

13. REST

“I’m not going to sleep with you. It would give you too much power over me.”
He can’t tell if she is telling him to leave. He hesitates. He wants her to tell him what to do.

“What’s your name?”

She doesn’t want to look him in the eyes. She doesn’t want to give him any cues to influence her opinion of him. He pretends that he is telepathic, that he can affect her if he just concentrates hard enough. If he just holds an image before him and tries to manipulate it somehow. He is not doing well at creating his pose.

His silence is already getting to her. She is trying to make it mean something in the same way that he has made it mean something. She can’t maintain her resistance. She has to turn her whole body away from him.

He gets up the courage, “Do you want me to leave?”

“No, I want you to stay. I don’t want to be alone. We can get something to eat.”

He wishes that he could be more forthcoming. He can feel the impasse with her. He has poured out his soul to her. He feels that there isn’t much else to tell.

“Do you like tennis?” she asks.

“I never really played the game. I’ve watched a few matches.”

“I was never really into the team thing. But I liked the game. There was this place near my house where I used to play. I drove by there all the time. One time there was all this commotion by the courts. I saw a police car and an ambulance. One of the players had collapsed from a heart attack.”

“Did he die?”

“I never found out. I think that he did.”

“Did you keep playing tennis? Have you been to the courts recently?”

“The accident impressed me with a sense of fragility about life. At the same time, the death didn’t happen to me. And when I went home, I didn’t take it with me. But it was still a part of me. Even when I played tennis after that, there was this seriousness about the game. Even though the games were fast-paced, it just seemed that everything was in slow motion. Life seemed to grind to a stop before my eyes. I could peek into that other horizon where time just came to a standstill. And as it did, the ball seemed to come down with such a dramatic feeling. For me it was strange. In my mind, I could hardly play the shot. But physically, it all seemed so much easier. No one could really hit one by me. I was so far ahead of everyone else.”

“You still play.”

“No. Sure it became easy for me. But then I felt this burden about the game that made it too hard to keep on.”

He wonders, “But you developed a system.”

She had experienced a psychic energy that was too devastating for her. She wishes that she could tap some of that now. She wants to be sure about him.

She feels that if she gives in to him, that she will lose what makes her special. She feels her whole life has become like the tennis match. Except for the fact that she needs to work, she has jumped off the train that carries everyone else along. She didn’t mean to escape. She just

has.

When she first saw him today, she wanted him to come back with her. Now she believes that he may be part of her other life. She doesn't want anything to do with that life while she is at home. If she could help it, she would never go back. It is taking her away from the flow of things. It has died for her.

He works to be polite. He realizes that if he is going to stay that he needs to keep her entertained. But she has made the limits clear, and he doesn't want to cross them.

He feels that she has discovered her own match, and she is now engaging him in a grueling competition. She wears him down by the inaction. She is in this other world where things are happening. He just watches and is incapable of affecting anything. He waits to volley back to her.

She is not sure if she should be afraid with him in her apartment. She really knows nothing about him. It's the same for him. But there is a suspicion that she has about him. That is part of her hesitation.

She gets him another cup of coffee. There are saying very little to each other. But the room is full of noise. And she is trying for some kind of balance. They are both shadows to each other.

She wants to survive in that space in between. She is doing everything that she can to penetrate that world without becoming completely overwhelmed. She can feel his presence. She feeds off their proximity. But she doesn't want to surrender to his touch. It's too late for her to drink coffee. She has a liqueur. She looks over at him and then works to avoid his glance. She goes back to her own world.

Why is there the invitation for him to come up here? The barren quality of the room reminds her how hard it is to hide her intentions at a moment like this. She stretches out on her chair. It would be more comfortable next to him on the couch. She is not ready for that.

She can already sense herself collapsing in his arms. She knows that he means trouble. But she can even figure out what that is about. Maybe he trying to patch his life together. Put the terrible experiences behind him. Is that going to be enough? Is it just a matter of willing it away? Will the heat of the moment again boil over him and make him do things that he would prefer to avoid?

He drinks from his coffee and works to make himself comfortable. He is not used to relaxing. He feels that he always has to be doing something. There is always some problem that he is trying to live down. The evening is becoming overly oppressive for him. He can sense that the feelings are coming back.

It has been so easy to maintain himself since he has been on his own. He hasn't flashed back at all. But at this moment, he can feel the pressure come over him. He is almost ready to take off in flight. He needs to hold himself down. Not let his darkness affect him.

She notices none of his discomfort. He is her guest. She wants him to feel at home. She is not ignoring him. She just isn't sure how to react.

Even their limited conversation has trickled to nothing.

"Maybe I should go."

She doesn't want him to leave. She knows that they have to progress somewhere, at least say something intelligent. There is little that they can do under the circumstances.

“No, sit down. Please stay.”

He settles back in the chair and waits for some kind of instruction to tell him what to do.

“I’ll get you some more coffee,” she suggests.

“I’m OK.”

He wonders if he should have asked for something more. At least asked for the coffee just to get her involved. Maybe she can offer him something to eat.

She has already invited him into her place. She is not sure if she is afraid of him. She can feel a chaos that is at the heart of his personality. She is in awe of him. If she approached it wrongly, it could crush her. But he has his appeal. And it keeps pulling her closer to him.

Maybe, they are both afraid of the same thing. He can feel a sense of chaos about this place. He is not sure what she expects of him. That they both want to cling to each other until the last traces of darkness have passed away, and that they can forget their ever was a chill in the night.

He is not very good at explaining himself to her. If she feels the same thing, maybe he doesn’t have to. He can just feed off of her presence. She wants him to hold her, but she knows what that means. And she is not ready to surrender. She is able to sustain herself from his interest. She just hopes that he might feel more encouraged to say something. She could start out another conversation. But his answers are all crisp and too the point. She wants to get him going.

They both feel incredibly alone even though they are together in the room. This adds to their sense of unease. She has brought him here because is fascinated by his mystery. She only feels paralyzed when she is close to this incredible power. If something would just take her over, she could fall in his arms. But she is overcome with her caution.

They stare at each other from the opposite ends of the room. He has given her the opportunity to dismiss him. She lets him stay. He is trying to save her. And now there is nothing that he can do to check himself. Still he feels little motivation to do anything.

Fear is a tricky thing. Usually it is the result of something, something that takes us over. And the more that we see it approach, the more that we see evidence for our feeling. Even if we create that feeling, there is a core of experience that sets it off. At this moment, it is more than that between them. She is attracted to what she fears. In a way, that is the source of her fear. She is facing something in herself that has always been there. She has invited it into her world. And now it moves among her.

That is why he is attractive. What he hides is that ability to threaten her sedate life. And if there is turmoil, it is something that is inside her. It is ripping at her. He does nothing. He just sits on the couch and acts innocent. That face says it all. Its power. It could strike a man dead. But she has put him to shame. She has made it impossible for him to move a muscle.

She is again struck by the fact that he also is facing the same trepidation. As the wave rolls over the room, she wants to reach out for him. And she can’t do a thing. She has prepared him for what follows. She has given him a place to warm himself. She has served him coffee. She has thought about feeding him. She has seduced him into her world. And there is little that he can do to resist that influence.

He is fighting off the cold that pervades the room. He beckons for her. But she remains in the chair. She is not going to make the first move. There is nothing to do. She expects

nothing from him. She wants it to stay this way.

It might be simpler if they had gone somewhere previously. Then their fatigue would just carry them to the next step. The excitement of the night would lead them on. But it is nothing like that. The resolution is their inaction. They sit on their hands.

Both are reminded of a deeper understanding. They glimpse their futility before their surrounding nothingness. All their attempts to resist that very realization are met with this denial.

She sits up. He imagines her as part of some fantasy. It appears that her gesture is just that kind of invitation.

She realizes why she has allowed him to stay. She lets him peer into her soul. There is a feeling of emptiness in his gaze as he probes the spaces of longing. She has always been drawn to the very danger that he represents. But her perfectly maintained corridors of the mind have been able to exclude this kind of interference. Now he is getting too close. And there is little that she can do to arrest his influence.

His rough hands seem to violate the protected places. He tampers with her innocence. She can't do anything to make him stop. She accepts it.

It is surprising how much of an affect that he can have while just sitting there and staring at her. She lies back and tries to enjoy what is happening. It's not enough. She is feeling tense with him here. Something needs to happen. It's not enough for him to explore her with his eyes. It only increases her desire. What is he waiting for? How can she hold him back?

She had asked him in. But she has drawn a clear limit to his search. And he has complied with her wishes. She did not expect him to be so tame. She felt that he would take liberties. He would honor her reticence, but he would pursue and pursue. Under his magnetism, she would give in. But none of this has occurred.

He has been almost docile sitting over there on the couch. She wants to call him out. On the other hand, she has told him to stay exactly where he is. And he has obliged. She might do more to inspire him. Let her hands wander over his body. Let his eyes travel over hers.

She stays in her world. She almost feels perfect unto her self. Why is she letting him observe her in this state? She is being studied. He is her jailer for the moment. She relishes this role on his part. What will he try next.

She gets up to check the door. From his vantage point, he follows her every move.

"Would you like some cake?"

It seems like forever since she has even said anything.

"I'd like to. But I really shouldn't."

Both of them are acting too good. Each sticks to the script.

"You haven't told me where you work."

He pretends to ignore her query. It is as if he has little interest in what she is asking.

"I do love your place. It is so sparse. So certain. Everything has meaning."

She is not sure what to make of his comment.

For safety, she gets up and checks the door. Then she realizes that he is inside with her.

"What are you doing?" he asks.

"Nothing. Just nervousness."

"You have no reason to be nervous."

“I’m just a bundle of energy. I always am.”

He doesn’t say anything. He lets her pace until she comes back to her chair. It is as if he slowly works his spell on her. And it is taking effect.

“What do you want to do?”

She is seeking guidance. It is too obvious.

“What do you want to do?” He seems oblivious to her suggestion.

“We could sit her a while.”

She goes back and sits in her chair.

He looks at her differently now. He becomes distracted. Someone else, a fantasy.

“Sometimes I’m not good with people.”

She wonders if that is do to his former confinement. Is that the only way that he can deal with her, as if he is doing something to her. And he is doing something to her. She wants to resist.

She lingers there and balances herself on the chair as she puts her feet in the air. Then she settles down.

“What was that about?”

She smiles, “Just whimsy.”

He wants it to be serious. He has lost his sense of humor. He feels his heart beat faster. It is as if he is in a work out. And the feeling doesn’t subside. She turns her head so that she is no longer face to face with him. That doesn’t deter his gaze. He needs to look at her. It is his encouragement. All part of the satisfaction that he wants to feel. He lets it wash over him.

He wants something even more natural. Raw without restraint. It is not so much a nakedness as a commitment of the body, of the soul. She is too tied up with conviction, with ideas. He feels guilty just by being here.

He wants to be with someone who makes no secret about what she wants. So he accepts her challenge. He pretends that he can accommodate to her way. But he cannot. It is not satisfying.

So he keeps on with his fantasy. He uses her. But he will not share with her. If she finds appeal in the cutting open the soul, he is turned on by the body. This thing elemental. Again, this is why she needs him. He models for her. His naked form is posed in the middle of the room. But he will have none of her concepts.

She feels reduced to nothing by his glances. She wants to hide herself. Even these clothes are not enough. He has gone from shining a light on her soul to exposing her body. And he is turned on by her smooth skin. He can imagine kissing her expansive back. He peels off her shirt and lets his mouth run over the flesh. She pulls back. He moves closer.

She will not look at him. He will not turn away.

“What are you looking at?”

He ignores her question. He finds enough to keep him going.

“I didn’t ask you here to be treated as a butterfly in your collection.”

“What do you mean?”

“Isn’t that what you’ve been thinking about?”

He doesn’t have any idea what she is talking about. He isn’t interested in the ideas. He wants to see her in another way. He finds it hard to relate to her brittle mannerisms. He blames

her for her shyness.

This would be an opportune time for him to leave. He breathes heavier. It makes her nervous.

“Is something wrong?”

“No, I was just lost in thought.”

But it is not the thinking that bothers her. It is his concentration. She wants to distract him.

“Are you always like this?”

He smiles back.

“Usually, I jump up and dance. Tonight, I am too tired.”

That has not stopped his desirous glances.

She again stands up. She is showing off, proud of her body. She works out constantly. It is her passion. She works and works out. There isn't time for much else. She wants to be admired.

She never thought of herself in this way before. Her clothes are occasionally revealing. But she also works to conceal. He is peeling away these layers.

“Are you always this difficult?”

“I'm not being a bad host, am I?”

“No, I'm just trying to understand you. What makes you go?”

She pulls her feet up on the chair. She is very limber.

“Do you want to do something else?”

“Like wrestle.”

“What?”

“You just seem so spry over there.”

“Oh, it's nothing.”

It seems like more than nothing. She feels that she is melting. Something better happen quickly.

“You're an odd sort. Are you always this funny?”

Maybe he should go. He is asking too many questions. Can't he figure out things on his own. She thought that he'd be more forceful. He is taking what he wants. But he gives her so little back.

“Are you sure that you don't want to sit next to me?”

“It's very comfortable on this chair.”

Indeed it is.

She stretches her arms out, and then settles back. She puts her feet back on the floor.

“You look like a dancer.”

“I wanted to be a dancer. I just do some routines at the gym.”

“You could show me what you do.”

“I'd be a little embarrassed.”

That is her reason for going to the gym. She hates embarrassment. She doesn't want to be taken apart by a man's gaze. Now she feels that is about her intentions. He can see how hard she works to keep herself together. For her, it is more like a dialogue. This is what I want you to see. This is what I want to talk about.

Her body makes her seem very chatty. But she also sees herself in a more formal way. She controls her desire. There are these gentle lines. And then these bursts of energy. These explosions.

He is used to seeing her under control. It is not as if she is rigid. But she likes to know her limits. This is the wall that she creates. She leads the visitors through those spaces.

He has escaped the beaten path. He had penetrated the inner sanctum. This is only to be expected. But she feigns surprise.

She catches a wave of her own. She is almost going through a mini-routine for him. It is her way of staying awake. She wants to feel that stimulation.

He is getting a kick out of her motion. It is as if she is performing for him.

“Can you do that standing up?”

“Of course I can.”

She stands up to do her routine. Then she laugh, and sits down again.

“I’m really a very simple person.”

“But you try hard to make it different.”

“I don’t know what I try to do.”

She wants to believe that she can explain herself with her words and her gestures. That she is a very open person. Once it is all clear, then there should be no problems between them. But her clarity is her way of holding things back. And he wants to break down the wall. This is why he is here. She wants him to play the role of the intruder.

“Maybe you want something from me that I can’t give you.”

She wonders, “What would that be?”

“Insight. Advice. I’m not simple. But I’m not always good with words.

If she lets him go, she will have to face the night by herself. It is no longer just tonight. There is a sense of gravity that goes with her isolation. She can feel each second of the clock tick until her eventual confrontation with her feelings of loss, of nothingness.

She expects something to happen when she invites him over. She isn’t certain what he might do. That is part of the appeal. She isn’t sure if she trusts him. That only adds to the danger. She knows if she gives in to him that will only make her more vulnerable.

She wants him to fill in the time. To make those empty moments seem full. To provide her with a little excitement.

He isn’t going to give up. He wants something from her. Maybe her attention. Maybe her fear. He seems to be enjoying the mystery. She doesn’t really know what he is about. As long as there is no real threat, she can play around with the danger. She can tell herself that it is all going to work out. She needs to push it to the edge just to know that she is alive. He is giving her the chance to do that.

He almost resents her characterization. He is this wild man just waiting to pounce. All his resentment is based on the fact that he isn’t hiding a violent personality from her. That his casual demeanor is not an act. That he really is as tame as he pretends.

For her, that would hardly be enough. She wants to keep skirting the edge. Her doubts about him only make her want him to stay. She is forcing him to perform and then punishing him for being himself.

Her world has been crashing around her. She has been able to maintain a calm exterior.

But beneath the facade she can feel things crumble. Sometimes she has to touch something solid just to reassure herself. She swirls around this slow melt. She can't ignore all the signs.

She again looks at him as he moves around in his chair. He seems a little bored. Maybe their conversation hasn't been that sparkling. She doesn't want to force things. She knows how fragile it all seems. It's not just her. There's still something simmering inside of him. The unknown becomes almost inspiring.

In the back of her mind, he has always been sitting here. He has judged her every move. Even when she has been alone, she has felt watched. He has just waited for the right moment to appear. All her defenses are quite shallow against his influence.

It is ironic that he now seems so docile. If he really was her watcher, why is he so hesitant to do or say anything. This could all be part of the waiting game. A kind of personal torture. He is just waiting for her to break. And she feels the pressure mounting. She again hops up and walks around the room. This is getting out of control.

"Don't you have somewhere to be?" She forms the sentence in her mind. But she can't bring herself to say anything. She doesn't want to give him reason to cut out.

"Are you sure that you don't want some cake?"

"I'm OK."

He smiles politely. Does she really have anything to fear from him? He seems harmless.

She attributes their lack of resolution to the fact that this is something that she does over and over again. This is not the first time that he has sat in this seat. Each time there is gradual movement. But still not enough to shake out his resistance. And he continues to remain almost as motionless as a statue. He has just become too comfortable sitting here like this. It seems that this is how it will remain between them.

How is he ever going to get what he came for? She is pushing him to the wall. Just hoping that he might come to life. He begs and screams and the room now echoes with all his intensity.

"What do you want from me?"

If she could just suffer internally, that would be enough for him to come around to her point of view. That is why he is sitting there so quietly. He wants her to identify with his dilemma. Perhaps she can feel the pain deep inside him. If she would risk a little more for him.

The scream wails from inside. She twists in the chair.

"Are you OK?" he asks. He seems concerned.

"I'm doing wonderfully. Why? Is something wrong?"

She shakes off the feeling and sits up. She pretends that nothing is wrong. He goes along with her.

She suggests, "Maybe you could come back for dinner sometime under better circumstances."

He hates to make plans

"I don't want you making a fuss over me."

He almost knows that there won't be a next time. He wants tonight to be different. It is almost a test for him.

When he first met her, he swore that he wouldn't let things get out of hand. He would do his best to respect her. And he is still making an effort. But he can feel the old self slipping

back. He is bracing himself in his chair. Trying to grab onto some solid reference point that can free him from losing himself.

He doesn't dare stand up. He doesn't want to get any closer.

"I'm glad that you asked me over."

She feels that he is trying to say more.

"I have a sense about you. I trusted your when I first met you."

"Do you always follow your instincts?"

"I feel that I'm observant."

"That's good."

She realizes that if she is wrong that it could be too late to turn back. On the other hand, he never knows what she has in store. This is her place. She knows the game. She can find her way around in the dark. That is her trick. She is going to shut off his senses. Trap him like a caged animal. Slam the lid on him and watch him squirm.

Maybe she's poisoned the coffee. He never thought of that. She played the part to the hilt. The lover. The desperate creature. And if he has a weakness, it is her uncertainty. But what if it is totally the opposite. That she has been observing him all along. That she is planning it out. She is going to make her move.

He laughs to himself. How could he even believe that she was that insightful. If she was really smart, she never would have let her in here. Besides, the poison options seems to fanciful. But she's not having any coffee.

"I told you that I can't drink coffee at night. It prevents me from sleeping."

He is as busy as a bee. He doesn't want to sleep. He has work to do. He considers what it would be like to have to clean this place up. He can't leave a shred of evidence that he has been here. It is even better that they assume that no one has been up here besides here.

"I could help you with the dishes."

She looks back at him.

"There really are no dishes. Just some cups."

There is something in that look. She is good. She continues to play the innocent one. She pours another cup for him.

"I told you that I was OK."

"Go ahead. It will only go to waste."

Just thinking about what he has to do has created an appetite.

"I will have a piece of cake after all."

She cuts the cake and puts it on a plate. The smell of the cake appeal to her. It distracts her from his smell. He has made his presence known throughout the apartment. It more than excites her. She sees him as a challenge. He probably thinks that she is too interested in his coming and goings. She has invited him here for one reason alone. In a sense, she has already satisfied her curiosity.

Again, he feels that he is being studied. He went along with her invitation. And now he is helpless on the couch. He is a character in a children's story who is being fattened up for the kill. She sizes him up. This won't be hard at all.

Will her plotting only get him angry? He wonders if his realization is only making it harder to turn over a new leaf. He can feel that his teeth are sharpened. He can taste the kill.

He wonders what fantasy he is nurturing. Is it his only defense against her? He is never as aggressive as he wants to be. She is clever. Without doing a thing, she has left him completely exposed.

He feels that he is deep in conflict with her. She has pinned him a few times. But he has avoided the final blow. It is the game of cat and mouse. He is outmatched. This is what he gets for being so friendly. For trying to dull his violent tendencies. She is encroaching on him.

This is all so premature. He wanted to plan things. It is all accelerating. She has shown herself to be adept at choosing her opponent. He feels guilty enough about himself that he has let down his guard.

“You are the one,” she laughs.

“What are you talking about?”

He is even more ill at ease. What does she know?

“Did someone come around asking about me?”

“I told you about that when we met today.”

“Are you protecting me?”

She answers, “I’m doing what I can to help.”

She seems oh so helpful. He is saying too much.

“Thanks.”

“You owe me.”

“It’s not like I can repay you.”

“You have to tell me what it’s like?”

“I’m not who you think I am.”

She is relentless, “If you were, what would it be like?”

“Like this here and now.”

She shivers.

“I’d touch you. And you’d like it. Even though you were afraid, you’d think nothing of it. You’d give in. And that would be enough. At that point, there is little that you could do to defend yourself.”

“But it hasn’t been like you think. I haven’t given in. I’ve resisted you as long as I can.”

“You will give in. It’s in your blood. You are on a hunt. That’s how I found you. You want it as much as I do. You try to control that thirst. It follows you wherever you go. I could see it at work.”

“You watched me at work?”

“You show it when you meet a new customer. You are waiting for him to show his weakness. So that you can insert yourself in his life. You really are a piece of work.”

“What are you saying?”

“You know what you are doing.”

“I don’t lead guys on.”

“You get done what has to be done.”

The pace is getting too fast. She needs to slow things down.

“Maybe you should go now.”

“Then you would have wasted an opportunity. I can smell it like a wild dog.”

“You’ve got me wrong.”

“Just as you’ve got me wrong.”

“But there is something about you. Something off.”

“If there was, wouldn’t it be dangerous to say that to me?”

She notices that he is getting worked up. “You love the flattery.”

“Even if I do, that’s not going to stop me.”

“I could have easily poisoned you.”

“But you didn’t.”

“That is your fervent hope.”

“Quit playing with me. It’s not becoming.”

She tries to calm him down. “You’re going to have to leave.”

“I haven’t had my fun.”

“You are a bitch.” He immediately realizes that he is not behaving himself. “I’m really sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you.”

“It’s not an offense. It’s part of the game. And you’re playing your hand too early.”

“It doesn’t matter when I play if it’s a strong hand.”

“That is not exactly true. If my defense is stronger than your hand, you really are screwed.”

“You are a little over confident.”

She asserts, “That is my strength.”

“But you don’t know what my strength is. Not yet.”

She can feel that wave of fear. She needs to act quickly.