

WHISKEYPAPER

ABOUT STORIES ARCHIVES

REBOUND GIRL by PENN JAVDAN

September 26, 2015



All I hear

in Jade's voice is sex and hate. And the level of sex and hate always depends on how low or high she falls on my cell phone text log. The lower she falls the more

hate. The more hate the more sex. The better. Today my log looks like this:

*Jade 8:55 pm Nayomi Yesterday, 6:55 pm Rita
Yesterday, 12:01 pm Marissa Yesterday, 11:57 am Devon
Yesterday, 9:14 am Jordanne Yesterday, 8:18 am*

It's almost midnight and I haven't replied. Today I think I'm going to be good. That I'll refuse. Then Jade calls and says she's left her boyfriend for good. Again.



Jade already had a boyfriend. I met him once. He popped his trunk open just to show me he meant business. Rifles. Pistols. Revolvers. Shotguns. Anytime anyone ever talked to Jade, Jade's boyfriend would flash his military badge and pop his trunk open. It was legal. He didn't make threats. He didn't point them at anyone. Anyone except me, that is. Jade said this was it. "Nobody sane does that," she said. She showed up on my porch and I thought I wasn't going to let her in the house. Until I did.



Jade does all sorts of things. She works. She goes to school. She volunteers. She cooks. She reads. She reads to me. I think about asking her to move in. I have it all planned. I've made her a key. But the other guy shakes his fist at the universe and says he'll point one of his guns at himself this time. I think I can stop Jade from leaving my house. Until I can't.



The ring was bigger than his army pension could buy. He bought it anyway. She wore it and worked and went to school and volunteered and cooked and read and

read to him too. "I'm happy," she said. So happy she went out of her way to text me then hated me when I didn't reply. Now my log looked like this:

*Jordanne 11:59 pm Devon 11:30 pm Marissa 9:46 pm
Rita 8:31 pm Nayomi 8:22 pm Jade Yesterday,
5:45 am*

She was back on my porch and ready to raise hell. The moonlight bounced off her face. This time I didn't try to stop her from leaving. I just fried her some eggs the next morning.



The baby might be mine. I think it is. Jade won't reply to my texts or emails or calls. Somehow I don't feel bad about her boyfriend and not just about his being suicidal but because I know she still wants me and I accept that it's come to this if a baby with her is what it's come to. I do my best. I try to but at night he guards the house the baby's in as he thumbs the hammer on his chrome coated Desert Eagle. It clicks the way a gun clicks when it's ready to fire.

I decide it doesn't matter who Jade belongs to because the baby doesn't last. I don't know what happens. Nobody tells me. I don't know the age or the sex. I yank up obituaries but don't even know if they had time to give it a name. It. Then I think of Jade tiptoeing out of my shower and me picturing a bump on her belly before she ever had one. I think of the same question every other girl in my text log has asked me one way or another which is if I believe in fighting for love. The answer is always no. Now I think that maybe every day without that person is its own brawl. Its own form of fighting.

I think til I can't think anymore. I wait til I can no longer wait. Slanting my way up their stairs I lunge for the door. The boyfriend sees me coming. He's on the trigger then looks at Jade and puts the pistol down. He steps outside and kicks the shit out of me. I deserve worse.



When Jade and I first met this is what she said: "Do you ever feel the presence of someone you don't know? I do all the time. When I meet whoever it is, I'll know." "You may never," I said back. "Too late," she said, "I already have." Jade stopped feeling the ghost of presence because it was me in the flesh. I wasn't not there anymore.

Today was different. I knocked and knocked and waited and knocked. Jade almost came to her senses. She told me to get lost. That another beating was waiting for me until she confessed her boyfriend wasn't home. We'd come to the point of talking through a door. She watched me through the peephole as I left her all I had to my name. A wad of wrinkled cash. "This would've been for him," I said. "Or her."



I'm at home slouching in front of the TV. I delete all my texts. The entire log including everything Jade's ever sent. I drop the phone and switch the TV on. I have no cable, no Netflix, no gizmo that'll beam my computer screen to the wall. All I get is what floats through the fog. A newscast reports a fire on a street that looks just like Jade's. I drive there and it's her. "Nobody sane does that," she says, quivering under a blanket.

The baby was never mine. Her boyfriend will be home any second. Jade's caramel head is on my pillow and a tingle touches the tip of my tongue. "You left something behind last time," I tell her, handing her a ring. "I know," she says, winking.

Any day now I'm going to let go. I think I'm going to be good. And when I do it'll mean it got better somewhere else. It'll mean I won somehow.

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About the Author: Penn Javdan has worked at a catering company, at a street vendor, at a restaurant, at a museum, at a bar, and on his writing. He's outgrown working for a catering company, for a street vendor, for a restaurant, for a museum, and for a bar. He hasn't outgrown the written word.

Story Song: "The Getaway" by The White Buffalo

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