

Getting Even

By

Patrice Hamilton

Based on the short story

"Hurricane Woman"

By Patrice Hamilton

EXT. IMAGES OF A HURRICANE HITTING A TOWN

CAMI is dreaming of a hurricane. The footage consists of the classic images of strong winds, bending trees, flooding, roofs caving in, people carried away by a river. The opening credits roll over the footage.

CAMI (V.0)

I was raised in a family with a tradition of naming baby girls after hurricanes. We believe in that the very act of naming something embodies it with a certain essence, a particular power. My mother was named after Hurricane Betsy of '56. It was a category 3, winds reaching 160 miles, 75 lives lost. I was named after Camille, a Category 5 with winds reaching 200 miles per hour, 250 lives lost if you include the flooding. We all know that there are no guarantees in this world, no balance between what's wrong and what's right. Justice might be blind, but the scales are corrupt. The powerful, the strong, the rich, and the bold win almost every time. Way back my family decided that women could use something extra in this world to get by. Not protection, but strength. They needed hurricane names.

Hurricane footage is mixed with pictures of Cami's family

CAMI (V.0)

My grandmother, LD, was the first hurricane woman. They only started naming hurricanes in the 50s, so LD was named after the Labor Day Hurricane of '35. My grandfather, Frank, used to beat her when he wasn't too tired at the end of the day. She had five sons and one daughter. One day she told Frank that there was a couple of coyotes down by the north end of the property. She rode out there with him and shot at the ground near his horse's legs. The horse threw him and stepped on him. I guess he was

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAMI (V.0) (cont'd)
about as bad to his horses as he
was to his wife and kids. She had
her sons dig a hole in the ground
and they rolled him into it. I
never heard if he was dead when
they put him in there, but my mom
always said that nobody cared
enough to check.

2 INT. CAMI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - MIDNIGHT

Cami is tossing in her bed as the last words of her monologue mix with the sounds of hurricane winds. In the distance, we hear a PHONE RING.

3 INT. BRYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BRYAN hears the phone and stumbles out of bed, making his way towards the kitchen.

4 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bryan gropes his way through the dark kitchen and answers the wireless phone.

BRYAN

Hello?

(pause as he listens)

What?

(pause)

Oh. April? Is that you?

(pause)

Yeah. I'll get her.

Bryan walks out of the kitchen and down the hall towards Cami's room.

5 INT. CAMI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryan steps gingerly over various articles of clothing, sneakers, magazines, and an EMT uniform.

As he approaches the bed, he gives Cami's sleeping body a gentle nudge.

BRYAN

Cami! Wake up. April's on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

Go away.

BRYAN

(putting the phone against his chest)

Wake the fuck up! She doesn't sound good.

Cami turns over and sees Bryan standing by her bed.

CAMI

Okay, okay.

Cami takes the phone from him.

CAMI

April? What's going on?

Cami listens for a few moments and then gets out of bed. While April is talking Cami grabs clothes from the floor and begins to dress.

CAMI

(muttering)

That asshole.

Cami draws a slicing motion across her wrists to indicate to Bryan that April has tried to commit suicide.

CAMI

It's gonna be okay. April, pay attention to me. Everything will be alright. I'm gonna come over there right now. Bryan's gonna talk to you for a little while. You know Bryan...my roommate.... So you just talk to him until I get there, okay honey?

Cami hands the phone to Bryan and picks up her cell phone from the night table.

CAMI

I'll call 911. You keep her talking. God fucking dammit.

BRYAN

Okay, so who's the asshole and what did he do?

6 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cami grabs her keys, her purse, and her emergency medical kit as she dials 911, then leaves the duplex apartment.

CAMI

Bob? It's Cami. Get someone out to 760 East Street. Attempted suicide.

(pause)

She's my cousin. I'll probably get there before you guys--it's right down the street.

7 EXT. APRIL'S CONDO - NIGHT

Cami takes out her keyring and opens the door.

8 INT. APRIL'S CONDO - NIGHT

Cami walks into the foyer of the condo. We can hear a women's voice talking faintly in another room.

CAMI

April!

Carrying her medical kit, Cami enters the living room and sees April sitting on a light yellow sofa. She is holding a phone, barely keeping her eyes open. Around her, the sofa is stained a bright red. It is a gruesome sight. Next to her cousin on the side table is a bottle of vodka and a glass with blood on it. On the sofa next to April is a bloody knife.

CAMI

(groaning)

Oh my God, April. How could you do this?

We hear the sound of an ambulance coming down the street. April closes her eyes and lets the phone drop from her hand. We see her bloody arm which seems to have two separate gashes, one near the wrist and one further up towards the elbow.

APRIL

Flirted with her right in from of me. Asking her who her favorite writer was. Like I didn't even matter.

(CONTINUED)

Cami rushes over to her as we hear the paramedics come towards the condo. Cami kneels before her cousin, opens the medical kit and starts unwrapping gauze. She murmurs soothing sounds to April while trying not to cry. When the paramedics arrive she steps aside and hurriedly picks up the phone that April has let fall.

CAMI

Bryan? Thanks. Call my mother,
will ya? Tell her to meet us at
St. Fran.

CUT TO:

9

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT - 3:00 AM

Cami and her mother BETSY enter the hallway outside of April's room and walk towards the waiting room. We can see April's father PAUL sitting next to April's bed, stroking her bandaged hand. April appears to be resting.

BETSY

(in a low voice)

This is because of that married
guy, right?

CAMI

Yep. The jerk.

BETSY

She shoulda known better. If he
cheats on his wife, he'll cheat on
his girlfriend. It doesn't take a
rocket scientist to figure that
out.

CAMI

You got that right.

BETSY

If being stupid were a virtue April
would be a saint.

The two women find a place to sit and slump into the chairs.

BETSY

I shoulda raised her better than
this.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI
You tried, Ma. She's got her
mother's nature. Sweet.

BETSY
(regretfully)
Yeah.

They sit in silence for a while, looking blankly at the television that is on a 24 hour news station. The sound is muted and the women do not have enough energy to read the scrawl of information below the newscaster.

BETSY
I begged both of them to give the
girl a real name.

CAMI
Might as well call her Lily.

BETSY
Or Violet.

CAMI
Doomed from the start.

The women sit quietly for a while, emotionally exhausted.

BETSY
He's probably home right now,
screwing his wife.

CAMI
NOT screwing her is more like
it. Probably saving it for the
new substitute April was talking
about.

The woman glance down the hall where April's room
is. Betsy's face hardens.

BETSY
Didn't even break up with her
first?

CAMI
Nope.

BETSY
I feel for his wife. I even feel
for that substitute. He'll be
breaking her heart next.

CAMI

Probably.

BETSY

A man like that should be brought down to size don't you think? Needs a little lesson about being more careful with people's feelings.

Cami looks at her mother but says nothing.

FADE TO BLACK

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EXT. APRIL'S BACK DECK - DAY - 10 AM - THREE DAYS LATER

April and Cami are sitting on her deck drinking ice tea. April's arms are still bandaged. She seems restless.

APRIL

But she'll be at my desk. **Sitting** at my desk! They started her today!

CAMI

I thought she was a substitute **teacher**.

APRIL

She is! She is! But Georgia said they were desperate. I guess she used to do some secretarial...

CAMI

When do you have to go back?

APRIL

(glancing at her bandages)
They want me back by June.
(smiling grimly)
I'd better wear long sleeves though. Can't have the prep parents getting nervous.

April gets up and begins to pace around the deck. Cami watches her wave her bandaged hands.

CAMI

Do they know about Garret?

(CONTINUED)

APRIL

(pacing)

The thing is, I have a lot of personal stuff in my desk. He used to give me these little notes. They're in my middle drawer. In the back.

April starts to pull at her long brown hair in frustration.

APRIL

The first thing anybody does is check out the entire desk. That's the first thing. Then she'll go for the computer. Look in all my files.

CAMI

Do you got anything on there?

APRIL

No, thank God. We're not allowed to use it for personal reasons. They check.

CAMI

Maybe it's a good thing if she sees the notes. It'll give her a good idea of what an asshole he is.

April stops pacing abruptly and turns white.

APRIL

(shakily)

I can't stand it. I can't stand her going through my stuff. It's personal. She has no right...

(beginning to shake)

I don't think I can take it!

Cami feels angry and helpless as she watches her cousin tremble and pull at her hair again.

CAMI

I'll go.

APRIL

What?

CAMI

I'll go to your office. Get your stuff.

April sits back in her chair and covers her face.

(CONTINUED)

APRIL

You think I'm pathetic. You'd never do this.

CAMI

Well, April. Yes, I do. He's a man, and men aren't worth much. And he treated you like shit, which means he's worth even less.

APRIL

I should never have...but there's something about him... He's gone out with about five other women at the school before me. At first I was like, no way, but he kept coming around, bringing me little things...He seemed so sweet, so thoughtful. And his wife never appreciated that in him...I don't know why I thought I'd be any different...

CAMI

Because women aren't worth much either.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT WATERSON PREP SCHOOL - MORNING -
11:00 AM

Waterson Prep School is a beautiful private school with pretty manicured grounds, ivy on the stone facades of the buildings, BMWs and SUVs in the parking lot. Cami parks her used Honda hatchback in the visitor's parking. On the back of her car on the bumper sticker it says "I brake for animals" and "A woman's place is on top."

12 INT. WATERSON PREP SCHOOL OFFICE - MORNING

Cami walks into the office wearing a baseball cap and carrying a large plastic bin. She looks around trying to figure out which desk belongs to April.

OFFICE PERSON

Can I help you?

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

Uh, yes. I'm April's cousin. I just came by to get a few of her things...

Everyone in the office looks up at the mention of April's name. Then they look at the desk in the middle. A young woman, JACKIE, is sitting there sorting through some mail.

OFFICE PERSON

Oh! Yes, of course. We were so sorry to hear that she...How's she feeling?

CAMI

Much better. Thank you.

OFFICE PERSON

(waving in the direction of the desk)

That's her desk right there. Jackie has been kind enough to fill in until she...until she comes back.

Cami walks over to the desk. Jackie smiles at her tentatively and moves out of the way. Cami quickly opens up all of the drawers and scoops anything that looks personal into the box. She makes sure to get the stuff in the back of the middle drawer.

As she's doing this, GARRET walks into the office and checks his mailbox. He's strikingly handsome and confident. He smiles at all of the ladies in the office and looks over in Cami and Jackie's direction. Cami ducks her head and watches as Jackie looks up and smiles at the man. She recognizes him from a picture April had in her desk drawer.

GARRET

So you're working here now?

JACKIE

Just for a couple of weeks.

GARRET

I was hoping they'd get some real office help. The girl that used to work here found alphabetizing a struggle. I wanted to give you a copy of that article I'm writing for the Chronicle about math and the right lobe of the brain. No reason why quantitative reasoning can't be a creative process.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

That is so cool. I was always
scared of math when I was a kid.

GARRET

Maybe you could look it over for
me. You majored in English,
right? See if I put all my commas
in the right place.

JACKIE

(blushing)

Sure.

GARRET

Then maybe you would let me take
you out to lunch. To say thank
you.

JACKIE

I guess we could do lunch.

GARRET

Good. I'll bring the article by
tomorrow.

Garret glances again at Cami, wondering what she's doing at April's desk, until a bell rings. Looking at the clock, he waves to Jackie and walks out of the office towards his classroom.

CAMI

That guy seems into you.

JACKIE

He's just being nice.

CAMI

Please.

Cami backs away from the desk and Jackie sits in the chair again, returning to sorting the mail.

JACKIE

It's only lunch. I don't do
married men.

CAMI

(picking up the box that
contains April's things)
Even if they think that math should
be a creative process?

CUT TO:

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INT. CAMI'S BASEMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Cami is drinking an Iced Late and eating a few munchkin donuts while watching her roommate Bryan lift weights. The basement has been converted into a weight room with a barbell set, a mirror, and a used rowing machine. Bryan is exercising on the rowing machine as he talks to Cami.

CAMI

You shoulda seen him. All over that little substitute. He's out for every girl he can get. Serial cheater.

(imitating his voice)

Maybe you could look at my article, check out my commas. I'll check out his commas--castrate the little bastards and turn 'em into periods.

BRYAN

You cannot say castrate to a guy--even if your using some weird grammar metaphor. The guy's probably got a big dick. For some reason, God gives big dicks to big dicks.

CAMI

Okay, but which came first? Is he a big dick **because** he has a big dick? Or does he have a big dick because he's a big dick?

BRYAN

All I'm saying is that if life was fair big dicks would have little dicks.

CAMI

So, does that mean that you, a guy who is certainly not a big dick, are vertically challenged in the dick department?

BRYAN

(smiling)

Ah, well, I am the exception that proves the rule. We're talking hours of soul shaking pleasure, yours for the asking.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

But then you'd be just another dick
to me.

BRYAN

If I had a dollar for everf time a
woman said that to me.

Cami smiles and walks over to the mirror. She picks up a ten pound free weight and half-heartedly does a few curls. Though Cami is in decent shape, she does not seem to be a person who has spent any time in the basement working out. She lives on junk food and the only exercise she usually gets involves her work as an EMT.

CAMI

(grimly)

I hate this guy. I'd like to kill
him, grill him, and feed him to the
family at a barbecue.

BRYAN

With potato salad. I love Betsy's
potato salad.

CAMI

Yeah. She starts it like three
days ahead. That's what the women
in my family do. Plan ahead.

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INT. APRIL'S CONDO - TWO NIGHTS LATER - 7:00 PM

Cami is sitting on the floor in front of the coffee table eating a Subway sandwich and potato chips. On the table is another Subway sandwich and soda for April, but her cousin hasn't touched it. The sofa that was stained with blood is gone and there is a big space in its absence. April is sitting on a chair. Her arms have smaller bandages on them now. The box of items from her desk is on the floor. April is picking up various things from it. She looks pale and vulnerable.

APRIL

(reaching into the box)

So you saw him?

CAMI

Yeah.

APRIL

What'dya think?

(CONTINUED)

CAMI
(eating a few chips)
Not bad.

APRIL
Was SHE there?

CAMI
Yep.

APRIL
Did he talk to her?

CAMI
You gotta stop thinking about him.

APRIL
I know.

April pulls at her hair hard but doesn't seem to notice.

CAMI
You need to eat something.

APRIL
(looking at the sub with
distaste)
I can't.

CAMI
You should hate him.

APRIL
Remember when Brittany Spears
shaved her head?

CAMI
Yeah.

APRIL
Know why she did it?

CAMI
Because they were gonna test her
hair for drugs.

APRIL
No. She did it because she was in
mourning. She was losing K-fed and
her kids, and she needed to do
something to show it was killing
her.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

They can know everything just by testing your hair follicles. I had a friend who went to a homeopath. Tested her pubic hair. Found out she had too much nickel in her system. How do you get too much nickel?

APRIL

When someone dies, you go to the funeral. The ceremony, the gravestone, it's so you can mark it, keep it somewhere inside of you. But when a relationship's over, what do you get to do? I can't even complain to anybody because he was married. It's like, I feel all of this pain but there's no way to show it.

CAMI

Yeah, well, I think you marked it plenty when you carved up your arms.

15 INT. CAMI'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Cami is pouring a cup of coffee while Bryan is cooking some eggs. They are both in EMT uniforms.

CAMI

She's not looking good. Losing a lot of weight. Talking about gravestones and Brittany Spears.

BRYAN

When chicks talk about Brittany they are like already buying realestate in crazyville. She in therapy?

CAMI

She must be. Looks like it's not doing much good.

BRYAN

Maybe you should talk to your uncle.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

I'm going over there today after work to check on her. She starts back at the school soon. Wanna come with me? Might be good for her to have another person there.

BRYAN

(giving her a plateful of eggs)

Oh yeah. Absolutely. Right after I vacuum the house and defrost the freezer.

CAMI

Defrost the freezer? Nobody even does that anymore. You've been watching too much Nick at Nite.

BRYAN

If I'm gonna act like a pussy whipped dude, the least you can do is give me a little....

CAMI

Then you'll go with me and be like EXTRA nice to April?

BRYAN

Then I'll go any place you want..

CAMI

(smiling)

Okay.

BRYAN

Okay? That's it? After like months of...

CAMI

No, that's not it. You got to take me out to dinner and get me drunk first. But don't let me get anything fried. I'm on a diet.

BRYAN

Seriously, right? You're not gonna change your mind after

CAMI

Do I strike you as the kind of person who changes her mind about anything?

(CONTINUED)

(stops rowing)
You realize our friendship is gonna
suck after this.

BRYAN
Price I'm willing to pay!

16 EXT. APRIL'S CONDO - NIGHT

Cami and Bryan ring April's doorbell. Cami is holding a pizza and Bryan is holding a six-pack. When April answers the door they are both taken by surprise. She is wearing her nightgown and her hair is cut very short. It is apparent that she cut it herself. She seems too skinny and easily broken.

CAMI
Whoa, hope it's not a bad time. I
called but nobody answered.

APRIL
(looking first at Cami, then
uncertainly at Bryan)
Oh, hi.

CAMI
You remember Bryan, right?

April looks at Bryan but says nothing. Cami glides past her cousin and walks into the condo.

BRYAN
Hi April. Good to see ya.

CAMI
Bacon and pineapple. So Hawaii
you can picture the girls jiggling
their coconuts. If you're going to
work we're gonna have to fatten you
up.

April follows Cami and Bryan into the kitchen. Cami makes herself at home, getting plates, silverware and glasses.

APRIL
I'm not going back to work.

Cami glances over at her as she opens the fridge and puts the beer. She decides to ignore this comment for now.

(CONTINUED)

CAMI

Want a beer? Mom used to say that when she was nursing me she'd have a beer and bang, down came the milk, right on schedule. Remember?

BRYAN

(grabbing a beer)

After my mother had me the doctor asked her if she wanted a cigarette.

CAMI

No way.

BRYAN

True story. He said she earned it.

CAMI

What country was this?

April watches them banter back and forth and then leaves the room.

CAMI

(whispering)

Did you see her hair? She looks like Mia Farrow in Rosemary's Baby.

BRYAN

(talking low)

Who's Rosemary's Baby?

CAMI

You haven't seen it? Mia Farrow has sex with the devil and eats raw meat.

BRYAN

I had steak tartar once. Almost barfed up a lung.

April comes back into the room carrying a box that is covered by a lid.

APRIL

Could you give this to Garret for me? You can leave it for him at Waterson.

CAMI

(walking over to April)

What's in it, honey?

(CONTINUED)

APRIL
Just a memento. Of the
relationship.

CAMI
Can I see?

April hesitates, looking at both Cami and Bryan, trying to decide.

APRIL
I don't know. You'll probably just
make fun of it.

CAMI
I promise, no making fun.

April looks at Bryan.

BRYAN
Me either. I may be a guy, and I
may have a dick as Cami can now
fully attest to, but I am not a
dick.

APRIL
(reluctantly)
Okay.

April puts the box on the counter and Cami takes the lid off. She looks inside and tries to hide her surprise.

CLOSE-UP OF INSIDE OF BOX: THE BOX IS FILLED WITH PILES OF APRIL'S BEAUTIFUL BROWN HAIR.

April covers the box with the lid and watches Cami closely.

APRIL
He always loved my hair. It was
like the first thing he noticed
about me.

CAMI
(trying not to seem too
disturbed)
Yeah, well, sure. You've always
had great hair.

APRIL
I needed to mark it. Make him
remember me.

Bryan watches the two women and figures out what's in the box.

(CONTINUED)

BRYAN
We'll give it to him.

APRIL
(looking hopefully at Bryan)
You will?

BRYAN
Absolutely.

April looks at Cami for confirmation. Cami nods.

APRIL
I gotta find some duck tape. I
don't want anyone opening it.

April leaves the room to get the tape. From the distance we
can hear April opening and closing drawers looking for tape.

BRYAN
You need to talk to your uncle, get
her committed.

CAMI
My uncle won't do shit. I'll talk
to my mother.

BRYAN
Your mother doesn't have the
authority.

CAMI
She'll convince April to go
voluntarily.

BRYAN
(looking in the direction that
April took to find the tape)
Think so?

CAMI
My mother can get her to do
anything. She took her in for
three years after April's mother
died.

BRYAN
Poor kid. How old was she?

CAMI
(grimly)
Eleven.

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