

THE DEPENDANT

Part Six of a Nine Part Series

by **Eric Heise**

Unestone Press

Norwood, Massachusetts 2001

UNESTONE PRESS EDITION, MARCH 2001
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Electronically Printed in the United States of America

“I don’t need this shit,” said Martin getting up from the Lazy boy recliner and heading towards the bedroom. Mira had been standing by the coffee table. He nearly shoved her aside as he passed. The vial was still on the table.

The vial had started the argument. Martin hadn’t made an effort to hide the vial which Mira said held cocaine. He threw out the two vials that Terry had given him. This vial was from Ruth, and when he came home from her place, he was high on coke and booze. He had forgotten about it until Mira just noticed it. “You don’t have any right to storm in here and give me shit for anything.”

“Then tell me you’re not on coke,” Mira demanded. “Tell me you’re not doing drugs.”

Martin turned around. “Of course I’m on drugs. You’ve been filling the prescriptions for me, dumbass!” He pointed to the table by the recliner. It had an ashtray overflowing with cigarettes, a half empty bottle of beer and three prescription bottles, two were empty. Behind them was a pack of Marlboros and a lighter. “I was in the hospital, remember? Don’t you remember the car accident? Cause I sure as hell don’t. I don’t remember a fucking thing after you said you didn’t want to marry me!”

“Martin, I don’t think we need to get into this right now,” Mira said. Her voice had calmed. “You’ve been hurt, in an accident. You were in the hospital for a while, but you’re back now. You’re back and you’ll be all right.”

“Yeah, I’m back and we’re not back,” Martin snapped. “You come here, you come here with your gestures of good will and Florence Nightingale prestige. You waltz around free as a bird on a branch, with no obligation to stay. You come here and talk down to me and mock my appearance.”

“Martin, I just think you and I need some time to sort things through.” Mira swallowed. “I know you must be going through a lot right now -.”

“How could you know what I am going through? How could you possibly know what I am going through?”

Mira sighed. “I really don’t think we need to go into all of this,” she said.

“Fine, then get out.”

Mira said nothing. Her face started to heat up and an urge inside her diaphragm swelled.

“Go on, get the fuck out.” Martin went over to his recliner table and got a cigarette. “Go on, I’m sure you have much better things to do than watch me. Leave.”

Mira’s eyes swelled with tears. “Fine. If that’s what you want, fine.”

Martin lit his cigarette as she stormed down the walkway. “That is what I want! And don’t fucking come back here, either, I don’t need your shit. I don’t.” Martin kept screaming at her even after Mira was halfway down the road.

He drank a beer and finally calmed down. He didn’t feel like doing any of the coke, not right now, but he did toss it in his top drawer, out of the way. He had got that vial while looking for Terry. Everyone he asked said Terry was either dead or in jail, and Martin didn’t know what that meant exactly. He didn’t care. Ruth just prescribed what he was looking for and that’s what really mattered.

Martin spent a few hours with Ruth. She was making Vodka tonics and boring conversation. After a few of them she didn’t look like the worn out middle aged whore Martin pegged her for when she opened Terry’s apartment door. She obviously needed some companionship, something other than a client. He wasn’t sure if he had been a client in the end or whether she was giving out freebees. They had had several drinks and smoked some grass. She gave him the vial, no charge and the number of someone who could get him in touch with another supplier.

“Some Chinese guy, I think,” Ruth had said. “Terry uses him all the time. Gets the good stuff.”

Martin still had the number. He wanted to call, but one of those I-slept-with-your-best-friend segments was on one of the daytime talk shows and that put Martin to sleep.

Martin was to meet this guy at a ball field on the other side of town. He didn’t know who this guy was, this *Huge-ah* the guy on the other end of the phone had said. Martin didn’t catch his name, but he had told the guy he was a friend of Terry’s.

“Tough break for him,” the guy said. Martin wanted to ask what happened, but he knew he’d just get the same answer: dead or in jail.

“How will I know who he is, you know, when I get there?” The guy on the phone laughed and said he’d know the dink when he saw him.

The field was deserted when he got there, except some scrawny Chinese kid with a backpack near the dugout. That must be him, Martin thought, though he does look *huge*.

“Hey, how’s it going,” Martin said. “I’m a friend of Terry’s. I was sent -.” The Chinese kid ignored Martin. Instead he went inside the dugout and opened his bag. Martin followed him feeling dumb and awkward.

Martin didn’t get a warm and fuzzy from this guy, he seemed to be in a real big hurry. Martin put it aside. Ruth hadn’t been in such a hurry, but that was something else. It had been three days since his visit with Ruth, and he had used everything she had gave him later the next day. It kept him up the whole night and he got to sleep during the day, but the past two days he was up and the sun-

light bugged him. He missed his dope. He barely thought of Mira anymore. The transaction was no sooner over when the Chinese kid disappeared, almost in thin air.

Each day faded into the next. The calendar in the kitchen was three months behind. He kept track of his cigarettes and his beer. He was amazed at how easy it was to slip back into that smoking habit after seven years off the butts. It hadn't been easy at first, starting off sickening and dirty. He got light headed from the first few, but by the time he reached the end of that first pack, the smoke was going down as easy as it ever had. After the third pack, he craved the nicotine like a wild animal and looking forward to every fresh cigarette He got depressed as he finished each one.

He bought some Vodka and tonic water and drank those at night. Beer worked well during the day, but it was the Coke that really helped at night. He found the daylight hurt too much and the Coke kept him up all night, leaving him able to sleep during the day.

His work called several times to check on him, see when he could come back, at least part time. Each time he answered he was groggy from the dope and booze. The lady from HR thought he sounded terrible and promised to check back on him in a few days. After a while, he stopped answering the phone. In no time, he'd stop everything altogether. He thought that if he ever did go back, he might look into the second or third shifts.

“Mom, I'm fine, really I am.”

“Well, do you think your father and I should come out there and stay with you,” Margaret said to her son. “Your father has some vacation time he should really use. They have people to worry about the stockholders while he's away.”

Martin shook his head to his kitchen. “No, mom, really. I am ok.” He didn't want them there. He didn't want anyone. Martin stood in his kitchen wearing boxers and a t-shirt that needed washing. Dried blood stained brown down the front where he had had a nosebleed the day before.

“How's Mira? Has she been coming around?”

Martin nearly had to ask whom his mother was asking about. “Oh – oh yeah. Sure. She comes around – here and there.” He trailed off.

“Is everything all right with the two of you?” His mother asked. “She isn't being a pain in the ass to my boy is she? No, Holly, I want the China polished before the Turners come over. You know how Jules is about tidiness.”

“No, everything is fine, mom.”

“Well if she's a pain in the ass – and I know she probably can be, the little shit, you make sure you send her to me. I'll give her a piece of my mind!”

“Mom, everything’s cool. It really is. I’m just recovering and will be – good as new in no time.”

“Well I am glad to hear that dear. Now you make sure you get plenty of rest and make plans to come out here soon. You’re father wants a rematch on that golf game from last fall.”

“Sure, mom. Tell dad I said – tell him I said hi.” Martin pulled the phone away and snorted coke from the end of a pen cap. “Tell him the rematch is as good as – good.” Snort.

“That’s great dear. Love you.”

Martin stood up straight. “Love you too, mom.” He hung up the phone. “I need a drink after that call. What shall I have?” He eyed a bottle of Vodka on the counter. “A Vodka tonic, of course. Bartender, make me a drink!”

The liquor store was in walking distance to Martin’s house. He had no car. That got destroyed in the accident. Mira hadn’t been around and he couldn’t wait for a cab. About a block from the store, a little dog jumped out at him from behind a chain link fence. It barked and leaped at the links that reached as high as Martin’s ankles. Martin knew the dog; it wagged its tail at him when he’d jog by in the mornings before the accident. Martin would sometimes stop and let the dog sniff his hand. Today, Martin told it to shut up and when it didn’t, he threw a rock at it and kept going.

The doctor’s office was lit with soft lighting. Martin sat across from the doctor, a table separating them. She held a legal pad in her arms, but she didn’t write on it. Martin slumped in his seat while the doctor sat upright, postured.

“How have you been feeling since you got home?” She asked Martin.

He shrugged. “I don’t know.”

“Have you felt depressed, angry?”

He shrugged again.

“Accidents can be a very trying event. They tug at our emotions. They cause us pain in places we’ve never experienced. You haven’t returned to work yet, right?”

Martin shook his head.

“Why is that?”

“Not up to it.”

“Are you nervous about re-entering the world, going back to the life you led before the accident?”

“I just don’t want to go back. I’m not up for it.”

“Is there still discomfort, physically?”

“Why does there have to be a reason? Why does everything have to have some psychobabble bullshit reason? Why can’t I just tell you I don’t feel like it and move on?”

“Because there is always going to be a reason for everything.” The doctor was calm. “Martin, life can spin us around and not always for the good reasons. And traumatic events can and will cause a major disruption in our lives. There is something ailing you. Don’t be afraid to recognize what it is.”

Martin sighed. He looked at the clock on the shelf. Fifty minutes of dodging before the session was over.

“Have you spoken to any of your friends, family? Is there a partner, girlfriend?”

“No girlfriend.”

“I thought she was in the car with you? Did she die?”

“She should have. She came around for a while and then stopped.”

“Why did she stop coming to see you?”

“We had a disagreement?”

“What about?”

“Life. Our life. The way I run my life.”

“She doesn’t agree with the way you’ve been since the accident.” She didn’t ask a question.

“She doesn’t like my methods to get through the day, let’s leave it at that.”

“Have you been overusing the medication?”

“I had a couple of beers, and she got bent out of shape.”

“Using anything else? It’s ok; you can say so, Martin. I won’t turn you in.”

“She accused me of using narcotics.”

“Have you?”

“A friend gave me something to deal with the pain. Can I smoke?”

“Please,” the doctor said gesturing to the ashtray on the table. “How long have you been smoking?”

Martin lit the cigarette. “Just started back up.”

“Have you been using cocaine, pot, any pills?”

“Just a little coke, you know, to get me through. No big deal.”

“Are you drinking a lot or just a couple to ease the rough spots?” She was sincere and Martin relaxed.

“A few beers here and there, maybe a Vodka tonic at night. We’re not talking about being a drunk, here.” Martin gave a laugh.

“So, she doesn’t agree with you drinking and she has a problem the cocaine.”

“Well, we were also supposed to get married, or she wanted to. Then I bring it up and she doesn’t want to anymore.”

“When did you try and have this talk with her? Recently?”

Martin shook his head. “Just before the crash.” He paused. “That is the last thing I remember before everything went black. I remember some EMTs talking. I remember waking up with a tube in my throat and a nurse leaning over me, then a doctor and another doctor. Then I woke up again and I’m in another hospital room with more windows and Mira is looking out one. That’s all I remember: arguing about marriage shit and then a tube was in my throat. And when the morphine drips slowed I got all kinds of pain in my torso.”

“The pain in your torso, has that eased up lately?”

Martin held the cigarette in his hand and stayed very still, nearly holding his breath. He tensed, wishing he were relaxed like before. Why did she have to bring that up? He looked at the clock. “Time’s up.” He put the cigarette out and left the office.

In the mirror, Martin stood holding his shirt up. There were scars from the surgery that went vertically up and down his stomach. Stitch marks crossed the large line every inch or so. Martin’s eyes swelled and reddened.

“Yeah, I need a refill,” Martin told the contact.

“I don’t know if we’ll be able to help you today, Mac,” the guy said. “Fucking dink is out of commission for a while from what I hear.

Martin grew frustrated. “Well, is there anyone else? I just need a little of his best. Actually, whatever he’s got is fine.”

“What ever he’s got huh? Let me get back to you; see what we can pull off. The word was that the dink was out of biz, but someone told me today he might be opening the shop up again soon. I’ll call ya back.”

Martin looked at the baggy the dealer sold him. No vial this time and the stuff was grayer than before. Maybe it was better, maybe not so good. Who cares, he thought. Martin got himself situated, the stuff on a mirror, dirty straw in hand. He thought about calling Ruth to come over, but he didn’t have her number and couldn’t wait. It wasn’t long after taking snorting the first specks of dust when he knew something really bad was going to happen. Right after snorting both lines, his nose bled like crazy and everything went white.

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