

ADOLPH GOES TO FLORIDA

Dear Family & Friends: Hi there! It's me, Tanya, Did you forget me? Well, I'm still in Key West and cuddling up in it like a little kitten. I've been really fortunate this year, lots of good things fell off the tree for me, as I hope they've dropped on your head too.

First, I've been promoted to Chief Project Manager for Lightning Software, a big advancement, huge six figures, and don't think I got it just by sitting on my butt waiting for Santa. I busted my buns for it. Aunt Caroline, I guess you're eating your words when you said I'd never get anywhere!

More: I celebrated by flying to Massachusetts for a seven day Meditation Program – utter silence for a full week – I did it – hated it.

Yes, I finally bought a boat- Grandma, don't worry. It's sixty five feet long, a sweetheart. I learned by doing. Had some rough water – your fat little girl nearly drowned twice - had to be given CPR, but all's fine now. And I'm taking up boxing too! Our company has a trainer come in and let me tell you, I can kick ass so don't talk behind my back, relatives! Ha Ha!

Have met some hot guys but none of us were ready to die to the world and get married. Yikes, I'm 30!

Come on by and see my great condo if you have nothing to do. Plasma TV in every room, open bar. So come see beautiful me! I miss you. Tanya.

Adolf Menges put the letter down in wonder when his father asked him to “look her up” when he went on vacation next month to the Florida Keys. Adolf was appalled by such a crazed suggestion. His idea in going away was to escape women for a while, not to seek them out. He had already “looked them up” in the most graphic connotation of the word, and

that unfortunate tendency had precipitated him into the most grievous difficulties; either the women were intrigued and encouraged him to boldly pursue his investigation further, or they hated him for it and raised hell up and down. Either way, the effect on his job where these adventures occurred were naturally catastrophic- he was either caught in the act, or summoned to the Chief's office in which he knew there would be waiting a flushed and tearful young woman with rage in her eyes. It was only because the firm liked and felt sorry for him - every one of the guys knew they'd have done the same thing if they were as dumb as him - that they gave him glowing references to the next lower rung on the law firm ladder. After an ignominious decline, Adolf was now relegated to the lowest and shabbiest level of the legal profession, bail bondsman, in which a round shouldered slouch was mandatory and a pair of stained tennis shoes and a dirty shirt collar was the office dress code. And if he were cast out of that firm, there was nowhere to go but the desert.

His mom, though, pressed him hard to see Tanya. "She's the daughter of our dearest friend Charlotte from her first marriage; it would be terribly rude if you didn't go to see her, even for coffee or something. She sounds so interesting! But people say I'm not interesting. And Charlotte tells me she's very lonely, that she can't find anyone she likes. And so she'd like me?"

Besides, you're thirty two and still living at home – it's embarrassing! You never have a girl friend. Maybe you can talk that out with her. Just go there!"

And so it was on a blinding, dazzling day in January that Adolf strolled to Tanya's marina in order to meet her when her boat returned from an outing with some friends. He stood there, seemingly without purpose, hooking his thumbs into his new carpenter shorts and idly watching the picturesque scene unfold, in which five or six young people clambered from the glistening boat as it bumped against the dock. Quickly, in high laughing farewells like fluttering birds, they rushed by him to their cars and drove away into the town. He thought this was promising. Hopefully, Tanya had gone off with them and had forgotten that this was to be their first meeting, when he saw that one person remained, a woman, who emerged from within the boat only to vanish again, and then to reappear. She plainly was not happy. Scowling angrily, she leaped ashore on strong, well tanned legs, which Adolf could not help but admire.

"Who the hell are you?" she demanded. She was in a terrible mood, and it didn't help to find this curly haired man goggling at her with large, vacuous eyes and wearing those awful pants. "You weren't out on my boat, were you?"

“No, I’m Adolf Menges,” he said, in his pleasant, subdued voice which people initially liked but eventually stopped hearing altogether.

“You left a voice mail to meet you here.”

“Oh, yeah,” she nodded, remembering. Satisfied with that, she returned to the matters that were troubling her. “What about those people, huh? I took them out in my boat, wined and dined them, and then they just ran away from me, as if they didn’t want to be near me. That isn’t right, is it?”

“No” he emphatically replied; he surely wanted to be near her. He was admiring her brilliant white golf shirt with a nautical anchor sewn in blue over her left breast, a breast that almost toppled him over the ramp. He was already “looking her up”, the vice that caused him to run away from Washington DC to escape. Both boobs were enormous and wonderfully shaped, he could see them vaguely against the light perspiration which shadowed them. He thought briefly that they deserved a paragraph or more in her annual letter to the folks, which also misled him to believe that she was fat.

“Well, fuck those people, huh?” she said defiantly. “Fuck them”.

“Fuck them, yeah,” Adolf said enthusiastically, his gaze glancing everywhere but at the beguiling woman.

She regarded him quizzically, leaning against the rail and rubbing one wildly expensive boat shoe over the other. She thought him strange. “Your name is Adolf? Didn’t Adolf Hitler have that name?”

“My name’s not Hitler!” He tended to give way to a certain bluster when this issue came up. “It’s Menges.”

“Oh, yeah!” she laughed, “I heard about you from Mom. Your father collects stamps, and you work for a shitty law firm. They tell me you’re a failure.”

He was, of course, a failure; he knew that, but he flushed a bright red nonetheless. “Hey” he began indignantly, “that’s not...”

“Forget it! It’s not a big deal,” she said airily, as though she had been talking about yesterday’s weather. She couldn’t help smothering a laugh at him, a tall, gangling, scholarly sort of guy, who looked like he was down to his last penny. The carpenter shorts, falling limply well over his knees like Scottish kilts, somehow added to the strange effect. “Come on,” she urged, feeling sorry for him. “Let’s go for a drink, okay, Adolf? We’re family. If you can stand it, so can I.” She hooked her arm in his, and guided him from the ramp toward the town. “Don’t be so sensitive,” she advised. “Where would I be? Most people don’t like me – I think they’re jealous.” She snatched a handful of his hair and pulled on it. “Nice hair! I wish I had it.”

She took him to a small, cramped bar nearby, cool and pleasant, and even if it was run down, there were open windows and begonias and chrysanthemums in pots on the sills, and a nice breeze drifting in. It was early and there were only a few customers. She ordered margaritas – for them both: “they’re great in here”. Adolf acquiesced, though he would hardly ever drink during the day. But he couldn’t refuse her: she was almost a relative, and she had dark eyes, deep and hungry, her hair heavy and tawny draping her shoulders, a full lipped mouth – and those boobs! But bemused as he was, he couldn’t help noticing that the disheveled young waitress who came to their table was looking hatefully at Tanya, and when she had taken their order, she nearly ran through the double doors to the back room, crying. As Tanya appeared oblivious to it all, he didn’t mention it, but it was only seconds later that the doors were flung open, releasing like a rodeo bull a burly young guy wearing a stained apron who came charging at their table. He was short in stature, but that part of his body which should have gone vertically a few inches more was packed instead into a massively muscled frame, He was also carrying the baseball bat that he used on recalcitrant drunks.

“Hey!” he bawled, advancing on them, “I told you never to come in here again!”

“What’s your problem, Colin?” said Tanya coolly. “I brought a friend in here because I wanted him to sample your key lime margaritas.”

Colin was not appeased; his meaty face turned the color of raw beef, characteristic of one who feels fully justified in doing mayhem with a club. He was in the process of raising the bat when Tanya leaped to her feet and leveled a 45 pistol with both hands directly at Colin’s shaven head. She had pulled the gun from her large florally embossed hand bag which she had fortunately placed on the table so she could show Adolf pictures of a dog she recently adored but which had run away.

“Don’t even think about it, Colin!” Tanya warned, leaning across the table until the muzzle practically brushed his skull. “And my lawyer is with me, right here. His name is Adolf Menges. He tells me that no one is allowed to leave here because if I have to kill you, I’m entitled to witnesses that it was in self defense. Right, Adolf?” She glanced expectantly at him, waiting for him to speak up to confirm what she had said. Adolf, terrified, his mouth dry as a desert, feeling as if someone like Colin had punched him deeply in the pit of his stomach, somehow rose on shaking legs to do what she asked. “Yes,” he quavered, “the young lady is correct. That is the law of” – grasping for it - “Florida. Everyone must remain here.” And now a brainstorm: “See Criminal Code, Part 6, Section 2a. Witnesses”.

“You see?” Tanya chortled triumphantly, observing that no one was rushing to the door. “Now put the fucking bat down!”

“You bitch!” Colin muttered, recognizing, if only grudgingly, that Tanya would blow his head off without compunction if he pushed the matter any further. “Megan hasn’t slept for two weeks”, he complained as he set down the bat.

“I can’t help it if she’s crazy – jealous!” Tanya said. “There was nothing between you and me – zero!” No disinterested observer who was present could possibly doubt her sincerity, unless they knew of her torrid affair last month with Colin until she broke it off with disgust. “Your girl friend’s the one who should take the hit,” Tanya pronounced. From the corner of her eye Tanya had glimpsed Megan grinning venomously from the end of the bar. “You want some?” shouted Tanya, swinging the gun in Megan’s direction like lightning in her two hands, and chuckling with delight when Megan drew back like a turtle within the doors again.

“Hey, you were wonderful!” They were back on the street and Tanya had thrown her arm around Adolf’s shoulder as they walked quickly away. “If you hadn’t been there, that pig would probably have tried something. I’d have shot him, but there would still be a lot of problems afterward.” But Adolf could barely hear her; the explosive event of moments ago, the

sudden and dangerous apparition of Colin, the brandishing of deadly weapons, his own sudden intervention, rising from his chair without any recollection of conscious choice or preparation ---- these were the components of an event that left him both shattered and yet euphoric.

“You were looking at my breasts, weren’t you, at the marina?” said Tanya in good cheer. “You know what – let’s have dinner tonight at the Black Swan, and then we’re going back to my house and I’ll show them to you. For as long as you want. Won’t that be fun? But you can’t touch them or I’ll have to break your arm.” She giggled again. “Oh, maybe I’ll let you. Is that okay?”

Still dazed as he was, made more so by the vast expanse of the sun, the vivid blue sky, and the violent beauty of the flowers surrounding the street, he could only say, “Sure, great!”

She kissed him quickly on his cheek. “I have to go to a boring, unnecessary meeting this afternoon, so I’ll see you at the Black Swan at six o’clock. You can’t miss it; it’s just down the street.” Uh,oh,” she said, glancing with disgust at her wrist watch. “Time to go!” She started down one of the narrow alleys between some quaint stores. ”By the way,” she said, coming back for a moment. “I think I’ll call you ‘Dolph!’”

After she left, Adolf, not knowing what to do, made his way down to the marina. He sat there, under the shadow of Tanya's boat, and looked out beyond the huddle of masts and boats to the sea, glimmering with silver, rolling lazily into the shore. It felt so good there, away from his hotel - motel, actually – a mildewed place crowded with shouting families and boasting a swimming pool more like a bathtub with blue body wash, but that was okay, all he could afford, but he didn't want to go back to it now. Not after that moment, the magnificence of Tanya; how bold she was, and how beautiful. And how she raised the pistol to Colin's forehead, and converted fear and shame into victory. He was happy just to think about her, and watch the sun descend behind a vast purple cloud bank, until he realized with a start that it was getting late. He managed to find a taxicab to get back to the motel, where in his haste he took a quick shower under the sputtering nozzle, dumped his suitcase upside down on his bed to more quickly find his "best shirt" and "formal pants", and then hurtled back into the cab still waiting for him to be sure he'd arrive at the Black Swan in time, and never mind the cost. He was racing to meet a beautiful woman; that had not been his modest style, but it was now and the feeling was intoxicating.

The Black Swan earned its name by the heavy darkness which engulfed him as he entered, and when a woman he could barely see took him

by the arm and gently asked him to leave as his name was not on the “list”, he mentioned Tanya; a respectful pause followed, and he shortly found himself led like a blind man to the recesses of a deep lounge chair. He ordered a margarita and waited for Tanya. Later, he appreciated the darkness because his embarrassment couldn’t be observed by the neighboring patrons as six o’clock went by, as did seven, and now eight, and still she didn’t come. He made a few phone calls, but received only her voice mail, and drank another margarita. A waiter had become ever more persistent, so he reluctantly ordered the recommended trout with a crushed pecan topping, but when it arrived its aroma seemed so heavily pungent he couldn’t eat it. He had no more appetite.

He knew she wasn’t going to come now; he knew he should leave, but he was too stubborn to do so. He was like someone mourning at a cemetery who knew but refused to accept the fact that the deceased was actually gone forever. And he knew that the funeral was his own. She had given him, oh, so briefly, a world of shining possibility, crude and dangerous perhaps, but brave and free. And he had taken a noteworthy part in it, when Colin tried to take a brutal vengeance on a guiltless woman who obviously wouldn’t give him what he wanted. But that moment of glory was over; the light extinguished, and only the dark remained. And its depth and blackness

would endlessly deepen until it swallowed him. He would have to go back to his ugly little motel, his shoddy job, his room at his parents' house, the hopelessness beyond it. But not yet. Not now. He fell asleep thinking of Tanya, of the broad, golden bracelet clasped loosely over her right wrist and the way it swung gently up and down as she held Colin back with the gun.

He nodded sleepily, still seeing her bracelet, when he felt something cool pressing lightly over his eyes. Someone was breathing, warm and wine flavored, against the back of his neck. "Guess who!" He reached up and grasped what seemed to be someone's hands. He twisted his body to look over his shoulder. "Yes, it's me!" Tanya said, laughing quietly into his eyes. "I can't believe you're still here! No one ever waits for me." She squeezed his shoulders affectionately. "I guess you waited cause we're family!"

"Look," she continued, more seriously. "We can't go to my condo tonight. There's something I have to do. It would be sweet if you'd come along with me. Would you, Dolph?"

He could only see her eyes gleaming and her fine teeth. "Sure!" he said, getting up unsteadily. He didn't care where they were going.

One thing seemed clear to him. He would never go home again.

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