

3. ALL ABOUT HATTIE

Robbie has invited me up to Memphis for the month. My cousin's friend Hattie wants me to squire her around the city. Robbie tells me, "She's a really cool girl."

"If she's so cool, why don't you take her around?"

"I've got to be at work early tomorrow." He works in an automotive parts store.

From the moment that we first meet, there is this strange chemistry between us. But she acts scared of me. She is really stylish. If it was a little cooler out, I am sure that she'd be in an old-fashioned box hat with a veil. She's wearing a dark green satin dress. She definitely has that thing. She gives me the eye. We've hardly been together any time before she plants a kiss on me.

"You're cute," she tells me. I can almost sense that she is planning something for later in the night.

We go see a couple of local bands. Nothing really special. Afterwards, we go to a dance club. At first she acts all seductive with me.

"You want to come into the bathroom with me." She leads me into one of the stalls. She gets a big smile on her face as she pulls me close to her. I love the wave in her hair. It gives her this sense of confidence. She has both her hands on my ass as she kisses me. I'm not sure what's going to happen next. Then she props herself up straight and shakes her head.

"I need a drink," she maintains. "Let's go dance."

I buy her a whisky sour. I have a beer. She takes a sip of her drink.

She tells me, "Watch my drink for me."

I don't feel like dancing. She goes off on her own. The dance floor is moderately packed. She finds a spot where she can show off.

After dancing for a while, she comes back for her drink.

She turns to me, "You're not bored, are you?"

"I'm having a good time." The music is pretty good. It's a mix of rock n' roll and indie dance hits. I head out to the dance floor and sort of dance with her. She is flitting around on her own. I watch.

There's a guy here who isn't that much into the music. But he thinks that he's one sexy dancer. He'd be more comfortable at some upscale club. He's a yuppie in training. He is wearing a tight shirt.

Mr. Suave works his way close to Hattie. She smiles at him. He comes up from behind her and starts rubbing his body against hers. I can't believe that she is even dancing with him. He seems like such a loser. He doesn't care about the music. He doesn't get it. He's just coming on to her on the dance floor.

I just want to leave. It had been a fun night. But it is starting to bore me now. Hattie is embarrassing me.

In the car later that night, she seems pissed, "You weren't having much fun."

"I wasn't that comfortable." I don't know what is really happening with her.

"You were being a dick to me. Where did you go? After we were dancing, I couldn't find you for about a half hour."

I feel that she is exaggerating.

“I just went off to play pinball in the other room. You didn’t seem that you were doing that badly off for yourself.”

She stares at me. “What are you implying?”

“I don’t know. I just thought that we were getting on really well. Then you went all cold on me.”

She looks strained, “I was having fun. Are you one of those possessive types?”

“I’m just trying to be nice. Robbie said that you were a cool girl.”

“I’m an adult. I don’t need someone telling me how to run my life.”

She is getting more than defensive. I can’t hide my irritation.

I question her motives, “You practically let some guy fuck you on the dancefloor, and then you cringe when I try to touch you? What’s that all about?”

“I’m not interested in you.”

I tell her, “You didn’t seem like that earlier in the night.”

She makes an excuse, “That was all in fun. It didn’t mean anything, any more than dancing with that guy.”

I object, “Not as far as he was concerned. He wanted to go home with you. He’s done that sort of thing before, and girls went home with him.”

She is perturbed, “I didn’t go home with him.”

I answer back immediately, “You could have. I just don’t know how you can be like that.”

“Like what?”

I am critical of her, “So open with a guy that you don’t even know.”

Hattie gives me one of those looks, “I hardly know you, and you wouldn’t have minded if I had sex with you in the bathroom.”

I smile back at her. She laughs. When I drop her off, I ask to come in with her.

“It wouldn’t be a good idea.”

I see my cousin after work the next day.

Robbie asks, “Did you sleep with her?”

“No.”

He is more than perceptive, “You wanted to, didn’t you?”

I’m not sure what he’s getting at. “Maybe!”

“You are cool under pressure. Every guy in Memphis fantasizes about Hattie Boudreau. She is one hot number.”

“Is it all fantasy?” I ask.

“Let’s just say that she has a reputation.”

I wonder, “Have you been with her, Robbie?”

My cousin answers, “I don’t kiss and tell.”

“That’s total bull shit. If you had slept with her, you’d be all over that.”

I still can’t figure out what the hold is that my cousin has over Hattie. But when she learns that he is free the next night, she’s just crazy to hang out with us.

Robbie takes us to an underground club. They are playing Black Rebel Motorcycle Club when we go in.

My cousin introduces me to Ray. He’s one of the big dealers in Memphis. My cousin

only smokes pot. But he's a buddy of Ray.

"Ray always knows where the party is. He's kind of a dick. But I can deal with him." I listen to my cousin. He has a real feel for Memphis. The pulse of the city. Who to know, what to do. He also knows when to disappear. That is the real art."

Robbie informs me, "You don't want them getting into your business."

Hattie is toasted. She wants to dance. I hold my breath as I see her head for the dance floor. I feel that we will lose her before the night is over.

I head over to the bar with Robbie.

"You need to watch that girl. She gets really crazy."

"I've noticed."

Robbie reminds me, "I know that I wanted you to take care of her. I just don't want her doing a number on you. She is a little freak."

I ask my cousin, "What kind of power does she have over you?"

"We're friends. She's like family."

I don't know where she is. Robbie tells me that he has to leave early for work.

"You told me that you didn't have to work tomorrow."

He corrects me, "I told you that I didn't have to go in until late. I still have to work. It's already 2. I can't stay out all night. You take her home."

"Robbie, I don't even know where she is."

"She's somewhere around here. She came with us."

"How are you going to get home?"

He tells me, "A friend is going to drop me off. I'll see you back at the place."

When I find Hattie, she is in the other room with some guy. I am afraid that she is going to go home with him. But she is glad that I've rescued her. She has me drop her off at her house.

She coaxes me, "It's early. You have to come in."

She wants to talk about her ex, Billy. She went out with him for four years. They broke up a year and half ago. She's been pretty much of a terror since then.

"I'm just not going to give myself away like that anymore. I felt like a chicken with its head cut off. I was running everywhere with no direction."

She hasn't seemed to have found the direction yet. But she is getting fantastic at pretending.

I don't know why she is telling me this. She makes a drink for herself. She is already stumbling around.

She asks, "You're sure that you don't want something?"

"Not now. I still have to drive back."

She has other ideas. She is getting very flirtatious. She presses her nose to mine.

"The longer that we hold the kiss, the closer that we get to peering into the soul."

I have no idea what she means by that. But she is good at making up things like that. I want to pretend. I want to get inside her mind and live through her hallucinations. If she is a seer, I want to share her visions.

Hattie loves to play a song over and over again until she totally gets in the mood. She invites me to play along. She puts on "Lover I Don't Have to Love" by Bright Eyes. She digs the line, "I asked your name, you asked the time."

She tells me, "It's all about you giving me something and me giving you something in return."

"Explain."

"I told you how Billy broke my heart. You have to tell me something about yourself."

She looks in my eyes. I can't take her stare. I stand up.

"There's not really much to tell you. I've only known a few girls. None of them broke my heart."

I feel a little strange that I haven't told her more about myself. I feel as if I am hiding something from her. But there is really nothing else to tell her. I don't want to break her heart. I just want to understand her.

"Just because I tell you things, I don't want you to think that you have a special power over me. I'm still myself. I live in this place alone from everyone else. Even my lovers." I wonder if she is coming on to me. It's been a little weird coming back here alone. It's her house. I'm just a guest. She can just tell me to go at any moment.

The Bright Eyes song is still playing. She wants me to listen. The piano plays a chord over and over with a slight variation. It is hypnotic. The singer's voice gets more intense. She sits across from me for a long while. We just listen.

I know about feelings that can never really surface. People who use masks on each other. People who take pleasure in being fake. Then it becomes real. I am understanding Hattie. She is different than me. So different. I am learning.

Hattie tells me, "This is a completely personal pleasure. I am glad that you can be part of it." She is sitting on the couch. I am still on a chair. I cannot reach to touch her.

I respond, "I am glad that you let me stay."

"When there is something that you really love, you get afraid that no one else in the world will ever understand. And if you open your heart to another person, he will just rip it out. Thanks for staying." She seems to be looking at something in front of her.

She comes over and sits in my lap, her legs straddling mine. She is in black hose. All that I think about is her long black hair. I pull her close and she gives me a deep kiss. I want this moment. I can smell alcohol and her perfume. I am feeling even more drunk on Hattie. I don't want her to let go. She is already somewhere else.

She is thinking that I am the cutest thing that she has ever been with. I know it will only be hours from now when she has forgotten about this moment. I take it for what it is. I am still dressed, but I have never felt so naked with someone. I just want to hide.

"You could be the death of me!" I speak the words to myself. I know too well what they mean. I am knowing Hattie too well. I am learning so much about myself.

We melt together. With other girls, I have always felt this sense of embarrassment. Hattie and I are so good together. There is no longer any shame. It is all so natural.

After getting dressed the next morning, Hattie kisses me.

"I want you to stay with me today."

I agree. I don't want to let her out of my sight. The sun is already bright. Hattie is the day. I need her to help me with all this light. It is too much of a revelation so early.

She has made us something to eat. I love the waffles with maple syrup. I drink my coffee. I am ready for the day. I wonder what she has in store.

She takes me to a city park. We sit in the shade and watch the breeze blow through the trees. I meditate on the shadows. She is never far away.

Late in the afternoon, we return to her place for lunch.

“I don’t want to let you out of my sight,” she tells me. She kisses me. We lie together on her couch.

I ask her, “Are you hungry?”

She nods her head. “Let me make you a tofu sandwich.” I try to help, but she moves too quickly.

“When do you go shopping?” I ask.

“We can go on Thursday.” That is a couple of days from now. How long does she intend to stay here together?

She teases me, “I could get things delivered here. We could stay here forever.”

“I’ll eventually have to go back to college. I need to get a job.

“You could be my house boy.” She laughs. She throws a sugar packet at my head. It misses me and glances off the wall. It stays in the corner of the floor. It’s not the thing that she usually does. But she doesn’t want to pick it up.

“I don’t want this time to ever end!” she tells me.

That is that. Hattie has laid down the law. We must obey.

The sandwich is filling. She has fed me well. She is trying to fatten up this scrawny kid. The slaughter is in the future.

“Let’s go in the living room, and I can read nursery rhymes to you.” She giggles and shakes her head.

She is wearing a yellow skirt with a dark blue t-shirt. She has dainty black sandals on her feet.

After our lunch, I help her with the dishes.

She notes, “You are good for something.”

“I knew that I had a talent. It’s just not honed.”

She is firm, “That’s why you have to stay here. You can’t ever leave me.”

“Robbie is going to worry about us,” I state clearly.

“I like to get Robbie worried. He’s so uptight.”

She stretches her hands in the air and dances around in the kitchen. “Let’s go watch a movie.”

I ask her, “What do you want to watch?”

She makes this weird face and bellows, “Horror.”

“Really?”

“No, I’m kidding. Maybe something French. Or a Bette Davis movie. That would be great. *Now, Voyager*. I want to cry.”

I want to watch her dance some more around the house. We have been fooling around all night. Watching movies, making out. Listening to music. She goes out to porch to smoke a cigarette. This is the house that she got from her grandfather. She lives here by herself. She doesn’t have to pay a thing. It is hers.

Hattie is looking at Orion constellation. “See that star.” She points it out to me. “The light that we see from that star was shining before there were any humans on the planet. And

when our ancestors first looked at the constellation, they saw the sky speaking to them. But when the light that now shines from the stars finally reaches earth, there will be no one here to see it. The dialogue will have ended permanently.”

She is freaking me out, “Look at it. It is our mirror. We see our face inside the mirror. It is our ultimate illusion. But when our true face finally emerges in the mirror, we won’t even be around to see it.”

Hattie has a book of Wallace Stevens poetry. She quotes from “The Snow Man”, “‘For the listener, that listens in the snow/ And, nothing in himself, beholds / Nothing that is not there and nothing that is.’ When I read those words, they make me afraid. I feel as if I am totally helpless.”

“Wow!”

She reads from another poem, “‘I am the necessary angel of earth,/ Since, in my sight, you see the earth again.’”

I close my eyes. I want to take her in my arms. She is my *necessary angel*. She is so close to me. We are so far from each other. Nothing means anything without my Hattie.

I watch her blow smoke rings into the air. They make a strange haze against the glare of the street lights. She is holding the poetry book by her side. I want her to read more from the book. I want her necessity to find its vengeance. I want her to cut out my heart. Come and stand over me. Throw flowers on my grave,

There is a thickness everywhere. It is a solemn moment. There is a faint scream off in the distance. I can feel that. That is her touch. Nothing more. She moves even farther away from me. I am near the steps. She is at the far end of the porch.

I want to say something. But the silence is too perfect. Any words would be oppressive. We remain in our place. I am trying to get closer to her. I have to do it in my mind.

I am afraid that she is traveling to another place. That she is with her Billy. Or someone else. If I move to touch her, I will vanish. I have never felt such immense power in one person. I let her become my faith. I live by her sighs. I try to catch a whisper. Anything to reassure me.

She finishes her cigarette.

“Let’s go back inside. It is starting to scare me out here.”

I listen to her words. I wait for her to open the screen door, and then I follow her in. There is something almost regal about her steps. This is a procession and the pilgrimage winds its way to the destination.

The house is old. It has a musty smell. And the paint is peeling. But she works to keep it clean. There is this smell of cleanser everywhere. It covers up the history, all the shame associated with this place.

“What do you want to do now?” she asks.

I want directions. I don’t want to intrude on the stillness of the moment.

“Come over here on the couch,” she beckons me. “I want you to hold me. I want you to keep me company. The night makes me cold. I am afraid!”

It has been a while since she and Billy split up. Moments like this remind her of her weakness. She no longer wants him back. But she still feels these pangs of desire. This is not sexual. This is elemental. There is no safety here. This is nothing like the antiseptic feel of a hotel room. The ghosts have not been chased away.

She wants to go back in time. A time before Billy, before all of this. She wants me along for her transformation. But she is afraid that I might ruin things. I am an observer of her heart. She cozies up to me. I have never known anyone with such a hollow in her soul. It almost gives her the power of a time traveler. This is what we are doing together. We are stripping away our emotions. All our preconceptions. It is only Hattie and I who are alive at this moment. We are the first visitors on this place earth. We are here to start again.

I am sure that she wished the same thing from Billy. And when she gave him her kisses, she had nothing else left to give. And he just stole that part of her. It wasn't as if he made her hollow. She was already that way. That is why she clung to him with such fervency. Billy was only a temporary religion. Her faith goes much deeper. That is what I am drawn to. She is Eve!

I can hear a dog barking. He knows that it is here. Even the dog registers the fear that echoes in the night. She puts her head against my shoulder.

"I am glad that you are here with me."

I wonder if my cousin knows where I am. I am supposed to be at his place while I am here. I haven't seen him in days. I don't want to tell him what is going on. I don't want to talk about this. I just want to live it.

Hattie is a chimere. I am only starting to penetrate her phantom existence. I hope to be reborn in her kisses and in her sweat. I have never felt her sense of emptiness. But now it draws me closer to her. It makes me feel immaterial. I can't even feel my hands anymore. The numbness has transformed into something super-sensual.

We are passing through the screen that separates us from the other realm. Hattie hardly seems to be a person of this depth. She is so devoted to the surface. She lives by her fashion and her hair. But she is trying to impose that same vision on the outside world.

I think that if she were more vain that she would try to paint or something like that. She would expect everyone to submit to her vision. But she is not like that. She wants to live it unmediated by any other medium.

It is overwhelming just sitting with her. I can feel her drain all energy from me. There is a listlessness in her arms. I am trying to resist this. I don't want her to think that I am bored with her. I am not. She is so much to deal with.

The night calm flows through us. Neither of us can move. We dare not. What will happen when our time together ends? It will all end in tears. I am not used to giving this much to another person. She is exposing my selfishness. This is strange because there is something in her that just sucks everything from another person. It is totally Hattie. She is all because she sees all. Since she is part of something so much bigger than herself, she will not yield anything to another person. She doesn't want them to distract her from heaven. The gates have opened for her.

She smiles just thinking about the gratification that her quest brings her. She is almost mercenary in her search. She is taking me along to complete the process.

"Let's go to my room. I want you to listen to something. Don't laugh at me. I don't want you to make fun of me. You can't even tell Robbie about what we are doing. I need you to promise."

I have crossed my heart. I can't say a thing. She has to do the talking. Her voice is now my lullaby. I will do whatever she says.

She has one of those old-fashioned beds in the middle of her bedroom with the big oak posts and the canopy on top. It is covered in netting. Once you get inside, it's like being on a life raft. I need Hattie to rescue me from the raging sea. I hold her close as we fall asleep together.

Hattie doesn't use air-conditioning. She has a system of fans stretching through the house. It usually keeps things cool. But in some patches of the house there is this lingering humidity. I like to call this the heat of passion. She smiles when I tell her that.

Hattie puts on the My Bloody Valentine CD *Loveless*. The band is playing "Only Shallow". The snare rolls are just driving me crazy, crazy, crazy. I love it. Her voice just lets me float on endlessly. I hold Hattie close to me. We float endlessly. The guitars just are so full as they surround me with their hypnotic vibe. This is my beginning and my end. My Hattie.

I think that I will always associate Memphis with this haunting moment. The night hangs on forever. I am submerged by the darkness. I take her hand. I am no longer lost. I don't want her to let go. The music swells. We are one!

I don't even have to touch her to grasp our togetherness. There is such power looking in her eyes, the cat's eyes. And even when I close my eyes, they are still looking at me. Their gaze burns deep inside me. There is this wonderful freshness in her kiss. Her skin is so alive. I can sense the electricity in her heart.

There is such pain just looking at her. My Bloody Valentine is still playing. Hattie is my forever. I know that she will hurt me. Neither of us can bear this much feeling. It will crush her. Then she will crush me. "Sometime" is playing in the other room. She bites my lip. I kiss her forehead. Her hair is damp against my face

We cannot speak. The music is saying it all. "Soon" is playing. I will live in her heat for the rest of the night. I know that dawn will only remind us of the end. We have set the CD player to repeat the album over and over again. We will share the same trance. The music is more potent than any drug. Her love is more calming than any narcotic. Nothing can phase me. Nothing can touch me. We are one!

I feel so young, so naive. I wonder how I can love someone so much when I know that she will destroy me. You are my Memphis, the place where the waters meet. This is where I refresh my heart. The source. And the humidity of the night reminds us where we are. The waters empty out for us and flood our hearts. There is nothing so potent. Her lips are sweet. Her flesh is salty. I float on her sea.

Here there is no time. In her bed, it is forever. Before I met Hattie, I knew nothing about life. I am afraid to let her know the hold that she has over me. I doubt that she can be so oblivious. Down deep she is heartless. That is why I want her so badly. She is so hard. Even when she breaks down, there is part of her that is hidden.

I work myself up so that I can be perfect. I lie against her. I do not move. I want our bodies to merge. I listen to her heartbeat. I work to match my beat to hers. I breathe with her. I beat with her. She cannot hurt me. I am no longer here.

My eyes are closed. I see the shining light. I gasp. I work my way back to her. I want to tell her how I feel. There is little that can be said to her. He knows it all. She is a visionary. She sees everything.

"You are almost there. Don't give up now."

She whispers my name in my ear. It really turns me on. The time with her has been

marvelous. We have lived together as if there is no outside world.

The next day she is getting restless.

“I need to go somewhere for a while. Wait here for me.”

I wait for her for hours. It is getting dark by the time that she comes back.

She takes my hand and leads me to her car. It is an old Cadillac convertible.

“I need to go see Ray.”

When I get there, Ray gives me the look. I barely know him. Just a vague introduction by my cousin.

“Why did you bring her here? You just want me to get her fucked up.”

I answer him, “I brought her here because she wanted to come. You called her up and invited her.” I am trying to be nice. He is a real dick.

Indra is passed out in the corner. She comes to every half hour or so, and then settles back in her coma. I know that she is just waiting to get more coke from Ray. Ray is getting a kick in leading her on. He’s planning to have sex with her when she regains consciousness.

Hattie tells me that Indra has always turned her on. She used to be all tanned and athletic. Now she uses drugs as her main recreation. She’s just a blob in a corner. She still looks attractive. But her whole lifestyle just turns me off. Her tight jeans and showing off her body.

I look over at Hattie, “I just want to get out of here.”

Hattie is a little turned on by the situation. Ray has been giving her the eye. She’s also been staring at Indra in the corner.

Hattie turns to me and laughs, “I want to stay. I want Indra. I really like the idea of a threesome.” She is thinking about Indra and Ray.

“Hattie, if you have sex with the both of them, I want nothing more to do with you.”

She is acting antagonistic, “Now you’re getting possessive again. I’m just talking.”

I keep wondering about what all those days with her have really meant. I am so ready to walk out the door.

Ray is again sizing up Hattie. He really gives me the creeps.

Ray turns to me, “Why are you still here, boy. I thought that the lady asked you to leave.”

I wish that Robbie was hanging out with us at this moment. He could make sense of it all.

Hattie speaks to me, “You should leave. I’ll be OK.”

I’m not much of a fighter, but I want to beat the crap out of Ray. I don’t even live here, and now I’m in the midst of this shit. I don’t want to care. I wish that I could just vanish. I am considering my options.

I walk over to Hattie. I touch her on the neck. I start to give her a massage. She hardly responds.

“You have to go,” she says.

I am freaked out. I have nowhere to go.

I show up at Robbie’s. I haven’t seen him in days. I really wake him up. I tell him about Ray and Hattie. Ray tells me, “I’ve got her away from that dick head before. She’s thanked me for it. But now it’s gone on too long.”

I keep remembering the look that she got when she was contemplating sex with Ray and Indra. I felt as if I wasn’t even in the room.

Robbie says, “You know his coke is shit. It’s so cut that it just burns the nose. That’s what everyone says in Memphis. We just get desperate here.”

I am starting to feel that Hattie isn’t special. I was just believing her front.

My cousin comforts me, “I wouldn’t feel bad about Hattie. No one can hold her.”

I ask about Billy. “Didn’t she take it hard when he left her?”

“Billy is like Ray. He was never with her. She just imagined it. Now you see what she’s become.”

“What are you saying, Robbie?”

He doesn’t mince his words. He is totally disparaging about her, “She’s a whore.”

“I thought that you liked her.”

Robbie informs me, “I never really got on with her. Sure I fed my illusions about her. But I never went for her or anything. I’ve known her since she was a kid. She’s always had problems. She’s just been acting them out in public. It’s not good at all.”

I feel duped. Why have I believed her to such a great extent? She is good at maintaining a public face. She is an honest to goodness celebrity here.

I wonder, “Is she just going to crash and burn?”

Robbie talks to me until deep into the night. I have so much energy and nowhere to take it. I really want to get in my car and drive over to her place.

It’s almost 5:30 in the morning when I get a call on my cell. She is slurring her words. She sounds distraught.

“I’m stuck outside Memphis without ride. I need you to come get me.”

I put on my clothes and am all ready to go. She calls back in ten minutes with new info.

“I’m going to be all right. I’ve got a ride. It’s all going to work out.”

I don’t hear from Hattie for a week. Then she asks to meet me at a café.

“What have you been doing with yourself?” I ask her.

“Lying low. Trying to get my life in order.”

“Great,” I tell her. I don’t want to put myself on the line again. “I miss you!”

She tries to hide her face, “I’ve missed you too. I’m sorry about that night. Ray owed me some money. I wanted to make sure that he was going to pay me.”

I hesitate to ask, “What did he owe you money for?”

“A private bet. Nothing major. I never slept with him that night.”

I wonder why she is making such an effort to win me back. Nothing is going to happen between us again. She seems to know that even better than I do.

I tell her, “I really didn’t think about it too much. It was just weird when you disappeared for so long. And that phone call.”

“I thought that we could patch things up. I needed some help. I used it as an excuse. I’m sorry if it didn’t work out.”

I am hurting. She is really dressed to the nines. Her hair still has that gentle wave. She has it over her forehead today. She’s wearing this cute beret and sunglasses. I want to take her away from all this shit. I can’t even look at her too long without coming apart. I try to save face.

“Hattie, I’m going away next week. Back to Atlanta. I’m going to miss you.”

“It sounds so final,” she says.

“We could spend some time together before I leave.” I know that isn’t going to happen.

Everything has just gone haywire. I'm not good at love. I don't know how to do parting scenes.

Robbie and I go out a couple of times before I leave. Hattie is out at the underground club one night. I want to say something to her. I just wave.

Robbie encourages me, "Go find her."

I go in the other room by the pinball machine. She is making out with some guy. I don't know how to leave. I want to do something. Maybe push him away. She looks up to see me walk away. She separates herself from the guy and starts to come my way. I turn my back as I head through the door. Once I am in the other bar, I find Robbie.

"This isn't good for me. I'm not having fun."

She has trailed me to the threshold between the two room. I can tell that she has something more to say to me. I can't let it happen. I can't approach her.

On the plane to Atlanta, all that I can think about is Hattie. I really wanted to make something of it all. It never happened.