

## 2/ DESEO

At 2:30 PM, Matt met with Silver in one of the three therapy booths on the ground floor. The booths were larger than the caretakers' offices and furnished with couches and armchairs.

As Silver walked in, the Fuchsia man stood and offered his hand. "I'm Matt, the healer assigned to your case, and I want you to know that I'm here for you to discuss whatever you want to talk about. There're no judgments here, no sins that can't be forgiven."

The youth shook his hand, then sat down in the chair facing Matt's desk.

"In fact, I'd really prefer it if you set the tone – you know to get us started."

Silver gazed at the floor. "I don't know what to talk about," he mumbled.

"Anything and I mean *anything* you want." Matt smiled encouragingly, but the younger man only shrugged. *Looks like I'll have to get the ball rolling.*

"What made you decide to check yourself into a house of healing?"

"Dunno." The youth hesitated, seeming to rethink his hasty answer. "I guess I wanted to get off drugs."

"Why is that?"

Another shrug. "I don't like living in those dormitories – them custodians treat you like shit – and never having any credits." This time Silver met the blond man's eyes. Yet his voice was still flat and emotionless.

*Like listening to a poorly rehearsed speech...Don't judge him. You wouldn't want to spill to your guts to a stranger either.* "So you want a new life; credits in your pocket, your own flat?"

"Yeah that's right, that's exactly what I want."

Matt nodded approvingly. "Nothing wrong with that." *It's a beginning.* Later that night, he would replay the session over and over in his mind.

"You a recovering junkie?" asked Silver.

"Yes, I am. All caretakers are."

The faint traces of a smile danced about Silver's lips. "How long you been clean?"

"Ten years."

“And you ain’t never gonna use again?”

“Recovering addicts don’t use phrases like ‘never again.’ We make a deal with ourselves not to use *today*. And then we get through that day. The next day, we do it all over again. It’s a hell of a lot easier than lugging the weight of 50 or 60 years around.”

“You see, we only *have* today. Tomorrow’s not guaranteed.”

“That’s sounds good – that’s real good you got that kind staying power,” the Indigo man grinned humorlessly. “‘Cause rush is one hell of a *rush*. I mean, when I do it, I feel all my troubles leave like *that*,” he kissed the fingers of his right hand and spread them towards the ceiling, “and I feel like nothing could ever get under my skin again – ever.”

Silver leaned forward, his smile gone. The hazel eyes now staring into Matt’s were insane ...and *hypnotic*. “Then I get horny – real horny – like I could fuck anything all night, as long as I keep smoking.”

Matt felt himself being drawn into Silver’s narrative – wallowing in it – getting high just from listening. The blond man tore his eyes away, almost shaking his head to clear it. “Tell me something: do you have anything negative to say about this wonder drug?!”

He struggled to control his mounting fury – he could feel the blood pounding at his temples. “The seizures perhaps,” Matt sneered, “the mood swings or hey what about waking up broke?!” He heard the anger – the scorn – in his voice, but he didn’t care. It felt good, it felt *right*.

Silver dropped his eyes. “Yeah, you right it’s some bad shit...and I wanna stay clean, it’s jus’ so hard!”

The Fuchsia man glared at him, speechless with rage. *Yeah I just bet! You little lying bastard...!*

*But if I hadn’t been sitting here the whole time, I’d swear it never happened! What kind of game is he playing?*

And suddenly he didn’t just think, he *knew*, that under Silver’s guilty façade he was laughing.

“Look man, can we stop now?”

“If you like,” Matt managed to answer, “we can finish up tomorrow.” *He fooled us all and we opened our doors to him. What have we done?*

Karla walked into the foyer, and slid her ID card into the flat metal box beside her apartment door. The door opened and the slender, dark woman walked in, and headed for her bedroom. After a long day, the clothes she’d worn to work felt confining.

She changed into a tee shirt and shorts went into the kitchen and opened her coldbox. Karla picked up two cartons of grape juice, and strolled into the backyard. Miss Opal wasn't on the front porch, so she was probably out back, enjoying her garden.

Opal was a retired history professor, but was also well read in philosophy and existentialism. She brought out the intellectual in Karla and, even better, made her feel safe; although the young woman would've been hard pressed to say why.

Karla found her sitting beneath the fruit trees, Nutmeg, curled up at her feet. The older woman's thick salt and pepper hair was tied back with a scarf that matched her blue, sleeveless dress.

Opal smiled up at her. "Hello dear."

"Good evening, I brought you something to drink." Karla sat down in the lawn chair facing her.

"Thank you; how was your day?"

"We had a new resident come in."

"Oh really?"

"A young Indigo guy named Silver."

Opal furrowed her brow, as if trying to remember something.

"Silver? That's an odd name."

"Yeah, I kinda thought so too." Karla sipped distractedly at her juice, gazing at the flowers.

"Did you have the dream again?"

"Last night, how did you know?"

"You look tired and your eyes are bloodshot." Opal's large eyes were full of sympathy. "That's the third time this week, how're you holding up?"

Karla shrugged, running her fingers through her cropped hair. "I'm just trying to maintain, trying to take this one in stride the way I do with the others." She grinned sardonically. "So can pretend I'm normal. But I can't pull seem to pull it off this time."

"Dreams are a mystery," Opal stretched her arms behind her head, "they can mean so many different things. Your co-worker pisses you off, so you dream about him. The dream is the mind's attempt to find a solution."

Now Karla smiled in earnest, warming to the discussion. "I've read about that. Most of the time the problem isn't even about the present, it's about the past. That's why they don't make any sense."

Opal nodded approvingly. "But there is always an underlying meaning."

"Uh-uh, mine aren't like that!" Karla laughed. "They always make

sense! Except for the fact that they're about people I've never met! And I'm forever in some crazy century, where I'm running around with a spear or something!"

"Yes, I'd be the first to admit that your dreams are different from any textbook definition."

Topaz's winds rustled the leaves lightly, stirring up an explosion of scent in the garden. Opal leaned her head back, closing her eyes for a moment. "Ah, the breezes are wonderful this time of day... You know, some mystics believe we've lived at least once before. Perhaps what you're experiencing when you sleep are not dreams at all, but memories of past lives."

Karla's smile vanished. Their conversation, just a few seconds ago, innocent prattle had now taken a sinister turn. *Is it possible? Could I have actually been all those things – a queen, an animal, a warrior – in another life? What about the man who was in my flat this morning? If he is a man?*

She'd tried to convince herself that he'd broken in somehow. Now this delusion was coming apart. *He can't be human. People don't just step out of nightmares... But then, what am I?*

Opal studied her with probing, dark eyes. "What else has happened?"

"I've figured out why the dream scares me so much." Karla pressed her fingertips into the sides of the juice carton, struggling to put her feelings into words. It wasn't easy. "I'm not even sure it *is* a dream."

"Then what do you think it is?"

The Indigo woman leaned closer, lowering her voice to a whisper. "A vision... I watched him escape. He was about to slip into a skin; put on a body like you or me would put on a shirt... and it was waiting for him, his flesh and bones and blood..."

Karla twisted her face in revulsion, a faraway look in her eyes, "Waiting, for how long? Years? Centuries? I always wake up before it happens, but I think he's out now... and he's coming for me."

Her words hung in the air between them. And she realized that Opal was the keeper of her secrets. *I've never told anybody else about them. Why do I trust her so much? Why do I feel like she'll understand – that she won't think I'm crazy?*

One day, Karla knew, these questions would be answered. But on that day, what would her friend ask her to do? What secrets would Opal tell *her*?

At that moment, Tatiana's voice exploded from her upstairs

window. “Get outta of here! You ain’t nothing but a junkie! You don’t pay no bills, you don’t spend no time with your children! I can’t stand the sight of you!”

“Cool,” Carlos replied in his heavy Bronze accent, “I’m gone, and don’ come looking for me!”

“So what you waiting on? Get *out!*”

The spell was broken. Relieved, Karla lifted her eyes to Tatiana’s window. “I wonder how long that’s gonna last?” She didn’t even want to think about the nightmare, much less talk about it. Talking about it made it real.

“Have patience honey.” Nutmeg jumped into Opal’s lap, and she absently stroked him. “She loves him.”

Karla snorted. “What’s to love? He’s unfaithful, he wastes all their credits, plus he has those junkie mood swings.”

“It’s often hard to see through the eyes of a lover,” the older woman replied serenely, “eyes that see faults as virtues.”

*Faults as virtues.* Unbidden, the dark face of her intruder rose before Karla’s eyes.

The back door slid open and the twins came running out, followed by Tatiana, her face hard and angry. “Evening, Miss Opal. Hey Karla.”

“Good evening, dear.”

“Hey yourself. You alright?”

The little woman turned her face to the window. “Shit, I’m better than alright – now that that motherfucker’s moving out!” She yelled loud enough for Carlos to hear. But her eyes were red and swollen from crying.

Ashley and Carlos Jr. seemed to have already forgotten their parents’ argument and were playing a game of hide-and-search around the tool shed.

Karla rose. “I’m going to get my ciphers. Can I bring you guys anything?”

“Bring me a beer if you have one,” said Tatiana, “thanks girl.” Although Karla didn’t drink, she kept alcoholic beverages for her friends who did. Tatiana, who did drink, never seemed to have any – courtesy of Carlos.

“Miss Opal?”

“A beer would be nice, Karla. Thank you.”

Bathed in the aura of the night moons, Tehotep squatted on the warehouse roof, his coat undulating in the wind like a dark bird of prey.

The initiation ceremony had been a huge success – better than he’d hoped. His changelings had all survived.

Tonight he would visit Karla. But he would not repeat this morning’s fiasco. *I will not be ruled by lust for her.* He was no love struck mortal to go bumbling about without forethought or common sense.

And Karla was no mortal woman. She was powerful and under the right circumstances: deadly.

*It’s time for the prelude to the dream.*

Tehotep closed his eyes: envisioning her...smelling her...tasting her. He pictured her in his mind, as he’d dreamt of her in his floating prison: addicted, with no thought past her next fix.

*Karla: dancing beneath the nightspot lights with friends... they’re passing a rush flute between them.*

Addicts had nicknamed the rush pipe a “flute,” because it bore a striking resemblance to the instrument, with its wide flaring mouth, the three holes carved into the top and the smaller, tapered mouthpiece. Rush powder was stuffed into the first hole, and junkies “played” the flute by alternating their fingers over the other two holes.

*Karla: sitting in a chair, her skirt pushed above her ass...playing the flute. Red and green smoke fills her mouth, while her friend’s/lover’s/acquaintance’s head moves beneath her skirt... Karla: making festival, caressing the smoke with her tongue.*

He inundated her with hot, private memories – but not the horrors of her past. These he kept: *Karla: sleeping in an alley under a filthy coat when she missed curfew...vomiting in a group ward with dozens of female addicts. She’s waiting for the morning roll call when the fixes are dispensed.*

And the piece de resistance: *Karla: stumbling home, after a long night in the streets, to find her father dead.*

There were, after all, fringe benefits to choosing what someone would remember.

She was leaning against the door of her flat when the cravings hit her. Karla swallowed rapidly, trying to clear her mouth of the saliva that filled it, perspiration coating her forehead.

“Karla what’s wrong?” Her friend’s voice was a jarring irritant. In a moment she would scream!

“*Karla!*” Opal’s cry broke the spell.

She wiped her forehead with the back of her hand. “I – I’m

alright.”

“You are most certainly not alright! What’s the matter with you?”

“I had the cravings.” Karla leaned against the doorway and closed her eyes. “I haven’t had ‘em like that in years.”

Her friend eyed her shrewdly. “Will you come over to my flat for a minute?”

“Miss Opal, I have to get up early in the morning!”

“Just for a minute.”

“Alright, but I can’t stay long.” *And you really don’t want to go in there yet, do you? Into the dark alone, where he might be waiting?*

She followed the elderly woman into her flat, and sat on one of the couches. Opal sat opposite Karla, her face a serene mask. Only her eyes betrayed the intensity swirling behind them.

“Earlier tonight you said you watched your dream specter escape, that he was ‘out now.’ Is there something you haven’t told me?”

*Why does have to she ask me about this now?* A vision of herself huddled on her futon all night, because she was too afraid to sleep, flashed through Karla’s mind.

“A man got into my flat today,” she blurted, “I don’t know how. Nobody else has a copy of my ID.” Her voice rose, teetering on the edge of hysteria. “He – he hid in my bedroom, while I was taking a shower! But I didn’t see him at first! All of a sudden he was just *there!*”

*She’s terrified.* “Did he touch you?”

“No but...” *Say it!* “I was looking right at him!” Karla’s voice dropped to a whisper, “When he left, he didn’t walk away. He vanished.” She buried her face in her hands then lifted it to gaze at Opal.

There was dread in her gaze. And beneath it, another primal emotion. Desire.

*She fears this creature, but she’s aroused by him too. That frightens her more than anything. Because she doesn’t understand. Not yet.*

“You think I’m seeing things, don’t you?”

Opal regarded her with dark, liquid eyes. Anger flickered across her face, but it quickly vanished. “No Karla, I believe you,” she said calmly.

“You – you do?”

*One wrong word and this child will shut down.* “He just disappeared?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“And it was the man from your dream?”

Karla stared, open-mouthed. “How did you know?”  
“You’ve been dreaming of his escape for weeks now. It’s a natural conclusion.”

*No it isn’t.*

“What did he say?”

“Say? He didn’t *say* anything. He just nodded.”

Passion briefly lit Opal’s face again. “Nodded?”

“Yeah nodded...like he was glad to see me.”

“Maybe he is a spirit,” Opal replied, with as much emotion as if she’d said: “Maybe he is old.”

“A spirit?” Karla’s voice trembled. “You mean a ghost?”

“Spirits are a diverse group, Karla. Only a few are ghosts. But if you’ll let me I can keep him away from your apartment.”

Silently, Karla wondered, how an ex-history professor could sit calmly discussing the paranormal, as if she was talking about the likelihood of rain. “When did you become an enchantress?”

Opal smiled thinly. “I am many things. Will you let me do this for you?”

The tall woman hesitated. “What are you going to do?”

“It’s best if you don’t know.” *Not yet.* “Please, just trust me. Give me your ID card.”

Karla reached into her pocket and handed Opal the plastic card. “Wait here, I won’t be long.”

Once inside Karla’s flat, the old woman went into the bedroom and took strands of the young woman’s hair from the comb on the nightstand.

She breathed softly on to the hair, walking from room to room. Pulling the strands as she journeyed. Spinning the wards of protection.

When Opal finished, she used her finger to trace invisible circles on her friend’s door, and the outside entrances to their building.

Back in her own apartment, she handed Karla the ID card. “You can go to bed now dear. He won’t visit your flat again.”

“Thank you.” *She’s so beautiful. Why haven’t I ever noticed how beautiful she is?* Every line, every crease seemed to tell its own story, its own tale of struggle, pain and triumph – and joy too. There was so much joy in Opal’s familiar, well worn face.

The two women stood looking at each other. *Into each other.* Time and space were suspended. The ceilings and walls around them receded,



and grew shadowy...an unspoken knowledge was passed to Karla, as palatable as an embrace.

*I'm not alone! There're others like me!* Relief washed over her, and she began to cry.

Opal hugged her and when she stepped back, Karla saw that her eyes were damp too. The older Indigo woman patted her face. "Now go get some rest. And don't forget – no matter what happens – that you are protected."

That night, as Karla lay in bed, she thought of her strange, wonderful gift and pondered Opal's last words. *She said: 'He won't visit your flat again. Not: 'He won't bother again' or 'He won't come near you.' She said no matter what, I'm protected.'*

*She's more than what she seems to be. I don't know who or what she is, but she's more than what she seems.*

Karla shut her eyes, and dreamed of Topaz...

*But this was not her world. This was an apocalyptic city, where the homeless slept in condemned buildings. Where enforcers nightly patrolled, searching for young men to send to war. Where gangs roamed the streets, looting and killing.*

*This was before the Time of Legend.*

*Her name was Simone; her man, Gokoti. They had four friends with whom they shared a mind-blowing secret.*

*They were Other.*

*Tonight, as wolves, they followed two enforcement vans. Simone was a midnight black wolf, Gokoti, burnt sienna. Joan had russet colored fur, with magenta highlights. There was a tan male, José. His sepia brown mate, Consuela. And Mark, the snowy albino.*

*In the back of the vans were sixty militants who'd been arrested earlier that night. The prisoners were activists who whispered freedom into the ears of anybody willing to listen, urging them to overthrow the Council, so the wars would end.*

The vehicles pulled to a stop in front of an electrified fence, surrounding three towers. The sergeant climbed out, and pushed his thumb into a metal cube beside the gate. It slid open, and they drove through.

Unseen, the wolves skulked alongside the vehicles. As the sergeant climbed down, the sienna wolf transformed into *werewolf*...his arms and legs lengthened, grew humanoid, until he stood upright...his paws becoming hands and feet...

Growling, he fell upon the startled officer, snatching his taser and clubbing him into unconsciousness, while five more werewolves attacked the others. In a few moments, it was over and their enemies lay sprawled on the ground before them.

Consuela pulled the keys from the sergeant's belt and unlocked the first van holding the prisoners. The hatch lifted, and the militants screamed in terror at the sight of them – hairy creatures with glowing, yellow eyes, their mouths crowded with teeth.

“Please,” a woman begged, “*don't eat us!*”

“Shut up!” Consuela rasped. “We're not going to hurt you!”

“We're setting you free!” Mark explained his voice barely more than a growl. “But you've got to hurry! The gate has a timing mechanism! In ten minutes it's going to close!”

Muttering, the activists jumped to the ground and edged slowly toward the fence.

“Get *going!*” José snarled. They broke into a run, throwing fleeting glances over their shoulders.

“You're welcome,” Joan muttered sarcastically.

Consuela unlocked the second van, and the prisoners yelped in fear.

Pursing her lips in irritation, Simone bent over and ripped the taser from an enforcer's belt. “We don't have time for this!” She aimed the weapon at the cowering men and women.

“Everybody – *out!*” As they hastily climbed down, she barked: “You're free to go!”

Gokoti laughed. “Well! That's one way of doing it; quick thinking baby.” The Others snickered.

But too much time had been lost. Only the first van of prisoners managed to squeeze past the gate, before it slammed shut. Trapped, the rest gazed back at their rescuers, too afraid to ask for help. Besides, what good would it do?

“Now what?” asked Joan.

José eyed the gate. “Think we can make it over?”

Mark raised an eyebrow. In his hirsute face, the effect was comical. “You can't be serious!”

“Why not? We've done it before.”

“Not while *carrying* somebody!” protested Simone.

“We got no choice,” José reasoned. “It's either that or leave 'em here.”

“He's right,” said Gokoti, “and we better hurry up.” He nodded towards the still unconscious enforcers, “those pigs might've wired

ahead. If they did, somebody's gonna be out here real soon to investigate."

Consuela sighed wearily. "Alright, let's try it." She grinned at her lover. "But if break anything, I'm kicking your ass."

The werewolves approached the trapped men and women, and they backed away.

Listen up," said Joan. "We're going to try to get you over the gate. But no more screaming, Ok?" She pointed a hairy finger at the towers. "We don't want any unwelcome guests."

An Amber man looked dubious. "How're you going to...*Hey!*" he cried out, as Joan scooped him up in her arms, took off running...and *leaped* over the fence.

For seconds, she and her passenger were airborne before, knees bent, she landed and set the man gently down.

The Others took turns vaulting the prisoners over the gate. By now they were no longer afraid.

But as José freed the last one, an elderly Indigo woman, something unexpected happened.

For a long moment she held on to the werewolf's hands, peering into his hairy face. Suddenly she exclaimed: "It's you – José!"

José was taken aback. "I – I don't know what you're talking about!" he stammered. "Who's José?"

"It *is* you! I recognize your voice now! It's them! José, Simone and Mark..." The militants began babbling excitedly amongst themselves.

"You look a little like Consuela!"

"I think that one's Gokoti!"

"You'd better get home now," José rasped, "before our luck runs out!"

"Alright dear," the elderly woman said. "And thank you so much!"

The friends watched them leave.

Joan rolled her eyes. "I liked it better when they were scared."

"By the time the Struggle's over, everybody's gonna know about us," Mark retorted.

"Fuck it," said Gokoti, "at least we're on the same side...What you got there baby?"

Simone grinned. "The keys to the pigs' vans." She dropped them into the gutter beneath her. Laughing, they became wolves again.

It was only as they loped away, that she saw the man leaning under the streetlamp.

*How long has he been there? Why didn't we see him before?*  
A chill passed over her...

*Karla stood on the porch, dressed only in her nightshirt. How had she come to be here? Was she still dreaming?*

*Yes, that was it. It felt like one...more like a dream than any she'd had in years.*

*The buildings around her were cloaked in mist, the streetlamps, lifeless globes.*

*The night moons encircled with a silver nimbus of clouds. The smell, what was that smell? So familiar? So enticing?*

*She saw now that the fog was tinged with red and green smoke. Rush smoke...! I've been breathing it! But for how long?*

*Her body answered her. Every nerve ending in her body seemed to come alive.*

*A surge of desire so intense, it was almost painful, rocked her senses. Her nipples grew hard beneath her gown. She could feel the dampness between her thighs.*

*Karla gripped the railing, trying to steady herself, while a voice from deep within her, cried out in protest.*

*And she was not alone. The unhurried, tapping of footsteps moved through the fog. She wanted to turn and go back inside. To flee from this place. To stay forever.*

*To wake from this dream. To never awaken.*

*Now, footfalls echoed just below her and Karla uttered a loan moan of fear/desire.*

*Then Tehotep stood at her side, and lust pushed aside her terror – the lust to embrace the primal: to conquer it with her own wanting. Karla studied the sharp, angular planes of his face. The last time they were together, he'd worn a different face.*

*But she knew him. She'd known him since the very beginning. He had killed for her more than once.*

*And this knowing stroked her vanity.*

*Without a word, he took her in his arms and began to kiss her hungrily. In one quick gesture he ripped her gown from throat to pelvis, pushing one hand into the small of her back and with the other, stroking her breasts and pubis.*

*The voice in her mind grew louder. You are being consumed! it screamed. He is a murderer, a defiler of innocents! Just for now, she whispered back. She clutched him, pressing her body against him.*

*“Come inside.”*

*He shook his head and for an instant, glared at her with such rage and passion, that she drew back in fear... before he bent his mouth to hers once more. She thought he would take her right there. Instead he lifted her in his arms, and carried her down the steps.*

*Karla’s dread returned – like that of a somnambulist who awakes to find herself teetering on the edge of a cliff. How could she let this inhuman creature carry her away, even in the midst of a dream? He was a daemon who would devour more than her body.*

*He would devour her soul.*

*For the first time \*\*\*\* spoke: “Sleep...”*

*She twisted in his arms, kicking and punching, but his grip was like iron.*

*Karla felt her lids grow heavy.*

*He took flight, and she slept in his cold embrace.*

*Three ravens glided alongside them – without warning they attacked, pecking at his arms and face. He hissed like a snake, and they burst into flames. Yet hundreds more – and more still – soared to take their place. They blanketed the sky now – covering the night moon – pecking at his face, his stomach, his groin. \*\*\*\* cursed them, burning them with his magic, but there were too many.*

*Beating wildly at the birds, he dropped her.*

*A cluster of ravens flew away from the rest – speeding past the writhing apparition of feathers and flesh that was \*\*\*\* – to take her nightgown in their beaks. More rushed underneath her, bearing her to safety...*

Karla opened her eyes. She was slumped against her porch railing. The first pale light of the illuminae shined through the clouds. Her ID card lay on the steps beside her.

Shivering in the morning air, she rose and opened the door of her building. She sat on the futon, and buried her face in her hands. *This was the kind of shit I used to do when I was using. Waking up outside, in alleyways, not remembering how I got there...But now, I got friends! I got a job! I got a life!*

*What’s happening to me?*

It was noon, and Karla and Matt were having lunch in her office. They’d met to discuss Silver’s transition into the house.

So far, they’d observed that Silver was fitting in well: he’d already

made new friends – among them Kurt, who bunked in the cubicle next door.

But Karla couldn't stop thinking about last night. And every time she relived the memory of the Others' victory over the enforcers, her mind returned again and again to the dream's conclusion.

*I was gonna let that monster make love to me. Was that a dream? Was it?*

*Or did it really happen?*

Finding herself outside, with no recollection of how she'd gotten there, was the hardest thing to accept. And the most frightening. *Where will I wake up next time?*

Yet for once, Matt seemed even more distracted than she was. He kept repeating himself. Then too, he was avoiding her eyes looking at the console, the floor – anywhere but at her.

*What's wrong with him?*

Matt, in turn, heard himself going on and on about Silver and the other residents, while inside him a battle raged. *Should I tell her? Will she understand?*

Karla made the decision for him. *I'm not the only one with problems.*

*This is one time I can make him feel better.* “Matt...”

“Huh?”

“I get it, Silver's doing great. Everybody's doing great. What else is on your mind?”

He smiled wanly. “Am I that transparent?”

She returned his grin. “Yep.”

“Alright here it is: I haven't been honest with you. I think Silver's admission should be revoked. Immediately.”

Karla raised her eyebrows. “You mean put him out? Damn! What'd he do?”

Matt described Silver's first session. Yet he couldn't bring himself to tell her of how he'd reacted to Silver's narrative of a rush high. He was too ashamed. *Admit it, he gave you a boner. I swear if he'd been holding, I'd have lit up right there in the therapy booth.*

Later, in the nightmare to come, he would wonder if not telling Karla had been a fatal mistake.

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