

She's Out There Bad by Dorrie Williams-Wheeler Web Excerpt 2

I faked my way through meetings and shared my drinking and drugging stories with my counselors and my groups. Being a Taurus, I loved attention and I exaggerated every story. I didn't really make an effort to make friends. I would go to the meetings, talk, listen, nod off, and go back to my room.

Sometimes they would show us these shocking videos during meetings. I remember one video showed the insides of an 11-year-old boy. His intestines had exploded after he was forced to swallow cocaine balloons in an attempt to smuggle them into the country. Another video showed the heart of a man that had basically exploded after a cocaine binge. The videos were so shocking and disturbing that they made you never want to smoke, drink, snort, ingest or inhale another drug in your whole life. Did I tell you about the video of the liver of a man suffering from cirrhosis?

A new patient arrived and they said they needed to put her in my room because my room had a handicap accessible shower. They moved me to a room which was very near the library computer lab and the recreation area.

As soon as I got settled into the new room I turned on the laptop to get some writing done. I spent a lot of time writing. I would write Leena letters and print them out in the library computer lab—the only place where we were supposed to access the Internet. When I turned on my laptop I noticed the wireless internet

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connection meter was full at four bars. I had seen nothing but “No wireless network available” for weeks. Could I possibly have been able to access the prison’s wireless internet network?

I clicked the “view available networks” icon on my screen. A prompt read: “Networks in range— Pleasant Counselors Connect-unsecured network.”

Could it truly have been that simple? Truly it was. I was able to connect. Normally laptops had to be checked out and wireless network cards were removed. But since I had my laptop from home and Paul brought it to me personally, no one had removed my wireless network card.

The thoughts raced through my head. Should I connect? If I connected and got caught, would that be a tier-1 or tier-2 violation? They didn’t say anything about Internet abuse. I wasn’t trying to get in any more trouble. But my curiosity got the best of me. I connected, and just like that I was on the Internet.

Having access to the Internet made the time pass a little easier at Pleasant Springs. I had to be very careful because if I were to have gotten caught, I knew there would be some kind of repercussion.

Anyway, boredom will cause you to do silly things. I was not only bored, but I was lonely. Leena didn’t have an e-mail address. I didn’t go out of my way to befriend any of the women at Pleasant

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Springs. In my eyes, all of those bitches were fucked up. So I would surf the web for celebrity gossip or catch up on my favorite soap operas.

Then I got real bored. I started e-mailing people from my past. First: Candy Layne.

Candy responded that same evening. She was happy to hear from me, but thought that my current situation sucked. Then I thought about whether I should write Dante. It so sucked what he had done with those nude pictures. Maybe he was hurt, but there was no excuse. In all of the turmoil of my current situation, I really felt comfort seeking out the familiar.

From mutual friends, I found out what ship Dante was on. I hadn't heard from him in years, but I knew he was out to sea. I contacted a mutual friend from our past and he gave me Dante's e-mail address on the ship.

What the hell. I'd e-mail Dante and see what the hell he was up to.

Hey, Dante. What's going on? You will never believe this. Well, never mind. How are you? I was just thinking about you and thought I would drop you a note to say, "Hi." You probably won't write me back. You're probably somewhere all married and everything. I was just thinking about how we used to go sit on the

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roof and look at the stars. Life was so simple then. I miss those days.

Shaylene Pratt (as if I have to write my last name, I know you know who I am.)

I didn't expect him to write back. I instantly regretted sending the message. I can't believe I added the corny "I miss those days," What was I thinking?

Minutes later I heard the familiar chime that indicated that I had new mail. I rushed to turn down the volume on my laptop. If someone heard that noise and found out I was on the unfiltered Internet in the privacy of my room, I would be toast.

I feverishly opened the e-mail message.

Shaylene. You just don't know how much I have been thinking about you these last few weeks. My intentions were to get in touch with you, but my ship is in the Mediterranean right now. Calling you really wasn't an option. I was hoping that when I come home we could talk and try to work things out. The thought of you with another man is just killing me because I know I fucked things up when I got in the Navy. Then the way I reacted about the pictures was completely unacceptable because I was doing my dirt, too. I should have just enrolled in school in Tennessee and we would probably be married and happy. Now everything between us is all

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fucked up. Hopefully, that will all change and we can get back on track.

Take care,

I miss you too,

Dante

He wrote me back. He actually wrote me back! I did a happy dance in my room. That was the beginning of my e-mail love affair with Dante.