

**Damn Yankee**

***SEPARATION  
ANXIETY***

**M.J. Louis**

## **SEPARATION ANXIETY**

Copyright © 2012 by M.J. Louis

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the author.

ISBN 978-1478236276

*For my supportive sisters and friends  
I couldn't have done it without you.*



## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Not for Nothing.....</b>	<b>6</b>
--------------------------------	----------

## 1. Not for Nothing

It was finally happening! I'd waited so damn long for this moment. It was truly the moment everyone dreams of. No, it was not hearing the howls of your narcissistic ex while he or she spontaneously bursts into flames. As they say, it's the American dream: owning your own home. Although watching my trifling ex-husband spontaneously burst into flames does come in at a very, very close second.

It's big. It's green. On the outside, green siding that had seen its fair share of New York City blizzards and smog-

filled, sweltering summers. You could count the rings of dirt on the siding like you would a tree to estimate its age.

The green theme was continued on the inside with wall-to-wall olive shag carpeting almost as aged as the house itself. And for your dining pleasure, unforgiving green-marbled, cracked mirrors encasing the entire dining room area. Let's not forget the extra-large popcorn ceilings throughout the entire house that not even Orville Redenbacher could rival. It was seventies décor at its worst.

The one greatest lesson learned by countless hours of HGTV was never focus on the cosmetic. As they say, she had good bones. Fifty years of grime could be power washed off, matted shag carpeting could be torn out, green-marbled mirrors that made you look ten pounds heavier could be removed, and large golf ball sized popcorn ceilings could be scraped away. Although, I honestly did rethink removing the

marbled green mirrors; having mirrors in the dining room that made you look ten pounds heavier would have made for a great dieting aid.

This was going to be either my greatest dream come true or the big green monster I used to see in my childhood dreams manifesting as a Queens, New York 1940s two-story colonial. I named her Big Bertha, Big B for short. She may not sound like much. She was rundown, tired, sad, and could use a little lovin'. We had a lot in common, but despite her obvious downfalls, she was loved.

I was forty-eight hours away from my closing. I had dotted my I's and crossed all my T's. I couldn't have imagined why my Jewish GQ wanna-be realtor and old college classmate, Isaiah, and my Jewish hottie lawyer, Luke, wanted to meet with me first thing on a Saturday morning. Shouldn't they have been observing Shabbat? But, I wasn't going

to allow any negative thoughts in! It was all good.

The only two people on the face of this Earth who could have possibly been as excited as me were my two angels: Maxwell, four, and Pepper, nine. Yes, Pepper. I was a huge Salt-n-Pepa fan back in the day, asymmetrical hairdo and all.

They insisted on coming along with me to meet with Isaiah and Luke. I could see them from my rearview mirror dozing off. “We’re almost there, guys! Look alive!”

Pepper popped up like a jack-in-the-box. “Are we going to get to visit Big B again?” She squealed with delight.

“I’ll ask Isaiah when we get there. Nothing has changed, you know. She’s still big, green, and ugly.” I doubted that was going to deter her from annoying the crap out of that poor unsuspecting man until she got what she wanted.

“I wanna see my room again,” Maxi said beaming with pride. “I hate

sleeping on Eve's smelly sofa. It stinks like garbage." Ah, out of the mouths of babes.

There was no denying the hot garbage odor emanating from that couch because that's where her liquored-up, drugged-up, and generally fucked-up husband, George, got it from. No amount of Febreze could mask that stench. Although, I must say, the electrical tape holding the arms together did give it that certain *je ne sais quoi* quality.

But, I couldn't let the kids know I shared their opinion. At least we had a roof over our heads.

I made a feeble attempt at putting things into perspective. "Don't say that. Eve and I have been friends since we were your sister's age. We are very lucky Eve and George are letting us stay with them in their home while we look for a home of our own. Would you rather go back to sleeping in our car again?"

“At least it doesn’t smell!” Pepper chimed in.

“Well, it’s almost over. In two days, we’ll be in our very own home that no one can ever take away from us ever again.” What I really wanted to say was, if it wasn’t for your no good, greedy stockbroker crook of a father we would have been still sitting poolside in our three thousand square foot home right about now, but I digress.

I had already taken my last dime and cashed in the kids' savings bonds to pay for their education at St. Catherine’s Elementary School, conveniently located a few doors down from our would-be new home. I had about twenty dollars to my name and I knew we were wearing out our welcome at Eve’s, so it had to be all good.

“Ah yeah, we're here, guys! Let’s get going. It’s already five to ten,” I hollered.

“Calm down, Mom. You didn’t even park the car yet. I thought you said we

don't have to be there until ten?" Unlike Pepper, who was unfortunately very much like her father, I rarely left things to chance or to the last minute.

"Look, chica, did you forget we're in Jamaica Queens? I refuse to pay for parking. You guys need to be alert so you can scope out parking spots. Alright?"

Maxwell's little finger jabbed out from the backseat and nearly took out my right eye. "There's one, Mommy! Get it!" he shouted.

"Thanks, big guy." I slid into that parking spot with the precision of a stealth fighter jet beating out some dude in a showy BMW. The queen of parallel parking struck again. "Sweet! Come on, guys, let's boogie!"

Before I knew it those little buggers darted out of the car. "Pep, grab Maxi!" I called out.

Thank God we were parked only a few doors down from the real estate office, so I let my tots run hand-in-hand

towards the office. Mr. BMW didn't fare as well in finding a parking spot and had to double park. I walked towards him trying not to make eye contact, but I noticed he didn't look too happy; however, damn he was fine!

"Reese! What the fuck, girl? That's what I get for coming out here on a Saturday morning to help you?" Mr. BMW said jokingly while walking towards me with arms akimbo.

Mr. BMW uttering my name was just enough to stop my little guy dead in his tracks. Maxi came to a screeching halt just when he was about to enter the office and made a swift about-face. He broke away from Pepper's grip and came charging towards the Armani-clad hottie.

My little soldier took a wide stance between Mr. BMW and me. With his little fist perched on his hips, he ordered, "Keep away from my mommy!" And with a hard shove to Mr. BMW's legs, Maxwell knocked the beautiful man's

designer sunglasses right off of his face to reveal his identity.

“Hey, buddy.” Isaiah swept Maxwell up with one arm. “What’s up?”

Maxwell’s face beamed with excitement and relief after realizing the man he was so intent on taking down was none other than Isaiah, my realtor.

“I want to go see my room!” Maxi barked out.

Pepper came charging out of nowhere and wrapped herself around Isaiah's legs. “I want to go see my room, too!” she squealed.

“Hey, Pep. It’s not your house yet, sweetie,” he responded in a tone that turned my stomach inside out. Isaiah placed Maxwell down and took hold of the kids’ hands to guide them inside. “Come on guys, let’s get inside.” He motioned with a head tilt for me to follow.

I couldn’t move. My legs wouldn't let me! And I was afraid I was going to puke the second I walked through the

office door. I was keeping a brave face on for the kids since June. It was now September eighth, exactly three months since we had lost everything. Let me elaborate on that. It was three months since Asshole, aka Carlo, my ex-husband, basically robbed our children and me of everything.

He, along with stockbrokers just like him, was what was wrong with this country! They were, and still are, blinded by greed and didn't give two shits who they fucked over all in the name of the almighty dollar.

But, truthfully, I blamed no one but myself for our situation. I was the one who talked Asshole into becoming a stockbroker after I found out he lied about his education, amongst other things. I was a college freshman and co-head cheerleader at St. John's University when we first met at a university frat party. He was looking to have sex with a cheerleader and I was looking to lose my virginity.

Yada yada yada, long story short, he was hot - I was drunk - we hooked up. What was supposed to be a summer fling ended up at the altar. Word to the wise, NEVER MARRY A FLING! Good lay does not equal good husband.

A fling will tell you exactly what you want to hear to get you into bed. For example, "I'm a college freshman, too, but I'm taking time off to explore what I really want out of life." What the subtitles have should read were: "I'm a high school dropout with a GED and a pretty extensive drug history. I had to go into the army or face jail time; but I got booted out of the army and was deemed unable to be rehabilitated. I live down the road from your college and come to on-campus frat parties to troll for unsuspecting college chicks."

Let's just say he was a good lay and an even better liar. I allowed him to take over the household finances while I was working full-time and going to nursing school full-time and ignored ALL of the

warning signs. But having a degree in psychology and now in nursing, I always thought I could fix him. Isn't that what all women believe about their wayward men? How does the saying go? You marry your mother or your father. Well, I married my mother. I didn't know much about my father except he came from old European money and dumped my mother when he found out she was a gold digger.

The reason I got my first degree in psychology was because I wanted to "fix" my mother and save my younger sister from becoming like our mother. My mother, Jazell Pierre, a borderline personality with histrionic personality traits, had me living my life on eggshells. I never knew what was going to set her off. I actually don't remember ever feeling safe or at ease growing up. The slightest misstep would lead Mommy Dearest to beat us like we were runaway slave.

My younger sister, Jazel Jr., aka Jazzy, was your typical passive-aggressive. I'd lost count of the amount of knives she stuck into my back. Although I managed to pull out every one of them I still had the battle scars to remind me every day just how crazy that bitch really was.

When my efforts to "fix" my Mommy Dearest and her "mini me" failed miserably, I decided to give my therapist skills a real challenge, and I married a combo of the two, hence my ex-husband, Asshole.

After ten years of being bludgeoned by that walking, breathing butt hole, I decided to end the bloodshed, but the savings I worked two jobs for was gone, along with my kids' savings for college. Every last cent, gone. The borderline, narcissistic, jerk who I allowed to play me since I was nineteen years old, gone! And believe it or not, I couldn't have been happier!

Now I was standing frozen and praying my feet would wake the hell up and take my happy ass through those office doors.

“Come on, Reese. We have a lot to talk about and we need to get on this right away.” Isaiah stretched out his hand to me and I reluctantly accepted. I closed my eyes, reached out my right hand, and allowed him to guide me in.

“Get on what, Isaiah?” I muttered. I barely got out those words on account of my heart blocking my throat.

“It’s going to be okay, Reese. We’ll do our best to help you,” he said with a consoling rub on my back. “Come on, let’s go. Luke’s waiting for us upstairs.”

Isaiah, who was always the consummate gentleman, stepped aside so I could go up, but before my big toe could touch the first step, Maxwell and Pepper bum-rushed the stairs. Isaiah snatched them up by their arms before they could reach the second step.

Luke appeared on the top flight of the stairwell and wagged a disapproving finger at the kids. “No, no, guys. We need to talk to your mother alone. Go sit downstairs and watch TV. There are cartoons on,” he ordered.

Pepper turned around and gave me that tortured puppy look. “Mommy, we want to be with you.”

I couldn’t make eye contact with her. “Just go downstairs, Pep, and take your brother with you.” I ran up the stairs and charged past the kids. I was petrified and afraid they could smell my fear.

“Okay, Mommy,” Maxi whimpered.

I stood on the top flight waiting for the kids to disappear around the corner before taking a seat in front of Isaiah’s desk.

“Come on, Reese. Have a seat,” Luke said in his lawyer shit’s-about-to-hit-the-fan tone.

It was time to face the proverbial music. I just couldn’t stand the idea of another thing going wrong in my life. I

was so close to putting the past ten hellish years behind me. And I swore to myself I was not going to enter my thirties penniless and homeless.

This house was more than just a house. It represented my freedom papers. It signified an end and a new beginning, not just for me, but also for the innocent bystanders, Pepper and Maxwell, who were wounded in the drive-by called my marriage.

I just wanted them to rip it off like a Band-Aid and get all this bullshit over with so we could move on already. “Okay, give it to me, guys, what’s going on?”

Isaiah took a seat behind his desk and calmly folded his hands. “I hate to tell you this. We know how hard you worked for this and we will do all we can to get you guys in that house before school starts,” he said with agony in his voice.

Okay, now I was really scared. “Just tell me what’s going on. Fix what?”

Luke walked over and put his arm around the back of my chair as if to brace me for the coming storm. “Okay, here’s the deal. We got a call yesterday around four thirty from the bank that was going to do your mortgage.”

“Was going to do my mortgage?”  
What the fuck did he mean by was going to do my mortgage!

Luke moved his right arm from the back of the chair to my shoulder and placed his left hand over both of my hands. “Your credit looks great, but Eve’s credit is no longer good.”

“What are you talking about? I paid over six thousand dollars in credit card bills in order to fix her credit so she could co-sign with me. You guys said her score was good after that. Now two days before my closing it’s suddenly not good anymore? This is bullshit!” I was trying to control my fury, but the New Yorker in me just came roaring out.

Luke tightened his hold on me. He looked over at Isaiah and nodded as if

to say, "Okay, I got a hold of her, now let's go in for the kill."

"Well, my dear, it seems as if your so-called BFF went on one hell of a shopping spree. She ran up her credit debt again," Isaiah stated with obvious disappointment.

I knew she was a bit of a shopaholic but I had just finished paying off all six of her credit card bills a month ago. "How much did she spend? It's only been a month and she swore to me she hasn't used her cards since I paid them off."

Isaiah shook his head in disgust. "She lied," he offered matter-of-factly. "I don't know what type of friend she has been to you, but she really screwed you. Apparently she really likes Victoria's Secrets. She charged over two thousand in one day there and the remainder was in cash advances."

"You can't be serious." I actually felt faint. "Why would Eve do this to me? She looked me right in the face two days ago and swore up and down she

put away all of her credit cards. Now what?" I pulled my hands from underneath Luke's and held my head in defeat.

Luke took over the conversation. "You or she will have to set things straight again."

"Set things straight again? Where am I supposed to find six thousand dollars? I spent my entire summer working double shifts to come up with that money. The kids and I slept in my car for three weeks. Now you're telling me I need to come up with another six thousand dollars or all of our suffering and sacrifice was for nothing?" I was choking back the tears as well as the rage I felt coming on.

Isaiah came from around his desk, pulled up a chair next to mine, and laid out his plan of attack for me. "You need to confront her. Don't let her get away with this. Didn't you tell us her husband has a drinking and drug problem? Maybe he's the one who did it."

What Isaiah said actually made sense. Eve always allowed that drunk to use her. He couldn't even hold down a job. I conceded, "You're right. He's always talking her into doing stupid shit." I'd be damned if some good-for-nothing lush was going to keep me from my dreams. "Give me the phone, please." It was about to get downright Brooklyn up in here, and I wasn't even from Brooklyn!

Isaiah jumped out of his seat like a there was a spring attached to his ass and handed me his desk phone. "Are you going to call her?"

"Do you want us to leave?" Luke offered. "We can give you some privacy if you want."

I didn't want to face this alone. "No, I want you guys right here. I'm afraid of what I might say if I'm left to my own devices."

Actually, I wasn't sure what I was going to say if she picked up. All I knew was that I needed to keep it together.

Going off on her or being accusatory wouldn't get me anywhere. I prayed these guys could rein me in if I started to lose it.

She picked up after only two rings. Shit! "Hello?" she said in a shaky tone. She almost sounded like she knew the jig was up.

"Eve, it's Reese." Isaiah and Luke pulled up their chairs and listened with intensity, as if they were privy to recently uncovered FBI tapes. With my peanut gallery in attendance it was game on! "I'm at Isaiah's office. Isaiah and Luke just told me you ran up your credit again. Why?"

It seemed like hours passed before she answered. "I can't talk right now; I'm on my way to my mother's." CLICK! The bitch hung up! WTF?

"What happened? Did she hang up?" I guess Isaiah was able to read my face.

"Yeah, the bitch hung up. It's on now." I redialed as fast as my fingers

could take me. “Damn!” Straight to voicemail.

“She didn’t pick up. I didn’t think she would,” Luke stated the obvious.

“Oh no, this trick didn’t! It rang once then went to voicemail. There was no way in hell that thieving bitch was going to get away with stealing our future. Isaiah, I need your cell phone, please.” I put out my hand and he complied.

I was betting she would be dumb enough to answer. “Hello?” Bingo! She was as senseless as I thought.

It was time for some hardball. “If you hang up, I will be at your mother’s in ten minutes. If you don’t show up there, I’ll be at your job. Trust me when I tell you, if you don’t fess up now to what happened, I’m sure a judge will have no problem getting the truth out of you.”

“Sounds like the shit’s about to hit the fan.” Isaiah could hardly contain his excitement. “Go get her, girl. We got your back,” he whispered.

“What happened? Why did you run up your credit again two days before my closing? I want an answer, and I want it now. I think you owe me that.” The only way I kept from screaming my head off at her was to grit my teeth. “Well?” My jaw was starting to hurt.

“You told me they already checked my credit. I thought that was it. I swear, Reese, I didn’t know they were going to recheck it.” She actually sounded sorry. Awww - bullshit!

“So, that somehow made it okay for you to buy up the entire Victoria's Secret catalogue?” I couldn’t wait to hear the answer to this one.

“I admit I bought some stuff from Victoria's Secret because I really needed clothes for my new job, but I swear I didn’t know George took all those cash advances out on my card. I didn’t ask you to pay off my credit cards anyway. You did it because you needed me. So don’t call me up threatening

me,” Eve ordered. Wow, that bitch had balls.

“Let me get this straight; according to you, the reason I worked every day for the past three months was to pay off your credit cards so you could buy clothing and so that your deadbeat husband could buy the good drugs and booze?”

“It’s not our fault if you don’t get your house!” the bitch yelled at me.

Oh, hell no! Who the fuck did she think she was talking to? “Not your fault if I don’t get my house? Really? You and that fucking loser you allow to beat your ass on a regular basis are going to give me back my money! Trust!”

“I don’t have that kind of money, Reese. I have my two boys to take care of and George is out of work. What do you want me to do?” She actually sounded confused and hurt, like I was supposed to have sympathy.

It was obvious she just didn’t get it. “Then why would you spend money that

wasn't yours? You have until tomorrow to give me the entire six grand back or not only will I take you to court, but I will also beat your ass to a pulp. You know me, Eve; I always do what I say without delay." I was pretty sure I made my intention crystal clear.

"You have twenty-four hours and the clock starts ticking now." She hung up. Okay, whatever. In twenty-four hours I would show up at her home or her job and collect or beat her ass like she stole something, which she did.

"So what happened?" Luke asked.

I had completely forgotten about Luke and Isaiah. "Bitch acted like I owed her something and hung up. I gave her twenty-four hours to come up with my money or I'm going to simply beat her ass down."

"Oh my God, girl, you're crazy." Isaiah was laughing so hard he almost slipped out of his chair. "But I believe you." He turned to Luke who was

shaking his head in disbelief. “Oh, she’ll do it. Reese is hardcore.”

Luke agreed. “I know she’ll do it, I just can’t believe you girls were friends since the sixth grade and she could do something like that to you. Is she on drugs, too?”

“One would think so.” Hard to believe I was about to defend her. “She’s a crazy bitch not a drugged-up bitch. It’s the husband. He’s the one who’s constantly talking her into doing stupid stuff.”

Eve always fell for the “bad” boy. If there was some fucked-up, boozed-up, or drugged-up loser within five miles of that idiot broad, she’d get with him. She actually met her past three boyfriends, including the current charity case she married, while volunteering at a rehab center for substance abusers.

I digress.

“So, Reese, how are we going to get you back on track? I’ll be honest with you; I don’t think Eve’s going to give you

your money. We need to come up with a plan or your closing isn't going to happen." Leave it up to Luke to bring me back to reality.

"I have no fucking clue, Luke." And I didn't. I really didn't have a God damn clue what the hell I was going to do if Eve didn't pay up.

Isaiah informed me, "Even if you do come up with the money to pay down her credit cards again, you won't be able to close Monday because you have to give it time to hit her credit report. Maybe we can push it for Tuesday."

"Tell me something I don't know, Isaiah." I needed to stop directing my anger towards these guys and focus my energy on coming up with a Plan B. "Sorry."

"It's going to be okay, Reese. It's one day." Isaiah attempted to talk me down.

But the only thing that could give me any form of comfort was the thought of being in my own home. "I wanted us to

be in our own home so badly by September thirteenth, Pepper's birthday. I promised her a birthday dinner in our new home."

What was I going to tell the kids? We had been officially homeless for six months, three weeks of which were spent in my car. I'd reached my breaking point. Where in God's name were we going to live? Eve was my last shot in the dark. We had no other options.

When my family heard the word divorce they turned their backs on us. According to my mother, sister, cousins, aunts, and uncles, marriage was a lifelong sentence. No amount of cheating, stealing, beating, or lying was supposed to break the bond that God made. Never mind the parts about honoring your spouse and thou shall not commit adultery. Those little gems were left open for interpretation by the husband.

FUCK 'EM! I had been the black sheep of the family since day one. I wasn't going to let it get to me now. I had to get their voices out of my head and concentrate on the task at hand.

"So where are you guys going to stay until you close? You know you can't go back to Eve's," Isaiah pointed out with a concerned look on his face.

"I'll figure it out." I always had a last resort plan on hand. "I just want to get my kids and go. I'll call you guys Monday."

Luke and Isaiah threw each other that "man, she's screwed" look. "Let us know what you want to do. We will do everything we can for you. I will do anything to help you. You know that, right?" Isaiah assured me.

I couldn't look into his eyes. I felt like such a loser and completely unworthy of his sympathy. "I know, thanks."

If I weren't so proud, I wouldn't have been in this situation. I would have been happily married to a totally hot,

intelligent, generous, and kind man who wanted to take care of my kids and me. But I couldn't accept the fact that a guy like Isaiah would want me. Why would a guy like that want someone as damaged as me?

I felt like a loser at love and at life. I was divorced and penniless. What could Isaiah possibly see in me? The only thing I thankfully still had going for me was my body and face. And I was about to put them to work. What choice did I have?