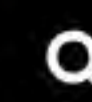


# FEMININE COLLECTIVE

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## Loving a Dangerous Man



I read in a magazine that women fall in love for three reasons. We fall in love with the Hero, the Entertainer, or the Caregiver. So, was he the football hero, the clown at the party, or the guy who offered to carry your groceries? I fell in love with Dagers because he was dangerous. And that made me feel safe. I know other girls who made the same mistake, but they'll never print that in a magazine.

Dagers asked me, "Have you ever wanted to kill someone just to feel their blood on your hands?" We were in high school, so most of us would have liked to kill our parents at one time or another. For about ten seconds. For grounding us or whatever. But if someone ever really tried to kill our folks, like in a horror movie or something, we would have risked our lives to save them. Unless we chickened out. Dagers never chickened out.

He practiced by burning his hand with a lighter. He'd hold his palm over the flame and get this dead look in his eyes until the other kid yelled, "Shit!" Dagers could do it longer than any of the boys joking around on the corner while we waited for someone old enough to buy us a bottle of Jack. Vodka was cheaper, but Dagers only drank Jack. Said it healed his bruises. He'd seen a picture of a guy drinking Jack on a billboard uptown. It read: It's not Scotch. It's not Bourbon. It's Jack. Dagers had a dream that the guy on the billboard was his father. Said someday he was going to Tennessee to find him.

Dagers hated his stepdad. Said he'd have moved out long ago if it wasn't for his mom. He wasn't gonna let her take that shit. When we were in high school, he couldn't afford the karate classes at the center, but the instructor let him stand outside the chain-linked fence and practice all the moves with the group. Dagers didn't want to wear one of those white clown suits anyway. He'd punch and kick the air, and then we'd go to the abandoned building up on 5th and he'd put holes in the drywall.

Dagers has been driving a forklift at the plant since he turned eighteen two months ago, so now he could afford the karate classes, but he's still outside the fence. We're saving up to get our own place, big enough to take his mom with us. I got a job bussing tables out at The Oaks. Bit of a drive, but the tips are good. I had a problem with the manager always helping me on with my coat, his hands getting all slippery, petting my jacket like it was a dog, asking if blonds really do have more fun. Dagers picked me up from work the next day and told the manager I'd be putting on my own coat from now on. Gave him that dead look. I told Dagers on the way home that my mom said I shouldn't wear so much make-up, "Wear pants, not skirts." Dagers said I should wear whatever I damn well please. "Doesn't give men the right to touch you." What guys don't get is, eyes can hurt sometimes almost as much as hands. Well, almost.

Now I'm sitting here waiting for the verdict, reading this stupid magazine. When the guard called his name at the trial, "Michael Dagworth," I nearly forgot that was him. I explained to the police why he killed his stepdad. They think it was pre-meditated, but Dagger's lawyer is arguing self-defense. I told Dagers, "Try not to get that dead look in your eyes when they ask you questions." He did real good. His hands weren't shaking like mine are.



I fell in love with Dagers because he was dangerous, but I love him because he's my hero. The night I got some overtime at The Oaks, I drove straight to Dagger's place afterward. It was snowing so his mom said I could wait inside. He came home late from karate class, his knuckles raw from punching walls, and found his mom with a broken nose, crying in the kitchen, his stepdad on top of me in the bedroom. Dagers grabbed that kitchen knife without thinking. Now we both know what it feels like to have blood on our hands. Not good. But I sure as hell was glad for it. Put that in a magazine.

Photo by Penny Mathews from Freemages



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## One thought on “Loving a Dangerous Man”



**Tanya Schmid** says:

🕒 August 30, 2021 at 8:20 AM

This story was written by Tanya E. E. Schmid. Unfortunately, the editors forgot to insert this bio:

Tanya Elizabeth Egeness Epp Schmid was a Doctor of Oriental Medicine until 2014 when she started a permaculture farm. Her work has appeared in Valparaiso Fiction Review, Sky Island Journal, Canary Literary Magazine, Whistling Shade Literary Magazine, Flash Fiction Magazine, and others. Tanya was long-listed in Pulp Literature's 2021 Flash Fiction Contest, and her work has appeared or is forthcoming in two anthologies: Poet's Choice Global Warming Anthology, and Quillkeeper's Summer Solstice Anthology 2021. She is a teacher of Kyudo (Zen archery) and the author of "Tanya's Collection of Zen Stories" (2018). <http://www.tanyaswriting.com>

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