

SOCCER



M O M



HUGH O. SMITH

SOCCER
M**M**



a novella by

Hugh O. Smith

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*“Man is the only creature who refuses to be what
he is.”*

— Albert Camus

CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Also by Hugh O. Smith

About the Author

Excerpt from *Pleasure Party*

Chapter One

Valerie felt her phone vibrating and swore under her breath. Great timing Mike, she thought to herself. Two more minutes and she would have been out of the NJ Transit train in the car and on the way home. The purse sat beside her, trapped between her body and that of the very large man at the window seat. At a voluptuous size sixteen, she wasn't small either and it took some effort to maneuver the purse from where it sat, lodged between them. Her movement woke her seatmate up and earned her a nasty look.

"Sorry," she said.

"No problem," the man growled, his eyes fixed firmly on her cleavage.

The phone still vibrated as she rummaged inside the purse for her iPhone, expecting to see her husband's number on the screen. Instead, the screen was blank, no missed calls, texts or emails had come in. She felt the vibration again and suddenly remembered the oth-

er phone she carried and retrieved it from the tiny pocket deep inside the pocketbook.

She pressed a button, the screen came to life, and she read the short text message, annoyed at its pleading tone.

Please tell me when.

The message was from a number she didn't recognize and for a moment, she indulged the wild hope that it was just a random wrong number but she knew it wasn't. She navigated to the phone's address book and called the one stored number.

"Hey Valerie girl," the voice on the other end answered.

"Hi Patricia," Valerie said. "Um, I just got a strange text and I was wondering if you...uh, gave the number to...him."

"I sure did. He begged and pleaded for it for a week. Plus, he paid top dollar for it. More money for us, right?"

"Patricia," Valerie hissed, looking around to see if any of the other passengers were listening. "I can't believe you did that! Are you crazy? He already has an email address for me. Now you went and you gave the phone number too?"

"Relax sweetie, it's just a prepaid cell, it's not like I gave him your personal number. And, that text cost him \$500, and every time he sends one it's another \$500 which means that's an extra \$250 in your pocket

each time. Are you gonna tell me you can't use the money?"

Valerie said nothing.

"Listen honey, anytime this is too much you just tell me," Patricia said. "I'll gladly..."

"No, no," Valerie said quickly. "It's just that it's..."

"Overwhelming?"

"Yes, a little."

"I know sweetie," Patricia's voice took on a motherly tone. "But wasn't it you that said to me when you started that sometimes we women have to do what we have to do for our families? You're just handling business."

The conductor called her station and Valerie saved the document she had open on her laptop, put it in her briefcase and stood, awkwardly holding her phone to her ear.

"You're on the train from New York," Patricia said.

Valerie said nothing.

"Darlin' I'll never know why do you want to make that commute every day? Waking up at the crack of dawn, running out of the house, prayin' you make the train, then getting packed on like cattle and then spillin' out into New York and taking shit from a boss you hate at a job you hate.

Valerie held on as the train lurched to a stop at her station. The door opened and a tide of commuters spilled forth, rushing toward the parking lot.

"Like you said, I'm handling business."

Patricia laughed. "That's not handling business girl, that being a glutton for punishment. If you really wanted to handle business, you'd take me up on my offer. I have more work than I can handle."

Valerie arrived at her car and threw her briefcase and purse in the back seat.

"We've gone over this Patricia, I don't want to..."

"All right darlin' all right, we don't have to go over it again, but you know the offer is open whenever you want it."

"I know."

"Good." Patricia's voice returned to its usual all business tone. "So, he wants to meet you tomorrow, same time and place as usual. Oh, and he wants something new this time."

Valerie sighed. "New?"

"Yes, he wants to...up the ante a little. There'll be some new tools in the tool chest. Nothing you can't handle. Can I confirm that you'll be there?"

Valerie rubbed the bridge of her nose, hung her head, and said nothing.

"You there Val?" Patricia said after a moment of dead air.

"I'm here. I got it. Up the ante. Fine, I'll be there."

"Good girl. I knew I could depend on you. I'll see you afterwards at the usual place. Oh, and that other thing he asked for, don't forget to bring it."

Patricia clicked off without waiting for an answer. Valerie started the car, then turned it off again and gazed at the now-deserted commuter platform.

“Up the ante,” she said to herself. It seemed like whenever she had a handle on her relationship with Patricia, things managed to shift enough to make her question herself all over again.

She’d been sure that her commuting days were over, but here she was again. Three years ago her husband Mike’s career was going so well that she was able to quit her job and finally devote all her time to her writing. It was strange at first, waking up in the morning and not having to run to the train to join the hordes of people commuting into New York City, but she soon got used to it and threw herself full force into writing. It took a while but slowly but surely, she made contacts and built her reputation among the editors responsible for hiring writers from magazines all over the country. Things were going well, she’d been able to get articles into major publications and was almost done with her novel and agents were sniffing around when the bottom fell out of the economy and Mike lost his job. They didn’t panic at first, they had savings, and with Mike’s experience, they were sure he would find something quickly. A month turned into three and then into a year and now, almost two years later their savings were exhausted and she’d had to go back to work so they wouldn’t lose the house. Even so, they were just barely hanging on. They’d all had to make sacrifices. She

went back to work, now her writing was regulated to early in the morning and the few minutes she managed to snatch on the train with her computer balanced on her lap. They'd pulled their son Ian from private school and enrolled him in public school. They'd been worried about that, but Ian was a trooper and had taken it well. He'd quickly made friends and was one of the stars of the soccer team.

She started the car and pulled out of the train station. Ian had a soccer game today, she had only a few minutes to run home, change, and pick up Mike then get to the field. She glanced at her watch. She would make it if she hurried.

She was pulling into the driveway when the phone vibrated again. She put the car in park, then checked the screen of the pre-paid phone.

Thank you Mistress, the text message said.

Valerie grimaced in disgust, turned the phone off, and went inside to meet her husband.

Chapter Two

Valerie had been awake for over two hours when her alarm went off at 5:15am. The alarm's shrill tones caused Mike to stir and she quickly shut it off, pulled the covers up over him, and gave him a kiss.

"I'm going jogging baby," she said.

"Okayhonestyoulateriloveyou," he slurred, and then was snoring once again.

"I love you too," she whispered.

She tiptoed to the bathroom and undressed quickly, stopping to look at the reflection of her naked body in the mirror. It had taken her a long time to make peace with the way she looked. Her teens were an awkward and uncomfortable time of being taller and heavier than the other girls. The boys too for that matter. She'd been made fun of and called names up until the summer she turned seventeen, when Mother Nature decided to turn on her body's hormonal faucet. Then presto change-o, all of a sudden, she had breasts and

hips and curves for weeks. High school was a very different experience after that. Overnight, the boys who'd waxed eloquent when they made fun of her were tongue-tied and stumble-footed in her presence.

Male attention only exacerbated her discomfort, and in her twenties, she endured a series of boyfriends enamored with getting with the sexy big girl. It took time for her to learn the difference between those who were truly attracted to her and those who merely fetishized her body and wanted to get with her for a thrill.

She was twenty-nine when she met Mike. He was different. He was comfortable with her body, and adored it but more importantly, he loved Valerie, the person. He loved everything about her, from her loud laugh to the freckles on her face to her hair that would never do as it was told. And, in turn, she loved him back. A year after they met they were married, and although they had endured marriage's slings and arrows there was nowhere she would rather be.

Now, at forty-one, she was entirely comfortable in her own skin. Her large, slightly unevenly sized breasts no longer made her sigh in consternation. The stretch marks from her pregnancy no longer seemed ugly, they were marks she'd earned on the road to motherhood, and her ass, well she still thought it was too big but her man couldn't seem to get enough so that was the silver lining in that particular cloud.

She yawned as she entered the shower and turned the water as cold as she could stand it. It had taken her

over an hour to get to sleep and when she did the sleep only lasted for a couple of hours before she was up again, wide-eyed and unable to get back to sleep. Try as she might, the conversation with Patricia wouldn't stop playing in her head. Up the ante, she'd said. How on earth would we do that, Valerie wondered. The things she did with the client were extreme enough, how would they make them even more so.

She left the shower and dried quickly. The freezing water had done its job, she was fully awake. She changed into her tightest jogging suit, not bothering with a bra, then pulled her hair back into a severe looking ponytail. She gave herself a once over in the mirror then tiptoed over to their bed and kissed Mike again.

"I'm sorry baby," she whispered.

Mike frowned in his sleep and mumbled intelligibly.

Valerie left the room and was on the way downstairs before she realized she was forgetting something. She ran back to the bathroom and fished the panties she'd worn yesterday from the clothes hamper and stuck them in her pocket, then made her way outside to her backyard where she stretched for a couple of minutes before setting off down the street at a slow but steady pace.

She ran to a park a few blocks from her house, nodding hello to two other early morning joggers she encountered. It was a Saturday, the neighborhood runners wouldn't be out in force for another hour or so, she had

the trail mostly to herself. Five minutes later, she looked around to make sure she wasn't being observed, then slipped into the trees, running for about half a mile along an overgrown trail until she emerged into the backyard of a small but elegant cottage.

She took a minute to catch her breath, and then walked along the side of the house, passing an old, immaculately kept Bentley parked in the driveway, its engine cooling with an audible ticking. A liveried driver stood by the drivers' side door, smoking a cigarette. Valerie passed within feet of him, but the man stared straight ahead giving no sign that he was aware of her presence. A small garage attached to the house and she opened the side door, walked through the garage and into a small but modern kitchen. On the table, a cup of fragrant gourmet coffee and a small saucer with a large freshly baked muffin sat on the table. She drank the coffee (two sugars, just a touch of skim, exactly how she liked it) and ate the muffin, the butter melting into the huge juicy blueberries. As she finished her breakfast, she glanced at her watch, 5:59am. Tearing off a square of paper towel from the roll on the table, she strode into the bedroom. The room was small but luxuriously furnished. In one corner, a tailored Italian suit was draped over an antique wooden valet and underneath it a pair of shoes, also Italian. On the bed, a man, naked, his head down, face pressed into the pillow and his bony rump up in the air. She put a hand on his head, stroking the few remaining wisps of white hair

that still clung tenaciously to his liver-spotted scalp, petting him as one would greet a favored pet. The man shuddered and his skin grew red and flushed at her touch. She put her hand underneath his chin and raised his face up for him to look at her and with the other hand unzipped the top of her jogging suit. Her breasts fell free, unencumbered, slick with sweat from her run. The old man's rheumy eyes went wide, riveted on her chest.

She used the paper towel she brought from the kitchen to wipe every bit of moisture from her breasts then without a word savagely ground the soaked paper towel into his face. His body shivered with pleasure, and he inhaled sharply and stuck his tongue out as if to absorb as much of her from the paper towel as he could. Seconds later she pulled the paper towel away, balled it up and threw it on the floor. His eyes followed it intently to see where it landed.

"If you're good today, I have something for you," she said, pulling yesterday's panties from the jogging suit pocket. His eyes went wide and he flushed again but still didn't speak.

"Put your head back down," she ordered.

The man did as he was told, reluctantly tearing his eyes away from the breasts.

She pulled the zipper of the jogging suit closed before walking over to an antique dresser in a corner of the room. An envelope sat on top of it and she opened it, glanced at the contents, then opened the dresser door.

Most of the items she knew and was familiar with, heavy wooden and leather implements designed to bring pain, but there were some new ones she was unfamiliar with but whose painful purpose was unmistakable. She picked up one of the new ones, swinging it a few times, liking the feel of its weight in her hand. The man on the bed gasped, his eyes riveted to the frightening tool in Valerie's hand.

"You like this one, I see."

The man on the bed said nothing, his frantic nodding and flushed complexion answering her question.

"All right then," she said turning to face him, "Let's get to work."

ALSO BY HUGH O. SMITH

All of Hugh's work is available on Kindle.

South South Bronx

(Short story in the Zane anthology Caramel
Flava II)

Willows

Green Eyes and Good Hair

Full Figured (Short Story Anthology)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hugh O. Smith is the author of WILLOWS, GREEN EYES AND GOOD HAIR, and contributed to, as well as edited the forthcoming short story collection FULL FIGURED. His short fiction story SOUTH SOUTH BRONX appeared in the Zane anthology Caramel Flava II.

Originally from Jamaica, Hugh credits his Jamaican upbringing and its rich storytelling tradition for his writing inspiration. Hugh now lives in Woodbridge, NJ. His website is www.hughosmith.com

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