

HEART FAILURES

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Two Rules

SHE ONLY HAD TWO rules and I broke both of them. This should be a love story instead of what it is. I was that excited about the way things were going. And if you knew me you'd know that I'm not one to toss the L-word around too much. I need my freedom. You know what I'm talking about. But I was willing to give all that up for Mercedes. That was her name. Yeah. Like the car. So of course my opening line to her was, "Let me drive." Get it? I don't know how I come up with this stuff so fast. It just comes to me. It's a gift and I thank God for it. Thank you God. As you can imagine, I got her with that one. Hook, line and sinker. Thought I was the funniest thing since, well, I can't think of what right now because I'm a little nervous in this setting. You understand. But you get my point. Mitchell Brothers' was packed but it was like it was just me and her all alone in there. So to answer your question, that's how we first met and I must admit I was happy with the way the relationship was progressing. I can't believe I just said that.

So I was throwing caution to the wind and jumping right in. First time for everything, yes? Anyhow. We were big time serious. And it wasn't just physical attraction either. Not on my part. Although women sometimes have been known in the past to think of me as a machine of sorts. You know. Built to please. A real boy toy. They didn't even try to get to know me, not the real me. They just used me for my more obvious physical attributes. But she was different. Don't laugh. She had a beautiful mind and recognized that in me, too. We really connected.

Examples? Well. Like we talked about everything under the sun. Like for example my shirt, this one that I'm still wearing right now. She thought it was silk but I told her it's actually a polyester blend. They do nice things with polyester now. Here, feel it, it feels just like silk. Go ahead. Don't be shy. I don't bite. Well, innocent until proven guilty on that one, right? I mean really. Yes, I suppose that particular piece of evidence is pretty damning. But doesn't that feel nice? Doesn't it feel like silk? And my keys. She asked about my keys. Wanted to know why I had so many and if I could move them to my back pocket so she wouldn't get cut or poked.

No. Of course that's not all. I'm just giving you the examples that are fresh in my head. I asked her stuff about herself, too. I understand that healthy relationships are about give and take. I didn't just fall off the cabbage truck, you know. It's a fifty-fifty thing. I asked her, for example, how old she was and when she told me then right off the bat I told her that she looked five years younger than that. See. That's how fast my mind works. Snap. Like that. Always one step ahead. And I asked what she had planned for the weekend and she told me she was going to slow cook a corned beef for her nephew's baptism on Sunday. See. That's what I'm talking about.

I have to admit that the more I got to know her the more I thought that she was the one. You know what I'm trying to say. I mean we had so much in common in terms of background and goals and so forth. We were really getting to know each other. Learning those funny, quirky things about each other that nobody else knows. Like did you know that she auditioned for the Fly Girls back in whenever that was? Remember that show with those coloured guys and the Fly Girls? I kidded her about that one. I sang the theme song to her, you know, that they'd play at the beginning of each show when the girls were dancing. It went like: everybody here is equally kind, everybody here is equally kind, everybody, everybody, everybody. Sound familiar? Yeah. But I'm a big kidder, you know. Women value a sense of humour more than anything else. Even penis size. That's according to *Vogue*. I know, I couldn't believe it either at first but they did a survey. What's that? No, not all the time. I just flip through it to stay up on women's issues. I file that kind of information away. My mind is like a computer in that way. That's how I operate. That's why I'm so successful with the ladies, if you know what I mean. I store all that stuff away until I

need it, then shazam, it's like I pull it out of nowhere. My mental rolodex.

Just waiting for the right moment. Like a cat waiting to pounce. It's all about timing. To me it's like Jerry Rice studying game film or Barry Bonds reading up on opposing pitchers. You follow where I'm going with this sports thing here? Because that's what it is to me. Chasing the females is a sport to me. That's why I stay in shape. I consider myself an athlete. Feel this. Go ahead. That's right. The curls are for the girls, baby. Well, usually it's a little harder than that but I've been under the weather lately. That and they're remodeling 24-hour Fitness so it's really been a couple three months. I use the one on Ocean Avenue. But you should see me when I'm in shape. I shave everything, it helps with the definition. And it's cleaner that way. Women appreciate that. I just had my scrotum waxed and I'm giving serious thought to electrolysis. And I had this guy take Polaroids once and sometimes I hand them out with my business cards. Pardon? Well. That is true, I did say that because I'm actually between jobs right now but they help me maintain a certain image. Check it out. A girl like Mercedes isn't going to be seen around town with some scrub. You like that? I came up with it on my own. I like the way it sounds: your pleasure is my business. I figure it keeps the doors open in terms of whatever career path I eventually choose to go down. Ideally? Well. I want to star in adult films. Obviously.

Right. So Mercedes could tell I worked out right away. When we first met. She was rubbing on my chest and my shoulders and my stomach. Between you and me though, I had to suck in my gut a little because I've been going easy on the abs lately. You know how it is. But I used to have the abs of truth. You could do laundry on my stomach. No, not like a washing machine, like a washboard. Are you making fun? I'm not sure I like your attitude. What is this, good cop, funny cop? Maybe I should make that call after all. Can I get a soda pop? Caffeine-free Diet Coke. Please. Thank you. All right. I am calm. I'm calming down now. Thank you.

Is this caffeine-free? Perfect. Anyhow. Oops. What'd you shake this thing up? So she was into me. That's what I'm trying to tell you. That's my point. Head over heels. What? No. That's not what I mean. See, there you go again. She was only like five-foot-nothing so that's why I told her to keep them on, if you must know. But everything was going great. That's what I mean. It breaks my heart

if you can believe that because I sure can't. I'm usually on the other end of that one, if you know what I mean. I'm not sure what I did wrong. I was trying so hard. Going that extra mile. I even wanted her to meet my mom. What? No. It's just us two. I'm in between condos right now so I'm staying at Mom's on Joost. By Glenn Park BART. Anyhow. We had big plans for the future. Big plans. White picket fences. Puppy dogs. Hot oil. You know the drill.

I think Mercedes and Mom would've really hit it off, too. Well. In some ways. But I wouldn't have been able to tell her where we first met. No way. Not in a million years. The thing you have to understand about my mom is she's old-fashioned. Kind of naïve to the ways of the world, if you know what I mean. She doesn't have a handle on how things work today. The whole dating scene. She doesn't get out much. Not since she took ill. That was back in 1974. So she's in a time warp. Stuck back in the days when, well, I don't even know what the heck they did back then. She watches a lot of television. You know, game shows, talk shows. What's that? Yeah. Probably. What time is it? I think she's watching "Wheel of Fortune" reruns. Is that absolutely necessary? Well go ahead then. Be my guest. She won't pick up, though. She'll think it's Regis calling. That's her thing. She never knows the answers so she's afraid to be a lifeline.

I know. But I figured this background would be important for you guys to know. I am trying to co-operate. I am trying to be helpful. Aren't I answering your questions? All right then. My point is that everything was going in a really good direction. None of that stuff that happened was any kind of premeditated or anything like that. It was a thing of passion. I was out of my mind for that girl. That's how it was. It's almost like I'm conducting my own investigation here. You know what I'm saying? It's like I'm trying to get to the bottom of this thing. Why she suddenly turned on me after all we'd been through. The ups and downs, good times, etc. So we're in this together—me and you guys. We're on the same team here. That's how I see it. That's my point. My point is that I'm not the bad guy here. Well. That's right. I guess technically I am the bad guy here, but I want to know when things started to go sour because I don't have a clue.

Exactly. Thank you. That's my question. What is up with the rules? You don't go and impose rules like that on the people you

care about. Not if you really care you don't. So that's my thing. When she told me she had two rules I just kind of lost it for a minute. No. Not right away. I mean she laid down the law as it were and I tried to go along with it, with her two golden rules. Are you married? How about you? Well then you both know what I'm talking about. When your old lady says jump I'm sure you say how far because you know how bad things can get if you don't. Am I right or am I right? In the doghouse, baby. The cold shoulder. Sleeping on the couch. A little Ben Gay in the recreational Vaseline jar. That tired old song-and-dance routine.

Things were going so good and I didn't want to screw it up so I went along with it for as long as I could. Didn't I mention that already? Sure. Sorry. I thought I told you already. Her two rules were, and this is a verbatim quote: (a) no rough stuff and (b) don't touch my privates. That's funny? Wait a minute. Hold up. This is no joke. You can see my dilemma. It was like a catch twenty-three. I had to break the first rule in order to break the second one. But see that's what I'm talking about. We were way past that stage as far as I'm concerned. You mean specifically? Because like I said before, we were really connected. It was eerie how close we got so quick. Do you believe in love at first sight? Well. Anyhow. It was like that. So I'm not sure how important that is in terms of the ways we normally measure time. Not sure how that'll help you here in your investigation. Our investigation, really. Right? In many ways I'm the victim here. Well. No. You're right. Not in that all-important way. That's true. What was your question again? Right.

Well. From the first time I went up to her with that one about me driving until Big Bruce and Pablo came to get me and made me sit on the curb outside on O'Farrell to wait for you guys, it was like three or four minutes. No more than five because we walked straight from the token window to the Copenhagen Room and her song hadn't even finished yet. I think it was "Rag Doll" by Bon Jovi. Yeah. That's a classic. And she was definitely daddy's little cutie, if you know what I mean. So in terms of actual time, I knew her for a couple three minutes or so. But if you've been listening to me at all you'll see that this is bigger than that and I've really known her for my whole life. Or longer. Because she was the one. But I have to tell you. Truth be told. All things considered. No regrets. Better to have loved and lost than whatever or however that goes. That was no holds barred the best three minutes of my life. Now do I need a lawyer or what?