



Mendacity

by Allan Boroughs

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“No, bit of a fuck up all round Kelvin. Regatta weekend clashes with Jenny’s gymkhana so we’re a no show I’m afraid.”

Alex Fourbouys leaned back in his chair, placed his perfectly shined Church’s brogues on the desk. He half listened to the voice on the other end of the phone while he checked his reflection in the trophy cabinet, running a hand through the mane of black wavy hair and pulling the skin a little tighter around the, already taut, jaw line.

He spotted Darrius bobbing at his office door and motioned him to one of the exquisite Italian leather chairs. “So Kelvin mate, I’ve been thinking about your business case, you really ought to get one of my guys to check it over before it goes to the board. I mean you don’t want to be handed your dick in a bag do you?” A quick wink at Darrius. “Yeah shouldn’t take too long, say about thirty K? Good stuff mate, I’ll have one of my girls call you, and then we should do lunch. And don’t plan a heavy afternoon afterwards either, later!”

He swivelled his chair. “Darrius, good to see you. I hear you got a million in the bag at Thornleigh and Bowes. First class mate.”

Darrius licked his lips.

“Yes, well, I think it’s a bit premature to...”

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“I’ve got a hundred percent faith in you mate,” said Alex. “I told the board, if Darrius is on the case then it’s in the bag. I’m counting on you so don’t let me down. So how’s er, so how’s er,” he waved a hand abstractedly.

“Melissa?”

“Melissa! Yes, great girl. Any kids yet?”

“Well not yet, we thought we’d...”

"Take my advice Dar, don't have girls, fucking brain damage. I had both of mine screaming at me last night because they wanted to do piano practice at the same time. I mean what the fuck am I supposed to do about that?"

"Maybe you could get a second piano?" said Darrius helpfully.

"A second piano! Don't be a tit Darrius, I haven't got room for a second fucking piano in the house. Well I suppose I could always get an upright." He was distracted by the thought for a moment. "So what can I do for you mate? Door's always open and all that."

"Well, there was something I really needed to ..."

"Don't mind if I multi-task do you, got a big trip coming up to the far east, won't be a second." Alex moved to his lap top and became immediately absorbed in his messages. Mendacity 3 of 7 © Allan Boroughs, 2008. All Rights Reserved.

The seconds ticked by, Darrius wondered if it was polite to continue. A bead of sweat formed in his hair and ran greasily down the side of his face. He distracted himself with the displays of alpha-maleness in the room. The trophy cabinet laden with silver, the leather and glass Italian desk flown in from Milan and, of course, the photos. Alex and family in smiley soft focus; Alex at the helm of a racing yacht in wet weather gear; Alex spraying Lambrusco from the podium at corporate go-karting; Alex in a black-belt clutching a Tae-Kwon-Do trophy.

Alex typed while Darrius sweated. How exactly do you raise a „sensitive“ issue when your boss is a card carrying psychopath. „Well Alex it's like this, I'm into the firm for about half a million quid. It started with a little excess spending on the old credit card you know, like the odd iPod or a night on the town but it just seemed to, spiral from there. Clothes, cars, holidays, a deposit on a flat in Berlin, a guitar that might have belonged to Elvis.“ All shit! Reams and reams of shit that he didn't need and didn't want and which just seemed to make the deep, desperate hole inside of him bigger and bigger.

„Oh, and the Thornleigh and Bowes thing Alex? I just made that up to cover my tracks. I really didn't mean it to go this far, it just got a bit out of hand, terribly sorry and all that. Oh, do you really think so Alex? Well that's awfully good of you. Thanks for being so understanding.“

Who the fuck was he kidding?

"Alex, I'm sorry but there's something I really need to..."

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"Fuck!" exploded Alex. "Jonty! Sorry Dar, won't keep you a moment. JONTY!"

Jonty presented herself at the door with a silent glare and pursed lips.

"Phuket have bloody cancelled! See if you can change my Saturday night in Hong Kong to Friday and see if Indonesia can do Thursday instead of Sunday. And get back to Louis Fishburn in Laos and tell him I'm in town on Saturday. Oh and find out what they spend in Laos-land and get me a grand's worth." Jonty dismissed herself with a flick of ponytail.

"Great girl!" he said. "Fantastic arse! Not talking to me at the moment though." He gave Darrius the eyebrow flash. Darrius made a show of half turning to watch Jonty on the other side of the glass wall.

"Is she any good?" said Darrius.

"Any good?" said Alex. "Fuck no, thick as shit, I'm telling you mate when they were handing out brains she was still in the queue for tits!" They laughed conspiratorially. Darrius's head hurt. Bloody Alex always had this effect on him. Just being in the same room as his tanned and toned, bespoke suited and coiffured presence made him feel fat and dishevelled.

"Alex, there's something I really need to talk to you about."

"I know what you're going to say," said Alex suddenly fixing him with steel grey eyes.

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"You do?"

"Yes. Did you think I was stupid Dar?" He raised a quizzical eyebrow. "Did you?"

"Er, no, of course not!" More sweat prickled his scalp.

"I know all about it Dar and, trust me, you're going to get what's coming to you."

He let the words hang in the air. Darrius wondered if he should bolt for the door. Would Alex try to stop him, maybe tackle him to the ground before he could reach the lift lobby?

"Look Alex, I know I owe you an explanation. It's not the way it looks, I'm just sorry you had to hear about it from someone else." Alex waved a hand.

"Don't apologise mate," he said. "You said what was on your mind and that takes stones my friend."

"It does?"

"Oh yes, and trust me Dar, when you bring in that million from T&B you'll be right up there with the rest of the big swinging dicks."

"I'll what?" Darrius was beginning to believe that he might have slipped through a portal into a different dimension.

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"I'm talking about you making partner inside a year my man. Don't think you haven't been noticed; I've made quite a case to the board on your behalf you know. Just bring in T&B and the pieces will all fall into place, and then we'll party like complete shag monsters!"

Darrius was stunned into silence. He had come to confess his heinous crimes and to throw himself on Alex's non-existent mercy and yet, here he was seemingly being groomed for promotion. Jonty reappeared, tapping her teeth with a pencil.

"Your three o'clock is here Alex."

"Gotta go mate," said Alex grabbing his jacket from the back of the chair. Let me know when you take down T&B and we'll go to dinner. I know this great little absinthe bar in Shoreditch."

And then he was gone; greeting the two Japanese in the lobby, with a formal bow; carefully presenting his business card with both hands and guiding them to the meeting room with an easy laugh.

Darrius watched him go like a departing comet and stood alone in the temple of testosterone. You couldn't win against a fucker like Alex Fourbouys, he told himself, you could dip him in dog shit and he'd still come up smelling of Paco Rabanne. He was pre-ordained to live this golden, untouchable life while everyone else scrabbled around in the shit for his amusement so you'd better forget any thoughts of winning. The best you could possibly hope for was some sort of nobility in losing where you gracefully

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accepted the natural superiority of Alex the corporate lion whilst you trembled and shook somewhere down the food chain.

Unless of course you were prepared to play the same game. The same terrible, self-centric, egotistical mendacious game in which you dared yourself to go ever higher and higher straight towards a blazing sun on fragile wings made of nothing more than lies

and bullshit and other people's hopes. Then possibly, just possibly you could take on Alex Fourbouys and win.

On the other side of the glass wall, Jonty's desk lay empty. He crossed quickly to the trophy cabinet and selected carefully before reaching down the bright, silver-plated Tai-Kwon-Do trophy. He placed it gently on the edge of the coffee table, unzipped his fly and urinated into the holy chalice, filling it to the brim with splashy golden froth before placing it carefully back onto the high shelf with its warm load. He stood back to admire his handiwork.

"Alright you tosser," he said under his breath. "Let's play this game."