

# THE TROUBLE WITH MEN: 101 WAYS TO CUT A D\*CK

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## CHAPTER 1

*I take a long, deep, really deep, like the earth's core deep, or blue, black sea deep (take your pick), shaky breath.*

*My eyes squint ominously; unconsciously, my lips purse firmly in a thin line. I focus my whole mind, one hundred percent of my working brain, on the important job ahead.*

*Scrutinizing the flesh carefully, I study its every crook, fold, and bend. Mentally, I draw a partition line to the part where the blade should strike first. Then, after that, on where I would follow it up with more sharp, quick cuts to accomplish my goal: sever it from its base.*

*Slowly, I pick up the butcher's knife, gripping its handle tight to prevent it from slipping off my clammy, trembling hands.*

*It's now or never, I tell myself.*

*Do or die.*

*Don't dare turn tail now, Denise. You've waited patiently for this moment.*

*I nod inwardly, agreeing with my alter ego.*

*Raising my right hand clenching the knife, I aim at the imaginary demarcation line I have etched in my mind.*

*And. . . whoop! I put the blade down in one fell swoop.*

*Blood spurts out from the gaping wound instantly.*

*Blood propels itself to my cheeks and lips. Instinctively, my tongue licks some of it.*

*My, it tastes delicious. Sweet. Like ketchup. Can't help but lick it more.*

All of a sudden, a familiar face looms in front of me.

A familiar, pretty, fuming face, her pink mouth growling at me, her pert nose wrinkled in irritation, and her black eyes fiery like those of a dragon about to spit fire.

“Denise! Snap out of it!”

Back to reality.

Which means I'm still inside our quaint little coffee shop, Den of Joys, with my business partner and best friend Joyce, whose furious, tattooed brows are now curled much like fusilli pasta, looking almost like her hair. She dabs, hurriedly, at my cheeks with a wet wipe, clucking her tongue like a mother hen.

“What is the matter with you? I told you not to open ketchup sachets like that. Look at you, you have ketchup all over your face and you're licking it like a toddler!”

“Was I?” I grimace, snatching the wet wipe out of her hand to do the wiping myself.

“You were daydreaming again, weren't you? Which you have been doing this past week. Of cutting your cheater boyfriend's dick.”

I flinch, guilt written all over my face.

Joyce clucks her tongue once more with feelings. “Tsk! You're hopeless, Denise. You have far more important things to do for our coffee shop than daydream about gory, sordid butchering of dicks.”

“Hey,” I protest, “FYI, I'm on cutting tool number one hundred. Who would've thought there'd be too many tools designed to cut, right?” Adding, I declare rather boastfully, “And, guess what? I'd done it this time. The blade cut through. If only you didn't interrupt.”

Shaking her head, she sits down opposite me in our tiny kitchen-slash-office adjacent to the coffee shop's main dining area. Joyce has been my best friend since kindergarten. In college, we decided to study International Hospitality Management. But while I majored in Culinary Arts, she took Hotel Administration. It didn't matter, though. Our friendship lived through endless homeworks, exams, recitations, food tastings, hotel hopping, cramming, and finally, getting our well-deserved diploma. After working at odd jobs for four years, we decided to put up our own business, mostly with the help of an interest-free loan from her wealthy parents.

I'm so lucky I have Joyce as my best friend. While many still search for that one kindred person to whom they can be comfortable with and share their souls, I already found mine. Never mind that there are times her words cut like glass.

Like now.

"You're impossible. Why can't you just ask him pointedly if he's cheating on you or not? Or better yet, break it off with that jerk?"

"I told you I don't want to come on to him as accusing. I don't have concrete proof yet. Besides, I want to give him a chance. He deserves it."

"Like hell. You've had proof, and you've given him a million chances ever since you hooked up with him three weeks ago."

"What? No, this is only the second time."

"Really." Her artistic brows go through the roof (of her forehead, that is.) "Well, what about the time he sneaked out on you while you were busy shopping, and he showed up with a kiss mark on his collar a few hours later after you've waited for him in the car? Or when you caught him flirting with the cashier at the gasoline station when all along, you thought he was buying you a soda? Or that time when..."

I sigh. "Okay, fifth time. And for the record, it was lipstick, not kiss mark."

“It’s the same old banana, idiot. Barely ten days into your relationship and he’d already cheated on you, but till now, you prefer to be a blind fool!”

I told y’all her words cut like glass.

But underneath all that spite, Joyce really, truly cared about my welfare. She had proven it countless times in all our years of friendship. And hurtful though her words may be, they always have a ring of truth to them. Especially when it concerns my boyfriend, Neil.

Neil. The handsome devil. The guy who, with a mere glance of his honey brown eyes, can make a girl lose her sanity (or her panties). He is such a suave charmer, with always a seductive smile on his tantalizing, red lips. “If looks could kill” has a whole new meaning when it comes to Neil because his looks are not just good; they’re great. Like Hollywood-actor-material-great. Really. He looks like Brad Pitt, only his hair is jet black, not blonde. Oh, and he isn’t rich like Angelina’s ex...yet. Slowly working his way up the corporate ladder, he told me.

Never mind that he always insisted on paying Dutch on our every date (which I could count on my five fingers). I mean, how lucky can I be? There I was, an average-looking girl, with crazy, wavy hair, thick lips and big eyes with a body to die for (because it looks like a skeleton), and there he was, the most gorgeous guy in town, paying attention to me in a bar and asking me to be his girlfriend. Never mind that he was a bit tipsy at the time (okay, more than tipsy), that he dropped his head to the table, snoring after I excitedly answered in the affirmative. Or that the following morning, he’d replied, “Who you?” to my text message greeting him, “Good morning, gorgeous boyfriend.” Hey, in all fairness, he was sorry afterwards, telling me he’d been just a bit overwhelmed when I reminded him what happened the night before.

Joyce had always argued that maybe he really isn’t into me, and sometimes the thought crossed my mind, believe me. But in the first few days of our relationship, Neil was the perfect boyfriend. He’d fetch me from my apartment, take me to the coffee shop, wait for me when I close up the store, and take me home again. It didn’t matter that he drank more cups of (free) coffee and ate more (free) meals in one day than our best customer.

The first week was heaven for me because we took strolls in the park, we watched movies, we dined out before going home. At the end of the first week, though, things went a bit downhill. It

was when little bits and pieces of lipstick marks, wanderings and flirtations began to emerge. I wonder if that has anything to do with me preventing him from entering my apartment again after he tried to stick his tongue down my throat and his hands were starting to grope under my skirt and blouse.

*Nah. Don't think so.*

Back to Joyce.

“I told you, J-Oh,” calling her endearingly by her pet name, I quip, “when I see with my own eyes that he’s kissing another woman, that would be considered as concrete proof. Which reminds me,” I fix my eyes on her, “Are you ready to go?”

“You mean, am I ready to go with you on a stalking spree of your stupid boyfriend?”

I frown. “Don’t be mean. It’s not really stalking. We’ll just follow him to where he’s going, see what he’s up to.”

“Denise. That’s stalking. Frankly, I’m surprised you’ve thought of doing this only now. You should have done this two weeks ago when he suddenly went AWOL on you. And why would he not answer your calls or reply to your texts?”

I sigh. “He said he was busy at work.” (Well, not exactly. He texted, “busy. job.”)

“He’s a copy machine operator in their office, Denise.” Her tone drips with sarcasm.

“Well, at least he’s not jobless!” I plead with her, “J-Oh, please stop tormenting me and let’s go already. He’ll be coming out of the office in fifteen minutes.”

Joyce crosses her arms over her chest. “On one condition.”

“Okay, I’ll make the menu for next month, if that’s what you want.”

“I already did that, idiot, because you didn’t do it last week, with you being so stressed out over your boyfriend’s no-show. No, I have another condition.”

I look at her with trepidation. “What?”

“That you will break off with that jerk when we catch him with another girl.”

I don’t answer right away. Joyce takes it hard.

Pandemonium named Joyce breaks loose. She screeches with her hands up on the air. “I don’t believe this! What’s the point of stalking him and catching him with his pants down if you won’t break it off with him? What are you? A cheater-sucker?”

Scratch that. Joyce takes it *wrongly*.

Patiently, I correct her wrong impression on my not-so-quick reaction to the condition she presented. “Of course I’ll break off with him. It’s just that I was hoping he’s really just busy, and that when he discovers I was feeling neglected, he’d realize it, come around and beg me to start all over again. We’ve had such a great beginning, J-Oh.”

“That wasn’t a great beginning. He was just trying to get into your pants. Or skirt.”

“Oh, J-Oh!” I bury my face in my hands, “you’re so cruel!”

Immediately, my gullible best friend changes her vicious stance and envelops me in a warm, big hug. “Den, you know I love you, and I don’t want to see you hurt. I’m sorry if you have to hear it from me like that, but you have to wake up to the reality that your boyfriend is one big, f\*\*\*\*\*g a\*\*hole!”

Uh-oh. I’ve been hearing those asterisks from her for the most part of three weeks, and it’s really getting on my nerves already. That’s partly the reason why I decided to give in to my urges and stalk Neil, and he gave me the perfect opportunity.

In a curt text, he told me (after my twentieth unanswered message asking where he will be this weekend) that he’d be out of town for a marketing conference happening in a hotel in Tagaytay.

Tagaytay is a holiday town south of Manila, sitting on a ridge overlooking the Taal Volcano. My plan is to tail him from his office this Friday afternoon (because he'd be riding with his boss to their destination), stay in the same hotel for the duration of the weekend, and surprise him just before he goes back to Manila.

I admit that by this time last week, I was already full of dark thoughts about him. (Read: doubt and anger.) Deny as I can, those small indiscretions kept nagging at me every day, slowly eroding my trust in him, added by his lack of presence and communication.

It was at this time too that I read an article about some women cutting off their cheating husband's or boyfriend's dick. Some may see it as gruesome, but me, I found it funny. I was laughing so hard as I read the stories of how they went about it.

The dick-cutting tales kinda stuck on me, dominating my every thought. It became a source of amusement, an inside joke (to me, at least.) It made the countdown to the days before *Operation: NeilStalk* less stressful for me.

But if you ask me, me cutting off Neil's dick is way too unrealistic and hilariously comedic.

First, I haven't seen his dick yet. I wouldn't know where to look since I have yet to see a big enough bulge in his pants, although there were certainly times he offered to show it to me, plus how it can 'perform' – his words, not mine, his brows going up and down like a bouncing ball as he said them.

Second, I despise mutilation. Heck, I can't even properly clean a fish I bought from the wet market! And third, I think it's a waste of time and energy to do so. Why not just end the relationship if the other is unfaithful?

I know, I know, that third point kinda bounces back at me because I keep on denying the real status of my relationship with Neil.

Oops, stop right there. Please don't call me an idiot. Joyce is the only one who's allowed to call me that.

I may not look like much but I'm a smart girl, you know. I graduated Cum Laude and I have multiple medals and awards to back me up.

It's just that (\*sigh\*) Neil was my very first boyfriend. As in ever. Since I was born twenty-five years ago. He's quite a good catch too, with his looks and easy going personality. He was my first kiss (wet and sloppy and unromantic it may have been, still...) I wanted very much for our relationship to work.

You see, my parents broke up when I was ten years old. Before my mom died, she told me she regretted every single day of their separation. She wished she had tried harder for their marriage to work. I was seventeen then, and I realized that all through those years, my mom lived in regret. She died with a broken heart, a broken home, and a broken dream.

I don't want to be like my mom. I don't want to live in regret, wondering what could have been if I've done this or that. So, childishly, I promised myself that my first boyfriend would be my last. He'll be the man I marry and spend the rest of my life with, and I will do anything in my power to make our relationship work.

But hey, this smart girl also knows that if all else fails, of course, I wouldn't hesitate to turn my back on Neil and leave. Good riddance. It's his loss, not mine. I'll not cry over spilled (and spoilt, rotten, contaminated, putrid) milk.

Joyce does not know that. I intentionally did not let her know because, well, I don't have a car, and I need her to drive me to Tagaytay.

Which brings me back to Joyce. Again.

My dramatics always work on her. I lift my face and flash my sweetest smile. "Okay. Shall we go? Where are your keys?"

Her mouth purses in a funny way, and her eyes avoid mine. Which makes me cringe because Joyce looking this way is not good. Not good at all.

"Why? What's the matter?" I demand. "Did you lose your keys again?"

“Uhm...sort of.”

“What do you mean, sort of?” I practically shriek.

She waves her hand, dismissing my concern away. “No, I didn’t lose my keys. Pop borrowed my car because his car broke down, that’s all.”

“That’s all? *That’s all?* How will we get to Tagaytay now? *By bus?*” Okay, I’m *officially* shrieking.

“No, silly. I asked my cousin, Gabriel, to drive you there in his car.”

“Gabriel, your cousin, again? Your monster geek of a cousin who has tormented me since fifth grade?”

“Hey, if it weren’t for his free services, our coffee shop would not be running smoothly. Besides, he’s always been our unofficial bodyguard, like, since forever.”

I snort, then my eyes widen. “Wait. *Wait a minute.* What do you mean, drive me there? You’re coming with me, aren’t you? You promised!”

“Sweetie, Gabriel will take you to the hotel and make sure you’re safely booked in a room. Then he’ll come back here and I’ll follow with Kurt tomorrow. I can’t leave my own boyfriend behind while I stalk my bestfriend’s boyfriend, can I?”

When Joyce calls me sweetie, I sweat in my underarms. Because I know there’s no way she’ll let me talk her out of this.

“But...but...”

“No buts. Gabriel is already outside, he’d texted me ten minutes ago. Don’t worry, I specifically told him not to ask you any questions. You don’t want to miss Neil, do you?”

She pushes me to the door and I am helplessly deposited into Gabriel's car's passenger front seat.