



Source: David Grossman, 'Plans for a military victory over Hizbullah are a fantasy', *Guardian Unlimited*, 20/07/06.

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His excitement over the phone was palpably unlike anything before. I hadn't expected him to call when the time came. He didn't explain why he needed me. Against that husky, focused energy, what could I offer? Perhaps he still flirted with notions of a normal future. I wanted to believe his inner humanity expected me to turn him in. I considered trying to dissuade him from his course, but knew what reaction that would elicit.

I'm always driving into distances and more distances. That muggy, sunny afternoon was perfect for a long journey in an air-conditioned car. Even as my heart raced, I refused to hurry. The pavement glittered under slanting sun. Cars flashed past.

The winding highway never leads to just one door. There will be many: a weathered door with brown paint peeling under relentless sun, a red one in a white house glistening softly under streetlights by a quiet boulevard, a banging screen overlooking a Muskoka lake at sunset. I go and they welcome me into stricken houses. What about the devil draws me? I have no parlay with him. It's the hope that beauty and tenderness might save these lost ones.

I rarely offer my own door, but the cabin was the only place he could meet without condemning me. The drive is a distance of four CDs. Enya and Joni Mitchell were all I could stand. City freeways and rolling farmland gave way to rock cuts, mixed forest and watery vistas.

His car sat in the driveway, but I didn't pull behind, expecting he would leave early without a word. I parked by the road and walked down. Through trees, the lake lay pale under hazy dusk. He stood silhouetted on the side deck, swatting at mosquitoes.

'Were you waiting long?' I asked.

He didn't answer. Keys in hand, I moved toward the door, but he took and kissed me fiercely, fumbling with my tee-shirt. I had to pull away to get us indoors, away from the insects.

Sometime later, we braved the bugs anyway. Daylight had vanished, full moon risen. We ran naked down the path, barefoot on soft hemlock needles, and dove at once into soft silver embrace. Bubbles caressed skin as we rose for air, inhaling fragrance of water mint. He chased me around the bay until my lungs and muscles ached. Beside the dock he caught up and pulled me back, pressing against my tailbone. Then we fell still, up to our necks, gazing into the white eye overhead. Blindfolds of cloud drifted across its orb.

Night was so silent it made our ears ring. After making love four times, we lay breathing and sweating, enduring body heat for sake of communion. I didn't know the plan, whether this would be his final sleep. In the middle of the night, all desire spent, he would sometimes tell me things.

He lay with beard against my neck, and breath in my ear forming whispered, wordless sounds. I drifted into a hypnagogic state. A procession of ghosts escaped his lips and crossed my face. I never could sleep in another man's full embrace, needed my own corner of the mattress, but now I couldn't leave him. I thought we might lie awake all night.

Some time later I awoke to heavy rain beyond the screen, thunder in the trees. The space beside me lay empty. I felt a jerk of loss, then noticed his vague shadow at the window. I gave no sign, but watched his lonely vigilance. Maybe this place, lacking politics or judgement, would raise inner voices to turn his intent around.

Next time I awoke, the rain had stopped and dawn turned the window pale. He had returned to bed and I didn't move for fear of waking him, but he must have heard my breath change. Rolling on top, he clenched his limbs around and planted his lips on mine.

In the silence outside, a leaf turned and shed raindrops through the canopy. He turned his head.

'What's that sound?'

I said, 'It's only a breath of breeze shaking rain out of the trees.'

It persisted, falling droplets turning other leaves, creating a cascade. His dark profile listened intently.

'Why doesn't it stop?' he asked.

He imagined spies in the forest. I had heard it many times while lying there alone, but no explanation could reassure him.

'What difference does it make?' I asked.

'None,' he said. 'We could be detected at any turn.'

So he made love to me once more and dressed, declining an offer of breakfast, saying he had to cross the border at 11.20 a.m. That was all. I watched him stroll to the car. Getting in and turning the ignition, he glanced once in my direction, then turned and backed the car away.

I made toast, eggs and coffee, then sat watching sunrise break over the lake. Thick streamers of mist rose from sodden hills. I considered making a phone call, but decided against violating my private sanctum. I could stay two or three days, ignore the news, go home when the worst was over.

It was 5.52 a.m. now. Alarm clocks would go off, husbands and lovers get out of bed, fathers shave in front of their sons, dress and eat breakfast. In business suits they would open front doors and bend to pick newspapers off front porches. So many doors on quiet laneways, townhouse doors in bare neighbourhoods. Broken, beautiful men amidst their own dilemmas, perhaps sharing my comfort in the sunrise.

Later I dressed and drove to one of the small towns that dot cottage country. It was busy with families on summer vacation. Teenagers bought yogurt cones and sat by the marina, watching other teenagers cruise in boats. I crossed the bridge and parked in a busy lot where streams of people passed in and out of the general store. Nearby stood a row of pay phones. All three were occupied.

I sat with the engine running, glancing at the clock, watching three people talk. It was 11.07 a.m.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Van Waffle.*