

Chapter 1: Danger Calling

The other jocks warned me. The program director warned me. Even the receptionist warned me.

They all told me never to agree to meet anyone who called the request line during my show. No matter how nice the voice, no matter what was said on the other end of the line.

But, you see, there was this one especially nice girl who liked to call. She had a soft voice and sounded so vulnerable. She called for several weeks and seemed to be a sensible young woman who just wanted to be friends with her favorite disk jockey, yours truly. She said she was very pretty and I believed her.

I discussed this situation with my fellow jock, Buddy. He told me I was insane to even think about meeting this girl; but if I absolutely had to, I should use The Plan.

Honest Ken

"Tell her to be standing at a certain intersection at a certain time," said the voice of experience. "Tell her you'll be driving a blue Chevrolet."

"But I have a red VW," I said.

"Exactly! You drive by," he said, "and if she looks OK, pick her up and tell her you're driving your brother's car. If she's a bow-wow, keep on driving."

But this girl was different, and I didn't want to be deceitful with her.

I told her to meet me at the White Hut, a local burger joint. I arrived a few minutes before our scheduled rendezvous and grabbed a table, dreaming of meeting my Farah Fawcett look-alike.

As I waited, a person walked into the restaurant - judging from its silhouette, probably a football player. Then the figure approached. Klaxons began going off in my brain. It was my phone pal.

This young girl, whom I'll call "Susie," was, to be kind, overweight. By this I mean she had a hard time squeezing into the booth across the table from me. At 5'3" she probably went 180 pounds, with a cratered complexion and a personal hygiene problem evident at 10 paces.

She introduced herself to me in that sweet, seductive voice and extended a sweaty hand, which I had no choice but to shake. There was a real disconnect between what I was hearing and what I was seeing. I heard a Playboy Playmate. I saw Refrigerator Perry.

All sorts of thoughts flashed through my mind. Like pretending I had to get something from my car and then peeling out. But I sat there, too stunned to move.

"Hey, Ken," she said, "it's great to meet you in person after hearing you on the radio for so long."

Maybe if I told her I had to go to the bathroom, I could walk back there and cheese it through the rear door.

"I told you on the phone there was something you could help me with," she said.

The restaurant door was only 15 feet away.

"I'm leaving my boyfriend, so I'm hoping you can drive me over there to pick up my stuff," she said.

I could feign a heart attack and the ambulance driver would whisk me away, forever.

Instead ...

However, I remained glued to my seat, we drank milkshakes and walked to my car. From there I proceeded to follow her directions to the most dangerous part of town so that she could remove her belongings from her boyfriend's house.

I was, temporarily, insane.

In this central-city neighborhood, the locals shot paperboys for fun. Garbage blew freely through the streets. The library had bars in the windows.

Susie's boyfriend Vince lived at the end of a dead-end street. A sign on the chain-link fence warned of a dangerous dog, and indeed loud barking was coming from within.

"That's just Angel," Susie said. "He won't bite you if you stay in the car."

Our game plan was for Susie to run in, pack a small suitcase and get out quickly while I waited in the getaway car. Vince was not supposed to be home, but apparently no one told him this, because the moment Susie entered the house, a heated disagreement issued forth. People two blocks away stuck their heads out for the free entertainment.

I can only assume that Vince took exception to Susie's desire to move out and expressed those thoughts in a forthright manner, punctuating his remarks with frying pans hitting cheap plaster walls.

My heart was thudding and a number of possible scenarios occurred to me, all bad.

Before Vince walked out to introduce himself, I had the first good idea of the day.

I shoved the gearshift into reverse, backed my VW out of the driveway and left Susie and her former paramour to work out their problems in the spirit of mutual cooperation and harmony. Hopefully no one got shot.

In 1976 the request line at our station was attached to a Code-a-Phone so that the air personality could either pick up or let the machine get it. I did the latter for the rest of my so-called career.

I still wonder what became of Susie. With her qualifications, she is either working a phone sex hotline or playing fullback for the Rams.