SHADOW PLAY

Love And Blackmail

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Another Thing Went Awfully Wrong More Than A Year Ago

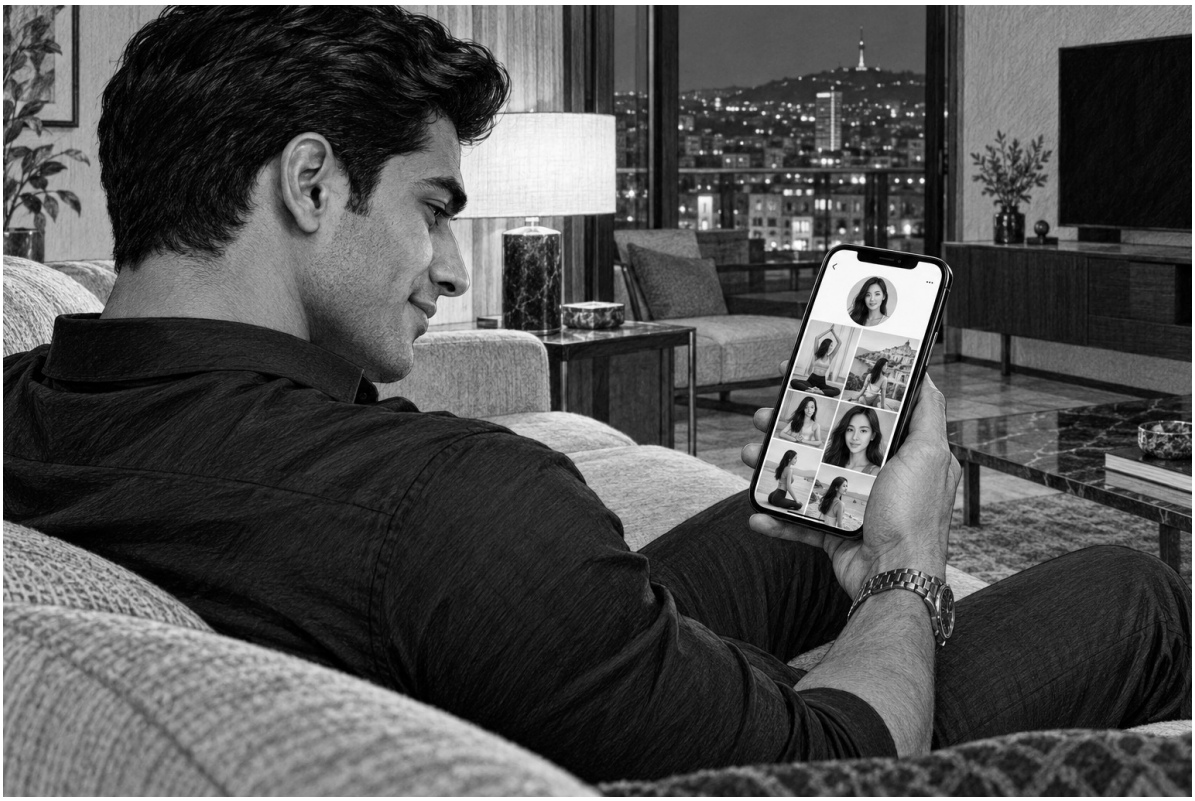
HE HAD BEEN looking at the list of his Instagram followers for long. Just scrolling to see who is following him. See if he could find someone interesting. He found someone by the name Isabella Chang, a Yoga enthusiast. On her profile were mostly Yoga images, a few party images, and a few images of her travels. She had a small following. He wasn't sure why she followed him, but she caught his attention because she was beautiful, young, and she had been liking his posts, which were largely selfies from different parts of the world.

Success in his entrepreneurial venture had brought him money. And with money, he was able to explore exquisite places in the world – Prague, Salzburg, the Swiss Alps, the Scottish Highlands, New Zealand's countryside, etc. His LinkedIn account was where he posted about his business. His Instagram was where he posted about life. He was in his mid-30s, reasonably good looking, and single!

Today he decided to return Isabella's favour by liking some of her posts. After having liked about a dozen of them, he kept his phone aside and cooked his dinner. His cook had taken a leave of absence today. He was always regular with the day's business news, which he watched post dinner, at peace. In the intervening time between his dinner and the news, he picked up his phone to see if there was a text from anyone.

Isabella had thanked him for liking her posts, 'Thank you, for liking my posts. Means a lot.'

She was a beautiful woman, Isabella. Appeared to be present in Ankara from her latest pics on Instagram, quite like him. He read the text and kept the phone down. Then he picked up the phone again and saw that the news was a good half an hour away. 'Why not,' he thought, and replied to Isabella.



‘You are welcome. You really have a great profile. What do you do?’

‘I am a part-time Yoga instructor and a full-time make-up artist for discerning women.’

‘Interesting. Which of these two do you like being more?’

‘Yoga keeps me in shape and gives me pocket change. My make-up skills pay my bills and then leave me some. How is life with you?’

‘It is good, but can be better.’

‘Isn’t that true for all of us?’

‘I am sure it is.’

‘How do you want to make it better?’

‘Meaning?’

‘Meaning does travel do the trick for you?’

‘Ah, you are referring to my posts.’

‘Yes, I am. I see you have travelled to quite a few places.’

‘God has been kind.’

‘And yet, you want God to be kinder. :-)’

‘Yes. :-).’

‘I think I will switch off now. I have a Yoga session tomorrow in my gym.’

‘Which gym do you take classes at?’

‘JW Marriott, Ankara.’

The answer got him interested.

‘That’s amazing.’

‘Yeah, it is a good gym, but what is amazing about it?’

‘I train there too. But I do not think we have met.’

‘I take my session at 6:00 am.’

‘No wonder, I usually go there in the late mornings or afternoons.’

‘You are not much of a stranger then.’

‘I think you speak for the both of us.’

‘Let me share my number with you’, saying so, she shared her number and continued, ‘please text me from yours.’

‘Was it going too fast?’ he thought to himself. ‘Or maybe God is kind,’ he thought again and smiled.

‘Sure’, he replied to Isabella. And a few seconds later, sent a hi to her from his WhatsApp.

The message got delivered, but the ticks did not turn blue. After waiting for a revert, he kept his phone aside and switched on the business news. Ten minutes into the news, his phone chimed. He grabbed his phone quickly and found her reply.

‘Hello again.’

‘I thought you had gone to bed.’

‘I did. Almost. Then I realised that my early morning class at Marriott is the day after tomorrow. Tomorrow, I have a late morning session for the ladies at another gym.’

‘Aha, so what’s the plan?’

‘Nothing specific. Will surf something and maybe go to bed.’

‘I mean for tomorrow morning.’

‘My own strength training. I am not good with deadlifts actually.’

‘Oh. Don’t beat yourself up, deadlifts are tough.’

‘It’s easy for you to say mister. I have seen your deadlifts.’

‘When?’

‘Your posts. They are picture perfect. You perform deadlifts without murdering the mirror. When I perform them, I feel even the mirror laughs back at me.’

‘Ha ha ha. Come on. I am sure you are not that bad.’

‘Enough about me. Tell me about yourself. You must be winning quite the attention at the gym.’

He liked the flattery coming his way. But truth be told, he was a looker. He knew that. So, he did not mind the attention that he was receiving from Isabella, who was herself drop dead gorgeous.

‘I just try to focus on my workout. Hey, but you are kind of hard to ignore. I am sure you get your fair share too.’

‘I get that a lot, more than what you would call a fair share. LoL. So... how come you have never joined my session?’

‘Well, first I did not know that YOU took the sessions. And second, I didn’t want to embarrass myself. Flexibility is not my strong suit.’

‘Hmm. Your legs, your chest, your arms, and your confidence are, though. And I think I can work with that. Want a 1 on 1 session? My way of saying welcome to the calm side 😇.’

‘Now?’

‘Now.’

Tempting offer. What’s the catch?’

‘No catch. I just feel that people open up more outside the gym. Would you mind if we did the call a little relaxed?’

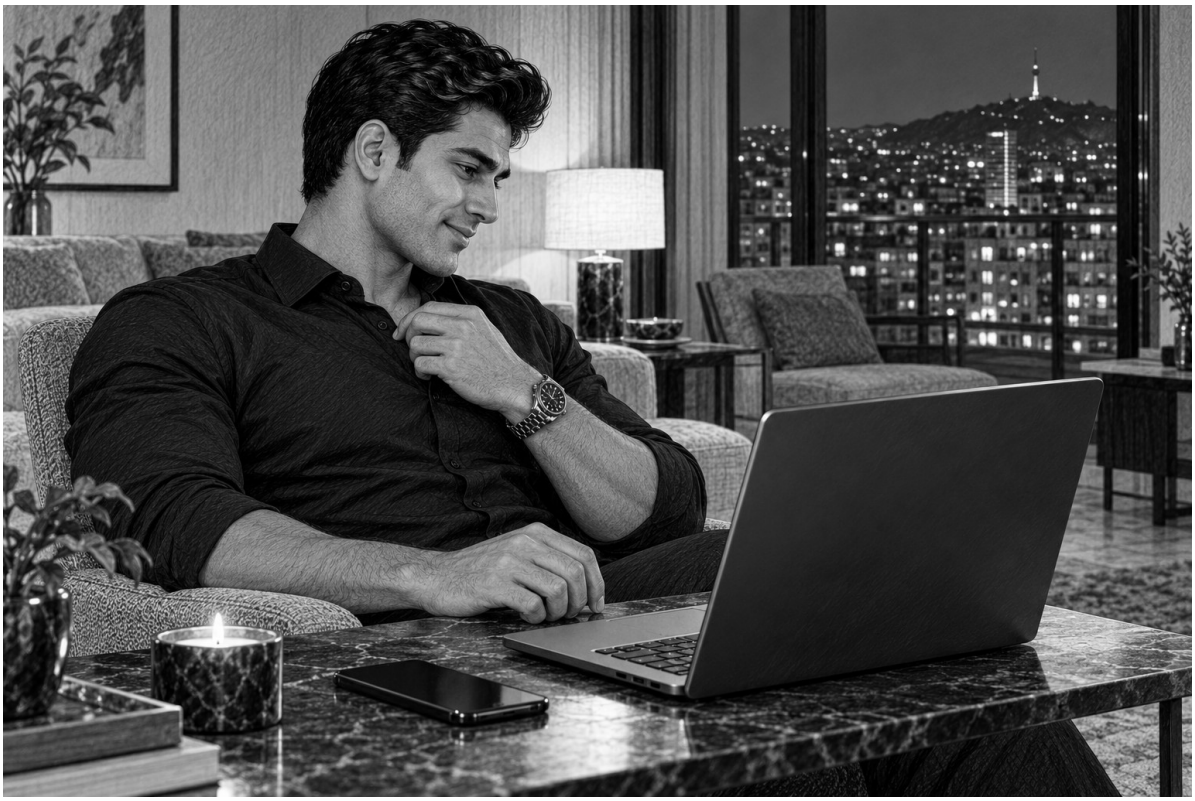
‘Define relaxed.’

‘No tight shirts. No tension. Just you being you. It becomes easier to shed your inhibitions that way. I’ll go first if that makes it easier.’

When he had woken up in the morning, he had never imagined any of this. He was single, did not mind some fun on the side, especially when the opportunity presented itself. He thought to give it a go.

‘This sounds dangerously peaceful. Give me ten mins?’

‘Perfect. Light a candle if you have one. And maybe… lose the shirt. Energy flows better that way 😊. Sending the link in a bit. Be honest, be open.’



‘You’re full of surprises, Isabella. Can’t wait to see what you’re about.’

After the session, he was left dumbstruck.

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