

TOMORROW
MAY BE
TOO LATE



THOMAS MARINO



BOARDING

Monday, August 22, 1988: 11:45 a.m.
Mount Holly, New Jersey

There's a large window behind my desk that I'm staring out of, gazing across the street at nothing in particular. "There's a call for you on 2202," Janet interjects.

I sit up, turn around to face front, and blink both eyes toward Janet, offering her an acknowledging smile as I answer the phone. "First Commercial Bank, Tom Marino speaking."

It's Mitch.

I spin my chair back around to the window and lean back, twirling one of my business cards in one hand. The title on the card reads Personal Banker — which is a catch-all job in retail banking, covering all aspects of customer service from concierge to underwriting loans.

"Hey, Tommy, I got some more jobs for you this weekend."

"Cool, Mitch," I smile. "Where are they?"

"Got one in Haddonfield at a house. Another couple in clubs."

I'm delighted. I love to get jobs in clubs. "Super! Which ones?" I ask.

"One is at the Cadillac Grill on South Street. The other is at Roxy's, right around the corner, just off of South."

“That’s bangin’,” I say, beaming with satisfaction; been to both places before, and both are upbeat and fun to work.

“Look, Tommy, here’s the thing...”

“Mitch,” I cut him off, “Can I get the information from you later? I’m a little busy right now.”

“Sure, Tom. Call when you get home tonight. I’ll leave the information with Lisa.”

“Okay,” I confirm and then hang up. I don’t want to take the information from Mitch at work. My terrific part-time job is slowly turning into a bustling full-time career. I’ve been a male exotic dancer since I dared to try it about two years ago.

“Why don’t you do some work?” Janet says from her desk, jokingly. She, too, is a Personal Banker, but is classified as my leader. Sometimes we hang out and party after work and we’re capable of being professional colleagues at work and close acquaintances off hours.

3:00 p.m.

Scheduled off earlier than usual, I grab my keys and lock my desk. I pick up my pending file, and in my rush it slips from my grasp, spilling paperwork all over the floor. Shit. Here comes Sue, our branch manager. She’s very beautiful.

“Leaving already, Thomas?” Sue always calls me Thomas.

“Yes, I’m done for the day, “I confirm for her. “Unless...Is there anything else you need before I go?” I ask, kneeling before her to pick up my paperwork.

Sue takes the stuffed pending file that I just managed to put back together and begins leafing through it. She asks, “Is this up-to-date? Have you made all your sales calls?”

“Yes and yes,” I lie knowing that there is no way she could have made heads or tails of the jumbled file.

“Well, then, you can scoot,” she permits cordially.

Outside, I get in my black 1985 Ford Thunderbird and head home. While driving, I subject myself to cassette tape after cassette tape of songs that remind me of Nadine. Nadine is my wife, and we’re getting divorced. Only a week ago, I picked her up from the airport after she had finished an extended medical training program with the Army. She was coming home, and the plan was that I would resign from the bank and we’d go together to her first assignment – wherever in the world that was to be. Instead of a warm homecoming and the continuation of our relation-

ship, she told me that we were through. Our songs, our memories, and our entire four-year relationship all stream through my mind. I love her like crazy and miss her terribly, but we had both been unfaithful to each other during this summer of separation. I’d grown so close to her that she has been my once-in-a-lifetime love, and she made it so easy to share my truths; so easy that I was honest about my most intimate homosexual desires and indiscretions. In return, she told me that I have to explore the part of me that’s sexually attracted to men: I need to find out what truly makes me happy.

I tell myself, She’s right — wash away thoughts of what will never be. I have to go on and be strong; there will be happy times ahead. But try as I might, I can’t stop the pain. It’s only been a week since she left. I also never meant to hurt my baby and I worry what this is doing to her.

I pull into the driveway at home in Wrightstown. It’s the house where I live with my Mom, Dad and little brother Danny — the house and home I most desperately loathe right now. The house I was supposed to be leaving in two weeks to start my own married and independent life. I can’t stop feeling like the rug has been pulled out from under me. I was raised as a military brat, and the prospect of a future life in a military family carried an appeal of familiarity and warmth that I’d decided I wanted and needed to be happy.

Sullenly, I walk to my bedroom and collapse on the bed. Thoughts keep racing through my mind. I need to reinvent myself. Where in the hell am I going? I want something to look forward to, to depend upon, but now the world is topsy-turvy. Uncertainty and excitement coalesce in my thoughts and I cannot wrap my mind around anything so I leave to hit the gym. A good long workout will help; it always does.

Friday, August 26, 1988

Having just finished a gig in my tux, I’m feeling really good as I fly down the Atlantic City Expressway going about 85 mph, listening to Terence Trent D’Arby singing “Sign Your Name.” I have all the windows down and the wind is racing through my hair. I’m dressed to kill, looking and feeling a bit like a young James Bond, sporting a white dinner jacket over a white tux shirt and black bowtie. It’s such a high to go on these expeditions. Upon arrival at the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino, I walk up to the reservations desk in the glitzy lobby. There are several attendants standing around looking pretty. A cute male receptionist smiles my way