

THE SAMPLE

# Beyond The Pale

A Fable about Escaping the Hustle and Finding Yourself

Matthew Turner

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Matthew Turner effectively turns our collective struggles into a meaningful story to help us all navigate some of our eternal questions with a bit more perspective, humility, and hope. We need new definitions of success in our world and this book helps us ask the right questions to get there.

**Houston Kraft**, Author of 'Deep Kindness', and co-founder of CharacterStrong

What does it mean to truly succeed? Through this deep and reflective business fable, Matthew Turner asks us to explore what matters most, and how we measure our business and our lives.

**Dorie Clark**, Bestselling author of 'Entrepreneurial You', and executive education faculty, Duke University Fuqua School of Business

I'm a big fan of the 'business fable' format - it's engaging, interesting, and lets us internalize important messages through story - the medium that our brains are wired to most easily comprehend.

**Danny Iny**, Bestselling author of 'Teach Your Gift' and 'Teach and Growth Rich', and founder/CEO at Mirasee

Matthew Turner makes you reflect differently about the big picture -- purpose, passion, hustle, flow, the different perspectives of consciousness. Beyond The Pale is that business fable, the one you focus, ponder, and happily lose sleep over, then go around urging all your colleagues to read.

**Richie Norton**, Bestselling author of 'The Power of Starting Something Stupid'

Entrepreneur and author Matthew Turner authentically captures the desires, dreams, and cost of "the hustle" in Beyond The Pale.

**Tom Morkes**, Author of 'Collaborate', and founder of Insurgent Publishing

Through 'Beyond The Pale', Matthew Turner provides Important lessons into what true success and fulfillment is all about.

**Erlend Bakke**, Bestselling author of 'Never Work Again, and Serial Entrepreneur

Embraced by the muses -- Beyond The Pale is filled with empowering stories of wisdom and awareness that will inspire you to trust that there's always hope, even in the most difficult times. This book will guide you in living your greatest life, ensuring you make the most out the 'one life' you are given.

**Leonard Kim**, Author of 'Ditch The Act'

If you want to live a bigger story, read this book. That's the gift of Beyond the Pale, a business fable for modern times. The stories you choose make the world.

**Michael Margolis**, Author of 'Story 10x: Turn the Impossible Into the Inevitable',  
and founder/CEO at Storied

Spur greater and uplifting success in your work via this uplifting, engrossing fable about how Ferdinand did that in this engrossing book, Beyond The Pale, by my widely admired friend, Matthew Turner”

**Kare Anderson**, Author of 'Mutuality Matters'  
and popular TED Talk 'Opportunity Makers'

Matthew Turner is a master storyteller! Beyond The Pale gives us a compass for regaining control over our lives. I recommend this book to anyone who is ready and willing to take full responsibility for themselves and the destiny of both your business and personal life.

**Ari Meisel**, Author of 'The Art of Less Doing', and founder of Less Doing

One.

## Coi Restaurant, San Francisco

She spins her spoon on the table, lips pouting and her head slightly shaking from side to side. I hold the phone to my ear, listening but not. I hear the words and passively take them in after another day of endless meetings.

“Okay,” I say. “Sure. We can talk more about it next week.” Still, the words keep flowing, me nodding and motioning my hand in a circle. “Okay. Okay. I’ve got to go. Thanks.” I place the phone in my pocket. “Sorry about that,” I say, moving my hand to the middle of the table. “Where were we?”

“I think it’s time, Ferdinand,” she says, clearing her throat and stopping the spoon mid-spin. She avoids looking at me, her eyes dancing from the entrance to the kitchen, to other tables and above my head.

“Time for what?”

Closing her eyes, she sighs. “Us.”

“Us? What about us, Beckie?”

She looks at me finally. “Come on, you know,” she says with a half-smile. It was the first thing I noticed when I approached her in the bar. *When was it, exactly? Eighteen months ago?* She had flashed me that half-smile as I tried to buy her a drink. I knew straight away it would take a lot more than one drink to get her to let her guard down.

I shrug.

She laughs, effortlessly, as she does so often, accompanying her half-smile. “In fact, that makes sense,” she says. “I imagine no girl has ever dared break up with you.”

“You’re breaking up with me?” I ask quietly, observing our surroundings and noticing how close our fellow diners are to us. Small wooden tables barely a foot apart, a fluffy white cushion the only barrier between Beckie and the women next to her. “Where’s this coming from?” I ask, a little louder. “We were just enjoying an amazing meal and this wine,” I continue, picking up the glass. “The best wine we’ve had in a long time.”

“Yeah. It is. And that’s the problem.”

“I don’t understand.”

With a long sigh, she places her napkin on the table and leans toward me. “You canceled this dinner three times already. You’ve been out past eleven each day this week. Have you even noticed that I haven’t been staying at your place for the last two weeks?”

“What do you mean not staying at mine? Sure you have.”

“No, Ferdinand, I haven’t. Not that your place is mine. We’ve only been dating for two years, but have you asked me to move in? No. Do we ever talk about the future?”

“Of course we do. We were talking about the future just earlier.”

She laughs. Not the effortless kind this time, either. “You were talking about your business’s future. You always talk about the future of Contollo and your future as some rock star CEO, but we never talk about *our* future. And you never ask me about mine.”

“Well, I always figured your future was the same as mine. You’re part of my future, Beckie. I love you.”

Rubbing her eyes, she shakes her head. “No, you don’t, Ferdinand.” A waiter walks past our table, disturbing the tablecloth as he does. The room’s perfectly lit, not too bright but far from dark. A long, slim painting rests above Beckie’s head, an assortment of white circles and swirls on a dark black canvas. “I don’t think you even know what love is,” she continues. “I’d say you love yourself, but I’m not even sure about that anymore. I’d say you love your business and your amazing career and everything that it offers, but again, I’m not sure that is true.”

“Come on,” I say, holding up my hands. “I love you. I love my business, and I love my life. I love our life together, and I thought you did, too.”

“So this comes as a surprise to you?”

“Yes. This is completely out of the blue.”

She slumps back into her chair, her eyes tightening and glistening in the light. “That’s really sad, Ferdinand. It’s sad that you haven’t noticed any of this. You don’t notice me. You don’t see that I’m unhappy. You don’t even notice if I’m there or not . . .”

Silence falls over us as the chatter around from other tables takes over. Couples laughing and sharing stories. Work colleagues having fun, clinking glasses, and letting off steam. An older couple to the right of us, holding hands over their empty plates.

“But, what?”

“I don’t know,” she says. “I know you’re not a bad person, but these days I’m not sure what kind of person you are. You’ve always been busy. You’ve always had ambition. It’s one of the things that first attracted me to you. You were passionate. If something was important to you, you were all in. But over the last year, you have . . . I don’t know. Changed.”

“Changed? I haven’t changed. I’m the same person I’ve always been. You knew what you signed up for when you agreed to date me.”

“What I signed up for?” she asks, incredulous. “When I *agreed* to date you? Ferdinand, do you hear yourself? I’m not one of your employees. I didn’t sign up for anything, and I didn’t agree to date you. We met, and I liked you, and I liked us, and we lived life with each other. For a time, I thought I would live the rest of my life with you. But I’ve known that isn’t the case for some time now.”

“Where is this coming from?”

“Haven’t you heard anything I’ve just said?”

“Yeah, sure, but—” I take a deep breath, close my eyes, and try to clear my head. “Look, I know it’s been a crazy year. With the big round of investment and, well, you know what it’s like. We’re growing exponentially. It’s a busy time, but it will even out over the next few months.”

“Will it?”

“I promise.”

“I’m sure you believe that’s true,” she says. “But it isn’t. You’re not busy because you’re always working. It’s not like you’re in the office until midnight every day. Your life is spent in meetings, and then you just hang out with your minions most nights at some club or an event that you just *have* to attend.”

“That’s part of work, Beckie.”

“If that’s what you tell yourself.”

“It is.”

“Fine. Well, if that is true, you’ve confirmed all my suspicions.”

“What?”

“Like, you don’t care about me. At least, you don’t care about me enough to have me as a priority in your life. Be honest, do I even make the top five?”

“Of course you do.”

She raises her brow.

“You are. We’re here, aren’t we? We’ve had a nice evening, right?”

She nods. “But one evening every couple of weeks isn’t a relationship. We’ve been dating over two years. How did we spend our anniversary?”

I freeze. “I . . . We . . . It was . . .”

“We did nothing, Ferdinand. For weeks, I kept asking you about it. I spoke to Christian, to make sure he put it in your precious calendar and to remind you. Which, he did. He even booked us at

Quince and arranged a weekend away in Big Sur. But you canceled both because ‘something came up.’”

I look away and down at my empty wine glass.

“What’s worse, you didn’t even cancel. You had Christian do it. You never even spoke to me about it afterwards. It’s like it never happened. In your head, maybe it didn’t.”

“Okay. I’m sorry. And you’re right. I have been . . .” I pause. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. I’m over it. I’ve been over it for a while. I tried to make it work, and I tried to talk to you about it. I tried to give you space because I know this last year has been tough. And I hoped it would get better once you closed your precious deal, but I kinda always knew it wouldn’t change anything. And it hasn’t.”

“It will change, though. I will change. I’ve heard you, and I see where you’re coming from, and —”

She reaches out and takes my hand. “It’s over, Ferdinand. I loved you. And I leave this with some great memories. I hope you do, too. But I don’t love you anymore. Not like that. I don’t hate you, but if I don’t walk away now, I’m afraid I might.”

I remove my hand and place both of them on my knees, straightening my back and puffing out my cheeks. “So, that’s it? No second chance? No conversation?”

“Don’t.”

“Don’t, what?”

“Don’t try and make out that this is out of the blue. Just because you’ve been too oblivious to notice, doesn’t mean that it hasn’t been a long time coming. If you spend just a few minutes outside of *Ferdinand Land*, I think you’ll see that.”

“Hey, come on—”

“Don’t,” she interrupts, her tone stern.

“Fine,” I say, biting my lip and taking another deep breath. “So, where do we go from here?”

“Nothing changes for you,” she says. “I’ve already moved the few things you allowed me to have in your house, and next week I’m heading back to stay with my parents for a while.”

“You’re going back to Michigan?”

“There’s nothing keeping me here. I came to start a career, but then I met you, and everything got put on hold. I’m not even sure what I want to do anymore. But I’m certain whatever it is, it isn’t in a city like this.”

“What’s wrong with San Francisco?”

She sighs. “Everything.”

“It’s one revelation after another tonight.”

“It really isn’t, Ferdinand. But the fact you think it is says everything.” She finishes her wine and pushes out her chair, rising to her feet and brushing down her long, elegant, black dress. Her wavy, blonde hair catches the light, her blue eyes standing out as they do in a gently lit setting like this. It was that smile that pulled me, but it was those eyes that captured my attention in the first place.

“I don’t want things to be strange between us,” she says. “In time, I would like us to be friends. If you want that, too. But right now, please, just don’t call me.”

“What, so I’m not allowed to fight for you?”

“I don’t want you to. I’ve thought through this a lot, trust me. I’m hurting.” She pauses, shuts her eyes. “You’ve hurt me, Ferdinand. I’ve been hurt for a while, and I just want to get away from all this and not hurt anymore. Please, let me do that.” Her eyes glisten in the light again. “Please.”

My chest aches as my heart races, realizing this may be the final time I see those eyes; the blue tainted red, shaking from the threat of tears.

“Okay,” I say quietly.

“Thank you.” She raises her shoulders and brushes down her dress once more before forcing a smile. “Good-bye, Ferdinand.”

I watch her walk away, her long legs effortlessly taking her to the door, and, then, in an instant, out of it. A rush of fresh, cool air replaces her, flowing over the table and onto my face. I’m alone, two empty plates with matching empty glasses, discarded napkins, and splatters of sauce across the crisp, white tablecloth.

The chatter around me grows in volume, colleagues laughing, couples talking, waiters taking orders, and the barman crunching ice. It’s a wall of sound, nothing clear enough to make out. Just noise. Just other people’s noise, and me, here, stuck in silence. I reach for my wine glass but remember it’s empty. The water glass is, too. There is nothing to consume but my own thoughts.

It feels like butterflies flutter inside me, working their way around my stomach and chest, along each arm and down both legs. I close my eyes and breathe to slow down my racing heart, gather my thoughts, and collect some sense of control. I’m used to slowing it all down like this. The endless meetings and unpredictable conversations.

*I’ve been here before. Breathe. Just breathe. Open your eyes. Gather yourself. Be strong. Look in control.*

“Can I get you anything else, Mr. Foy?” The waiter asks, approaching the table.

“No. Thank you. Here,” I say, rooting into my jacket pocket and handing over my card. “I need to get going. Can you arrange a car for me?”

“Of course.” He nods and walks away, back toward the bar where the barman continues crunching ice.

“Geez,” I whisper. “Where did all that come from?”

It’s been a busy year, and at times, I imagine, I’m not the easiest person to be in a relationship with. But who is? In a position like mine? I treated her well. We’ve gone on amazing vacations. We’ve had fun. What more can she expect at a time like this when I’m building something so important?

I sigh, rubbing my eyes and picturing her face, not the one that’s just departed, but rather the version with that smile, cheek-to-cheek. The way she would stare at me and blink slowly, brushing her hair behind her ear before gently biting her lip.

“All sorted, Mr. Foy,” says the waiter. “Your car is waiting outside, whenever you’re ready.”

I nod and retrieve my card from the table, push it into my pocket, and rise to my feet. “I don’t have time for this,” I mutter, heading toward the door. “I will be just fine. In fact, it will be better this way.”

Pulling the door open, I head out and into the night air, cooler but still warm. The evening is young, and I now have the time to enjoy it.

**Two.**

### **In a Private Car, San Francisco**

The glass is cool on my forehead as I stare out of the window, the final remnant of light clinging to San Francisco's skyline. There's an entire night of darkness ahead, and now I get to enjoy it in a place where opportunity meets excitement. I always meet the most interesting people on nights like this. This is how someone like me should be spending his time, not at home watching a movie or drinking wine around a pool.

Nobody builds an empire that way.

I pull my phone out of my pocket, bring the screen to life, and take note of the numbers that greet me, letting me know of all the unread messages, texts, emails, replies, and voicemails I have. The numbers never fall, only rise. No time to face them, not now. I open my contacts—type *Christian*, click call, and hold the phone up to my ear. He'll know where I should go tonight.

"Hey, Ferdinand," he says, picking up on the fourth ring. "How's dinner?"

"Don't get me started."

"Why, what happened?"

"Nothing. It's fine. Beckie and me, though, we're past tense."

"Wait, really? Why?"

"I don't know. Totally out of the blue if you ask me, but apparently, she's not been happy for a while. She seemed more than happy enjoying all the stuff I bought her, but not now that I have to work late some of the time, and, you know, run a successful business."

"Man, sorry to hear that. You okay?"

"Yeah. I'm fine. It's not like we were going to get married. Plus, it's been two years. A good time to move on for both of us."

"I guess," he says. "But still kind of sucks. You were good together."

"You think?"

"Yeah. I liked Beckie. She was good for you."

I picture her face again, those eyes looking at me, this time red and stained, glistening in the light.

"Whatever. It's done. Time to move on."

"Okay. Well, if you say—"

"So here's the thing," I say, cutting him off. "I now have an entire night to enjoy, but I'm not sure where the best place to go is. I've just told the driver to drive around for a while. So, the man who knows more about my life than I do . . . where should I go tonight?"

"Tonight? What were you thinking?"

"I'm open to whatever, so long as it has alcohol. On a night like this, the older the whiskey, the better."

"Well, there's an event at Gallery 308. Sasha's running it."

"Perfect. Can you call ahead, and let her know that I'm coming."

"Yeah. But are you sure you want to? I can come over, if you want, and talk. I imagine you want to get a few things off your chest."

"Nope. I'm good."

"Okay. If you're sure—"

"I am."

"Well, don't drink too much. You have a stacked day tomorrow."

"Like every other day, then," I say. "Okay, so hit me. What's on the agenda for tomorrow? When do I start?"

"Your first call is at seven, and you're back-to-back until eleven," he says. "So the good news is

you don't have to leave the house until then, but you need to get to Union Street at noon, and—”

“What's that for?”

“The podcast with Jordan Harbinger. Dorie set it up.”

“Oh, yeah. What about the afternoon?” I ask.

“A few meetings at the office, and you have dinner with Ray and drinks with—”

“Okay, okay. You're sending all this over to me in a message, right?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Do me a favor and keep some time free in the evening. If I know Sasha, I'll meet some interesting people tonight so may have a last minute meeting or two to set up.”

“Okay, I'll make a few adjustments,” he says, a clicking sound of his keyboard accompanies his words.

“Hold on a second.” I lean toward the driver and move my hand into his eye line. “Can you take me to Gallery 308 at Fort Mason?” I ask, then settle back in my seat and hold the phone to my ear. “Okay, so just internal meetings tomorrow, right?”

“Yeah. Other than that interview, it's all internal. It's a busy day, though. You're back-to-back until . . .” he pauses. “Ten, maybe even eleven at night.”

“The way I like it,” I say, smiling. “Plus, nobody to distract me now.”

“Yeah.” Christian pauses again. “You know, it's okay if you do want to talk about anything. You and Beckie have been dating for over two years. It's a long time, so if you want to talk about, you know, anything . . . we can.”

“I appreciate it, Christian. But I'm fine. Seriously, it's probably a long time coming. Like I said, we were never going to get married, and come on, if we did, it would only get messy. How many people in a situation like mine end up getting divorced? I don't need anything like that, so her leaving now is a blessing.”

“Okay. If you say so. I guess I'll let you go. I'll call Sasha. You know where to find me if you need me.”

“Have a good night, Christian.”

I place the phone into my pocket and lean back, looking out at the passing buildings and lit streetlights. I close my eyes for a second and it hits me—how tired I am. These last few weeks have been hectic. In fact, these last few months have been constant. One opportunity followed by another. It feels only moments ago since we brought in the New Year.

The first time I met Beckie like yesterday.

I picture her face again, that half-smile and how it instantly had me the first time we met. A night not all dissimilar to this one. A day of meetings followed by an evening of events and drinks with potential investors. I didn't plan to go out that night, just as I didn't plan to go out now. A quick escape before another day of back-to-backs, and there she was, alone at the bar as she waited for her friends. Her red dress, long, bare legs, and slightly curled blonde hair. Those blue eyes that seemed painted on in the bright, fluorescent lighting from the bar. Just another girl, but at the same time, not. Before I even approached her, my chest fluttered. I remember feeling so tired, yet given a new sense of energy the moment I laid eyes on her. It feels like yesterday. But the two years since? I can barely comprehend how so much time has passed.

I sigh, forcing her face out of my thoughts.

“For the best,” I say under my breath.

I smile over this now spontaneous night where so much could happen. Sasha always throws the best events. I was going to miss it, but now I won't. Who knows who I'll meet. Who knows what will happen over the next few hours.

“Hey,” I say to the driver. “Do you have anything up there with caffeine in it?”

He holds up a bright blue can. “I have this,” he says. “Tastes awful but packs a punch.”

“Sounds perfect.” I take it from him and force my nail under the tab, pulling up until I feel the fizz vibrate against my finger. I take a sip, wincing as it touches my tongue. “What flavor is this?”

“I don’t think it’s a flavor. Just chemicals and sugar. It works, though. I always drink it when I drive through the night.”

I purse my lips and scrunch up my nose. “Well, here goes nothing,” I say, downing the can’s content as it burns its way down my throat and into my stomach. “That is,” I hold my hand to my mouth, “terrible. That may be the most awful thing I’ve ever tasted.”

The driver laughs. “Yep. The good news is you won’t have to sleep for the next two days.”

“That is good,” I say, more to myself than to him. “I have no time to sleep.”

I lean back and pull out my phone, although I’m not sure why. A screen of notifications greets me once more, the numbers higher than earlier, and I have neither the time nor motivation to open any of the apps and face what’s inside. Instead, I launch my camera, hold my phone out as far as I can reach, smile, and click. Inspecting the photo, I swipe left and consider each filter and hue available, settle on one, swipe again, click, and send it to an app and begin typing. It’s all automatic, fingers forming words and hashtags. Pressing send, I wait a second, and there. Just like that, I’ve published across the world to my two million followers.

This time last year, it was less than half of that. This time next year, it will be many millions more.

I swipe down and refresh the screen, already hundreds of likes and dozens of comments. I smile, although not sure why. It means nothing. I know it doesn’t, but . . .

I sigh, push my phone in my pocket and rub both my cheeks. “I just need a few drinks,” I whisper. “Just need to let go a little and have a good night.”

I look out of the window again, cars rushing past in the opposite direction, blurs of light as night has almost completely set in. I press the little button and watch as the window slips down and welcomes a rush of air into my face, cooling my eyes and forehead. Taking a deep breath of the fresh air in, I hold it in my lungs. I feel the toxic energy from the drink coarse through me, my fingers tensing and my legs growing restless. Yet my mind remains unaffected, lethargic, and tempting me to close my eyes.

*Not now. Wake up. A few drinks will make it better.*

My leg vibrates—a new message to my phone. I slip it out, glad for the distraction.

*I’ll meet you at the entrance xx*, it says, from Sasha. I smile. Soon, my night can begin.

### Three.

#### Temple Night Club, San Francisco

The bass trembles through my feet, rising up my legs and tickling my thighs, then running up my spine to my neck, my ears hearing, as well as feeling, the sound come through me. The incessant beats have me in a trance, although the five—*or is it six?*—drinks may be playing a role.

Sasha's event, as they always are, was a hit. A launch party for some new drink company, full of beautiful people—some I knew, many that I didn't. Models painted from head-to-toe, sharing drinks and posing for pictures. Other models on stilts, walking around and handing out food. I've already forgotten the name of the brand, but if Sasha has anything to do with it, it will become well known soon enough. A few of us left before the party grew stale, filing into Temple before getting ushered into the VIP area, a roped off private booth that's literally at the center of the room.

I remember a time when I used to laugh at people who sat in supposedly private areas like this, paying stupid amounts of money for the privilege. Private and out of the way of everyone else, yet in the midst of them so they can see what they're missing. Part of the same floor or the same room, nothing but a velvet rope standing between those inside and those out. I guess I laughed at people like that because I wanted to be like them. I didn't want to sit on the outside, looking in with envy, curious about what it'd be like to be in there. I wanted to be the one surrounded by the rope, a bottle to myself, and the freedom to pour as much as I want, when I want. No permission. No limitation.

"Great night, huh?" Sasha says, sitting beside me.

I nod. "You always put on a great show."

She smiles, raising her glass and clinking it into mine. Leaning closer, she practically shouts into my ear. "Where's Beckie?"

I hold in a breath, reminded of why I'm here in the first place. "We broke up."

She looks at me, surprise filling her eyes. "When did this happen?"

"Earlier tonight."

"Sorry, dude," she says, placing her hand on my shoulder. "You okay?"

"I'm fine. It's been coming."

She nods, finishing her drink and placing the glass on the table. "A good excuse to get another bottle sent to the table," she says. "In fact, how about we go all out?" Picking up the drinks menu, she points to the last item on the list. "What do you say? A bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue?"

I smile. "Sure," I say, recalling how I used to also laugh at the fact that a bottle with such a price tag existed, assuming anyone who ordered it to be insane. Sasha walks toward the rope and wraps her arm around a waitress, pointing to the menu, smiling and shaking her hips. She owns an area like this, moving from person to person, spending just enough time with everyone to remain top of their minds. Always dancing. Always moving. Always grinning, laughing, flirting.

She moves over to Joe, hugs him and takes his drink, sips from it. I don't know Joe's last name, although I've known him for three years. This is the third time I've partied with him this week, a fellow entrepreneur with his own thriving business. He faces Tori, a model who posts makeup tutorials to a million-plus subscribers, and also Seth, a former football player who's now a personal trainer to wealthy executives. We all know the same people. We all go to the same places and follow each other online. We're all friends, although sometimes it feels like it's in name only. It's one of the reasons I've spent so many of these nights alone. Beckie never enjoyed life behind the rope.

"There's just no substance to anything," she'd say. "Everyone talks about the same thing, boasting about their latest success and gloating about who they met on their trip to Bali last month. I honestly cannot remember a single conversation I've enjoyed with any of them. Can you?"

"They're fine," I had replied. "It's just part of the scene. We all do business with each other and know the same people. It's how I've met just about every one of my investors."

I picture her face again, red-eyed and sad, the moment before she left the restaurant. She will already be in bed. She no longer has to pretend to enjoy nights like this or spending time with these people, no longer has to pretend to love me. I sigh. She never understood. She's never appreciated what it takes to build something important in a city like this.

"I hear you and Beckie broke up," says Joe, snapping me back. "You okay, brother?"

"I'm fine. We just wanted different things in life. No big deal."

"I'll drink to that," he says, raising his glass. "It's hard to find a girl who gets what we do."

I nod. "How's business?"

"Good." He smiles. "We should grab lunch soon. I'm working on something big that you'll love."

"Sounds good. You have Christian's number, right?"

"I do. I'll set it up." He sits beside me, crosses his legs, and leans back. "You know who I was thinking of the other day? Wil. What happened to that crazy mother?"

"He moved east to Ohio or something."

"Ohio? Why in the world would he move there?"

"I don't know. I haven't spoken to him for a while. He's kinda dropped off the radar."

"Man, that's crazy. He was always out. That guy would have me laughing for hours, talking about the most random things." He downs his drink and plants his hand on my thigh. "Good speaking to you, Ferdinand. I'll set up that lunch. You're gonna love what we're doing."

I move to reply, but he's gone before I get a chance. Sipping from my glass, the smooth whiskey slips down my throat, soothing, as my head tingles from the amount of alcohol filling it. I feel calmer than earlier, less consumed by my own thoughts; I'm still tired but a content, relaxed kind of tired. The in-between state when inhibitions are down and thoughts become carefree but not yet where they become careless and wayward. A soothing, relaxed state of mind, although not far from the tipping point where regret lives. I sense that line nearing with each mouthful, a line Christian would practically drag me away from if he were here.

Sasha approaches, seeming to read my mind with a bottle in one hand and a dangerous smile across her face. "Look at what Sasha has brought you, Mr. Foy." She sits next to me once more, places the bottle on the table, and points at it. "This will help you forget about Beckie." She laughs. "Literally."

I let out a long breath. "I don't know, Sasha. I have a full day tomorrow. Right now, I'm buzzed and happy. A few more drinks . . . and who knows what will happen?"

"Exactly," she says. "That is where opportunity exists, and that is how life should be lived."

"I don't know—"

"Just one glass." Picking up the bottle, she opens it and begins to pour. "You've already paid for it." She laughs and hands me the glass. "You may as well drink at least one glass before I take the rest."

She holds her stare, gently nudging my shoulder until I cave. Lifting the glass, I hold it to my nose for a second, inhale and consume the aroma, and then drink, filling my throat and letting it linger on my tongue. It feels harsh at first but quickly softens.

"One drink," I say, sipping again from my glass and swilling the whiskey across my gums.

I say the words, but I know they're not true. This won't be my last drink. It should be. I should place the glass on the table, say good-bye to everyone, and head home so I can finally get a solid night's sleep. I should wake up in the morning refreshed, exercise, and write in my journal, just like I used to. I should try meditation again and read and make a healthy breakfast. I should be ready with time to spare before my first call, allowing my mind to clear, so I can own the day and be in control of everything that happens. I should, but I won't. This drink tastes too good, and, as Sasha says, I've already paid for the bottle. The damage is already done.

All that awaits me at home is an empty bed and those nagging thoughts of Beckie that will no doubt keep me awake most of the night. I finish the rest of the glass in one long swallow, sink back into the seat, and welcome the oblivion.

## END OF SAMPLE

Thank you for reading *Beyond The Pale's* sample. I hope you enjoyed how Ferdinand's journey began. If you would like to continue reading, you can purchase a copy of the book on:

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