

### 3. HIT THE POOL

When I get back I have been assured that my job is still there. But things don't seem as smooth as I thought.

"Benny, you've been replaced."

"I've lost my job."

"We needed a grounds keeper. And you weren't around so we hired another guy."

"You promised me that I still had a job. That's why I didn't feel bad about leaving. You just fired me."

"I'm trying to tell you. Don't feel bad. We've got you working at the pool with Sammy. Do you know anything about pools?"

"I help with my brother's pool at the house."

"Great!"

I am glad to finally get off the work detail. This is better than rescue.

The pool is a different sort of job. A lot of the maintenance occurs early in the morning before anyone is there. Sammy instructs me in the chemicals. A lot of the stuff I know already. But this is a big pool. And they work in such quantity. I learn how to use the hose to vacuum. Vacuuming is such a big job. We need to do it every morning. This place has to look state of the art. That is why the members pay so much.

The pool attracts a very distinct clientele as compared with the golf course or the equestrian fields. Polo develops the fiercest competitors. One upmanship reigns on the links. The pool attracts those given to a high form of leisure. The social set likes to sit around on their deck chairs and drink. Flashy suits are often the order of the day. Sometimes the women might be revealing. Few actually brave the waters. Heaven help them if they actually get wet.

The pool crew is a strange mix. There are the high school and college kids looking for a part-time job. Many of these are children of members who want to teach them the value of a dollar. There are some old timers and guys like Ian and I. Even though there's extensive work with such a large facility, the burden is much less than on the grounds crew. There is almost an element of glamor in keeping the place in order.

After work some of the guys will hang around the work room and smoke dope. They'll get a little boisterous after a few drinks. I'm not really one for smoking pot. In my country, I could get really potent hash. I wasn't even into it then. This would be worse. Pot just makes people lethargic. I have enough to worry about.

I am developing a friend in Ian. Ian's origins are Hispanic, but he's made every effort to act like an Anglo. He even changed his name. He's all into self-improvement. He even encourages me.

"Benny, you can earn more if you get your life guard certificate."

"Don't we have enough to do?"

"Seriously, you can spend part of the time just sitting in one of those chairs watching the girls in bikinis."

I smile. Most of the patrons hardly notice us except when they need clean towel or there's something that needs fixing with the showers.

"I was never that good a swimmer. But I'll try anything."

We walk around in our white uniforms ready to take care of each and everything around the pool.

“At least, we don’t have to bring them the drinks.”

“Benny, the waiters get drinks. I heard about one waiter who was actually dealing drugs to the clientele. Everyone knew. But he just did it anyway.”

“Did he get caught?”

“That was part of the problem. I don’t think that they wanted to shut down the supply.”

“Did they want their cut?”

“I heard that he did something really stupid. Like they caught him with one of the underage girls. He dug his own grave. No one could really help him at that point.”

“So the place has gone dry since then?”

“Are you thinking of going into business for yourself?”

“I was just curious. I’ve had my time with the drug business.”

“Wow. I didn’t know that you had a history.”

“Just some minor shit. Nothing to talk about.” Of course, it was a lot to talk about, but I couldn’t risk repeating that story.

“It must be quite a come down to work here.”

“We all do what we’ve got to do.”

“I could use a new car.”

“I just need a vehicle of my own. It’s not so fun getting a ride or taking the bus.”

“When’s that going to happen?”

“I’m starting to save my money.”

I am looking for something basic. An old Honda. I can’t roll around in a BMW like my spy brother. I can’t worry about that now. There’s enough to keep me busy with the pool.

Ian catches me staring at one of the girls.

“Don’t give it a second thought. These are thoroughbreds. We’re just the nags. There’s no way that we’ll ever catch them on this track.” I thought about the guys that we work with. I had never noticed that they treated us any differently. But I guess Ian is right.

“Sir, there’s a problem with one of the toilets in the women’s locker room.”

She is looking up at me.

“I’ll get someone to take care of it.”

We actually take two of us to check it out. I get Ian to go in there with me. We first have to clear that section of the locker room. The women rush to finish their showers and cover themselves up.

It turns out that someone has put too much paper in the toilet. We’re able to plunge it without too much difficulty. I’m glad that is all. We are hardly plumbers.

I get this strange feeling walking through the room. I can smell the perfume. I have forgotten about my passionate side. This seems too real. I’m not watching television anymore. I feel welcome in this inner sanctum.

“What a mess.”

The toilet had overflowed. We get mop and some cleanser to clean things up.

“Benny, I guess it did turn into a job for two people “

”I just like walking through here.”

“It’s the shit house for girls.”

“You know what I mean.”

“Benny, you have to get out more.”

“I try.”

“Not hard enough.”

I realize that he is right. I am deriving this strange pleasure by being a voyeur. It’s all right to live in a television world when you’re a kid. Now is the time to come out of the shadows.

The work is a lot easier in pool maintenance. But the hours are longer. We have to do extra work late in the day. Sometimes the shift requires us to stay until after the pool is closed down. This means that I am home less. Ramon gets mad about me being slow with my work at home.

“You’re hanging around with that playboy friend of yours. You have no time for your work here.”

“I worked eleven hours today.”

“How many hours are you awake in the day?”

I defend myself, “Not many more than that unless the CIA is teaching you funny math.”

“You have no respect for me.”

“Ramon, you’re not my father.”

“You would never talk to your father like this.”

“That’s my point that you don’t seem to understand.”

“You’re not pulling your weight.”

“I give you money. I do your work around here. And you are getting mad at me for hanging out with one of the few friends that I have. Ramon, what’s your problem.”

“My problem is that you’re a freeloader. You’ll find whatever way you can to do the least with your life.”

He has all the answers. I get a beer and sit by the pool. He is dressed and going out to a party.

The next day we have a real mess at the club. Payton has been there for a long time, one of the old timers. He even has a son in college. He has taken bets on the side for years to earn a little extra money. Everyone knows that he is honest. If he can’t cover a large bet right away, he always makes good.

Some new member hears about the operation and makes a bet on some long shot. The pony wins, and he starts demanding his money right away. This is totally bull shit. Payton pays him as much as he can and asks the guy to hold cool for a couple of days.

“Listen, you lying sack of shit. You pay me my money right now, or I’m going to beat the shit out of you.”

If this were the streets, Payton would beat the crap out of this rookie. But it’s his place of work, and he doesn’t want to ruffle any feather. A bunch of us gather around when we hear a commotion. This dumb ass cold cocks Payton. Payton doesn’t see it coming. He doesn’t expect that from a member of this elite club. He doesn’t swing back. All he does is make sure that the guy doesn’t get a chance to hit him again.

The jerk blames Payton for starting it.

“I’ve got witnesses who will back up my story.”

I tell Ian, “His witnesses had their heads turned when the whole things went down.”

“Their heads turned, and their asses in the air.”

We know that we have no hope of intervening. Payton is going to lose this job that he’s had all his life. I want to intervene. Someone needs to beat this little creep up. There’s nothing any of us can do. The rules of privilege. I can just imagine my brother’s excuse.

After Peyton leaves, my supervisor Willy is going crazy. I know that he didn’t want to fire Payton. Payton has a lawsuit, but all the big lawyers in the city are friends of the club. They give him a nice severance, and send him on his way.

It’s hectic trying to make up for his departure. I’m running towels out to the deck. I’m checking on the restrooms. I’m monitoring the chemicals. These are all things that I do normally, but it is harder when we are short-staffed.

As I walk by one chair a woman calls me over. She is stunning in an unusual way. Each detail seems painted.

“Darling, can I trouble you for some towels?” She is supposed to have picked up her towels in the locker room. But I oblige her. “I’ll be right back, Mam.”

I bring two towels to the foot of her chair.

“Could you get me a gin and tonic?”

“I’m not a waiter. I’m with maintenance. I could get someone for you.”

“That will be great. I guess I didn’t realize that you were a *pool boy*. Although I’m not sure that they call you that,” she surprises me with her comment.

“What?”

“Pool boy.”

“Oh, I’ve never heard that.”

“You know the expression, everyone can use a good pool boy.” She is wearing a straw hat. Her lips seem luscious. She has sunglasses on but she is looking right at me. The blood is rushing to my head.

“You will send that boy with my drink.”

“Of course.”

“I could use another favor. Could you rub some sun tan lotion on me. I just forgot when I was in the locker room. It’s sort of hard twisting around while I’m seated.”

“Mam, there’s a rule against touching the members.”

“Could you bend the rules just for me?”

“I am afraid of losing my job. We already had an incident this morning.”

“I’m very good friends of the Director. I don’t think that anyone is going to lose their job just doing a favor for a poor woman like me.” She is pouting her lips and holding the sun tan lotion out for me to use.

“If you insist, I’ll do what I can.”

I sit down at the end of her chair. The bottle is a little greasy, and I hold it nervously. This seems so simple, but I feel like I can easily do something wrong. I’m having difficulty getting the lotion to come out. She is looking at me intently. She takes off her sunglasses to emphasize her concern.

“You have to shake it. What’s your name?”

“I’m Benny.”

“Benny, you have lovely eyes.” She puts out her hand for me to shake. “You just have to shake it some more.” I’m not sure if she is talking about her hand or the lotion. I grasp her hand and she runs it along my palm.

“How’s the lotion coming?”

I’m getting more excited, looking at her, touching her. “It’s just about ready.”

“Don’t get nervous, Benny. I’m not going to bite. At least not here, not now.” She winks at me, smiles, and then puts her glasses back on.

The lotion just squirts in a glob on my hand. I feel a little embarrassed.

“Now you’ve got to take the lotion and rub it in my skin.”

She takes my hand and suggestively moves it around the edges of her lime bikini. She seems so hot to me. I tremble just touching her skin.

“I love to get just a little sun. Not too much. A little kiss!” She again puckers up.

“Ooh!”

“What?”

“That feels good. Rub it in some more.”

I move my hand around her back. I make sure that the lotion covers her neck. Her suit is low cut. She makes sure my palm lays flat across her breasts. She is holding my hand while I move it on her. I look around to see if anyone is watching. Fortunately, Willy is nowhere to be seen. She lets me spread the lotion across her stomach. As I put lotion near her waist, she slides my hand gently under her suit.

“We have to make sure that everything is covered.”

She is more provocative when I do her legs. She has my hand rest on the bottom of her suit as she adjusts herself in the chair.

“You have lovely hands. I bet you could give me a great massage.”

If someone sees what I am doing now, I would not only get screamed at. I would be fired right away. But I keep on with my special work.

“Benny, I’ve got a pool at home. Do you do houses?”

I play dumb, “What do you mean?”

“Would you come to my house and do my pool.”

“I don’t think they would allow that.”

“I’m asking you to come on your own.”

“I really don’t have any equipment.”

“We have everything that you need. I don’t really like the boy that is doing our work. My husband is going to get someone else. I just need someone temporarily.”

I look a little freaked out.

“My husband is never there. I can pay you in cash. It will be our little secret. I could even pay you a little extra for a massage.”

“I really don’t know about that.”

She reaches in her purse and pulls out her card.

“This is my card. I’m Brenda. You can remember that.”

I try to say it with feeling, “Brenda.”

“That’s great. You’re kind of cute.”

“I should be getting back to work.”

“Are you going to give me a call?”

“I’ll try.”

“You have to do more than that. Otherwise, I’ll have to come by here and give you a spanking. You wouldn’t want that.”

She must think that she is something special. She is. I am blown away. I am numb for the next five minutes. Ian has to snap me out of my trance.

“I saw it all!”

“You did not, Ian.”

“Rock and I were watching you. You probably could have gone down on her and got away with it.”

“What are you saying?”

“You’re passing your initiation.”

“What initiation?”

He is teasing me. He knows that I am already paranoid after this morning.

“She’s hot, Ian.”

“I don’t think that I could have held back like you did. You were a real Casanova.”

“She’s a sweet thing.” I stake my claim.

“Really sweet. I’d love to taste her honey.”

“I think that she stings. She’s married.”

“Of course, she is.”

“She wants me to come out and do her pool,” I inform them

“You’re going?”

“What do you mean?”

“Think of it as an opportunity.”

“I’m not sure about these opportunities. They have a real way of backfiring,” I check myself.

“You have to take her up on the offer.”

“Then what?” I ask.

“She gives you money for doing a service. That’s what we do here. We just don’t run the show.”

“Have you ever done it?”

“Never. But it’s great. We could set it up on our own.”

“What are you talking about?”

“We could bust out of this place. We’re all just one day from losing our jobs. You saw what happened to Payton today.”

“I’m not going to lose my job.”

“But this would be great. Those rich bitches will pay all kinds of money. All of them have pools. Think about it.”

“I am thinking about it. It feel like more trouble than it’s worth,” I hesitate.

“You’ve got to think about it. I could put together a business plan. We could make flyers and business cards.”

“We can’t pass them out here.”

“We could hand out the business cards surreptitiously.” His brain is working overtime.

“Then what. We have no equipment.”

“I could get a truck. We could borrow stuff to start. I’ll price it. I’ve got a cousin who might be able to help us out.”

“We’d work as a team?” I ask him.

“To start off. Then we’d get separate trucks. We could split shifts to start.”

“Sounds good. I’ve been saving some money.”

“I thought that you were going to buy a car.”

“I was. But this could mean that I get a better one.”

All that I can think about is visiting Brenda. The business seems like a perfect excuse.

“I’ll tell Ramon about my idea. He might be able to offer some suggestions.”

Ian’s been studying business. I trust his sense. This is the change that I need. I’m tired of having Willy leer at us all the time.

I want to run my idea past Ramon.

“You have enough work here without taking on a third job.”

“It will eventually be my main job.”

Ramon is skeptical, “What if you don’t get clients? It’s hard breaking in cold.”

“I’m going to do it.”

“It could be a disaster.”

“I thought that you might help out.”

“And lose all the money that I have.”

“I thought that maybe you could lend me a couple of thousand.”

Ramon chides me, “It doesn’t work that way. You’ve been completely lax with all your work around here. This is not a free ride.”

“I’m doing the best that I can.”

“You’re going to have to do a lot better.”

“You’re worse than Willy.”

“Willy makes sure that the pool looks fantastic. I wish that my input could do the same here.”

“Ramon, I’m there some nights until 10.”

“You can get up early the next day.”

“I do. But then I’ve got to get over there by 7 or 8. Cut me a break.”

“I would, but no one cuts me a break at the Agency. One mistake, and we all could be dead. I’m performing a service for the country.”

“I’m doing my part at the club. You know that. That’s my job. I do the best that I can.”

“Benny, you always have an excuse. I was going to invite you out with me. But you’re feeding me so much shit tonight. You can stay home and think about what a little creep you’re becoming.”

He still sounds like the ten year old who used to scream at me.

I get a beer and relax to the TV. I think some more about Ian’s idea. I’m going to have to call Brenda if I’m going to follow up on the plan. She’s got to have some friends. I didn’t tell Ramon about her. He’d probably tell me to lay off. He doesn’t have enough to worry about without messing with my life.

I need a day off soon. They don't have me in on Friday. I just hope that holds. With all the short-staffing, it's coming down on all of us. I know some of the college kids have to go out of town. So that's going to make it worse. I can't let it bother me.

The girl in the movie reminds me of Brenda. I am so tired. I close my eyes. I can hear her purring to me. It feels so good.

I wake up in the middle of the night. My brother is still out. I feel a mess. But I get ready for bed. I take a long shower. It perks me up a bit. I feel confident in myself. I am starting to love life again. I still have about four hours of sleep left.

As I settle in my head is working extra fast. Too much has happened today. What if Brenda can't help? Or Ian can't get any money. Everything could just fall through. I wish that Ramon could be more helpful. He could even get me a bank loan. He has loads of contacts. I could clean pools for the CIA.

I need to stop there. One brother working for the Agency is too much. I didn't sign up to be a snoop like him. I'm not that kind of guy.

I fall asleep thinking about vacuuming Brenda's pools. She is watching me in her lime two piece. I have made it.

The next morning the weather is awful. Ramon has slipped in before the rains. There are a few days of incredibly bad weather for Los Angeles. It rains and rains. There are high winds. Our work is really cut out for us. The pool chemistry is way more acidic than usual. Leaves and other trash have blown in to the pool. Even the surrounding grounds are a mess. There is stuff strewn throughout the deck. There are broken branches on the ground. We are very methodical in trying to clean up the place. We first clean up the waste. We use the strainer to take the leaves off the surface of the water. The sweeping alone takes over a half a day. We have to add loads of soda ash to the pool. The chlorine level has to be brought back to normal. Nobody is really swimming or hanging out. It does make it easier to get all the work done.

There goes my days off. I'll have to wait a few days. I almost forget about Brenda. I don't want that contact to go by the wayside. She has me thinking about my life differently. For a while I thought that I lacked any attraction for women. I didn't feel like I had what it takes to play the game. Now I feel raring to go.

"Do you remember me?"

"Of course, I do. The cute pool boy!" I call Brenda up and am surprised that she really does remember me. I thought that she gave out her card all the time.

"Do you still need me to do your pool?"

"Of course."

"I'm off on Monday."

"That's good. My husband won't be home. He always interferes in my plans."

I feel so excited when I hang up. I'm dancing around the house.

When I actually show up at the house, she greets me in a robe with her swimming suit underneath. We agree on the terms for the job. Everything is handled very business-like. She shows me where are the chemicals. While I start the pool, she heads in house to do some work. It takes a couple of hours to get everything done.

"I've brought you a little snack." She has made sandwiches and has lemonade for me.

"That is so nice."

“I thought you might be hungry.”

“I thought that I’d have to go out for a burger. But this is going to be fantastic. Her robe is half open. But she is not acting as provocative as she did at the club.

“I didn’t know that you recently moved here.”

“Yeah, my brother came with me. He’s a polo player, Ramon.”

“My husband’s talked about him. They say that he’s fantastic.”

“He’s a great rider. He always has been.”

“I encouraged my husband to get into horses. We have the money. He just doesn’t have the interest.”

“Do you ride?”

“A little.”

“I never did. My brother is the horse lover.”

She is again staring at me. But she is sitting across the table.

“I once ran a talent agency. Did you ever want to be in movies?”

“When I first came here, I told people that I was writing scripts for movies.”

“Everyone’s got a script here. Something that they’ve waiting to be made. So how did your story go over.”

I am apologetic, “At first, I didn’t even have a story idea. Girls would laugh when I had nothing to say after my introduction. Then I wove together a better story. I’d have a script and studio connections. But they all wanted auditions. I didn’t have any.”

“You should have told them to meet you at some hotel. You could have made it look like a casting call.”

“Then what would I have done. Take advantage of them. That’s not my style.”

“You seem so innocent.” She asks me how old I am.

“You’re younger than I thought. You’re still really cute.”

“Is your husband in the movies?”

“He’s actually a caterer. He inherited the operation from his father. It’s a big operation.”

“Have you ever worked with him.”

“I help out. It keeps him busy all the time.”

“He leaves you alone a lot.”

“He lets me do my own thing. I do get a little lonely. It never hurts to have a friend over now and then. Are you going to give me that massage that you promised.”

“I thought that you were teasing about that. I’m no professional.”

She takes off her robe. She also takes off her swim suit top. Her breasts are facing me. I find that I am staring She shows no embarrassment. “Benny, Benny!”

I catch myself, “Yeah.”

“I’ll just lie on the table, and you can work away.”

I don’t pretend to be an expert. I work my way deeply into her muscles. She is a little tight.

“You work out a lot.”

“Yeah, I’m always at the gym.”

This all seems to easy. I am close enough to kiss her. Her perfume is heavy and is going to my head.

“You seem a little distracted, Benny.”

“I guess I’m not used to being so close to a beautiful woman. I mean Ramon is always bringing girls over. But it’s not the same.”

“You just have to relax. I’m not going to hurt you. Just work your way with your hands. Let them do the talking for you.”

There is so much that I want to say to her, but I feel tongue-tied.

“Benny, have you made love to a woman since you’ve arrived?”

Her question really makes me feel out of place.

“You have nothing to be afraid of.”

I am not sure if she is just curious or is leading me on.

I have a towel over her swimming suit bottom. “Benny, I could take it off if that makes it easier.”

The blood has all rushed to my head. I want to talk about my business plan. All that I can think about is getting busy with her in her husband’s house.

“Benny, this is my place. You can feel free to do anything that you want here.”

I am working the oil into her lower back. She has removed the bottom of her suit and is lying on her stomach. I work my hands along her buttocks, and start to move along her legs, her smooth legs.

“Would you like to come with me to my bedroom?”

“I don’t feel that would be right.”

“But you’d really like to do that.” She is encouraging me.

I am ready for her. I wonder when I will again get this possibility. I just feel that this is compromising my business plan.

“My husband will never know. And if he did, there is nothing that he could do.”

I don’t know what that is supposed to mean. I don’t want to disappoint her. I am paralyzed.

She puts on her robe. Her suit is still on the table.

“Benny, your check is on the table. I’m going to go to my room. It’s on the second floor, first door on your right. I’ll leave it up to you. If you want to come up, I’ll show you a good time. Otherwise, we’ll take this up another time.”

She doesn’t do up her robe. She is encouraging me to look at her naked body as she slinks past me. I have already been paid. I could leave now. Discretion tells me to leave now. She might think worse of me if I leave now. Sometimes you have to do things for your country, your adopted country.

Success often requires us to make sacrifices that might at first be against our better judgement. Let me just say that I took pity on the poor lonely woman. If I’m going to be a good pool boy, I need to provide full service.

Brenda starts to become accustomed to my special extras. She reasons that it all comes as part of the deal. She sweetens my reward.

“Let’s just call it an investment in your future.”

I love my investors more than you can know. That is the first concern of any business. They must supply their investors with the full reward for what they have put in the business, no matter how deeply they have sunk their fortunes.

Ramon is hardly reacting well to the increased time that I am away. It only amounts to a couple of times a week. But this takes away from my appointed duties. I am finally seeking some real satisfaction, and he is trying to take it away. He begrudges my success, no matter how meager.

“In America, no one else is going to feel sorry for you. You’ve got to get a plan, and stick to it.”

“Benny, you’re becoming a burden on me. You’re not really pulling your share. Our parents never really taught you the necessary lessons of life. Look at me! I contribute to the society. I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps. I’m sending you out on your own. You’ll have to do the same.

“What are you talking about?”

“There’s always going to be place for you if you want to come back.

“Who are you kidding?”

“This is all for the best. I’ve always loved you as a father. I’m only trying to help you be a man.

It is a hot day. I am learning the lessons on growing up very quickly

In my mind I can hear my brother hitting the random polo ball. He is at work saving freedom from the deadbeats and the freeloaders like me.

I gather my stuff together. I can say that I can temporarily stay with him while I make plans. I feel that this is the best time to go. My business is its infancy. It is only going to get better. Nothing can stop me now.