ATALANTA K.O.

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ATALANTA K.O. (excerpt)

by D.L. Siegel

ROUND 8

[We hear the sounds of voices, the clinking of glasses. This blends into the sound of the N train going by overhead. Chorus Leader 1 walks the round card across the stage.

Atalanta appears and trips her way into the center of the space. She is dressed up and extremely tipsy. No, forget that. She is drunk. The kind of drunk you only get to when you're not used to drinking alcohol. She stands, wobbly, trying to maintain her footing. After a moment, Atalanta holds her hand out and we hear the sound of an apartment buzzer.

Samir approaches from the corner. He wears only boxer shorts or perhaps pajama bottoms and his hair is messy from sleep. As he comes towards Atalanta, the lights shift, abruptly.]

SAMIR

Attie?

ATALANTA

Hi!

[She tries and fails to strike a seductive pose. This unbalances her and she lets out an uncharacteristic giggle.]

Oops.

SAMIR

Oh for Chrissake. You're drunk? Seriously?

ATALANTA

I...might be.

[Atalanta stumbles.]

(with unnecessary emphasis on her consonants:) Might. Yes. I might. Be. Drrrrrrunkkkkk.

[Samir backs up a step and gestures for Atalanta to follow him. A chair appears. We are in Samir's apartment. Samir turns his back to Atalanta, looking for something.]

SAMIR

Sit, before you fall down and hurt your—

ATALANTA

(placing a finger over her own mouth)

Shhhhhhhhhhhhh! I can handle…myself.

SAMIR

How did you get here?

ATALANTA

Camel.

[Samir crosses his arms over his chest. Atalanta starts laughing.]

No, I took the train. I think. I think there was a train. Couple of trains.

SAMIR

Well, you're not taking the train back. I'll call you a cab.

ATALANTA

Where am I going?

SAMIR

Home.

ATALANTA

No! Why?

SAMIR

It's late.

ATALANTA

Fuck that shit, it's the weekend!

SAMIR

…It's Tuesday.

ATALANTA

(an unintelligible sound of dismissal)

SAMIR

I'm gonna get you some water.

ATALANTA

Not thirsty.

SAMIR

Don't care.

[Samir grabs his water bottle from somewhere. He turns on a faucet that we don't see, and we hear the sound of rushing water. Atalanta approaches the chair but doesn't sit. She just looks at it, oddly fascinated. Samir, finished filling the water bottle, returns to her side, puts the bottle in her hand.]

SAMIR (cont'd)

Drink this.

ATALANTA

I told you, I'm not—

SAMIR
(more firmly)

Drink. It.

[Atalanta takes a reluctant sip of water. Samir sits in the chair, combing his hands through his hair. He looks very tired. He takes in Atalanta's outfit, her general demeanor, some of the fog of exhaustion clearing from his eyes.]

SAMIR

You're not even twenty-one.

ATALANTA

No one checks. Did you know that? For the laaaaadies…no one checks! It's awesome.

SAMIR

Still. You should know better.

ATALANTA

Should I?

SAMIR

Who were you even out with?

ATALANTA

Kassi.

SAMIR

I didn't think you liked her.

[Atalanta brandishes the water bottle in a dramatic gesture.]

ATALANTA

She's pretty. Isn't she? All, like…perfect and…put-together. Uses big words. Fancy words. Every time I see her I just wanna mess her hair up and get her to say something mean.

[She makes herself laugh.]

And at least she doesn't treat me like *(with some serious air quotes:)* "Boxer Barbie."

SAMIR
(getting it)

Ah. You read the interview.

[Atalanta nods so fiercely she almost unbalances herself.]

ATALANTA

Kassi felt baaaaad, tried to retract…something. I don't know. So she bought me drinks until I wasn't so mad.

SAMIR

That article doesn't mean anything.

ATALANTA

Oh I know…I know! RIGHT? Sure. Yup. Yup yup meaningless fucking interview. Yup yup yup yup—

SAMIR

(gesturing to the water bottle)

Have some more.

[Atalanta takes a long drink from the water bottle. Eyes Samir steadily.]

I've already talked to Cal;s people. If you want the rematch, it's yours.

ATALANTA

Oh I *want* it.

SAMIR

We can talk about this again when you sober up—

ATALANTA

(in a voice that allows for no dissention)

I want. The re-match.

[Atalanta moves closer to Samir. He stands, barely resisting the temptation to back away from her.]

SAMIR

I don't like you drunk.

ATALANTA

No? Well that's too bad. Because I like *you* drunk.

[She finds herself extremely entertaining.]

I mean, I like you when *I'm*…you get it.

[Atalanta approaches Samir, holding the water bottle suggestively. He can't help but notice.]

SAMIR

Come on, I'll throw on a shirt and walk you downstairs.

[Atalanta places a hand on Samir's bare chest. He focuses his eyes somewhere above her head.]

SAMIR

Attie…?

ATALANTA

You are beautiful.

[A tense pause.]

SAMIR

(putting his hand over hers to move it)

That's the alcohol talking.

ATALANTA

No. *No.* You've always been beautiful. *So* beautiful. But you were…and I was too young and…*[with air quotes]*…'professional boundaries'…and I was…Little Orphan Attie.

[She makes herself laugh.]

You get it?

SAMIR

(tense)

Yeah. Yeah, I get it.

ATALANTA

I couldn't touch you. Wasn't allowed. But now I'm someone's…Maybe now I get to be a whole new—

[Atalanta drops the water bottle, lets her fingers linger over Samir's skin. She sighs.]

You're like iron.

SAMIR

Attie, you shouldn't be/ here.

ATALANTA

(her fingers still playing over his)

No, not iron. There's…more give. Strong, but…Not iron…Graphite! Like a pencil.

[This makes her laugh.]

You're just a big, sexy pencil.

[Samir takes a significant step back from her, breaking contact.]

SAMIR

I'm serious, you shouldn't—

ATALANTA

You like those words a *lot*.

SAMIR

Which?

ATALANTA

"Shouldn't." "Should." I *shouldn't* be here. I *shouldn't* be drinking. I *should* know better. I shouldn't...touch you.

SAMIR

(quietly, pained)

Definitely shouldn't. That last one.

[Atalanta tries to remove her shirt. Samir looks like he'd like to kiss her or strangle her or both. He settles for stilling her hands and preventing her from taking her clothes off.]

ATALANTA

Don't you want to see me?

SAMIR

(with as much authority as he can manage)

I'm gonna get you a cab and you're gonna go home and sleep this off.

ATALANTA

(shaking her head back and forth)

No, don't want—

SAMIR

You don't get a vote here.

ATALANTA

(with sudden ferocity)

Yes I fucking do!

SAMIR

Attie—

ATALANTA

You always tell me what to do.

SAMIR

That's how this works.

ATALANTA

No, that's how *training* works.

This is different. The way we…it *should* be different. That's a 'should' for you. Everything should be different. Why don't you see that?

[Samir can't seem to find the words to answer her. Atalanta puts her hands up, ready to throw a punch.]

SAMIR

Come on, what are you doing?

ATALANTA

Maybe if we…*[she sways, unsteady]* if this could be like training—

SAMIR

This is ridiculous.

ATALANTA

(so lost)

What do I have to do to…

[She lowers her fists.]

Hit me.

SAMIR

…what did you just—?

ATALANTA

(her voice is breaking)

Hit me. Break me apart and…and put me back together as something different than this.

[Samir grabs Atalanta's arms, effectively pinning them to her sides.]

SAMIR

No.

ATALANTA

I'm…boiling. Under my skin.

SAMIR

NO. Stop it.

ATALANTA

Crack me open and let me breathe.

SAMIR

I can't.

ATALANTA

Don't you want me?

SAMIR
(his response spills out of him)

Yes.

[In this one word confession, Samir has said too much and he knows it. Atalanta stills, her eyes tracing the planes of his face.]

ATALANTA

Then why--?

SAMIR

Please stop this. I'm begging you.

ATALANTA

Are you scared? Don't be scared.

SAMIR

Am I scared?! Of course I'm scared. I'm fucking TERRIFIED OF YOU.

ATALANTA
(trying to comfort him)

Samir.

SAMIR

You don't play fair. You never play fair.

[Atalanta tries to break free of Samir's hold. She can't. Her frustration manifests itself into a sound that is halfway between a growl and a whimper. Closer to the whimper.]

ATALANTA

Let GO. Let go.

[Samir lets out a huff of a frustrated breath, leaning his forehead against Atalanta's. She stops struggling. They stand that way for a moment, a romantic, sensual version of a boxer's clinch. Samir closes his eyes against the sheer ecstasy of just holding her in his arms.]

SAMIR
(hushed)

Just breathe. Ok? Just breathe.

[Samir relaxes his hold on her. It is a mistake to free Atalanta's hands. She launches herself at Samir, kissing him with too long-restrained passion. After a moment of this, Samir responds in spite of himself. Just for a moment. Atalanta turns up the heat,

violently gnashing her mouth against his. Ferocious. Far too much. It takes all of Samir's strength to move her away from him. The violence and subsequent rejection stuns them both. They breathe into the space.]

ATALANTA

Samir…?

[Samir stares at her. Shocked. He is a total loss for words.]

Are you bleeding?

SAMIR

(licking the inside of his cheek)

…A little.

ATALANTA

I'll get better.
[sultry in spite of how drunk she is] You can train me. Like with everything else.

SAMIR

(with a frantic shake of his head)

Don't ask me to…I can't. We can't.

[They look at each other for a long moment, their breathing a cacophony in the space. Finally, with a huff of breath, Atalanta shoves Samir and starts to clumsily gather her things.]

ATALANTA

(with a humorless laugh)

Fuck you.

SAMIR

Attie—

ATALANTA

No, nuh-uh. I'm going, ok? I'm goooooooing. Leaving.

SAMIR

I didn't mean…nevermind.

[Atalanta walks a few steps away from Samir, pauses, and turns back to look at him.]

ATALANTA

You know Kassi said she could tell from the way you say my name.

SAMIR

(not following)

What?

ATALANTA

She said…your mouth…licks its way around all the syllables. She said that's why you like to call me 'Attie.' Less…letters. Won't give you away.

[Samir is speechless, lost. Atalanta stalks off with purpose, but the heels make her unsteady. She trips and Chorus Leader 1 catches her. She offers her hand, but Atalanta looks into her eyes and shakes her head, refusing help. The round bell sounds.]