Abbie walked through her living room to hang Mystery Man’s leather jacket on the coat rack, where it can dry properly and be seen from the living room couch. Abbie was gleefully aware that this jacket had become her new obsession. Maria was finishing off her glass of wine when Abbie sat down with her.

Maria opened the conversation. “I talked to Steven, and after a lot of convincing, he agreed to stay away tonight. He really is upset, Abbie. He knows he messed up big time. If I were you, I wouldn’t let him off the hook so easily this time. You know Steven, he’ll go all out. You might as well get some flowers and gifts to make up for the nightmare he put you through.”

“I’m not going to get back together with Steven,” replied Abbie.

“I’m afraid to ask, but does this have something to do with that leather jacket you can’t seem to take your eyes off of?”

“You might want to get yourself another glass of wine. You’ll probably need it for what I’m about to tell you.”

Maria again exclaimed, “Oh God,” and then got up to pour herself another glass of wine. Abbie graciously rejected Maria’s offer to pour her a glass of wine as well. Maria returned to the sofa, swallowed a large gulp of wine, and said, “I’m ready. Let’s hear it.”

“First of all, don’t worry. I’m not injured. My car wasn’t seriously damaged either when I slid off the road and got stuck in a ditch.”

“Are you sure you’re okay!?”

“I told you not to worry. I am more than fine.” Abbie continues with her version of the evening’s events. “I was in the middle of nowhere when I slid off the road, and I had no way to call for help. That is when fate rained on me. You are right Maria. I was devastated, upset, and furious with Steven. I was stuck out there for half an hour until my Mystery Man came to save the day.”

“Mystery Man?” asked Maria.

“Yep!” said Abbie with a huge smile. “He saw I was freezing and needed help. So he pulled over, put his jacket on me, and wrapped me up in his arms with a big hug. He was so considerate and wanted me to feel safe and comfortable. He put me in the driver’s seat of his car while he assessed the situation and called for help.”

“Well, that sounds exciting! Why do you keep calling him Mystery Man?”

“I never found out his name, ” answered Abbie.

“This is getting more interesting by the minute! Describe this Mystery Man to me?”

“It was the strangest thing, Maria. For the first 20 minutes or so, I couldn’t even tell you what he looked like. I just knew that he was big.”

Maria interrupted to ask, “Big in a good way or not so good way?”

“Definitely a good way. It was dark, and hard to tell his exact build. I didn’t perceive him as a bodybuilder type, but the man was built like a house. My first thoughts were that he was some sort of lumberjack or football player,” Abbie said, laughing.

“Do you have any idea how old he is? Is he cute?” asked an intrigued Maria.

“If I had to guess, I would say he is a few years older than us. Cute is the wrong word. When I finally began to look at his face, I wasn’t sure if I was attracted or not. I’m so used to Steven. His features were strong, and his face was, how can I say it, more mature. I don’t mean old. I just mean more mature.”

“Hmm, I am struggling to visualize him, but he doesn’t sound like your type at all, ” noted Maria.

“That’s very true. However, I’ve never been so attracted to anyone in my life. You asked if he was cute. I would not describe him as cute, but he was incredibly handsome. He had that good kind of confidence. He had the most amazing smile and beautiful blue eyes. Even though he was built like a house with hands bigger than my head, his touch was as gentle and soft as could be,” Abbie said as she felt herself gazing into space, recalling the feeling of the moment.

“You let him touch you!?” asked a concerned Maria.

“Relax, it was all very innocent. At least at first. He was just brushing the hair from my face. But I got to tell you, Maria, I had never felt the things I felt when that man touched me for the first time. It was magic! It was exhilarating! And yet, paled in comparison to how I felt when he kissed me.”

“You kissed another man beside Steven!?” asked a stunned Maria.

Abbie could feel disappointment and even a little judgment from her roommate. Maria only had a friend-level attraction to Steven, but she liked him very much and didn’t seem to like the idea that Abbie had kissed another man.

“Don’t forget Maria. Steven had just dumped me. If I had thought about it first, I might have held back. But I in no way regret any of the kisses I shared with my Mystery Man.”

“I get that he broke up with you. I guess I’m just struggling to think of you with anyone else but Steven. You said kisses? You kissed him more than once?”

“We kissed more times in half an hour than Steven and I have kissed in the last six months, maybe longer. The kisses were so much more passionate. Every kiss brought me closer and closer to realizing the truth. Fate had delivered me my soulmate,” proclaimed a confident Abbie.

“Soulmate? I can’t even believe I am hearing these words leave your lips. I’ve never heard you describe anyone, not even Steven, as your soulmate,” stated a bewildered Maria.

Abbie remained calm and serene and said, “That’s because I never met my soulmate until tonight.”

“If this ever gets back to Steven, he is going to be crushed. I am terrified to ask this next question, did anything more happen than kissing.”

“There may have been some over the clothes hand wandering, but I assure you it was PG-13 at most. But I was up for more if he pursued it.”

Maria’s face expressed the shock she was feeling inside. “Oh my God! Are you telling me that you would’ve slept with this man if he wanted it?”

Abbie smiled and responded with a catchphrase she is famous for, “You got that right!”

At this point, Maria was beside herself. “I don’t know if I’m ready to hear anymore. It’s been a long time since I’ve pictured you with anybody but Steven. I know he broke up with you, but it just feels wrong. I mean, come on, Abbie, you don’t even know his name? You couldn’t have been with them for more than an hour or two. So how can you say he is your soulmate?”

“I don’t know for certain how far I would’ve gone with him so soon after the breakup, but I wanted more. I’ll explain why I don’t know his name in the second. But I want to say that none of it felt wrong to me. All of it felt right.”

Abbie could see that Maria was still struggling and tried to find a way to comfort her. “I know it’s hard to think of me with someone besides Steven. Until tonight, I felt the same way. Compared to Mystery Man, I was slow to recognize the feelings we had for each other. He didn’t reveal his feelings for me until he could see that I was ready. He was quickly able to show me that Steven and I were not right for each other. Somehow Steven knew it, and I didn’t.”

“But Steven regrets what he did. He wants it to work between you two.”

“Steven is just scared to be alone. He waited five years to propose and broke the engagement because deep inside, he knows we are not right for each other. Steven and I have a checkbox relationship,” explained Abbie.

“What does that even mean?”

“It means he checks all my boxes, and I check all of his. The relationship looks good on paper. It may even look good in practice. Mystery Man helped me understand what I think Steven inherently knows. There is something seriously lacking in that relationship. Steven and I are both settling for each other. Steven and I are comfortable together, but there is no passion. When he’s not around, it’s no big deal. It’s not a problem because, like clockwork, I’ll see him on the weekend.”

“What’s the problem with that? “asked Maria, sincerely trying to understand.

“I don’t want to be in a relationship anymore with someone I am comfortable being without. I want to be in a relationship with someone who I am uncomfortable being without. Does that make any sense?” Abbie asked, hoping that Maria was getting on board with her new perspective.

Maria paused for a second to consider what Abbie was saying. “I think I get what you’re saying. While from the outside, you and Steven look like a great match, but inside, it’s all routine and no passion or excitement. And you want to be with someone you miss terribly when they are not around instead of the mediocre feelings you feel when you and Steven are apart. Is that about right?”

“That’s a good summary. Steven and I have never been passionate about each other. I want that feeling, Maria. I deserve that. So do you, so does everyone. Don’t you want to find your soulmate? The one you can’t bear to be without. The one who makes you feel wonderful with nothing more than a simple touch. Don’t you want that, Maria?” asked Abbie, almost pleading with Maria to understand.

“Of course I want that. Who doesn’t? I guess that just seems more like movie magic than real life. Are you sure you’re done with Steven? Do you still love him?” asked Maria.

“I was thinking about that after my shower. I do still love Steven, and it’s more than just friendship. I love Steven like a boyfriend, but not a soulmate, and not a life partner.”

“Are you sure that you couldn’t have that was Steven if you both made an effort? How do you know it would be any different with your Mystery Man?”

Abbie explained, “It would be awkward to try and manufacture that feeling with Steven. It’s just not there. It’s over between him and me. I already have that feeling, that passion, that emotion with my Mystery Man. It was effortless to fall for him. I don’t have to manufacture anything. I may not be as certain as he is that fate brought us together, but I am getting there. And I am 100% sure he is the right man for me.”

“As I hear you explain things, the more I’m beginning to see your relationship with Steven in a different light. I am not as convinced as you are that you couldn’t make things work with Steven, but I do get what you’re saying. This might be easier if I knew more about this Mystery Man of yours. Can you tell me why you don’t even know his name?”

“Sure! The thing about my Mystery Man is that he is all about passion. He’s been stuck in comfortable relationships that look good on paper but lacked when it came to feelings of the heart. So he decided to take an all-or-nothing approach and risk loneliness for a chance to find his true love.”

Maria interjected, “And he sees you as his one true love? And what does that have to do with not knowing his name?”

“He would say that he knows I am his one true love. He felt it the moment he saw me. He felt like fate had set this all up ahead of time. Eventually, I came around to his way of thinking. But he could see that my confidence wavered a bit. And he also thought it was important that I find closure with Steven, even if it meant giving Steven another chance. He also said it was important for my friends and family to see me single for a while. So that they won’t think he is nothing more than a rebound relationship,” replied Abbie, still not answering Maria’s question.

“Honestly, that all makes a lot of sense. But it still doesn’t explain why you don’t know his name.”

“Mystery Man knows that if he gives me any information about him, the first thing I’m going to do, we would do, is hop on the Internet and find out everything there is to know about him.”

“Damn right we would! And why is this a problem?” questioned Maria.

“He said it was a problem because then I’m going to try to make the relationship work on paper. He doesn’t want to risk this becoming a checkbox relationship. He assured me that we most certainly both check each other’s boxes, but that’s not what he’s after. And now that I understand things differently, it’s not what I’m after either. He wants the feeling to sustain us until the next time we see each other.”

“When do you plan to see him again?”

Abbie laid out their plan. “His lease is up in a few months, so we decided to meet again at 12 noon, three months from today at the exact location fate first brought us together. Then I’m going to help him find an apartment in town, and we’re going to start a relationship.”

“It all sounds so unreal. But, Abbie, the most important thing to me is that you’re safe and happy. I can’t help but worry this Mystery Man fantasy that you have comes crashing down on you. I am glad that I have three months to get used to the idea. Of course, I will support you, no matter what. But I also plan to protect you if I see this thing going sideways.”

Abbie smiled and gave Maria a hug. “I wouldn’t want it any other way!”

“While the whole thing makes me nervous, I gotta say in the ten years that I’ve known you and the many guys you’ve crushed on, I’ve never seen you look like this before.”

“You mean that I look like I’ve been touched by an angel?” Abbie said with a wide smile.

“That is exactly what I mean.”

Maria and Abbie spent a few more minutes talking before retiring to bed. They both agreed to keep Mystery Man a secret between them for now. Neither of them wanted to hurt Steven and decided silence was the best way to prevent that from happening.