Stacey was afraid to stay by herself, but both Doug and Stacey knew it was to keep her out of trouble. She had recently started rebelling against their thousand and one rules and this weekend was no exception.

“I’m bored,” she whined to Doug.

“Well, call one of your friends over.”

“Oh, please. Those provincial dimwits. I’d rather slit my wrists.”

“Are you talking about your best friends? The ones you are inseparable with at school? The ones I never see you without?”

“Please, Doug. You of all people know how exasperating and boring those people can be. You’ve perfected the art of the lonesome dodger.”

“Yeah, but the way they flock around you and the way you eat up the attention, I just figured you were one of them.”

“Really.” It was a statement, not a question. “I’m just playing them like pawns until I can get out of this godforsaken town,” Stacey pulled a rubber band from her wrist and gathered her thick long blond hair into a high ponytail.

Doug watched her as he realized maybe there was more to this stereotypical blond head-cheerleader straight-A student. However, he doubted it.

“Seriously, let’s *do* something,” she begged.

Doug didn’t know what typical sophomores did on a Friday night. He was, as Stacey said, atypical. He never *did* high school and he only had four months before he would escape this ‘godforsaken town’ as Stacey called it. “What do you have in mind? As I see it, there are three choices; White Lady’s Lane, the Masonic sign, or downtown.”

“Boooring,” she bellowed.

“Well, what are you thinking?”

Stacey’s eyes lit up, “Do you have the key to your dad’s bottle shop?”

“Of course, you know I do. But, no way.”

“Oh, come on. Don’t be a droll. I’m so sick of the drolls in this town.” Stacey meticulously played with her ponytail, pulsing her fingers through the top which encouraged it to fill out and add height.

Doug sat mesmerized by the way she constructed her hair just so and made it look like one of those red-carpet looks with just a flittering of her fingers. “No can do. My pops would kill me.”

“How’s he gonna know? We could go up the back alley and be in and out within minutes.” Clearly Stacey had thought this out.

“Be in and out and get what?”

“Whiskey.”

“And what the hell do you know about whiskey?” Doug challenged.

“Well, I know a number of things. I know it gets you drunk fastest. I know Maker’s Mark is much better than Bushmills and doesn’t give you as much of a hangover. And I know,” here Stacey paused and coyly glanced Doug’s way, “it is Cecilia’s favorite.”

Doug swallowed, “Cecilia?”

“Oh please, don’t tell me you don’t know which one she is. The cheerleader with the big tits. I know all you seniors call her Titcelia. And unless you’re dead, I know you’ve noticed her. You’re not dead, are you, Doug?”

Doug knew exactly who she was. And he knew from the other seniors that she was very willing to share her tits. “Yeah, I know who she is.”

“Well, I happen to know that she *really* knows who you are.” Stacey was very clear on what she was trying to hint at.

“And I guess I’m supposed to ask, what is that supposed to mean?” Doug was not too surprised that Cecilia may have a crush on him. He was not cocky, but he knew that he was good looking. Good-looking enough to have his choice of any girl in the school; and in the schools within a 4-town radius also. His natural athleticism also added to this for the girls; captain of the football and basketball teams and starting pitcher for 4 years. However, he had never picked a girl. He found he didn’t need the headache. They were a lot of drama and not a lot of substance.

“You know exactly what it means. And I know she is bored tonight too and we could have a little party.”

“Party? Oh, no. That is definitely not happening. You know your dad would kill me.”

“Oh, Doug, please. You know I don’t mean a party party. Just you and me and Cecilia. And you know, maybe, your friend Steve.”

“Ah, hell no. Steve? Are you kidding?”

“What? What’s wrong with Steve? He’s cute.”

“Stacey, he’s a senior.”

“Now, I’ll ask, what’s that supposed to mean? You’re a senior and you were just thinking about Titcelia, but what? I can’t have a crush on a senior?”

“You have a *crush* on Steve? Oh, no.” Doug knew what Steve was like. And he was not going to approve of him circling around his little cousin. And he wasn’t going to encourage Stacey’s crush on him. “Steve is a pig.”

“Oh, come on, Doug. No, he’s not. He’s always very kind to me.”

“Of course he is. Because he wants to get in your pants. Or cheerleading skirt, for that matter.”

Stacey giggled. She giggled, “And what’s wrong with that? Come on Doug, I’m 16. Give me a break.”

“Oh, I am *not* hearing this.”

“Come on. Nothing’s gonna happen if you’re here anyways. Call him and ask him to come over. And I’ll call Titcelia. Please.”

“God, Stacey. Do you know how much trouble we will get in all the way around on this one?”

“We’re not going to get in trouble. We’re going to be in and out of the bottle shop. We’re going to come back here to the house. And we’re going to hang out in the basement and play some games. No one is ever going to know anything about this night. It’s no big deal.”