

Nobody's Business

There are a few, universal truths that many of us come to realize as we move through life. The sky is blue, except when it's not. People love each other, except when they don't. Friends help each other, except when they won't. For every law, there is a loophole. For every absolute, an exception. Love and hate. Bitter and sweet. Fire and ice. Faith and doubt. Devotion and abandonment. "I'll always be there for you" and "I've got some other stuff to do".

Slowly, the armadillo paced back and forth along the well-worn path in the carpet. He chewed on the stubs of his claw tips and repeatedly glanced at the clock. He played and replayed the impending conversation in his mind, trying to make certain he had accounted for every possibility. Every gambit. Every maneuver. Every ploy. He knew his opponent well.

He should...after dating him for 6 years.

He'd be home soon. Then it would start. The talk he didn't want to have. The endless round-and-round of who did what to which where whatever. Already, he felt the muscles of his stomach aching to try and curl up into a little ball; to hide from what he feared. But what was it? Being alone....or being with him? Yes, he had a temper, but he was also very loving. Intense. That's what he was. The plates on his back had the scrapes and scratches to prove that. But he'd never really hurt him...just scared him.

A lot. Sometimes.

Soon. Very soon, he'd hear the car pull into the driveway. He'd hear the car door close. That would be his best indicator. Whether the door slammed...or simply shut. If it slammed, could he hold his course and go through with this?

He reached over to the chess board and picked up the silver queen, moving it diagonally and holding it above the onyx bishop. His lower lip trembled and he set the shining lady back where she had been.

He paced back to the bed, scooped up the remote, and clicked the TV on. In the glowing window of that horrid oracle, he saw the face that would soon be contorted in rage or despair; heard the voice that would soon be snarling or sobbing. In the commercial, the words uttered with all the tender honesty of a used car salesman.

Nobody listens

Nobody understands

Nobody cares

Nobody wants to help you

I'm Tabas Nobody

And we run our company the way it should be run. Like Nobody's Business.

He clicked off the TV just in time to hear the car door outside slam shut hard enough to make the shocks creak.

He wiped his eyes, stood up straight, and cocked the revolver...