

## CHAPTER 12:

### ONE OF THE WORST MOMENTS IN MY LIFE

Anthony was a well-known, Minneapolis hair stylist who trained with the acclaimed Vidal Sassoon in England. He was frequently featured in magazines like *Modern Salon* and *Glamour* and knew his way around New York runways and Europe's highest fashion districts. A few times a year, he traveled to Seattle to put on expensive demonstrations for local stylists who were eager to learn about his trendsetting, hair cutting techniques and the newest clothing styles.

In 1982, I took the time to attend one of Anthony's demonstrations at a hotel in downtown Seattle and sat in awe as he performed his magic on a brightly-lit stage. He was tall and self-assured, and wore black leather, Italian-made shoes that clearly stood out on stage. His presence and command of the audience was inspiring and something to watch. As he snipped and flipped strands of hair at lightning speed, I wished that I had that same kind of mastery. When he finished with one of his demonstrations, a young woman with fine, delicate, facial features and long, blond hair confidently walked onto the stage. Her overall presence was so striking that she looked like a professional model.

"What's your name, sweetie?" Anthony asked.

"Claire," she said. Although her appearance was stunning, I detected a hint of nervousness.

Without another word, Anthony wrapped a cape around Claire's shoulders and began his work. In seconds, hair started to fly every which way. I should have been paying closer attention to the cut, but what stood out to me was the scared look on this girl's face. Her shoulders were also rigid and filled with tension.

"Now, watch this," announced Anthony, "You must take complete control over the client and her hair if you want to become a master-level stylist. This is your show! And you must carry out your vision for her head of hair."

"What about what the client wants? Doesn't that matter?" I mumbled to myself, but I didn't have the nerve to speak up and repeat my thoughts in front of the large crowd.

Anthony continued to whittle away at Claire's hair. Every time I thought he was done, he kept on cutting. I could eventually see tears welling up in her eyes and I felt sick to my stomach as I watched how increasingly miserable she became.

When he finally finished, Anthony whipped the cape off of Claire's shoulders as if he was completing a magic trick. He then shouted out to the crowd, "Now, this is what's popular on the fashion runways in New York! Isn't it a gorgeous cut?" The audience surged to its feet and clapped loudly. Feeling trapped by my surroundings, I reluctantly joined in. Out of the corner of my eye, however, I watched as Claire stood up and walked off the stage with a distraught look on her face.

In spite of what I had just witnessed, I arranged for Anthony to give two private classes in my salon the following year. I felt that I had to expose my stylists to his advanced hair cutting techniques and modern fashion sense because I wanted to improve the quality of work at my salon.

Anthony and I kept in touch over the years and one day, in the middle of a hectic afternoon, the receptionist called me over, handed me the phone, and said that Anthony was calling from Minneapolis. We quickly exchanged pleasantries and he hurried to make his point.

"Kay!" he exclaimed, "I have wonderful news! I'm moving to Seattle!"

"What? Is this going to be for good?" I replied.

"Yes, I've been in Minneapolis for five years now and I think it's time for a change. I'll be there next week to start setting things up."

"Wow, so soon," I said, trying to process what he had just told me.

Caught off guard, I was speechless and had no idea what else to say.

"Kay," Anthony continued, "I'm calling you because I want to talk to you about a wonderful business opportunity with me. Can we meet for lunch after I get there? I think you'll like what I'm going to offer you."

I had no clue what Anthony had in mind, but his excitement, which was similar to his presence on stage, was contagious. "Yes! Let's do that!" I agreed.

After he arrived in town, we met at a well-known, upscale restaurant in downtown Seattle. Anthony approached me with the look of someone who had just walked off the cover of *Gentlemen's Quarterly (GQ)* magazine. His dark hair was slicked back with a heavy coating of pomade and his leather jacket looked like a million bucks on top of his tailored, grey wool slacks.

"Can you give us a table in a quiet corner of your restaurant?" he asked the waiter.

We were escorted next to a window in the back and Anthony didn't waste any time in spelling out what he had in mind.

"Kay, thanks for coming. I'm so excited to talk to you about a partnership between the two of us." He was intense with his direct eye contact and animated

gestures. "Here is my plan. I'll be completely moved to Seattle in two weeks and I need a salon to call home. I've chosen your salon, Studio 904, as my home base!"

"Uh...Ummm...Why?" I asked, totally taken aback by his plan.

"I realized that there are a lot of nice salons in Seattle, but I think the two of us can help each other become even more successful. You have a beautiful salon and nice clients, but your stylists' work, pardon the expression, sucks! I can give your stylists ongoing training to raise their skills. Can you imagine? You'll have in-house training by Anthony Marciano, a Vidal Sassoon-trained, master hair stylist from Minneapolis. Clients will be busting down your doors in no time because there will be so much publicity."

"Did you say you'll be working in my salon?" I asked. In my disbelief at what I had just heard, it was the only detail that he mentioned that registered with me.

"Yes, but I won't be there all of the time," Anthony said. "I will be busy with press interviews as well as hosting cutting classes and fashion shows whenever I get the chance. But yes, otherwise I will be at Studio 904 serving clients with the rest of your stylists."

"But, where will all of these clients come from?" I asked, as I began to realize that there might be a problem with his proposed arrangement.

"You'll bring clients into the salon through your regular marketing, but then you'll direct them to my chair. Essentially, I want you to give me my own chair so that I can start to establish my business."

"Oh, I see. You want me to rent you a chair. Did you have a rent figure in mind?" I asked, wanting to get the conversation back to a place where I felt a little more in control.

Anthony's impeccable eyebrows shot up. "You really don't get my offer, do you?"

I replied, "Sorry, but I don't understand how this will be a mutually-beneficial, working relationship." I tried to project professionalism, but I felt outclassed and a little dumb for not understanding his proposal.

He gave me an appalled look and raised his voice. "You will charge me nothing for the chair! In exchange for occupying a space in your salon, I will train your stylists to be the best in the city. Don't you get it? My training is worth thousands of dollars. I'm offering that to you absolutely free of charge!" he explained.

I couldn't ignore the feeling that I was being scammed or something pretty close to it. But, on the other hand, I thought, what if I am turning a blind eye to the chance of a lifetime? I had to consider that there might be some merit to his idea. Under his plan, I would get a celebrity stylist who would attract a lot of new clients, train my fledgling staff, and give Studio 904 a prestigious image.

Anthony leaned in closer to me. "Kay, I need to have your answer today. If you agree, then I can begin working in two weeks."

I cleared my throat. It was dry despite having already drained my water glass. "I'll have to think about it," I said, "I don't think I can give you an answer today."

"What is there to think about? You should be ecstatic that I'm giving you this opportunity. You know, I could have picked any of a dozen other salons in Seattle, but I chose yours." he said, emphatically.

I hadn't thought about Claire and her appearance at Anthony's hair cutting demonstration in a long time, but suddenly I couldn't get her distraught face out of my

mind. Tightly gripping the sides of my chair, I made a split-second decision like Anthony had requested.

"I'm sorry," I said, "but I can't take you up on your offer. I don't see how this deal can be a win for me."

"How can you say that? It's a fantastic deal for you," he replied, incredulously.

"It doesn't equate to a "win-win." You want to work in my salon with no committed schedule and have me direct my clients to your own chair so you can put money into your own pocket. What this amounts to is paying you to occupy space in my salon and use my clients, but you are providing nothing in return except training for my stylists."

Anthony stood up abruptly. "You are stupid and small-minded!" he yelled. His face was red. "I don't know how you're still in business! The work that comes out of your salon is so bad. How do you ever think your employees are going to improve unless you have someone like me to teach them? Tell me, who is going to be able to do that for you?"

I wanted to crawl into a hole. Anthony was causing a scene and everyone in the restaurant was staring at us.

"I will teach them," I whispered.

"You? Are you kidding? What makes you think you're capable of training anyone? You've never been anywhere. You're just a local stylist!" he shouted.

I quickly stood up.

"Anthony, I'm leaving." I said.

“Besides, you’re a woman. You’ll never be seen as a Super Stylist!” he said, as he glared at me.

I ran out of the restaurant with tears streaming down my face, feeling like the whole world was watching me stumble out the door.

"You don't have it in you to do it!" I heard Anthony yelling behind me.

I rushed to my car sobbing, achingly crying out almost unintelligibly, "I *know* that I can train them... I *can* and I *will* train my employees...I *can*, I *can*, I *can*..."

Years later, I realized that I had made the right decision as my own training program became well known and successful.

### **WATCH MY VIDEO**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcujoyjCa-g>