

**Self-Made Man**

**A Short Story**

**by**

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Well, Chuck had done it; he'd finally done it. It had taken one hell of a time, and as for the planning permits, you'd think he was going to build on the White House lawn. All he wanted was a little plot of land in the woods, a clearing, where he could construct his mountain hideaway. Five or six hundred square feet perhaps, certainly no more than a thousand, that's all he would need. Why did everyone have to make things so complicated? This was The United States, the Land Of Freedom and Opportunity. Where anything was possible if you had the drive, the vision, and yes, of course, the money to succeed. Oh, really? Some of these mindless bureaucrats must have thought they'd relocated to the PRC. 'You require how much land?' You need a particular form for that. 'You want to build *where*?' 'You need a special license for that. 'Your structure is going to be *how* high?' You *definitely* need a regulatory authority for that. Signed; in triplicate. Even out in the middle of fucking nowhere. So many documents, getting passed from one petty official to another. Why should wanting to build a small cabin in the woods cause such a headache? He wondered what it must be like for *real* developers, those companies who constructed whole housing projects. How did they manage ever to lay any bricks? Then it dawned on him. Of course. These guys had council officials in their pockets—a few dollar bills in a plain, brown manila envelope—backslapping and glad-handing at the right functions. Making sure they gave 'donations' to the right causes.

Anyway, it had all now been concluded. All the paperwork that was required to be completed was completed. Signed; in triplicate. He could now forge ahead and start. He had

found a local builder and given him the blueprints. That was something else he needed to do. These pissant penpushers wouldn't take his sketches, carefully drawn to scale with measurements. Oh, no, sir! He had to employ an architect, an *architect* for Chrissakes. He tried to explain; he wasn't making a replica of the Sears Tower. He just wanted a single-level lumber lodge. But, no. For them to even consider his proposals, he needed to employ a professional designer. They could recommend someone, they said. I *bet* they could, he thought. At twice the going rate with them getting a kickback for the referral, no doubt. No, thank you. He would find his own. And he did.

It didn't take long for the construction company to complete the project. It wasn't a difficult job, and to be fair, their client wasn't as particular as others for whom they had done similar work. Chuck just wanted a simple, small log cabin where he could spend some time away from the hustle and bustle of Madison Street on the Lower East Side. A place where he could stretch out and relish the quiet ambiance of his second home in the Allegheny Mountains, not far from Ticonderoga. All he had to do now was to tell Marcia. Boy, would she get a shock? Her boyfriend had actually built his secret hideout, his Fortress of Solitude. Her disorganized, uncoordinated, dysfunctional better half had not only purchased a parcel of land, but he had also erected a house on it. He hoped she would be as thrilled for him as he was for himself. He should have known better.

Marcia regarded Chuck with horror. He had done *what*? He had gone behind her back and spent money, funds they did not have, on a useless piece of property and built a lodge that they would probably never use! At least, she, Marcia, would never go to this cabin. Where was it? Out in the middle of fucking nowhere, that's where, she screamed at him.

Surrounded by wild animals, poisonous plants and insects, snakes, *snakes*, the very word

made her shudder. What was he thinking of? Had he gone mad? Yes, that was it, only not just mad. Insane, criminally fucking insane. Was it too late to try to recover some of their money? Perhaps they could say he hadn't been well, the pressure of work, illness, *anything*. 'Not of sound mind' was the phrase that came to mind. She would get a lawyer; maybe they might be able to think of a solution. They certainly charged enough. Yes, that's what she would do; she'd find an attorney. This was the last straw, she told him. She would never, *could* never go anywhere near that place, no matter what he said.

Chuck was unprepared for such a reaction and thought the best thing to do would be just to keep quiet and let her calm down. Maybe when she thought it through a bit more, she would see it wasn't such a bad investment after all. It wasn't just for him; it was for both of them, and there weren't any snakes out there – well, not that many.

He decided to give her the apartment to herself. His presence was only exacerbating an already fraught situation. He would go out for a little while, try to find a way to turn her around. It would be easier to push the Empire State building over with your pinkie, he thought. He had been walking the streets for about half an hour when it struck him. Why hadn't he thought of it before? Smiling knowingly to himself, he strolled back to their flat, considering the best way to bring it up, the way he would persuade her not just to want to go, but to *demand* to go.

Marcia had calmed down a little by the time he returned but was still furious. Inviting her to sit with him on the sofa, he took her reluctant, trembling hands in his. Smiling, he whispered in her ear. At first, she couldn't make out what he said, so he repeated it. She looked at him, silently shaking her head, but she, too, was now grinning. She asked him to explain a bit more. So he did. Several times. Marcia's eyes now sparkled with delight as she imagined

what would happen when they arrived there. Maybe there had been method in his madness, after all. And there was something else, a secret of her own, something she would save as a surprise...

Chuck had dressed the timber bungalow with furniture he was positive she would like. He sure had got it wrong with her reaction to his project but was certain that the room décor would meet with her approval. They had been together long enough for him to know her tastes. Marcia entered the cabin hesitantly, not sure what she would find. She soon nodded in grudging approbation as she acknowledged he had tried to decorate it as she would have wanted. It wasn't perfect, but at least he'd made the effort. She smiled her approval at him. The only thing they didn't have was power. The generator, the oil-fueled 'genny,' was to have been delivered last week, but the company had got their dates mixed up and believed he didn't want it until the following Tuesday. No matter. There was plenty of kindling, and he would get a fire going soon. This would give the place a real, homely feel. He would also light the wood-burning stove and make them both a nice home-cooked meal. Later, they would have time to enjoy the solitude of the place and indulge in their shared interest, the reason he had finally persuaded her to accompany him.

Chuck carried her over the threshold of the bedroom door, like a new bride on her wedding night. They were already undressed, having disrobed over the dining table. She was giggling with the promise of what was to come, her whole body trembling with anticipated delights. If he had forgotten to pack it, she would never forgive him, but he wouldn't be that stupid, would he? And she still had her surprise for him. It was now dark outside, and the storm lantern he had lit cast eerie dark shapes across the walls and ceiling. It almost looked as if there were more shadows around them than there were people in the room. Dancing naked

in the dim light over to the suitcase, he rummaged inside and brought out the object triumphantly for her to see. She made to grab it, but he playfully pushed her outstretched arm away. Again she tried, and again he brushed her grasping hand out of its reach. Tauntingly, enticingly, he held it up in front of her, both laughing as each knew he would eventually relent and hand it to her. It was hers, after all, to do with as she pleased, and she certainly intended to please herself, that was for sure. What he was teasing her with was the largest vibrator either of them had ever seen. He had purchased it for her on the internet, no local adult store having anything like it. It was more than twice the size of a regular synthetic phallus. It was called '*The Pleasurizer,*' and it lived up to its name. It was so big, Marcia had trouble inserting it because, even wet and lubricated, it hurt her. She was a screamer anyway, but when she used this monster, she had to stifle her gratifying expressions of passion. The walls to their apartment were paper thin, and the neighbors would surely hear her cries of ecstasy. It would be embarrassing and shameful for both parties, to say the least, as they passed each other on the communal stairs. But out here, in this forest wilderness, there was no one to listen to her moans as she orgasmed. She could pleasure herself to her heart's content, shout and scream as loud as she wanted, and spend the whole night in rapturous euphoria. She glanced at her boyfriend in silent gratitude. Ever since his illness, Chuck had not been the same. Not the man he was. Or ever would be.

After a while, Marcia suddenly stopped and looked up. She asked him if he heard it. He must have heard it, the noise from outside. Chuck looked at her blankly. Noise? What noise? He hadn't heard anything. It must be her imagination. Forget it. Get back to what she was doing. He liked to see her in this condition. It brought back so many happy memories. Memories of times when she never required artificial stimulation, times when he was all she needed, all she wanted. But those times were over. For good.

She couldn't rest. She had definitely heard something, she was sure. Patiently, he asked her what kind of noise. It was like a rustling sound, she said, like leaves, but moving forward, getting closer to their cabin. Shielding his eyes against the glare of the lamp, he looked out the window into the darkness. Trying as hard as he could, he scanned the surrounding area. He could see nothing. All the same, he did not like to see her in this heightened state of trepidation and alarm. He offered to get dressed and go outside to convince her there was nothing and nobody close by. Fearfully, she grabbed his bare arm and begged him to stay with her. She was frightened of being left alone, and even more worried about what might befall him. Marcia didn't want either of them setting one foot outside the door, not until it got light. She was now shaking, trembling with fear. It was no use. She would not feel safe until morning. To assuage her anxiety, he tried his cell phone just in case, but they were too far away from the nearest mast. He was not getting any signal. This was definitely not what he had in mind when he built his little piece of heaven. It had turned into a hell. He could see the terror in her eyes. There was only one thing for it. The local building ordinance stated that every home constructed in the area, especially dwellings such as his, had to have a storm bunker under the property. They would be safe there. Would that help her? Yes, it would. Tearfully, she let him throw a blanket around her while, grabbing both sets of clothes, he guided her to the trapdoor that led to the underground shelter. He lit the emergency lantern, throwing some illumination across the windowless room. Eventually, she seemed to calm down and began to breathe normally again. She even managed a wry smile, as if to say sorry for being such a neurotic girlfriend. He grinned back lovingly. They would remain here until daybreak, then drive home. One thing was for sure. He would never bring her back for sexual pleasure or any other reason.

It was now time for her to reveal her present to him. Slowly, she pulled a knife from under her blanket, the one she had artfully lifted from beneath the pillow where she had placed it earlier. She had skillfully hidden it until now. It was a big weapon. He looked at her confused, wondering if she was playing some sick sex game with him. But this was no game. Before he could even think about defending himself, she lunged at him, plunging the eight-inch blade expertly through his neck. Although she was staring wildly straight at him, she did not appear to notice his look of shock, amazement, and utter horror as he automatically brought his hand to the gaping wound. She drew out the blade and, in a frenzy, stabbed him again and again, randomly, all over his exposed body, blood spurting out everywhere, splattering, gushing onto the surrounding walls, the shelves, the floor, even the roof of the bunker. It was, of course, all over her too, but she would wash it off shortly. Finally, she was rid of him, this millstone around her neck. Always spending money they didn't have on projects they couldn't afford. He was slowly bankrupting them. She had asked him, begged him, over and over, please stop already; enough was enough. But, no, he wouldn't listen to her. It was as if he was using up their savings as compensation for not being able to perform for her anymore. Like wasting all their money would compensate her for his lack of sexual ability! What was he thinking? This timber vanity was the straw that finally broke the camel's back.

Even as she had been shouting at him for buying the property, a plot was hatching in her scheming brain. This would be the ideal opportunity. The structure, so he told her, was in one of the more isolated parts of the forest. Hardly anyone would know it was there; would know he was there. Feigning reticence but still allowing him the illusion of persuading her to get him to bring them both down here had been a stroke of inspiration, and the storm shelter had been an unforeseen bonus. He might lay down here for months, maybe even

years, before his decaying body would be discovered. She would be well away by then, with a new name, living in a different state. She had executed her plan brilliantly, if she said so herself.

Marcia didn't hear the door to the cabin opening and who, or rather, what, was entering. At the height of her sexual climax, she had unconsciously tapped into something, some unseen, primeval, powerful force that had been dormant in the woods for generations, centuries, millennia. As she was experiencing the sexual thrill of her life, she was thinking of how she would persuade Chuck to get them into the cellar. It was at this moment that the concept became a reality. In the throes of her self-gratification, she had unwittingly given life to this imaginary nemesis, and now it was here. Amorphous, shapeless, in the undefined form of a man, but without human features, bereft of human passions, devoid of human emotions. The only feeling this creature had was the compulsion she had imbued it with. The instinct to kill. Marcia would soon scream her lungs out, scream as she had never screamed before. Then she would not scream again.

The End.