

“So why are you here?” Dr. Walters asked. In her late thirties, confident, intelligent, with short brown hair and lively green eyes, she wore a cream blouse and blue suit skirt, cut daringly high on a nicely muscled thigh. I couldn’t remember if I’d made her a distance runner in her character profile.

I shrugged, looking at her and liking the view, which is, of course, one of my problems. “Oh, I have a number of issues,” I said. “The lead one being that I’m a writer, a storyteller always looking for a story to tell.”

“That wouldn’t be unusual except for your assertion that the whole world we’re living in is a story that you’ve written. A bit unusual, don’t you think?”

“Probably,” I said, “yet still true.”

She looked at me for a minute. “If that’s the case, then I’m a creation of yours too.”

“One of my better,” I nodded in mock approval. It seemed to tickle the sense of humor I knew she possessed.

A smile, quickly suppressed, flashed across her face. “All right, Richard. Let’s explore this. You’re a successful and respected businessman. Comfortable, if not wealthy. You seem to have a pleasant life. Yet you believe the entire world, and I, are creations of your mind. Right?”

“Well summed up,” I replied.

“Why me?” she asked, leaning forward and challenging me with her eyes. We sat about five feet apart in comfortable chairs in her quiet, well-appointed room. As she moved, the creamy blouse fell slightly open, showing a gold chain resting between her full breasts.

“One of my other issues,” I replied. “I open up only to women. I relate to them on a level that I don’t with men. Probably has something to do with the fact my father died when I was nine. I’ve always defined myself by how women feel about me. Always wanted their approval and attention.”

“So it’s not just about sex?”

“It’s a lot about sex, but I have lesbian friends. I don’t sleep with them, but I find I react the same way to them. I think there’s something wrong with me. Narcissism or something.”

“Labels,” she said, “aren’t always helpful, especially when applied by a layman. So far you sound like a man who just likes women.”

“I fantasize about almost every woman I meet. I worry that it’s adolescent, childish even.”

“Hardly unusual. Men think about sex once every seven seconds.”

“Six, five, four, three...”

She laughed appreciatively. I liked how it made her eyes look.

“So you came to me because I’m an attractive woman you can open up to.”

“I wrote you that way.”

“I think your obsession with women is a mask for these deeper issues. We have to address your belief that you are the creator of the universe.”

“Oh, I didn’t create the universe. There’s a real one. I don’t know who created that one. God, the Big Bang, or as Woody Allen said, ‘Something fell somewhere.’”

“Then what about this universe?” she asked, waving at the room and beyond it, the metal and glass towers of Manhattan, visible through the window. I hadn’t decided what part of Manhattan her office was in so the buildings had a vague and generic look.

“Work in progress,” I said to myself.

We talked on for about an hour, almost like friends. I slipped in a few jokes to ease the mood. Gradually we moved closer, subtle shifts of the chairs, leaning toward each other. She was easy to talk to, so I rambled on about my life. Her large green eyes drank it in sympathetically. Occasionally she brushed glossy hair out of her eyes and stretched in the chair. Her cheeks picked up a hint of color.

“Well,” she said. “The time flew today. You have a great sense of humor, Richard. There can’t be that much wrong with a man who can make me laugh so much.”

We stood at the same moment and bumped into each other, standing face to face. She didn’t move back. I leaned forward slowly and gently kissed her lips. She hesitated, fighting with herself. I moved to her cheeks and eyes, hearing her breathing go ragged. Suddenly she kissed me back. I let my hands sit lightly atop her hips, enjoying her scent. I felt her heavy, soft breasts against the front of my shirt. I cupped one in my hand, feeling her body quicken. She returned the favor, reaching between my legs. Then we were pulling our clothes open atop her desk. The sex was hard, urgent and deeply satisfying as we climaxed together.

I rolled us over so my weight wouldn't be on her. She straddled my hips, breathing heavily and pushing her hair out of her eyes. “I...I don't believe this,” she said. “I've never done anything like this before. This is so unprofessional. It's crazy.”

I looked up at her with a bit of frown. “So you're saying that I need to work more on your motivation?”

“I am not a character,” she snapped.

“This piece is getting away from me,” I sighed. “Not the direction I intended at all. Time to take a break.”

“Richard,” she said, “there's medication for this sort of condition. I know we've had a horrible start here but I can help you.” She stood up, tucking her blouse back around her and pulling her skirt down in a move I found deeply erotic.

“Don't worry,” I said. “I love every piece of work I do. I'll come back to this story. I'm sure it can be salvaged with a little thought.”

She started to speak but the words died on her lips. A terrible knowledge filled her eyes....

I leaned back, suddenly feeling an ache in my back. Bad posture over the laptop again. I hit save on the piece and stretched. One thousand and seventeen words today. Not bad, but I really needed to work on the end.

I reopened my laptop about a week later, determined to finish the story. To my surprise I found Dr. Walters sitting in her chair. She wore different clothes from what I remembered writing. Her eyes were red and I realized with a shock that she was crying.

“So you’re back,” Dr. Walters managed.

“Yes.”

“Yes,” she repeated, a wild bitterness in her eyes. “The author, the storyteller, who made up the book in which I live.”

“I shouldn’t have told you,” I replied, a feeling of genuine regret stealing through me.

“What’s my first name?” she cried, tears springing to her eyes. “You didn’t even give me a first name.”

“Sorry. You weren’t supposed to be a major... umm what names do you like?”

She choked back a sob. “I’ve always liked Susan.”

“Susan it is.”

“And you made me the sort of unprofessional bimbo who would have sex with a patient on her desk!”

“Dramatic license,” I said.

Her lip quivered.

“You never do it again,” I added, “it was because...because I remind you of your first love, a boy who was lost at sea—”

Susan gasped, her hands flying to her face.

“-whose family moved to Europe,” I amended frantically, “and you gradually lost touch.”

Color came back into her face. She nodded. “Better.”

“You know,” she added after a few moments, “you could also have made yourself a bit more attractive. It might help with making our little explosion of lust a bit more plausible.”

“Well, OK,” I said, hiding my disappointment. I thought my main character’s rugged good looks up to the task. “How about something a bit James Bondish?”

“Which one?” she asked.

“Please yourself,” I said.

She leaned back, a small smile flitting across her face, chased almost immediately by a frown. “I wanted to ask. Did you make my boobs bigger?”

“No,” I lied.

She gave me a skeptical look.

“You came back,” she said finally.

“I told you I would.”

“I like a man who honors his word.”

“Good.” I smiled at her. I found myself almost hypnotized by the depth and warmth of her green eyes. I love intelligent women. Susan seemed even more beautiful than I remembered. Had I written her as such a knockout? I found it difficult to remember.

“Is there more to my part?” Susan asked. She stood and slowly walked over to the couch where I sat, which I only now noticed was far larger than it had been and boasted a plush ottoman. She sat next to me. I could feel the heat from her body against my hip. “Are you still working out your issues with women in this piece?”

“Ah, maybe,” I said, surprised.

“Tell me more. Tell me how you feel about women.” She leaned provocatively close.

“How about I show you instead,” I growled, brushing her soft cheek with my lips.

Susan smiled; her teeth were white and perfect. “God, Richard, you’ve written me as such a sex kitten.”

“My publisher says my target audience is eighteen to twenty-five-year-old males, who desperately hope something like this will happen to them,” I replied, struggling out of my clothes. I looked down and froze momentarily. “Hey, what happened to my chest hair?”

“Have you ever seen a man with chest hair on the cover of a romance novel?”

Susan breathed, sliding over me and doing fun and interesting things.

“This...this,” I said struggling to concentrate, “is...is supposed to be a tense psychological thriller.”

“Sure,” she laughed, “full of amoral women having uncommitted sex in implausible circumstances. How Dean Koontz of you.”

“Are you saying my work is derivative?” I protested.

Susan silenced me with her lips.

Well, this was starting to go more the way I wanted it to. I’d handle her criticism on rewrite. I cast an eye toward the doorway as I unfastened Susan’s bra.

She caught my gaze. “Oh don’t bother looking for my secretary to enter to start a threesome. I read ahead. She has the day off.”

I looked at her in terror, realizing what Susan had become, one of those characters you give birth to but can no longer control. She had taken on a life of her own and the discipline of the pen would no longer contain her.

“Oh Richard,” she said, throwing her arms about me. “Your publisher is giving you terrible advice. Most books are written for women. Romance novels outsell everything else.”

“But,” I protested, “there’s no respect for the genre. It’s pabulum for the frustrated in bad marriages.”

Susan smiled a golden smile. “It could be worse, darling. You could be writing science fiction and forfeit all literary respect.”

I shuddered.

Susan kissed me. For a while I forgot about everything else.

Afterward, we sprawled on the sofa and ottoman. Gentle soft sunlight outlined every curve of Susan’s body. “What now?” I whispered.

“Time to write the final line,” she said, stretching languidly.

“Any suggestions?”

“You already know, Richard.”

And suddenly I did. I swallowed hard and the words came to me, redolent with commitment and permanency. “And they lived happily ever after.”

Susan smiled.

The End