

An Almost Love Story

When Olivia Martin moved into the PC unit, she could have passed for a woman: five feet nine, slender, with smooth brown skin and braided black hair, her walk feminine. I received advanced knowledge about Olivia from CO Romer. Romer said she had hormone shots before her incarceration, which accounted for her womanly chest. Somehow she was also able to maintain red lips, though cosmetics were not available in the men's prisons. That was one of her little secrets.

But Olivia couldn't keep her bigger secrets. She had been to two other state prisons, and had worn out her welcome at both. In the first prison, she threatened an inmate who refused to have sex with her. In the second, she accused another inmate of trying to rape her. Caseworkers called her "a management problem." By the time she got to Northeast State, Olivia had an enemy list of five spurned lovers. I figured she would be the object of desire, envy and hate among other inmates here, in neverland.

"Inmate Martin," I said, when we met for the first time, "I have two words for you: no drama." But I was not surprised, when only a few days later, I could hear Olivia's mezzo-soprano voice across the tier, yelling propositions and obscenities.

For months, I assigned Olivia to a single cell. She could go out with others for yard and tier time, and out to the law library. But I wasn't going to allow her to cell-up with anyone, not with her history. Prison sex, even consensual sex between inmates, was a crime. Co Romer said that the sex offender prison where she once stayed tacitly accepted consensual sex, despite the laws. Even prison rape had not been taken seriously; prison rapists were jokingly referred as "booty bandits."

Robert O'Neil, "Bad Bobby," became Olivia's newest suitor. Tall and muscular, he became a gang dropout, an informant against other gang members and was forced to PC up. Once relieved of the victim role, he returned to his predator position and joined a little clique of White supremacists in the PC unit. Officers believed O'Neil extorted and assaulted other inmates, but they could never catch him. Olivia and Bobby even wrote grievances, which said I was discriminating against them, because other inmates were having sex. But I didn't budge. A few days later, a unit officer showed me something, a letter he had found, torn up in the garbage. It was from Bad Bobby to Olivia, professing his love to her. A few days after that, a sergeant showed me a love letter from Olivia to Bobby.

It wasn't too long before Olivia began writing kites to me, to get a cellmate. First, she said she wanted to live with Bobby. I told Olivia that I could not allow sex in the unit, that it was against the law, and that both could be prosecuted. She smiled and said "I know Bobby from the street. He's not gay." Bad Bobby said he wanted to live with Olivia too. He confirmed he knew Olivia from the street, and assured me he wasn't gay. But I knew the deal about prison: men identifying themselves as straight engaged in sex

with other men, "on the down-low." If you were "pitching," on top during sex, or getting oral sex, you were still straight

Two weeks later I received a kite from Olivia, stating she no longer wanted the bed move. And two days later I received a kite saying that she wanted the move. Two days after that, I received a kite from Olivia stating "EMERGENCY: DO NOT MOVE ME IN WITH BOBBY." An officer in the unit said O'Neil had assaulted one of Olivia's "friends," Roger, on the stadium size exercise yard. But he hadn't gotten caught. It wasn't long before Olivia snitched off Bad Bobby, not only saying that Bobby had assaulted Roger, but that he was also involved in getting drugs into the unit. Olivia Martin added Robert "Bad Bobby" O'Neil to her enemy list. She wanted to leave the unit, for her own protection, but not until she received her new TV set.

Olivia eventually ended up in the mental health unit, after attempting to hang herself with a bedsheet. I noticed her TV.

"Hey, how'd you get that?" I asked.

She smiled and said "Oh, Roger bought it for me." This was the same Roger who had been assaulted in one of Olivia's triangles.

I replied "Wow, that's bad karma. Maybe you'll wake up when something bad happens to you."

Olivia went to the back of her cell, threw her television toward me, and screamed "YOU MUTHAFUCKIN' ASSHOLE, YOU MUTHAFUCKA" as I left. I could hear the sound of broken glass as I turned the corner to write the disciplinary report.

I saw Olivia a few months later in lockup. She had gotten fat, had shaved her head. She was creating a disturbance, slamming her large heavy plastic property tub against the floor. I saw Bad Bobby too, in lockup; we discussed his bad relationships. Another inmate who asked to live with Bobby accused him of rape.