

VALMOND

Confidential

EPISODE 0: SINGLE & SEXY



K. Rutter

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WRITTEN BY K. RUTTER

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Valmond, Ohio

Population: 3,129

County Seat of Tripper County

High rates of multigenerational families and long-term residency

Median Household Income: \$70,000-\$75,000

Summary: The rural Midwestern parents like to brag about their kids' sports achievements and scholarships, and the term super-sweet is not only a variety of corn but also what's whispered into innocent ears as they lose their virginity on the backseats of parked cars on the sides of country roads.

Growing up in Valmond, baseball is king, sweet corn is queen, and you mean nothing if your last name isn't Thorpe. It's where BJ's are exchanged as Valentine's, but women get down on their knees for one other man as well because every Sunday, the church pews are full, and the freshly ironed dresses are daintily lifted as they slide to their knees in prayer.

One boutique, one grocery store, and only two kinds of people: the farmers and everyone else.

It's where dreams die, and rumors fly.

Welcome to my hometown.

By: Lauren McDelgar

Staring at the words pinned to her corkboard, Lauren McDelgar thought back to her 3rd year of college. She took a communications class in which she completed an assignment based on her hometown. She was required to name real statistics and to write a summary of what life was like. Though provocative, her professor gave her a score of 90 for her creativity.

Damn, she was proud of that assignment.

After college, when she had moved to New York City to chase her dreams, she kept that assignment tucked beneath a magnet on her beat-up old fridge. She looked at it each morning in an attempt to garner the motivation to keep moving forward. Unfortunately, reality had chased her right back to Ohio. Art and design were her passions, but she had only been able to find a low-paying job in advertising. It was a struggle to pay rent, but her pride was too great. Instead of asking her parents for help, she packed her bags and headed home under the guise of missing the small town. What she missed was the big-city vibe. She missed the feeling of making her own way. Mostly, she missed the distance between her and her ex-boyfriend, Hunter. Standing in her childhood bedroom, Lauren looked in the mirror as she brushed her hair.

Valmond, Ohio. What the hell was she doing back here?

She kicked herself for agreeing to meet Suzanne Thorpe at the Valmond Fair. She and Suzanne had been best friends since kindergarten. Suzanne had beaten Lauren at almost everything. Suzanne grew up on her dad's sprawling farm, and he owned multiple rental homes; Lauren's parents owned a modest house and a small diner. Suzanne got her period first, lost her virginity first, and got her driver's license first. She was named head cheerleader and won prom queen. There was only one thing that Lauren had gotten that Suzanne didn't: Hunter.

Hunter had been her first everything. He was the little boy who pulled her hair in first grade. The boy who asked her to her first dance in middle school. He was the young man who slid his hand into her pants after a party in 9th grade and then spent the rest of her high school years stringing her along with false promises.

Lauren walked to the closet to find a cute outfit. Deciding on a short, red romper, she realized that she was fretting over her looks because she knew he would be at the fair. He didn't deserve the care she took with her makeup. He had destroyed the right to invade her thoughts. Yet there he lived, in her mind, on her heart, and physically causing the ache in her stomach.

Finally, one hour after she had agreed to meet Suzanne, she forced herself to her car and drove toward the fair.

Arriving a short while later, the smell of roasted corn permeated the air. After walking for a few moments onto the Thorpe property where the fair was held, Lauren stopped to buy a bag of cotton candy. This brought back memories of her youth, when she would run along the midway and beg her parents for more ride tickets.

Pushing the memories out of her mind, she headed toward the beer tent.

The beer tent.

Quintessential small-town entertainment. A mix of local drunks, humble hard-working people who only drank a few times each year, and a few randoms who would never be seen again. Always, there were alumni of Valmond High School.

Lauren's parents, Dixon and Daisy, owned Daisy's Diner. She was practically raised there, so she knew all the longtime residents. She also knew her parents wanted her to carry on the family business, but she had no desire. Being a small town, it had always been more than a diner. It was a gathering spot, a late-night hangout, and a place where parents hosted children's birthday parties on slow, Sunday afternoons. When she returned home, she agreed to help at the diner until she found a permanent job. It reminded her of everything she saw as a failure in her life. She was supposed to be in New York, meeting the

love of her life and waiting for a Tiffany engagement ring and a proposal atop The Empire State Building. Instead, she would be serving half-price dinner specials to farmers and ex-friends who didn't always know how to leave a decent tip.

Being at the diner also meant she would hear all the gossip. She didn't like to be involved in it, but she enjoyed hearing it. If she didn't know the person directly, she would know a friend, a cousin, or a coworker. News traveled fast in Valmond, and not always accurately. However, it was a distraction from her own worries.

One constant source of recent conversation was Samuel Harper and what was going to happen to him. She did not believe the accusations. He had always been so honest and kind, but his name was splashed across the newspaper and social media.

Reaching the end of the food trucks, Lauren saw Suzanne's father, Maxwell Thorpe, huddled up in conversation with another successful farmer, Amos Newman. Her bet was that they, too, were talking about Samuel. It was no secret that Maxwell had a dislike for Samuel. Several years earlier, Maxwell had made him a generous offer for his land, which Samuel promptly turned down.

Nearing the beer tent, Lauren heard a voice say, "Make good choices." She knew the voice belonged to Heather Winzel. Heather had one of those distinct voices that seemed to carry for miles; it cut through crowds and made people cringe. Seated directly next to the entrance of the tent, she sat behind a table, displaying a large sign that read, *Valmond Isn't for Sale*. Heather was on the city council and was leading a crusade against big developers. She and her husband were members of the Valmond Church but were also among the first to pass along "neighborhood news," as Heather liked to call it: it was gossip, pure and simple.

Heather bellowed, “I’ll pray for you,” as Lauren ducked into the tent. Lauren paused for a moment, quickly recognizing the group of her ex-classmates.

Without trying, her eyes zeroed in on Hunter, though he was preoccupied with a pretty brunette. Her heart raced, and she immediately regretted coming.

How could he still have such a hold on her? Or was it just habit, what her body knew?

God knows, she never allowed herself to feel so deeply about anyone else. She had dated a few guys in New York City, but never let them close to her heart. Or her panties.

She craved physical touch as much as she craved everything good that could come along with it.

Suddenly, Lauren felt herself being pulled from the trance she had fallen into.

She felt heat take over her, as if it were an imprint on her skin. She followed the source and found herself locking eyes with Logan Orr. What the fuck.

Logan was a jerk to her during their senior year of high school, when his family moved to town. They bought an old house and converted it into a restaurant. Lauren’s parents tried to be friendly, hoping to see them as allies in a small area with few businesses, but a terrible experience with Logan had established the last six years of bad blood. The townspeople gossiped and made it into something else entirely, as small towns usually do, and everyone saw the two families as rivals. Now, Logan’s eyes were on her, and she assumed it was out of animosity.

Lauren rolled her eyes and turned away. As she started to take a step, a longtime friend of her mom stopped her.

“My God, Lauren, look at you! You are beautiful, honey.”

She grabbed Lauren into a tight hug, then stepped back with a big grin.

“Your momma and I are setting up a lunch soon. I want to hear all about the big apple.”

“I can’t wait!” Lauren said, though it sounded dreadful.

After a few moments of small talk, Lauren was able to move on and reluctantly made her way to Suzanne

“Lauren, I’ll be damned! I didn’t think you’d show up.”

She couldn’t help but smile at her old friend. Suzanne was barely 5’ tall with long blonde hair and a big personality.

They quickly embraced, then settled onto the edge of a picnic table.

“Jax, go get Lauren a beer,” Suzanne ordered.

Turning to Lauren, she whispered. “I met Jax at a gas station in Columbus.”

Lauren laughed, not at all surprised.

“Only you would pick up a guy at a gas station.”

“I didn’t pick him up; we only added each other on Snap. Tonight is the first time we are meeting up. Besides, I have my sights set on Kirk.”

She motioned with her head toward a handsome guy standing nearby.

“Who is Kirk?” Lauren asked.

“Only the hottest guy in this town. He’s a newcomer. He moved into the ground-floor apartment in the same building as Tianna Temple.”

“What does he do for a living?”

“I’m not sure,” Suzanne answered.

Suzanne continued, “My dad said I should steer clear of him, but my mom said he seems exciting.”

Lauren fought the urge to laugh out loud. Of course, Suzanne’s mom would think that. She was wild herself. She had passed her mother,

Katherine Thorpe, as she entered the beer tent. She was sitting with Milly Jones and flirting with a small group of younger men.

Katherine was hot, and unfortunately, she knew it. She was not known for being a saint. Quite the opposite, actually. Lauren was shocked that Katherine didn't want Kirk for herself.

Jax returned with the beer, and a country rock band started playing. For the next several hours, Lauren anxiously stole looks at Hunter, though he completely ignored her.

By 11:00 pm, Suzanne was hammered. She was making a fool of herself, but seemed to be having the time of her life.

Not Lauren. She had slowly sipped on two beers throughout the evening, not finishing either. She didn't want to leave, feeling compelled to stay near Hunter. At the same time, she was miserable with his flippant attitude.

Just when she thought she could not feel worse, she saw Hunter kiss the brunette. Lauren wanted to vomit.

She decided to finally go home, but needed to use the restroom first. Lauren slipped behind the tent to look for the porta-potty. Reaching for the handle, the door abruptly flew open, and Logan exited, bumping into her.

"Damn, I'm sorry, Lauren," he said, grabbing her arm to steady her. She didn't say anything; she only made a nasty face at him.

Leaving the porta-potty, she found Logan waiting for her nearby.

"I just wanted to apologize again," he said.

"Don't worry about it," said Lauren, as she turned to walk away.

He walked fast to get in front of her.

"No, I mean..." he started, then stopped.

Annoyed, she spat out, "What?"

"I want to apologize for how I treated you in high school. I was less than a gentleman."

“Less than a gentleman?” she snorted. “You were a total dick.”

He laughed.

“Fair enough.”

Her brutal honesty eased the tension, and both relaxed a little.

“This is no excuse, but I was really bitter back then. My parents moving me here at the start of my senior year was really tough. I felt isolated from all of you who had grown up together, so I lashed out. Looking back, I think I liked to cause scenes because it made people notice me.”

His voice was kind, which she did not expect.

“I wish I could go back and change things. I know I was a bit of a bully when really I thought you were gorgeous.”

Lauren was still absorbing his words when he said something else.

“I still do.”

She locked eyes with him and was stunned to find her heart racing and familiar desires stirring deep inside.

They stood staring until a crack of lightning broke the silence.

As rain started to fall and people around them scattered, Lauren did not object when she felt his hand take hers. Running, she followed him to a red Chevy truck. Logan opened the passenger door to let her in before running to the driver’s side.

Inside the cab, they looked at each other in the darkness, and both started to laugh.

Logan spoke first, “I can’t remember the last time I was caught in a rainstorm.”

“I spent the last year in New York City, and was caught in the rain too many times,” Lauren said.

“What brought you back home?” he asked.

“Money,” was all she said.

“What do you plan to do here?”

“I’m still trying to figure that out.”

She jumped when thunder rumbled loudly.

The truck was getting warm and stuffy. Logan started the truck to turn on the air conditioning. The radio buzzed on, playing a soft country song.

A few people came running from the direction of the tent towards Logan’s truck. Lauren realized it was Hunter and the girl from earlier. They hopped in a car and drove off.

She felt tears welling in her eyes. All night, he acted like she never existed, when the Valmond Fair had always been special to them. At least, it had been to her. It was after a night at the fair that she had first slept with him when she was fifteen.

The rage and grief and lust all swirled inside her. She loved Hunter. She hated Hunter. She didn’t know what to do, so she did the only thing she could think of.

She pounced on Logan.

As the storm raged on and heavy rain continued to fall, she threw her leg over his lap, straddling him. She used both hands to touch his dark, trimmed beard as he worked to free her large breasts from the V-neck romper. Leaning to suck on her nipples, she used a hand to open his belt buckle. He lifted slightly, breaking the kiss, to let his jeans be pulled down to his knees.

He was hard. It would be hard not to be with her tits in his hands. She pulled away and positioned herself on the seat so she could grab him with one hand. Leaning over, she took him in her mouth, sucking the tip lightly between her lips. He lay back his head and moaned. After a few minutes, she sat on him again, pulling her romper and

panties to the side. She slowly slid down onto his length, as he cupped her ass with both hands. Moaning, she started to ride him. Her breasts bounced as she moved, the wetness from within her was dripping down, as the rain pelted the roof and windshield.

She closed her eyes and thought of Hunter.

The thunder rumbled.

She remembered how his curly hair would pelt with sweat when he lay her down and fucked her.

Lightning lit up the sky.

She remembered how her nails felt digging into his back.

There was another loud rumble.

She pictured him jerking off as he watched her rub her clit. He fucking loved to watch her do that.

The rain slowed down as she felt her breath come in waves, and her insides quivered with an orgasm.

She kept going, pumping up and down until he also came, jerking forward slightly and moaning.

She leaned into him, each of them wrapping arms around the other. After a moment, she pulled back to the passenger side, fixing her romper and smoothing down her hair.

“I didn’t see that coming,” she said with a laugh.

“That makes two of us,” he agreed, as he, too, pulled his clothes back together.

They spent a little time making small talk, but suddenly things felt awkward.

What the hell just happened? Lauren thought.

“Well, it’s getting late. I’d better get going,” she said.

“Where is your car? I’ll drive you to it.”

“No, it’s okay. I’m not far away.”

“Would you like to meet for coffee sometime?” he asked.

“Sure,” she lied. She had no intention of meeting up with him.

“I’ll stop by the diner sometime,” he said.

“Good night,” she spoke softly, as she hopped from the truck.

He turned on his truck lights so she could see better in the darkness.

She did not notice the lone figure sitting next to them in a dark van,

watching. As she started her car and pulled away, his face was

illuminated in the darkness.

It was Kirk.

Watching, Smiling, Waiting.

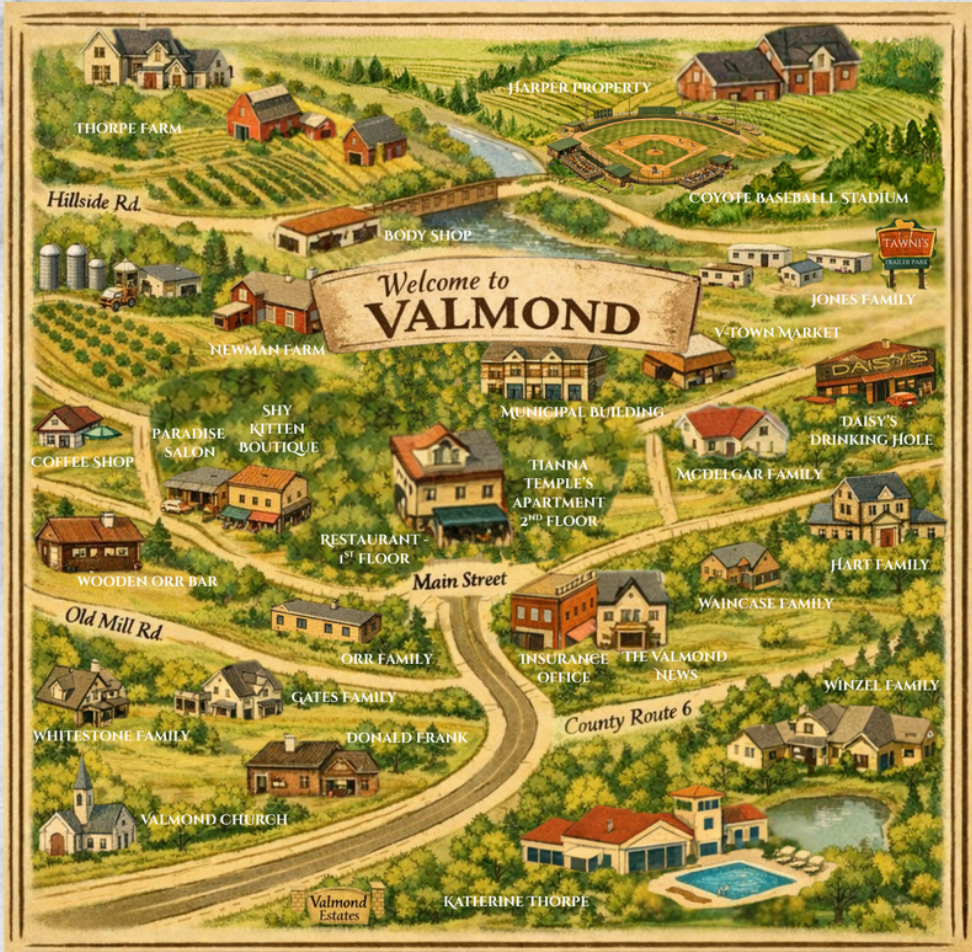
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WHERE THE BOURBON IS STRONG
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