

Nothing Personal

975 words

ted.gross@comcast.net

Marc met his ex-wife Susan for coffee the Monday morning after New Year's to go over a few practical matters.

The Ford Ranger he kept in her driveway not starting and blocking the UPS guy making the loop. The grandkids Sarah and Eden, travel sports picking up again and which ones he can he come to (she handed him two schedules she printed out). An IRA account still in both names due to a botched financial planner job, and she has someone better.

Marc said new guy sounds fine and he took a couple minutes and checked off the games he could make. He didn't address the truck. "One thing I keep forgetting, not critical of course, but I want to come by and get my trophies."

"Hmm," Susan said. "You waited juuust a little too long I'm afraid. I took care of them."

"Took *care* . . . you're not saying . . . ?"

She gave him the short tight-lipped nod, the nothing

personal bit, and you could feel the satisfaction oozing out of her.

“I mean like, how?” Marc said.

“Where? Goodwill. The one in San Rafael. Mostly.”

“Well when?”

“Before Christmas. Frank’s daughter was coming in, like I might have told you, and we needed that closet. Again, if you’d made your intentions clear--”

“Yeah you would have found other arrangements.” Giving her the stare now, the one he admittedly pulled out too often when things were decent.

Susan drained her coffee, a that’s that, and got up. Marc asked what did *mostly* mean.

“The one I threw off a bridge,” she said. “You know which.”

He processed this as she disappeared onto Chestnut Street. Yeah he was pretty sure which. An age-group tournament in San Diego. Doubles. They’d given them these two-handled decorative champagne buckets. Nice and heavy.

The problem being he’d disappeared for an hour from the Saturday night function with someone’s wife, or girlfriend. Susan wasn’t on hand and it would have been no big deal except his idiot doubles partner mentioned it

to a few people.

Marc figured might as well and drove to the Goodwill in San Rafael. They told him the way it's set up these days, a patron's donation goes to a central processing unit and is distributed to random Goodwills.

Marc said oh and took a look around anyway. There was one fake-silver mug someone might have won once at a summer camp. Other than that, some old wooden tennis racquets. There was a guy at the courts who collected those and bragged about selling a few online. Jesus Christ.

Marc didn't sleep well that night. He kept tossing it around, which bridge she could have thrown the champagne one off of.

If she really did. She could have simply meant got rid of it. As opposed to letting someone else enjoy it. Though Susan typically didn't play games, and in the morning Marc thought he might have it.

They'd had their first date at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park and returned there every 5 or 10 years until things went bad. Over the south part of the lake was a rustic stone footbridge with two tunnels through it.

He googled it, a little confusing at first because they changed the name of the lake--meaning Stow whoever

he was must have done something wrong that got found out--but they still had the rowboat rentals.

Let's see. You had the latest two women he'd met on the dating app--Valerie and Marissa. He thought maybe Marissa, because she had a bit of a weight problem, which might stabilize the thing better when he went over the side. He said we'll get Hunan noodles on Clement Street after, and on Thursday she met him in the parking lot.

Marc forgot they had pedal boats too, and that seemed a better option, in fact he probably could have handled it himself but here you were. Marissa said she was at this lake with her dog once but has never been on it. This will be fun, she said.

There were other boaters near the bridge and Marc zigzagged back and forth until it was clear enough. He had a bag with a mask and a wetsuit top, and he explained to Marissa he was going in for a minute, and she said be careful, which was kind of strange.

The initial chill was brutal, Marc putting together yes it's California but it's January and I'm an idiot. Still, he took a big breath and made it to the bottom (he thought). You couldn't see much. He surfaced and tried it a few more times, trying to anticipate where a trophy

would have splashed down thrown off the bridge in this direction. If she threw it the other direction you have no shot. Which you really didn't here either.

On his final dive he felt a flat piece of metal and figured okay bring up *something*. It was a Nevada license plate, maybe old but maybe not.

Marissa said, you know what, that's kind of a miracle--and did he know she grew up in Genoa, Nevada?

Marc said no but he was there once, Genoa, the original settlement in the state, he remembered them telling him, and still has the oldest bar.

“So you know then,” she said.

No need to mention he was there with Susan. Susan was trying to be an artist and she set up a canvas across from the bar and went to work. He killed a few hours while she painted, told her it was a nice rendition, and for sure she could sell it on eBay, Craigslist, one of those, especially if she orange'd up the sky more.