

EVA MORAN

## HOW I WANT YOU

I visited this friend of mine, Mayler, down in Florida. Mayler and me, we're just friends. But not really really. He wants me. And I used to want him.

You, are nothing like Mayler.

Just before I got on the plane to come home, he told me that I suffer from low self-esteem. When I asked him why, he told me it was because my golf swing was too stiff. That, plus I'd fucked too many guys.

"Anyone who fucks that many guys has to have low self-esteem."

I told him it might be a good idea for him to massage his balls with a Tabasco sauce/rubbing alcohol/cut-glass cocktail. But not really. Really I said, "I can play a pretty good game of golf, man," and then rushed to the car to sulk.

When he gets into the driver's side, I imagine that there are walls all around me. He can't get to me.

Low self-esteem, my ass!

But now this is all I think of. I think of my low self-esteem.

In a panic, I turn to my most trusted source: *Cosmo*. Some people may think that the How To's and Quizzes in chick-mags are only as useful as statistics about cars that have gone over a cliff while driving with a platypus in the passenger seat, but I swear by them. They have never let me down. Since grade seven, when I was desperately trying to understand why the boys didn't like-like me and the quiz *Which Fairytale Princess Are You?* let me know that I was Snow White the tom-boy princess with many male friends but only one true prince, to today, when *Why Don't Men Approach You?* explains that I am too confident and not insecure at all, I have trusted all chick-lit sources. They are an indispensable resource. The most important thing: they make me right and Mayler wrong.

Thank you *Cosmo*; I feel strong again.

Until breakfast.

I ordered my Huevos Rancheros and we, the ladies, were talking about dating. And I said, "I don't think it's too much to ask that he doesn't have a girlfriend. I mean, ditch her. I'm great," referring to some guy on a balcony who told me he loves me—a story I just made up. And then, as a joke, because of course I told all my friends what Mayler said, "Op! There I go again with my low self-esteem." And everyone laughed. And I should've felt great, right? But I didn't. I thought, "Am I even good?"

It's like by saying the words, insecure, low-self-esteem, lack of confidence, Mayler conjured them into existence. Mayler's like a witch that way, or a druid or a wizard. Or whatever a dude-witch is called—that's Mayler: conjurer of insecurity. I'm not even sure I'll ever be able to play a game of golf again. And I can't fuck anyone—anyone outside of my day dreams.

I dream about you—the you that I want to want me, which could be everyone or anyone at any given time but today, it's you. I should say, these days, it's you.

I've thought about it every way and everywhere. I've thought about it in a bed. I've thought about it on a boat. I've thought about it in a castle with a moat. I've thought about it up high and down low. I've even thought about it starting with a peep-show.

Okay. Fine. I'm using the Seuss as a distancing mechanism. But still, I swear, it's all deeply true, even if I need a system.

Greg used to tell me that—that I had a Pentagon defense system: the Pentagon gone Mother Goose.

He said, “No one's ever getting close to you.”

But that's not true. He could have got close to me but he wouldn't tear my clothes off. He liked us both to undress neatly first and would only climb into bed after we folded our respective garments. He came in the room once and I was lying there waiting and he asked, “Why don't you get undressed?” And still I waited, watching him slide his khaki pants to his ankles. “Oh. You expect me to tear your clothes off.” He snorted like it was a funny idea.

It turned into a long staring competition. Him naked. Standing. Me clothed. Waiting. It was winter. How long could he wait? I asked myself how long I could wait when he began to double-fist his cock and pump it hard.

But I know what I want.

I put my folded clothes to the side of the bed.

My favorite way to think of you these days is like we're in a romance novel or something. I dream of you there ... at the bike shop. All sweaty and hard from being a sweaty hard bike mechanic. And, there's me. It's a blowzy spring day. I'm wearing a red summer dress, very a la mode and very revealing and I walk into your shop through the automatic doors and the fragrant air breezes in with me and you see me and you wrap your grease stained hands around me and slide them down my ass and grip so firm and deep that I can feel your fingers push into me and get wet.

Or, we are on the beach at night sitting on some driftwood. My red dress is billowing in the wind. I'm cold. You ask, “Are you cold?” And I straddle you and get inside your jacket and smell you and you have a good smell—the kind of smell I can smell for life. And I grab for your belt buckle and it's cold but I'm not. I'm hot. I whisper, “God you make me hot.” And I fuck you backwards watching the ocean. I come and I tell you you made me come. And then you make me beg for it. I whisper, “Please. Please. Please.” And then you bend me over the driftwood and fuck me deep and hard and harder and then hardest, deep. And then you cum all over my back. And I love it.

Or or or, there is this one. I am standing at the kitchen counter in a red dress and I ask you to put your hands on me and ...

I really need to buy a red dress.

The reality: I went to see you last summer. After coffee you asked me what else I wanted to do. There you were, gorgeous and manly—bicep manly—standing there like a man—manly. Waiting. I could have said anything. It was summer. And I was wearing a summer dress. And I did want to go down to the beach to go down on you. I looked in the direction of the water and then at you.

“I dunno. This city’s kinda dead at night,” I said.

And you said, “People are so weird. And totally predictable. It’s boring, right? But Magnolia trees and Cherry trees in blossom captivate us every goddamn spring... It’s just doing what it does... forever and always. Bastard trees! Know what I mean?”

“Yeah.”

What did you mean? Are you actually a bike mechanic? Are you like a flower-philosopher-gay-bike mechanic?

“Did I tell you you look good tonight? You do. Nice dress. Keep in touch.”

You hold me for a little too long.

I will keep in touch. God! I will. I’ll touch myself while we keep in touch. I’ll cross my heart and swear to you: I will think of you and touch myself.

I haven’t wanted anyone as badly as I’ve wanted you.

I thought that only dirty old men like Dante got to have little girl muses inspiring them to wax poetic, straight into the classical cannon. Now, I know that all you have to be is dirty and then you’re set; you are my muse.

It started out as poetry in my journals. Long epic poems about flowers and you fucking me. But I am a shitty poet. And the poems just turned into a stream of musings about you, my muse, until I had oodles of lusty lines making hot stories that made me and my friends hot. So I thought, why not send the stories out? Why not go for what Dante went for—poetic fame, grandeur, and perfection?

That’s how I ended up at Harlequin.

With you as my muse and the Harlequin formula, this whole new love world was so easy. There’s a guy. There’s a needy girl. There’s veiled sex. There’s a fight. There’s a rescue. And then, there’s love—real romantic love.

It was so, so easy at first. I just plugged you and me in.

For example, my first book: I have two kids alone because my husband died in a tragic DUI on our anniversary. To make ends meet and buy my little girls a bicycle, I become an elf. You are Santa Claus. Together, we are perfect mall mythology.

Late one night we're snowed-in at the mall. Just me and you.

Oh dear! How do I get to my daughters? Are they safe? What should we do Santa? What should we do?

You lean over me and say, "We're not real. We can do whatever we want. We can make magic."

Did we ever!

I called it *Yes I Can Can for Santa*. Masterpiece!

But then, my Fabio gets the pink slip.

When I walk into the boardroom on the third floor of Flagshipromance I'm sweating through two shirts. I walk into a wall of lady-angular editors.

Okay. So. Umm. Maybe Santa bounce-bounce bouncing me on his knee while I tell him what I want is a bit much but, but, but ... I cut the part where we get high and employ the mannequins in a hard elf labor camp of our love. Maybe the bad idea was the climax saloon scene when, after you watched flashes of my pussy as I kicked high into the air, you buy my daughters two pink bikes that we christened in our love juices. Yeah... maybe that was a little much.

"We at Harlequin," starts Mab, the head-bitch in black, "don't know what you were thinking."

Stupid stupid stupid! Sex should always be wearing an alluring transparent nightie! Our sex was a topless Jarvis streey crack-head hooker.

"Neither do I. Sorry."

God. What was I thinking?

Mab's assault continues, "There is no marriage. No real rescue outside of some vague reference to euphoric orgasm interpreted as love. And where is the fight?"

"Oh. I just tucked it in there between, ummm, the uh-hh, first love and second love... scenes."

"Well. It's all wrong for Harlequin."

"I know I'm sorry. Again, sorry. I'll just, ahh ..."

Everyone shuffles in their seats. Some start to collect their papers.

"I really appreciate the opportunity you ..."

Can they take their money back? Fuckety-fuck-pants! My new lap-top. I'll have to take my new lap-top back.

“But we love it for our new imprint.”

Everything in the room stops.

“In this urban fem, post-fem world full of eye-candy and boy toys, chick-lit and the New York bitch chic of ‘I know what I want and you are not it but you can be it for now until the morning,’ we like the idea of more boys, less feeling.”

“Well, yeah but, like you said, there is some sort of love even if misinterpreted and, there is only one guy.”

“Huh.”

Mab peers over her MaxMara black-rimmed glasses and brushes my sentence away with a flick of her hand.

“More men. Less feeling. The main character can struggle with some feelings, maybe even end up in a tentative traditional B.S. romance, but we'd prefer just play, games and lots of sex and maybe a fight somewhere. Think Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Pam Anderson. Think fuckaliscious, fuckglorious, fuck-happy.”

More like a drive-through Mcfucrappy meal. I think.

She's so angular.

“I only write about one guy, really.”

Mab is looking at me hard. Sizing me up without looking me up and down. She's just taking me all in. The other ladies are just sitting there, nonchalant, listening, not caring, waiting for pointy Mab to give the go-ahead to jump on my throat. Or worse, forget about me.

“Look. Can you do it or not?”

There is no way.

“Sure I can.”

She smiles. They all do. And I feel ivory white and doe-eyed and poisoned by an old lady's creepy apple.

“Good. Rough draft by the end of the month.”

The papers begin to ruffle and briefcase clasps go snap—the lady editors are all in a chatter.

And then SILENCE.

Mab speaks.

“I want to read it personally.”

I can feel it. This is going to be shitty.

I go home and tuck all my Harlequins away. This breaks my heart. I love the pictures on the covers. Those are real people on the covers. Real women posing in real bodices with real men really undoing them. How can you even undo a bodice by yourself? YOU CAN'T. How would I have gotten my daughters bikes without you? What am I going to do without my Fabio, you? What?

I try to write, but I can't.

You are nowhere. Without you, I am lost. There is no shore. I have no idea which way to go. With no idea how to get to you, I am adrift in a blank white sea. But I know I have to swim. Swim or Mab will sink me.

I backstroke. on high school swim team backstroke was my best. I can manage a fair clip and I do. I'm going and going and going and I have no real idea where I am headed but who cares, at least I'm going. And things start to change so I must be going somewhere. The water is salty. And this is pretty cool to be in a white sea swimming—swimming as fast as I can. And there are other people. 1940's movie star sailors all in white—like Gene Kelly and Sinatra. Wow! I've always really liked Gene Kelly and Sinatra. Sweet. And we're all swimming along in the White Sea and as we go the water gets denser and I move slower but I'm okay, I'm still givin' 'er and the sailors are still smiling their pearly white smiles. And so what if things are getting a bit ... sticky? Smiling sailors, Cetaphil-texture, salty, sticky ... water? Oh god. Seamen semen! I'm stroking sailor spunk. Thousands of sailors and gallons of spunk. This grosses me out.

I yell out, “This fucking grosses me out man!”

But the sailors just keep on smiling. The waves of cum lapping my body. The endless deep thrumming of thousands of fists pumping.

This is all too much for me. I'm weak. I can't do this. I can't take this sailor gang bang. I'm just not woman enough.

And I let go. I let go and lapse and fall and sink.

Down.

Down.

Down.

Into the deep deep dark.

And here at the bottom, I can hear—I can hear myself better than I ever have. And I want to stay. I want to stay in this solitary silence away from it all forever.

But I can't.

She whispers, "You can't."

And I feel her strong hand on my back.

Mermaid Marion.

Mermaid Marion carries me swift to shore and drops me off.

She puts all the sailors in a row. Puts them all in a row to knock them down to their knees.

And I say, "That's cool. What else can you do besides saving lives and making men worship you?"

And Mermaid Marion says, "I can do lots of cool stuff on land. On land I have lots of special powers."

Mostly her special powers are fucking men.

"You can be like my invisible side-kick," she says to me. "You can just write down whatever I do."

Mermaid Marion puts on her red dress and takes the town. She has a new date every night. And every night she gets laid. And sometimes she makes disturbing analogies that I love to copy down, like "Really I'm just a barnyard milkmaid: I yank until they cream-scream." I love this one. It's demeaning and it disturbs me. I love it. And sometimes when she's fucking and I'm watching on the sidelines she moos and yells, "I do it to amooooos you!" and the guy thinks it's about him when really it's for little invisible me.

And Mermaid Marion never loses her cool.

Okay, except for maybe once. But she was in the right. I mean, she hit on this guy at the bar.

She said, "Can I suck your cock? I'd like to suck your cock a lot."

And this guy says, "You shouldn't ask. You shouldn't have to ask. You should make me beg for it. Any woman worth screwing knows how..."

And Mermaid Marion's raven hair starts to wave around uncontrollably and her tawny skin is turning blush red and her eyes are fixed on him and... I have no idea what is going to happen.

His mouth just keeps on talking and he asks, "Don't you have any self-respect?" and that is the last thing he ever says because Mermaid Marion blasts him with fire rays from her eyes and hair and he disintegrates right before us.

When I look at the knoll of corpse-ash at my feet, I say the only thing I can, "That is so cool!"

And we just go on after that. Her fucking. Me writing her fucking. And she says she's like this because of a broken heart but that now her career is more important to her.

"I'm a rock-star / lawyer / psychologist / mother. It's very demanding and fulfilling."

Wow, I think. That's some pretty important job, M.M.

And everything is la-dee-da wonderful until one day she gets a call on her shell phone.

"Uh-huh. Okay. I see. Uh-huh. Well okay. Let me talk to her about it first. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. I will. See you soon."

My heart is broken.

"But you have to try to understand" she pleads. "There is a very important concert /case that I think would be very good for my patients and children if I play / win it. I have to go back to Kingdom Bumbpasea-c. I just have to."

I understand.

"I'll miss you" I say, handing over her red dress and lip gloss.

"You keep those" she says. "I won't need them where I'm going."

And she stands there, topless.

"M.M., you can't go out in the city like that!"

"Why not? These are all I need."

And she straps two rounded cushions to either shoulder: tackle ready.

I say, "Yeah. We used to have something like that in the eighties."

"Bye," she says.

I say, "Bye."

And that's that. All that's left of her is a red dress, lip-gloss and a manuscript. I line them up side by side on my bed. I write on the blank page of the book: *Milk Run in a Red Dress*. And I think, "Mab is so going to fry me."

This is how the meeting goes down: "It's like Battlestar Galactica, Madonna, The Little Mermaid, Vonnegut, Freud and Jung all had a gorgy post-post fem queer modern culture fuck! Orgy! It's a... Gorgysporg!"

Who's-a-what's-a-who's-it?

“I love it. Love it! It will sell. Oh my god will it sell. I like it so much I want to change the name of the imprint to Red Dress. Of course the title will just be *Milk Run*. What. Do. You. Think?”

Mab is all softscreen Mab and smiling—not pointy or sharp at all. Like she’s friendly. Almost.

I don’t know what to think.

When I go home, all the evidence minus the manuscript is still there on the bed. I think back to school. Back to my time as an undergrad at York when I took a delinquent psych class. I caught Jung in Mab’s rant. I think Jung. I think: two personalities, two chemical substances; if there is any reaction, both are transformed, forever. I think me + you = x. And the x looms. Question.

I have no idea what you and me equal. I have never tried.

I look down at the limp red dress.

I decide to write to you as M.M. would.

**Subject: I want you to do such wrong things to my body.**

**Hi,**

**I want you to do the dirtiest...**

**No. No. Wait.**

**I want you to take me like a...**

**No. Wait.**

**I want...**

**I want...**

**...**

**I want you to punish my pussy--my entire body--relentlessly with your cock.**

**...**

**and then maybe we can do coffee.**

I hit send.

You respond. Five seconds later.

**Re: I want you to do such wrong things to my body.**

**I’m in town. Meet me at the Jetfuel. Tomorrow 7:30pm?**

Yes! Yes! Yes! I get to wear the red dress. I get to wear the red dress for you.

The next day, I am still in my happy world of success—book success and potential sex success—when I hear a *bleep* from my computer and I race to it thinking it is you and I am elated—ELATED. And it’s Mayler and not you. But I don’t care. I want to brag.

So I g-chat with him about the book and how I thought I almost lost the same job twice and about how wicked-awesome you are and how I am going to see you tomorrow night and I tell him what I am going to wear and...

He writes, "Sorry."

I don't feel so good.

"I wrote to say I am sorry for saying those things about you."

I write, "Sorry that you said them?"

"If I had known that they would hurt you, I would never have said them."

"But you still think I have low self-esteem right?"

"I don't think it's really going to do either of us any good to talk about this any further."

"You brought it up."

I wait.

Nothing.

"I've done all sorts of good, crazy-good things. Why do you think it? Why?"

Nothing.

"Mayler, you are not some oracle with a riddle. I just want the answer. Why?"

Nothingnothingnothing. Never.

"WELL I'M NOT WAITING MAYLER!"

I'm. Not. Waiting. This time.

I am not waiting for anything or anyone. I close my lap-top. And I chant. I won't wait. I won't wait. I won't wait like I did.

Like I did when I wanted it bad and went over to Jason's house wearing heels, thigh highs, a black and silver teddy, and a lot of make-up. I kissed him long. He changed me into oversized duck pj's—and watched 'til I fell asleep. Then he fucked me. Or Chris. Chris would spoon me and then "wake" from his deep "sleep" to feel me up. If I reacted he would drop back to "sleep." Only if I lay there, still, would he give me the full score and addendum. Then there was Sid and Ming. Both had an obsession with *Star Wars* prequel sex. I'd spend hours watching droid battles until comatose and then I'd get lazy sex: fucked while reclining on my side, on a couch, TV in plain view. Sid or Ming did not want to miss a moment—not one single *Star Wars* plasma screen moment. For all of them I would sit there in agony pretending to study or pretending to sleep or pretending to enjoy Jar Jar's witty repartee. Wanting. Staring. Monitoring my breathing. Only when I was a good possum, a

nearly dead possum, a Sleeping Beauty neurotic desperate possum would I receive rescue—a touch—a call to filthy glossy cheap un-airbrushed wild.

Fuck *Star Wars*!

And fuck waiting.

Wanting badly and waiting sadly is over.

I'm not waiting for anything or anyone. Not for Mayler and not even for you.

“I swear, I won't wait for you” I say to myself.

“And I am not dolling up for you either.”

Screw the red dress.

I throw on my black cons and my black jeans and a gray t and head out the door just as is: ready to see you.

And, when we meet, I just complain. You say let's go for a walk when the Jetfuel closes and we walk. And, I tell you about the whole thing. Mayler, golf, the books, Kingdom Bumpasea-c. And maybe you think I'm totally crazy-girl crazy but I don't care. Walking. Walking. And more. About how my daddy beat me and my cat Tom died when I was seventeen and I had to leave class because I was crying so hard. And about each and every boyfriend. And I tell you everything but it's still not everything and then, you touch my collar bone.

“You're surprising.”

And just like an emergency button for a loopy-loop I stop, dead. And you touch me. And breathe.

You say, “I bet you have a pretty mean golf swing.” And you move your hand across my chest like you are flattening out a cool sheet of music and I feel myself open.

I look into your eyes—your sea-green eyes. You open me. Like a flower in spring. Like the one thousand million love stories and poems I am alluding to: You, open, me.

You say, “I see you.”

All the light of childhood summers in a field or at the beach or in the park pours in. I feel hot and happy like those kids who really need some Kool-aid on a humid day and that big jug guy comes over and pours his orange icy-ness all over them. You are pouring over me with your hands.

“You're like my Kool-aid on a sticky summer's day,” I say.

What the fuck did I just say?

You just stare at me.

Oh God! What the fuck did I just say? I'm about to cry.

"I know," you breathe. "I want you too."

And you start to undo my pants. And I can see me in your eyes and if I look hard enough I can see you in mine and me in yours again and again and again right into the future. Right into you drawing me a bath in winter after a hard afternoon. And I trust you haven't bent anyone else over and fucked them that day or on any other day, ever. And when you ask if I want Thai, you can reach into my purse without flinching because you know I am not your mother; I won't hurt you. My purse is your purse. With me, you can put your hands everywhere.

I want you from now, to then, to then, to then until we are old. I want you when your ears have grown to half the size of your head and your mouth and nose have grown together. I want to grow older closer together like your old nose and your old mouth on your future old face.

You whisper in my ear as you touch me, "God I want you."

And for a split second I think, what's wrong with you?

You ask, "No?" but I say, "Yes."

And this, all this, is exactly how I want you.

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