

What Are the Odds?



The dimly lit bar was buzzing with activity. The thumping music drowned the sound of raucous laughter and boisterous conversations. The air smelled heavy with alcohol, smoke, and people. I'm not usually a bar person; I've not been since two years ago when I walked in on my partner making out with his best friend. I'm here today to remind myself to live a little and let go of my developed phobia of bars, but this isn't helping.

"You look pretty tonight to be dull, Miss. Can I get you a shot? It's the weekend!" the bartender yelled over the loud music to me.

I was about to reject the offer when someone sat beside me and countered him.

"You're not seriously advising the pretty lady to get drunk in a wild place like this, are you?" He said.

"Way to kill the mood, dude. Here's a bar, and I was suggesting not forcing her."

The bartender defended.

The stranger was right, but I felt feisty tonight, maybe adventurous, so I decided to take a shot.

"You know what, Mr? You're right. Give me a shot!" I said to the bartender, smiling.

"Oh, wow. A feisty one. Sorry for intruding, then. How about I buy you a drink to make for it?" He offered.

I was just about to decline when I turned towards him, and oh, God, he was an Adonis.

"*You know what, I'll buy you a drink for trying to be a kind stranger. How about that?*" I said coyly.

"*I can't say no*" he responded, smiling in return.

I wasn't here to find a guy, and I knew where this was headed, so I made up an excuse to leave. But right then, I got a call from my best friend. Perfect!

"*Look, dude...*"

"*Leonard*", he interrupted, "*my name's Leonard.*"

"*Fine, Leonard. I got to go. My best friend just called, and I need to get back home. We have a girl's getaway soon and a lot to do. But it was nice meeting you.*" I said and offered a warm smile.

I stood up, about to leave, when he called after me.

"*Hey, dude. What's your name?*" He shouted.

"*You won't need it, Leonard. I'm pretty sure we may never see again.*" I said confidently.

"*Never say never, babe*" He said firmly.

"*Fine, I'm Carolina,*" I answered.

"*Okay, Carol. Say hello to Samantha for me, and have an amazing getaway.*" He said.

I was already on my way out when I heard that, and I stopped for a second. How'd he know Samantha's name? I felt like someone was staring, so I looked to my left, peering into the glass window to find a lady there, but she wasn't looking at me, or so I thought.

Samantha's POV

I was packing my bags for the one-week getaway with my best friend when I stumbled upon a picture of Lucas, my ex. I thought I had disposed of this, but it's still like an annoying parasite, always returning.

I tore the picture and was about to dispose of it when the door opened. It was Carol.

"And what has little Miss been up to on the weekend?" I teased.

"Oh, please. I just had a drink at a bar and met some guy, but that's all there is to it," Carol said, smiling.

I left out the weird part of Leonard knowing her name and the creepy feeling I got of someone spying on me. I may be paranoid about what that dude, Leonard, said earlier. So I let it be.

Sam and I talked some more, and of course, she juiced out all the details about Leonard and how devilishly handsome he was. But I wasn't really into him, at least. But he was easy on the eye. I laughed out loud at my thoughts.

Sam and I decided to spend the remaining days just doing some fun stuff and cleaning our apartment. It's always better to come back from a vacation to a clean home.

We went to Starbucks to get some coffee, and someone kept shouting from behind.

"*It's weird, I know, but I think that guy's calling you dude, babe,*" Samantha said.

"*Huh?*" I said, turning around to find Leonard with an annoying I told you so smile.

"*Oh, my God!*" I said, turning towards my best friend. "*That's the Adonis I met at the bar,*" I said, freaking out for a minute.

"*Oh, that one's an Adonis,*" she said, winking.

I gave her a killer stare, and she raised both hands, laughing.

"*Oh, hi Leonard,*" I say with a singsong voice.

"*Play it cool,*" I mutter to myself.

"*I already told you my name, so you don't have to call me dude, you know?*" I said firmly.

"*I know, but you already think me annoying, so I enjoy being even more annoying,*" he said, smirking.

"*Of course,*" I respond with a hardened smile.

"*Sorry to break the tension, but hi,*" Samantha says teasingly to Leonard.

"And you must be the amazing best friend, Samantha. I've heard a lot about you."

He interrupted with a smile, still holding her hands.

"Oh? I'm flattered". Sam said, laughing.

"I haven't told you much about her, Leonard. Don't make things up," I said cautiously.

"Oh, not much anyway, but if you're having a getaway with your girl pal, she must be amazing. Plus, she's a sight for sore eyes." He said with a wink directed at Sam.

"Oh, whatever, you flirt. See you around; we gotta go," I said.

But I discovered his attention wasn't really on me. He's staring toward the drive-thru at the order section, and I follow his gaze but find nothing.

"Are you okay? Earth to Leonard". I say, snapping my fingers before his eyes.

"Sure thing, dearest. I just thought I saw someone, but it's fine. Enjoy your day." He said and walked away quickly.

Now, that was unlike him. He didn't even respond to Sam's goodbye. He'd flirted with her, so he could have just waved at her.

On our way in, I saw something that threw me off momentarily. It was the same woman I thought was looking at me at the bar, but she wasn't this time. She was placing an order right in front of me. I think she caught me staring at her and politely smiled.

Alexa's POV

He's moved on and looks happy. It's funny he thinks this is over and he can go on leading a happy life with someone else. I've been keeping an eye on them. I'm lucky I ducked quickly, or he could have seen me. I can feel he's suspicious; I have to be more careful.

Her lips curled into a seemingly friendly smile when she intentionally ensured Carolina saw her at the order section. But her eyes betrayed the dark storm brewing within her. As she approached the target, she feigned ignorance and politely said hello. But behind her facade, the rage was simmering, her envy seething. She wanted nothing more than to eliminate her. But she had to be patient.

"Hello," I responded, *"I'm sorry for staring, but I felt ..."*

"Be careful; you don't know what he's capable of I'm sure you love your friend." She said like a prophetess of doom before storming out.

I stood transfixed on the floor in shock, confusion, and disbelief.

"Are you okay, Carolina? You've been staring into space for a while now," Sam said, drawing me out of deep thoughts.

"Yeahh... I'm sure. Don't worry." I said, trying to sound reassuring but failing woefully.

"Uhh... okay. I already made our order. Let's go." Sam said, leading us out of the cafe.

That evening, I received a private DM on my Instagram.

"Hello, pretty lady. Are you a magnet? Because you sure are attracting me!" with a wink emoji.

That was so corny but a bit funny. Still, I skipped the message and continued with what I was doing. In the next few minutes, I received two new notifications from the same private person.

"C'mon, dude. I had to crack my brain to come up with that line, and you're going to ignore me?" with a sad emoji face.

I laughed out loud because Leonard is something!

"I've only ever heard a coconut crack. You must have a similar head to crack it ". I replied.

"Ouch, you're funnily rude. I don't mind," Leonard responded with a laughing emoji.

"Well, it does feel good that I don't have to explain my joke to you." I texted, smiling.

"I don't mind hearing more. And if you wanna know what more this coconut head has up his sleeves, a dinner at your favorite restaurant works". He offered.

I laughed out a lot. Look at how he slipped that in. Sam walked in on me laughing and asked for the tea. I told her everything, and she laughed too.

"Still no response from you. You can come with your best friend if that makes you feel safe. She's beautiful, too, so I won't mind." He added.

Seeing that text annoyed me, I texted, *"You don't have to bring Sam into all our conversations, Leonard. It's unsettling. Do you like her, or are you trying to woo me?"* I responded.

"I'm sorry. I thought being friendly with your friend would put your mind at ease. I apologize if it was a bit off. Would you come on a date with me then?" He replied with a puppy eye emoji.

"Fine, pick me up by 6.30 p.m. La Vie en Rose sounds delightful. I'm craving something French," I reply.

"Perfect! See you at 6.30 p.m., Milady."

I agreed to go on a date with him then but suddenly remembered that woman's words, so I decided to indulge Sam.

"Do you think he's weird?" I ask Sam.

"Who, Leonard?" she asks.

"Yes, he appeared without warning and has subtly entered our lives. He's funny, handsome, has a whiff of mystery, and is very flirty. It's giving some sort of vibes," I admit.

"Look, Carol, you've sworn off guys for two years. It wouldn't be normal if you didn't feel weird about him. Besides, he's embodying the mystery guy role perfectly, and he has his charm," Samantha said.

"You sound like you'll say I do if he asked you to marry him," I said distastefully.

"C'mon. Don't get me wrong. I didn't mean to sound like that. But the most important thing is that you're going on a date with him tonight, and that's the perfect opportunity to learn about him. Ask him things you wanna know and gauge his response. If something seems off, trust it. I'll always be with my phone, so you know you can call." Sam assured me, reminding me of why we became best friends in the first place.

"Thanks, babe. You're the best," I say, smiling.

"Oh, I know," she says proudly, and we laugh.

Once the time came, I dressed up, and Sam did my makeup. I looked beautiful tonight, and there was no hiding that. If things go well, I may follow him back home, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

"Carolina, he's here!" Sam screamed from the sitting room.

I looked at myself in the mirror again before coming downstairs.

Leonard's POV

It felt like I saw Alexa at the cafe. I thought she was locked up, and I called to confirm, but my guy had yet to contact me. I won't let her take away my happiness. It was all a mistake, and I've put that behind me. She has no right to make me feel guilty for all that. I'm a new person with a different personality

and face to match. I like Carol; she's beautiful and smart and funny. I won't lose her, too.

Walking into her house and seeing her descending the stairs in that red dress made me smile as I imagined her being mine.

"You look beautiful, Sam, but I'm here for the lady in red," I teased with a smile.

"Of course, sir" Samantha said smiling.

I walked up to Carolina and offered her the flowers I got while making her cheeks turn pink with compliments. We got to the restaurant and caught up like old friends. She asked me questions about my past, a subject I was afraid to touch, so I lied or changed the topic. She said I was mysterious, but I covered it with a boyish charm. I didn't want her getting suspicious. Afterward, I suggested returning to my apartment to open a new bottle of red. And she obliged. On our way back, the weather changed, and it felt like it was about to rain.

"It's going to be a cold night. Seems it might rain," Carol said, looking out the car's window.

"Yeah, if you're uncomfortable with being stuck at my place, I can drop you back home," I suggested.

"Don't worry, I'm good." She assured me.

We got to my place, and I showed her around before entering my pantry to get a bottle of red. Coming out, I saw her wandering around my office.

"You work here?" She asked.

"Yeah, I don't feel like meeting in-person clients at the office; I work from here. That's the flexibility of being a Software developer." I added.

I showed her around for a few minutes but excused myself to take a call when I saw it was from Roland, the guy I contacted about Alexa.

As Leonard left the office to take a call, I got suspicious and decided this was an opportunity to see if I could find anything about his past that he seemed sneaky about.

I stopped when I got a text from an unknown number.

"Even after warning you, you went to his place? You must hate living".

"Who's this? Leave me alone, for goodness' sake!" I replied angrily.

I opened Leonard's drawer and found the last one locked. I pricked it with a hairpin and found a box. I also pricked it open, and to my shock, I found newspapers and information talking about someone with Leonard's name, Leonard Smith, about the bizarre death of his exes. And I found that weird prophetess of doom's picture in handcuffs on the last page.

I'm starting to panic now. Have I been fooling around with someone dangerous all this while?

"What are you doing here?" Roland says, catching me off-guard.

"Who are you for real?" I ask fearfully.

"You read my files? Why would you invade my privacy like that, Carolina?" The look in his eyes sent shivers down my spine. I'm scared now and afraid for my best friend's life. Who have I welcomed into our lives?

I began walking back, desperate to get away from him.

"She was right all along. You're a dangerous man. Are you trying to kill me and have my best friend, or do you wish to kill us both?" I asked, now crying.

"Which woman, do you know her name?" Leonard asked, now looking fearful.

"Tell me, Carol. Was it Alexa feeding you these lies?" He asked, panicking.

"If you're talking about the woman in the photo I saw, then yes. She told me to be careful. I should have listened to her. She said my best friend was in danger. Don't tell me you're trying to hurt Samantha. She's not done anything to you, please." I said, sobbing.

"Oh, God! Samantha. I wouldn't harm her... Even knowing her name was a coincidence. I'm good at guessing. I promise. But, look, Carol, I know you don't trust me, but I can't explain everything now. That woman, Alexa, is a sadistic, obsessed admirer I shared a night with years ago. She's obsessed with me and has hurt everyone I've been with. The police initially thought it was me but discovered it was her, and she was arrested but feigned madness. If she's been talking about Samantha. It means she's out to hurt her. Do you understand me?"

Leonard said, almost breaking down. Now, I was really scared.

"There's no time, Carol. Call the police and get in the car. Let's go." Leonard shouted.

As if on cue to substantiate Leonard's claim, Alexa said, *"I told you to stay away from him, but I guess your Samantha will have to pay for it now."*

What are the odds of our escape from this nightmare? You guessed right.