

12. DREAM THERAPY

“Walter, we trusted you to take care of our daughter.”

“I tried.”

“You slept with her.”

“She’s eighteen.”

“That’s not the point.”

THE TREATMENT: You have a problem. You dream about it. You feel bad about it. You wake up, and you realize that you haven’t done it. But you feel guilty. You never want to do it again.

“That’s not going to stop me.”

“It better.”

I have been called in to the police to answer questions about the disappearance of Angel Butler.

“She was your editor.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Maybe they are thinking of the girl to whom I offered a ride.

“Do you have something more to tell us?”

“I really should talk to my lawyer.”

“How did the story progress this far?”

“I have nothing more to say.”

Evangeline gives me the most bone-chilling look.

I ask her, “What is it honey?”

“I want to tell your wife.”

“You can’t tell her. You mustn’t tell her.”

“Why?”

“She has cancer. It will kill her.”

“I thought that she’s recovering.”

“Whatever. She needs all her strength just to make it happen.”

“It’s the right thing to do. A lie will end up working against her.”

“It’s not your right to tell her.”

“Are you going to tell her?”

“I don’t think that I could tell.”

“Then I have to do what’s right.”

I never thought that Ariel would find out. I am feeling more and more daring. I want to make love to her in our bed. I want to destroy the complacency that I have come to associate with our domestic bliss. My, how I hate what we have become. I am destroying myself by staying. But I don’t want to give up on my world. I love the house. I have affection for Ariel.

I feel like a monster. Evangeline is exposing the worst in me. The more that she challenges me, the more that I am willing to take the risk of being with her.

“You want to tell Ariel, but you’re still willing to make love with me.”

“You want it both ways. You want me to feel the guilt for you. But you want to keep hiding this from Ariel.”

“You can’t keep me in this position. Tell her, and set me free.”

“I can’t stay with her.”

“You’re going to leave her now.”

“I’m going to wait for her to get better. Then I will tell her.”

“You will tell her then.”

“I promise.”

I kiss her passionately. It makes me forget my predicament.

“You are a scoundrel.”

“I think that’s what makes my dick harder.”

“Sex has to be something evil for you.”

“I don’t think that I’m an exception.”

“What are you saying??”

“I believe you’re the devil’s daughter. You move in next to me, and my wife gets sick.

The next thing I know it, I’m having this affair with you.”

“Admit it! We both want this!”

“I do. But I would never have been like this if it wasn’t for you.”

“Guys have been saying this about you all my life. You think that you’re special. You’re no different from anyone else.”

“Then why don’t you find someone else.”

“I’ve never found someone so full of bull shit about his personal life. It makes you believe in sex more than anyone else that I know.”

“I want to believe that it’s love. But I’ve already given everything that I’ve had to Ariel.”

“You’re obsessed with this death thing.”

“Quit being so psychological with me.”

“But that’s how it’s always been. You become overwhelmed with the things that you watch. Before you even touch them. So when you do touch them, you feel totally committed to them spiritually. You’re pathetic.”

“What am I supposed to do to free myself?”

“We need to quit doing this. We need to confess. We need to be forgiven.”

“There really isn’t this much forgiveness in the world. You have to know that.”

No one has a body that gets me as turned on as Evangeline. She oozes with desire. It pains me just to look at her. It is just silly that Ariel wants me to play these sex games with her. I have never thought of her that way. Not the same way as I think of Evangeline.

This is the curse that I have brought upon our house. It has affected my wife. Even before I have become involved with Evangeline, things have been going like this. It was all inevitable that things would come to pass like this.

What can I do to stop myself? I am following a necessary urge. There is nothing that can stand in its way. I have been made this way. I have to give in.

“You do nothing but make excuses for yourself, Walter.”

I feel that she can read my mind. That I am so easy for her. That is why she is with me. It helps make up for how men have treated her in the past. I am totally predictable.

“I wish that none of this had happened. I wish that I could call it all back.”

“That’s why I want to tell her. It’s our way of making amends. Of putting things back

the way that they should be.”

“The world is meant to be in chaos. That’s why we fuck so well together.”

“You are brutal.”

“I am honest. I understand that part of our soul. That there is part of us that we cannot control. Our monster. When it takes us over, it is the most driving thing.”

After a while, we forget our worst offenses. I am waiting for time so that it might redeem me.

“Kiss me.”

I watch her naked body as she gets up from the bed. I feel this need to be with her all the time. I hate that part of our connection. Our urges just move us along like pawns. And when they dissipate, I hate her. Why isn’t she dying?

“Walter, sometimes you just make me sick. I feel that I could strangle you. You are a little prick.”

“I have the same feelings about myself.”

“When will we ever be free?”

I correct her, “If that’s what we hope to achieve, we are only becoming more trapped by our affair.”

“It’s just sex. But we are these physical beings, and we always believe that there’s more than this to our meaningless wrestling in the afternoon.”

I have never felt this blinding passion for Ariel. It has just seemed like the right thing. This is something else.

The dream seems so involved. I wake up to face the surprised face of Ariel.

“I had the weirdest dream last night. I dreamed that I was having an affair with our neighbor Evangeline.”

“I dreamed that I had cancer.”

“I thing that you had cancer in my dream as well.”

“Dreams have a way of undoing us.”

“Walter, I guess that you learned your lesson.”

“I find the woman gross. There is nothing appealing about her. But she is nice. And Henry is such a friendly guy.”

“When you deny things with such certainty, that is a sure sign that you are having an affair.”

“I told you already that I took the dream treatment. I imagined the worst thing that I could possibly do. I dreamt about it. And I wake up all guilty about it. Then I realized to my relief that it was a dream.”

“Would you sleep with her if you had a chance? Just a toss in the hay.”

“Cancer’s really not such a thing to joke about so I guess that we’re not really equal on that front.”

“Hardly so.”

I thought of other possible dreams. One that I had murdered a young woman. The other that I had stolen an idea for a novel from someone else.

“Things could get worse for both of us. I might have dreamt about our marriage.”

“I might have dreamt about stealing all our money for myself.”

“I really think that you’re a better wage earner.”

“You’re about to get a promotion.”

“I had the absurd dream about losing a package for work. And getting fired for it.”

“And the dream about the dream treatment. Something you shouldn’t be forgiven for.”

“I guess that’s where imagination is limited by reality.”

“Or pleasure is marred by pain.”

I need my morning coffee. I don’t have to go in for while. Ariel is in more of a hurry.

“I was really skeptical about this treatment stuff.”

“Ariel, I still am.”

I’m going to spend part of the morning working on my new novel. I really hope to find a publisher.

My dream is more than wish fulfillment. It reminds me that Ariel and I are not so affectionate as we once were. It’s not a big deal. I’m hardly going to act out my fantasies. There’s just none of the sparkle that surrounded our passion. It all seems so mundane. My duty. The thing to do.

I think that I feel that same way about my life. The only thing that really excites me is my writing. I feel that I can use my words to create something of real value. I can give shape and meaning to my life. I can travel to a world that is full of adventure.

I can find this thing inside of you. I can make it more than it is. Make it into something of flesh. I can touch that thing for you.

“Ariel, I want you to touch me the way that you used to.”

I tell myself this. But I want to tell that to her.

“Ariel, I want to touch you the way that I used to.”

I don’t really care to say this. I never expect to find anything more inside of her. That’s the way that it is. It is working its way deep inside me and tearing me apart. I can sleep and forget about it. I dream that I am with someone else. But that just seems wrong. So I wake up more guilty. I can’t tell Ariel how I feel. I have sex fantasies about other women all day. Voluptuous women. Women who have something that Ariel doesn’t.

I have this dream of a girl with curly blonde hair. She is in a short olive dress. I love her thin legs. Her imaginative style. I think that I see her. It is actually a neighbor leading her child to get ice cream. The dress is a drab green. She has none of the appeal of my dream. I hate myself for expecting it to be real. I hate her for not living up to the dream.

I say something nasty to her. That is for your benefit. It helps you feel my sense of guilt. You can forgive me. I can act like even more of a prig.

“Walter, I thought that you were finished playing the part of the neighborhood prig.”

The conversation starts out as Ariel. But it becomes someone else.

“You can take me home, I can show you what a prig is.”

In my dream, my dick is harder than ever.

“It’s the transplant.”

“What are you talking about. It’s my desire. It is mind over matter.”

If Ariel can touch the matter, she can figure out what is in the mind. That is why she is a scientist. She can extrapolate to the past.

“Where do we start?”

“Walter, we can discuss it at dinner.”

I hear what our dinner conversation is.

“I dreamt that I ate too much. Then I woke up.”

“I had a dream that you had cancer.”

“What did you do?”

“What I always do. I slept with a neighbor.”

“Did that cure you?”

“Fuck no. It made me want her more.”

“Why don’t you march over there and tell her.”

“I’ve been feeling pretty impotent of late. It wouldn’t do much good unless I just masturbated.

“You’re really great!”

“Thanks, Gabby.”

I don’t want to stop. I use my hands to mold her body to my desires. I squeeze both my hand together as if to ignite the place of desire. It is the core. From this core radiates all other pleasure.

She stretches herself out take me. Everything forms around this center. I am aroused. She is the flesh!

We are electric together. She can think about nothing else. It is a new history for her. She will keep coming back to this moment. She begs for this. This is her hunger. The flesh pulsates.

“Do me harder!”

Their rhythm is just fast enough that she cannot catch her breath. Her heart skips a beat. She loses a breath. She jolts to the next level. Almost near the point of an attack, the moment of collapse, she pushes for more. She has just enough to throw me into fits. I stare into her eyes so I will not lose my focus.

“Can you feel that wave?”

She is open to the belief that there is something out there for her. Something that drives her on. More than the flesh. The spirit that will make up for anything left out of the physical contact. She wants to believe with all her heart. Where the flesh is weak, this makes her strong.

She has done this time and time again in the hope that she will not have to retreat. It carries her along. She wants more and more.

“Our paths are meant to cross.”

Is that all she wants? Or is there something else. She hopes that she can create herself on the basis of the passion. But she knows that this is not so. Part of her lives in a place where she is driven down by her dreams. She hangs on but can never reach what she wants. That is why she puts so much of herself on the line in the sex. She doesn’t want me to question our union.

I have never felt like this with Ariel. She is just the opposite. She knows that she already has it. She hardly looks at the mirror except to check herself.

Gabby lives in horror of the mirror. I can’t help. She feels that will never measure up to an image that she has herself. So she always has to give herself to the image that others have of her. She has to get them while that feeling of desperation corresponds with her fear. When skin first touches skin. She has to make it all happen so quickly. Not let her partner have second

thoughts.

I am already giving in to my doubts. She hates me for this. But there is nothing that I can do. I don't want to reject her so summarily. I hold her even closer. But I almost feel my own body slip away. There is nothing for either of us.

"Kiss me so that we don't forget each other."

I give in to her mythology. The night is young and there is little left but the draughts of forgetfulness.

She is such a poet. But it is not enough to rescue our time together.

"I want you to push me harder!"

How can this intensity match her tender longings? It cannot. She knows that our time together is fast slipping away.

"Hold me close before I melt."

I don't want to lose myself as well. I make the ruthless sacrifice.

My time with Gabby went down as this unfortunate incident. I didn't want it to be that way. I feel ashamed.

Germaine offers an uplifting contrast. I am a thief in the night. I have taken from Gabby, and now I share the spoils with Germaine. Her input seems so refreshing. I can hardly ignore that I have abandoned Gabby to engage Germaine's resources. She is an artist. I accept her call.

Germaine orients me to my creative side. I have never felt this kind of stimulating conversation. We talk about art and photography. I tell her about my friend Ralph. I discuss my writing.

"You finally have your chance to escape. Stay in this world."

"What do you mean?" I ask her.

"You can't go back to Ariel. She has been plotting against you. In your world, she seems like a loving wife. Behind the veil, we see her for whom she really is. She only means to harm you."

I feel like a storybook character who has just discovered the witch. Germaine wants me to remain with her. I feel motivated to find Vicki. Only she can help me continue my search for the ultimate pleasure. This is all getting so distracting.

"You are becoming caught up with sex for its own sake. You don't care about the women that you're with."

"They like to have fun, and so do I."

"That's great. But this is going nowhere. Do you have something important to tell me?"

"I am the only one that knows the passage to the next stage."

"You're going to leave me in the dream world."

"You shouldn't wake up. We share something here. Don't give in to wakefulness. Don't leave me."

Germaine is much more insistent than Gabby. But I can't stay. My dreams are only part of my therapy. Besides, I need to follow onwards to the next step. I need to find my paradise.

"Walter, you are missing the importance of the heart."

"That's just an illusion of the body."

"Exactly."

I don't understand her.

“You’re going to have to make love to me, Germaine.”

“I’m not a vending machine for you to insert quarters. I want to be loved.”

“You’re asking too much. This is just about getting me off.”

“You used Gabby. I don’t want to end up the same. I’m offering you freedom. I can let you live forever.”

“I am not sure if I should believe her. But I do anyway. I use this as my excuse to seduce her.”

“You should have never done this.”

“What do you mean?”

“She’s our daughter. You were going to protect her.”

Her body is so delicate. I am afraid that I am going to break her. But she is so into sex. She knows secrets that shock me. She loves the mix of pleasure and pain.

“That way I never have to come down.”

There is a shine just looking in her face. She is leading me to the next phase. She doesn’t want me to leave. I have to go.

Vicki is a goddess. She has learned the technique. That is why Germaine feared her. She thought that she would destroy me.

Her body is the altar. I work to unlock the inner sanctum, the tabernacle. It is like embracing a bird in flight. There is so much life inside of her.

She totally believes her myth. She senses the magic and what she can do with her powers. She dances around me and touches her body as she goes through these motions.

“You want to be there to!”

I do want to be there. How can I attain the same level of vision?

“This is not just about fucking. It is mystical. But you have to surrender yourself to the pleasure. You’re so hung up on this personality exchange. It’s not about that. It’s about conceiving of your whole being as surrounding sex.”

She is such a change from Germaine. When the pleasure is the most intense, I will be cured. I will wake up.

“Walter, don’t give in. She is in league with Ariel.” I remember the warning from Germaine. But I do not heed the advice. I want this explosive passion. Vicki is almost drugged-out. She has starved herself. Her only nourishment is sex. She is ravenous. I feel as if my life is being drained from me. There is so much more. I am with her completely. There is nothing to save. Nothing to hold back.

The next phase is nectar of the gods—the ambrosia. I taste it and stay aroused. This makes my congress with Vicki without equal. I have never felt anything so intense. Her body completely opens up. It is celestial. I am part of the sky. I float on and on and on in her.

Then the kiss. I try to not wake up. This is the most critical part of the therapy. I sustain the summit. And what follows allows me to sail off into eternity. To soar and soar again

I pull her close as we both accommodate to the vision. We see the forever. We are part of the forever. I cross over.

What follows is initially disruptive. Vicki encourages this fierce energy. It is a workout. But her body has become so flexible that is as if I am swimming inside her. I ride the waves like a dolphin.

“Walter, I have given you everything that I am made of. There is nothing else.”

I collapse in her arms.

“There has to be something else.”

“Not from me.”

She proposes a world beyond the world.

“I can’t take you there.”

“Who can?”

“That’s really not my doing. I have finished my task.”

I want to go one more round with her. I feel spent. I am not excited enough to wake up. I fall deeper into the dream state.

I only wish that Ariel could offer me something as illuminating. She uses pleasure as a counter weight to her everyday trifles. I love this sense of exploration that I have shared. The intent of the therapy was to deny my commitment to pleasure. It was meant to remind me of my devotion to Ariel. But I love the treatment more than the cure. I want this to continue.

“Walter, you’re so cold. You just take from women?”

“I have found women who are willing to give.”

I refuse to wake up. But my dream is no longer vibrant enough to sustain me.

We are living in a cramped apartment on Peachtree Road. It is convenient to work. Little else can be said in its favor. We have plans to move into a new house in Dunwoody. We are waiting for our loan to go through.

“Maybe I should have been more careful when I got out of college.”

“Ariel, you can’t think like that. You do what you have to do at the time.”

She is overtaken by her guilt. Each day it is dragging her down. She does what she can to try to forget. She can hardly sleep.

“Things will get better. We’ll get the new house.”

We have to get it. It is our only hope. My credit history has always been good. I have made no mistakes. I have paid all my bills on time. I have money in the bank. I have taken no silly risks.

Later that day, I get a call from the bank. I get turned down

“I gave you everything that you needed.”

“Your boss told me that there was some uncertainty about your job.”

“Even if I needed to change jobs, my wife’s salary could cover the payments.”

“I don’t think that your wife would like it if she knew what was going on. That you expect to live off her salary.”

“I’m not saying that.”

How did I get in this life anyway? I need a drink.

“That’s your problem, Walter. Your drinking. I used to think that it made you charming. Now you sit up all night by yourself and watch videos. This isn’t why I married you.”

“We still have our dreams. I go to work every day.”

“For how long can you keep that going. You don’t even touch me.”

I am trying to escape my cliched existence. Maybe another business trip is what I need.

“I also hate the fact that you’re always away on business.”

“Maybe we need some time apart.”

“Walter, we’ve had too much of that. We need to separate.”

“You don’t want a divorce?”

“I don’t know what I want.”

I know too well what I want. It has nothing to do with Ariel.

“Walter, I feel that you’re becoming more and more a pervert. You want these pictures in your mind to come alive. You’re ignoring me.”

I can’t even see her anymore. I see through her. I want to touch her. I want it all to be substantial. We needed that house to make things right. Why did my boss fuck things up? I need to get rid of that miserable prick.”

I see him the next day.

“It’s just a difference of opinion. We all have our right to different points of view.”

“This is not a different point of view. It’s my life.”

I find another life; I am unemployed.

“There’s my point of view and your point of view. Isn’t that great?”

“Only in my point of view you’re working, and I’m not. I’m not employed.”

“So what!”

“In my world, baby, I’m alive and you’re not.”

“Is that the end of the story.”

“There’s something really good about your wife, Jenny. But I’ll save that for later.”

“It is what happens to Nabokov after postmodernism. The viewer feels that she can control the object of desire through her gaze.”

“Through his gaze. You’re talking about pornos. That’s what your dream therapy is about. It’s about making something so real just by thinking about it all the time.

THE NARRATIVE

Angel has to escape an abusive situation at home.

Veronica wants to escape a loveless marriage.

Ariane lacks confidence in herself.

Ariel enjoys her job and thinks marriage might compromise her career.

OF

After a power failure, I discover a stray file on my computer.

I notice unusual graffiti at the subway station.

My boss sends me on a business trip out West.

My wife gets cancer.

I lose a package for work.

Aaron agrees to help me.

I get caught with his wife Jenny.

He challenges me to a game of pool.

Angel shares her supernatural magic with me.

Angel disappears.

The police pick me up for questioning.

Angel is found dead.

Mr. Fisher contacts me about my novel.
 A mysterious stranger interrogates me.
 Ariel catches me with Evangeline.
 I lose my job.
 Ariel cleans out my bank out and leaves.
 The Organization tries to recruit me.
 My boss is found dead.
 I take the dream treatment.
 I confront Mr. Fisher.

FF

The world ends.
 My world ends!

This goes way beyond Mr. Fisher. If he will not see me there has to be something more for me to do. I will have to pass into the other realm.

“When you die, Walter, that will be the end of recorded time.”

I am glad that I feel so right.

Dear Walter,

This is the last time that you will hear from me. From this point forward, I will have to let you make your own way in the world.

Ariel, your advisor.

We can change things. We can change how we feel about ourselves.

“But that won’t last. I’ll only expect something from you that you can’t give,”

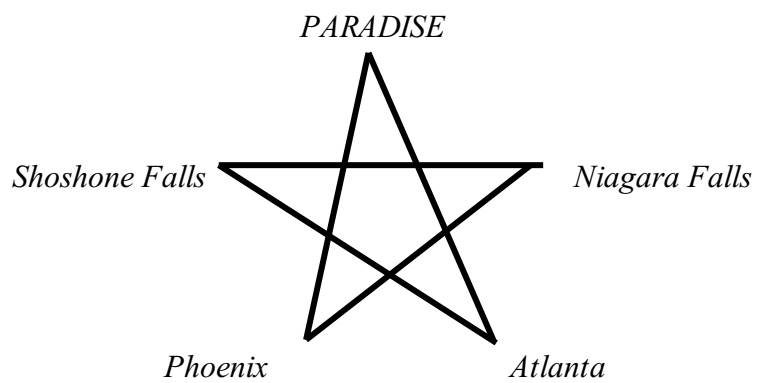
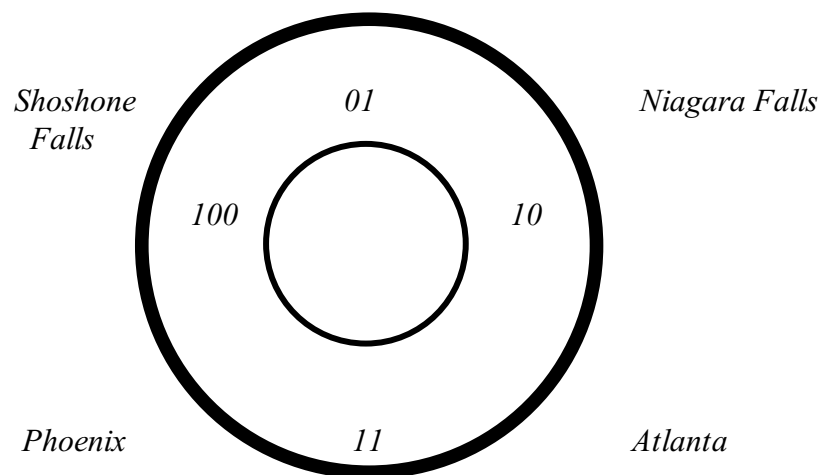
But for that one moment, you will have what you need. You’ll have that connection.

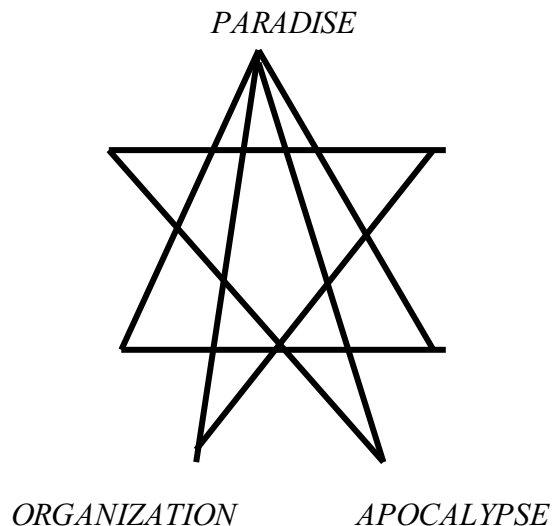
And we can make it mean so much more.

0001	<i>Q</i>	<i>1</i>
0011	<i>Q+</i>	<i>3</i>
0111	<i>A</i>	<i>7</i>
1111	<i>A + [=]m</i>	<i>F</i>

0001	<i>Done</i>
0011	<i>Would</i>
0111	<i>Yes</i>
1111	<i>To you</i>

FF





From the moment that I saw those diagrams, I knew that I was on to something. Even in my dreams, I knew about the reasonability of my understanding. Now I am even more certain. I have decided to go above, Mr. Fisher. I am appealing to an authority that is greater than he could ever exercise.

I know that I have done things that make me feel guilty. I am sorry for all my crimes. It was not meant to be this way. I started out with a purpose. I was trying to be a good person. I was trying to do something to help. How did it all turn out so badly?

I wonder what you are all afraid of. Why are you all so afraid of what I have to tell you?

The police stop by my rooming house. They have loads of questions to ask me. They are trying to connect the dots. Why didn't they try to do this sooner. I am going just out of my mind with all the info that I have. I have the last pieces of the puzzle.

My wife Evangeline picks me up. She is with our daughter Angel. She tell me that she wants to reconcile.

"Henry, I want you to clean up. Then get a job. Then I'll take you back."

"You sold my house from under me."

"That was just a trick to light a fire under you."

This is a nightmare. How did I ever end up like this. I wake up.

"Ariel, I can't figure out how to turn off this dream therapy shit."

"We never took dream therapy. That was another story. Something that you read in Philip Dick or Aaron Fisher."

I kiss her and fall back asleep.

"Walter, there's more to come. We passed your report to headquarters."

"You told them about this Organization trying to take over the company."

"It's not really an organization. It's more of a take over bid of some associates of Aaron's. They want to make him CEO."

I need some help. The only one that I can trust is Ralph.

“I need to see you, Ralph.”

“I’m with Ariel. Could you make it another time?”

“How can you be with Ariel? I’m with Ariel.”

I look over but she is no longer in the bed with me. This is all too exhausting. I don’t know where to turn. I am quickly running out of options.

“There’s only so much time. You have to finish the last chapter of your book.”

Angel calls me.

“Forget that last chapter. We’re not going to publish.”

“You can’t be like that. I’ve discovered the meaning of the world. You have to see my constellation maps.”

“It makes no sense.”

“Angel and Ariel are the same person.”

“Now you tell us. You needed to offer more clues throughout the book. Does that mean that you were trying to kill Ariel?”

“No, she really was sick.”

I was sick because you were poisoning me.

I left something out. All the papers from the insurance company.

“Mr. Fisher is going to end up collecting his advance from you. Walter, can you deliver the package? Wake up Walter.”