

CREATIVE WRITING



Smiling and ready for work, Angel tells Steve to have a good day. Before leaving, Angel plays with Sparky for a few minutes and says good bye to Sparky. Sparky is Angel's pet parrot and trusty companion. Angel thinks of Sparky as her best friend who accepts her for all of her faults. She has had him for over 10 years.

After telling Sparky to have a good day, Angel heads off in her little red convertible with white interior and white wall tires and a killer stereo that vibrates when she cranks up the radio. She has a corporate job as an executive associate.

Angel finally arrives at work after fidgeting in traffic for the last hour. "It's about time I get here," Angel thinks to herself. She hurries to the elevator because she is running late. When she has time, Angel likes to enjoy the surroundings by taking in the colorful oil and water color paintings that adorn the walls.

She arrives at the elevator and punches the 15th floor. Angel can't believe how privileged she is to have her own office as an executive associate with a view of blue sky and white clouds. Angel has a breathtaking view of the city with a lake that is pure and clear as the sky, and at night the view is stunning with the twinkling lights lit up against the night sky. Angel likes to gaze at the view of the waves moving across the water during the day, but since becoming disenchanted with her job her vision has become fuzzy.

By mid-morning, Angel is at her desk practicing her poker skills to alleviate the boredom of her job. Every day Angel tells herself "Why do I continue with this job I hate," when she would rather be somewhere else playing cards in a bar or a casino practicing her poker skills, getting ready for the Texas Hold 'em Regionals in Atlantic City. As luck would have it, Angel's boss hurries into her office and catches her playing cards.

Her boss says to her "What are you doing?" and "Why isn't my report done?" Angel says to her boss: "I'm sorry but I just can't seem to get motivated today and I wanted to play cards instead."

Well, her boss tells her, "Missy, you better get moving on my report because I need it first thing tomorrow morning." As her boss stomps off, Angel does not respond.

After her boss storms out of her office, Angel sits at her desk for a while, pondering. She tells herself, "Damn, I really hate this job, the pay and the work I have to do. And to top it all off, my boss is a slave driver, and I'm so tired of it. Perhaps today is the day I tell him to take this job and shove it." Still seething, Angel gets up from her chair and marches to her boss's office and tells him she is quitting her job.

Her boss asks Angel why? Angel tells her boss that she's fed up with the rat race, her job, and the pay. Then she waltzes out of there, telling her boss goodbye.

After leaving her boss's office, Angel is smiling and dancing all the way back to her office and the creases on her face emulate her relief. She is thinking to herself, "One down and one to go." After racing around her office and packing her personal items, Angel bounces down the hall to the elevator for the last time.

Angel arrives at the Bar and Grill to get ready for the Texas Hold 'em tournament. Winning this tournament would qualify her for the regionals in Atlantic City. Angel walks up to the bar and orders a Cosmopolitan and sits down at the game table. As Angel waits for the game to start, she rubs her hands along the felt table, loving the feel of it under her hands. The tournament finally starts and for the next few hours, while Angel plays, her mind races as she forms a game plan on how to tell her husband, Steve, that she no longer wants to be married to him. Meanwhile, Angel continues to win each hand. Her chip count increases as she cleans out the other guys at the table.

As Angel is playing cards, she tells herself, "Well, that was easy, saying good bye to the hated job. But now it's time for me to figure out how to say goodbye to my life at home and leave behind all that I

know and the life I had with Steve."

Angel believes that the only choice she has is to leave Steve in order to fulfill her dream of being a poker player. Steve is unaware that she plays poker at night after work and that's reason she's always late.

Angel is stalling as she is gathering up the courage to leave the bar to go home to talk to her husband. Angel realizes she can no longer put off the inevitable. Finally, Angel leaves the bar after drinking a few drinks, and collecting her winnings from the tournament. As she drives home, she is getting more nervous by the moment because she is getting ready to confront Steve. Angel realizes this decision is going to turn her life upside down.

Angel arrives at home. Sparky is so excited to see her that Angel plays with Sparky for a little while. But Angel is anxious to sit down with Steve and tell him of her plans. Angel looks for Steve and finds him in the living room watching TV. Angel says, "We need to talk. Could you please turn off the TV for a while?"

Steve says "Sure" and cuts off the TV. In relationships people say that opposites attract and this is the case with Angel and Steve. Angel likes to party and Steve likes to stay home and watch TV, which causes a lot of conflict between them. After 10 years of a companionable marriage, Angel is feeling suffocated by her home life and is not sure what to do about it. After much reflection, part of her wants to leave her husband but is unsure what to do. She is scared because she would be leaving the safe and secure life she has known for the last 10 years. Perhaps today is the day for making a change?

Angel tells Steve that she knows that he is losing his patience with her wanting to come home late at night.

Steve says, "You're right, I don't like it." "I'm sorry that you don't like it but I can't help that I do."

"While we're on the subject, why do you go out at night? Are you cheating on me and I'm the last to know?"

"No," she says, "I'm not cheating on you but I do have a wild side that you don't know about. After work I like to go to the local bars, wear black leather and play Texas Hold 'em Poker. When I'm playing poker, I'm in another world. I know I get home late but I can't help my addiction to playing poker."

Angel and Steve have been constantly fighting about her coming home late all the time and Steve has lost patience with Angel.

"So that's where you've been," Steve says. "Why didn't you just tell me you liked to do these things? I could've gone with you some time to see you play."

"To be honest, I wasn't sure how you'd react to my wild side," says Angel. "I've been waiting to tell you for a long time but wasn't sure when the right time would be. Now that you know, how do you feel about me playing poker?"

"I'm not sure. It's quite a shock, but perhaps I can accept it," Steve says.

"You know we've been married for 10 years and you know I love you, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," says Steve.

"Remember this morning when we woke and you saw me smiling?"

"Yes," says Steve.

"There were many reasons why I was smiling and I didn't want to tell you then. I have for some time been having doubts about my job and my relationship with you. Not that I'm not happy, but I feel like I'm being stifled by my job and our relationship."

Steve asks "What do you mean?" "I feel like I can't be who I want to be," Angel says. "I have dreams that I want to pursue but I feel like as long as I'm married to you, my dreams will never come true."

"What dreams are you talking about?" asks Steve.

"My dream of becoming a poker player full time and traveling around the world to play in tournaments," Angel says.

Steve asks, "Why poker?" Angel tells him, "I don't know, but this is something I have wanted to do since childhood."

Steve asks, "So you want to throw away all we have for a dream that may not come true. Don't you think that's selfish of you?" "No," says Angel. "This is all about me and

not you. Didn't you have dreams growing up?"

"Yes, but that was a long time ago," says Steve.

"Today I quit my job and I'm heading to the regionals in Atlantic City to play poker. Tonight I qualified by beating the other guys at the local tournament," she says.

"What, when were you going to tell me this? Why did you do that? What about our obligations here?"

"I know you're disappointed in me, but I'm sorry that I couldn't take my job anymore," she says. "I know you don't understand why I'm doing this. And I'm sure you think I'm being selfish but I'm going to leave to pursue my dream. I've made up my

mind and nothing is going to change it."

"What if it doesn't work out?" says Steve. "What if I support you in this dream, will you stay?"

"I'm not sure, but I know I have to give this a try," she says.

"Can I go with you?" asks Steve.

"I would love for you to do that, but please understand I have to do this on my own right now," she says. "Perhaps later you can join me in Las Vegas for the nationals if I make it that far."

Angel desperately wants to become a poker player. She knows that she must make sacrifices to achieve her dream.

Angel goes upstairs to pack her bags. She packs

her clothes and takes what she needs to get by.

Angel then loads up the car with her luggage. She picks up Sparky and tells the bird, "Let's go on an adventure."

As Angel is walking out the door with Sparky, Steve's face is gnarled with a frown as he peeks from the window, and hollers to Angel, "Good luck."

Angel gets into her little red convertible and revs the engine. She looks at Sparky and says "Are you ready for the adventure of a lifetime?"

Sparky looks at Angel and says, "Let's rock and roll."

Off they go, Angel and her trusty sidekick Sparky, riding in his cage on the front seat leaving the dust behind them.

Atlantic City

By Melanie Rhodes

For the first time Angel can feel the night wind blowing her hair as she drives. She is thinking about her future and what will happen when she gets to Atlantic City.

Having left behind Steve, her husband of 10 years, and her job to pursue her dream, Angel is drumming her fingers on the steering wheel, feeling nervous about what she gave up. Did she do the right thing? Angel keeps looking back in the mirror. "Sparky, do you think I did the right thing?" she asks.

Sparky says, "Yes, dear." Angel is shaking with anticipation as she is driving down Highway 905 towards her dream of playing poker.

After being on the road for several hours, Angel looks at Sparky, says, "Let's stop and get something to eat."

Sparky says "Right on." Sparky is a parrot that her husband gave to her for her 30th birthday. Sparky likes to mimic Angel and Steve. And Angel has taught him other phrases.

In the distance, Angel spots a bar with neon lights of yellow and green. She pulls into the parking lot. Angel gets out of her car and walks into "David's" with Sparky in his cage. On her way in, she looks around and notices the bright lights and red and yellow neon signs.

Angel sits down at a table in the back. She puts Sparky's cage on the seat beside her. She looks around and sees the walls decorated with signs of all shapes and sizes. Some say "Drunken Dogs Playing Cards," "David's Bar and Diner," and "Don't Talk about Yourself. We will Do It after You Leave." The signs give the bar a nostalgic feeling.

A server wearing a mini-skirt walks up to her, and says, "Welcome."

"Thanks! How are you?"

"I'm fine. Where are you from?" the server asks.

"I'm from a small town down south."

"Well, it's nice to meet you. Do you know what you would like to eat?"

"No, could you give a few minutes to decide?"

"Okay," says the server.

The server comes back and takes Angel's order. Angel orders a greasy hamburger, fries, and a Coke and then pulls out a deck of cards.

She starts shuffling and deals the cards and says to Sparky, "Do you want to play, too?"

Sparky says "Right on."

Angel sits Sparky's cage on the table. She deals out the cards, one to Sparky and one to herself. She looks at Sparky's cards and says to him "You have a king and a two. What do you want to do?"

Sparky says, "I'll take another card, please."

Angel lays another card, a king, in front of Sparky, who now has a pair of kings.

Sparky says, "I'm good."

Angel looks at her cards and sees that she has an ace and a ten. She discards her ten card and picks up another card and draws an ace, which gives her a pair.

Angel lays down her cards and Sparky's and declares she is a winner of that hand.

The server returns and sets the food on the table. Angel crinkles her nose, smelling the french fries and greasy hamburger. She takes a bite out of hamburger and grease drips all over her plate. As Angel deals the next hand, a scruffy-looking guy with a beard and long shaggy hair swaggers up to her table.

"What are you doing?" he asks.

"Sparky and I are playing poker," says Angel.

"For what?"

"I'm practicing for a tournament," Angel says.

"That's funny! You and the parrot." The stranger gives a hoot of laughter.

"What's so funny about that?" she asks the stranger.

"It just seems kind of silly playing with a parrot," he says.

"I don't think so," says Angel.

"So how about you and me playing a few hands," he says.

"I'm game, if you are," she says.

"Well, pull up a chair."

Angel deals the cards for her and the scruffy stranger at the table.

They play one hand of cards with no stakes and Angel loses the first hand.

The stranger asks to play another hand, as if confident that he will win again.

Angel and the stranger play another hand and Angel wins this time. As Angel is getting ready to deal another hand, a couple of other guys walk up to the table and want to know what's going on. They're covered with skull-and-crossbones tattoos and wearing black leather jackets.

"We're playing poker," says Angel.

"Really? Why is that?" one asks.

"I'm practicing for a tournament," she says. Angel explains to the guys that she is on her way to play in the regionals in Atlantic City after winning a local tournament.

"What? You're a girl," exclaim the guys with tattoos. "What makes you think you can win in Atlantic City?"

"Just because I'm a girl, it doesn't mean I don't know to play," she says.

"Why do you want to play in Atlantic City?" ask the guys.

"Because it's a dream of mine to play," Angel tells them. "My dream is to play poker and I left behind a husband of 10 years and a job to pursue my dream."

"Well, you're crazy to do that," they tell her.

"Crazy or not, let's play and I'll show you how well I play," she tells them.

"You're on," they tell her.

"Great," Angel thinks, "more people to practice with."

The guys pull up their chairs and Angel starts dealing the cards. Since there are now three guys, plus her, Angel asks what the guys would like to bet. "Do you want to bet money or do we use ketchup packages?" she jokes.

"Let's bet money," the guys tell her.

"Okay, the blinds are \$1 and \$5, so let's place your bets," she says.

With all bets placed Angel deals the cards. While playing their hands, the men are making jokes and laughter is heard around the bar. Hearing the laughter, others start coming towards the table to see what is going on.

A couple girls come over to the table.

"Hi, we're playing cards," says Angel. "Do you want to join us?"

"No, but we would like to watch," they say.

"Sure," says Angel.

The women cheer her on.

The guys look at her and shake their heads and say, "Deal the next hand."

Angel loses the next hand. She deals the cards for the next one. Angel's luck begins to change as she wins the next hand. This continues and after several winning hands for Angel, insults start to fly.

The guys taunt her by telling that she is only winning because of luck.

They continue to play and after Angel wins several more hands, the guys are starting to get pissed off. They tell her, "You're cheating."

"I am not," she says.

Sparky chimes in: "I am not."

Sparky says to Angel: "I love you."

The girls then chime in and tell the men, "You're just jealous because you're losing to a girl."

"No, we're not," the guys shout. "We think you're cheating because there's no way you could have won those hands without cheating."

"I am not cheating. I have won each hand fair and square. You think I'm cheating because a girl can't beat you," she tells them. "Let's play another hand to prove I am not cheating."

Sparky chimes in, "You show them."

Angel deals the hand, and she wins again. "See, I can play," she tells them.

In disgust, the guys throw their cards on the table.

Angel tells them, "If you don't like it, you can all leave the game."

Angry and with the chairs scraping, the guys get up and leave.

"Wow," Angel tells herself after the guys leave, "what sore losers they are. Are all guys like this, or just some of them? Well, I guess I'll find out soon enough in Atlantic City." Angel is wondering what she will encounter when she gets to Atlantic City.

Although Angel won many hands against these guys, she starts to doubt herself. Should she go to Atlantic City or turn around and go home?

Angel steps outside the bar to call Steve at home. She dials the number and the phone rings several times before Steve answers.

"Hello," says Steve.

"Hi Steve, it's Angel."

"Hi, how's it going?" Steve asks.

"It's going okay but I'm starting to have some doubts about my playing in the tournament in Atlantic City," she tells him.

"Why is that?" asks Steve.

"First of all, I miss being at home," she tells him. "Atlantic City is so much bigger than home and I feel nervous about playing in such a big city."

"Well, I think you'll be fine," Steve tells her.

"Another reason is that Sparky and I stopped at this bar to eat and ended up playing cards with these guys who did not take kindly to me taking their money," she says.

"You're kidding, right?" Steve says.

"No, I'm not," Angel says. "These guys were such sore losers and had the gall to tell me I was cheating."

"Well, I'm sorry," Steve says. "You know that poker is a man's game so that was bound to happen."

"So I'm doubting myself and wonder maybe if I should turn around and come back home," Angel tells Steve.

"Well, I think you need to give it try. You already gave up your job and you feel so passionate about this. I think you should go to Atlantic City," Steve tells her. "Do you want to meet you in Atlantic City?"

"No, I'll be okay, thanks" Angel tells Steve.

After hanging up the phone, Angel skips back into the bar to collect her winnings and picks up Sparky and heads out to her car. She buckles Sparky's cage into the front seat. Angel starts up her car and revs her engine. She pulls out of the driveway and stops to look right and then looks to the left.

She looks at Sparky and says "Which way should I go?"

Sparky says to Angel, "Go right." Angel makes a right turn towards Atlantic City and they are on their way.