

July 14: ♪ 3. Upsidedown ♪

“Did you tell him about me?” Rose blurted out, as the door to the apartment closed.

Mrs. Hamilton's eyes narrowed. Rose now remembered the older woman's rule about not talking until they reached a safe distance from the seller.

“No, dear, I will not tell your secret.”

Rose could not hold back. Her excitement needed an escape hatch. As she bounded across the old floorboards of the hallway, the carefully controlled American English gave way to the Valley Speak of her teenage years.

“How did he know me? My fans are, like, my age. With those puppy dog eyes and that baby face...What d'you think, like, he's 25?”

She had expected boring visits to uninteresting, small apartments. Peter unexpectedly stirred her emotions. A superfan who did not immediately mob her. How exciting. His appearance confused her. A fashion dissonance.

“You know, like, the height, like, the dark, long, wavy hair. Kinda like Dustin Hoffmann in *Little Big Man*, fer sure, with a child-like face. The preppy clothes don't fit. That's more Tom Cruise in *Risky Business*. But, those stubbles...bad shave, not chic at all.”

Mrs. Hamilton seized the pause to get a word in.

“I made him change clothes. What he wore last time was so *ugly*. Bright green polo shirt with khaki pants and white adidas. Did you see? No ring on his hands. A woman would not let him go out like that. *Naja*—I did not know *you* would dress like that.”

“I'm so totally stressed out after the trip. Didn't want anybody to, like, recognize me. See how that worked.”

The two women entered the elevator.

Rose peered toward the apartment door hoping in vain to

get another glimpse of Peter. “Did you see the cartoonish Swatch? Who wears *that*?”

“He's such a *Kindskopf*, as we say here. I expected Mickey Mouse with moving arms on the watch. My son, Michael, in tenth class, wore a dark brown fedora all the time. He loved the Indiana Jones movies. Children are like that.”

“Yeah, he's such a boy.”

Peter disturbed Rose's sense of style. Nevertheless, she could not help but like him in his immature, klutzy way. Her thoughts drifted to night time activities.

Charles!

She fished a pink case out of her handbag and touched the black iPhone screen. “What the... Right, no service. Why do the Germans have to do their own phone thing? So totally stupid. I had to borrow Brenda's old phone.”

“*Naja*, my phone works in America. Miss Lancer comes here all the time to sing on television, so she has a GSM phone. Works anywhere in Europe. The USA is the chaos. Phones that only work with one company. Tsk.”

“Whatev'.” Rose pulled a small Motorola phone from her handbag, flipped it open, and held it to her ear. “See, Charles left a message that he, like, called the wrong number all day. Stupid.”

The two women walked past new metal mailboxes hanging below ornate green stucco palm leaves.

Rose looked at Mrs. Hamilton's light blue eyes. “He wants to do dinner at HARTMANNs.”

“Noble. One of the best restaurants in Berlin.”

“I don't know. He says he can intro me to these big shots at, what, Babblingburg.”

“Oh, Studio Babelsberg in Potsdam. Maybe you can make a movie here.”

“Yeah, I, like, need it. The big studios won't talk to me, you know. I, like, try so hard to get roles, but everyone's against me now. Not fair!”

“Maybe you have luck tonight.”

“Maybe.”

He's 50 and no hair. I can already see the headlines: Desperate Rose And Her Sugar Daddy. Like I need that.

The two made their way back along the busy street. Rose's eyes followed a young man wearing sun glasses whisking past in a black BMW. Her nipples hardened.

Should have gotten some action before I left home, after those losers in rehab. Spur of the moment travel decisions. So stupid.

Charles and his lusting eyes, gross, but he wears a Rolex. The real estate agents, all old enough to be her father. That left the long-haired kid with a cheap watch. At least he spoke English.

Rose ran her index finger across her lips.

Should have called Maxim Germany about a photo shoot. They'd paid for the flight and then some.

“You have *Esquire* here?”

The older woman stopped and gave her a puzzled look.

Rose smiled. “You know, the men's magazine. I'm on their list of sexiest women alive all the time.”

“I am sorry, I do not know.”

The two reached the carriage way. The pungent stench of wet dog rose from the cardboard left behind by the beggar.

Mrs. Hamilton leaned down. “Why did you give him a hundred euros?”

“Don't have anything smaller. Anyway, he can get a room and give that poor dog a bath. Those two needed the purifying power of water.”

The picture of the ocean view from her home entered her mind. The waves of roaring traffic reminded her of the Malibu surf. What was she doing in landlocked Berlin?

Rose stopped and looked around. The old brick buildings had a pompous feel, like Charles.

Old world charm, but ultimately boring and so yesterday.

Peeling paint, graffiti, and soot-covered ornaments—many façades bore reminders of the city's recent real-estate depression.

The youthful newer buildings, no different from the architecture of downtown Los Angeles. Besides, she already missed her family after only two days here. How ridiculous of her to think she could endure weeks or months alone, separated from them by an ocean.

She turned to her agent. “Like, you know, this one's good. Cancel the other appointments.”

“Oh, you like it? Very good investment. Germans love sunny rooftop apartments. You can always sell it at a good price.”

“Whatev'.”

Rose had no mind for real estate right now. She needed to get ready for Peter in three hours. For sure, this childish nobody could not possibly help salvage her washed up acting career. He had entertainment value, though. Even with her friends far away, her beauty would spare her a boring evening alone in a foreign country. Time to focus on something more important than condominiums.

He's gotta think I'm so broke to wear this crap. I'll give him a good show. Brought just the right blouse.

Mrs. Hamilton turned the corner and pressed the unlock button on her Mercedes key.

Rose caressed the fabric below her ample cleavage. Career or casual sex. She still had time to decide.