

## **Rachel**

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03.05.2006 – 03.07.2006

She was awakened by a gentle whisper from a fading dream. Her eyes, as light as a pool on a scorching summer day, opened to explore another day although she tried to cling to sleep and whatever fantasy world she had come out of. Eyelids fighting what seemed like dawn, she refused to let go of the night's sweetness. Her heart was throbbing with those familiar pulses. The pleasure was too good to give up.

Her hand traveled inside the blanket and caressed her hip. She always liked to start off slow and build the anticipation. The smooth nails, just manicured yesterday, slid across her warm skin, stopping at the cotton fortress. A finger slithered under the fabric, making a circle as it descended to the place of yearning. Her hand followed, gently stretching the waistband and traversing through the soft patch of forest to the fields of desire. Two fingers traced the outer folds of a pink flower. She found her treasure.

A quick moan escaped her lips when the first finger entered, but soon cascaded into a familiar sigh. She adjusted her hips, making herself more comfortable. Her breathing slowly increased as she entered into a soothing pattern of motion. The silk blankets ground into her skin and she felt like she was floating on waves of fabric. The one and only hill on her body's lower landscape sprung to life. Her fingers explored the regions the dream had stirred.

She licked her lips and increased the pace. The gentle motions of her hand's two explorers soon turned into quick thrusts. Her eyes shut even tighter. Her hips moved more and more. She wiggled in the sea of silk that was her bed. The pair of dancers twirled in paradise.

Deeper and deeper between the folds, finally allowing herself full satisfaction, she reached the coin-sized object of ecstasy. She bit her lower lip. The exploring dancers involved the wall in their routine, brushing up against it, slow-dancing with it. Her mouth opened and closed in pleasure, like a poet searching for words. She kissed her other hand, allowing a finger to penetrate her lips and quickly escape, glistening with saliva. The internal ballet was soon complimented outside as her other hand crossed back and forth across the burning, burgeoning hill.

This rhythmic pattern continued and energy flowed through her entire body. She began to move about more and more in bed. Eyes closed, indifferent to the morning and the world that awaited, she indulged in herself, fingers feasting on the radiant pink flower. Her moans, echoing a delicious female art, were only restricted by the moments when she bit into her lips like a gentle fruit. The sheets were now shaped to her motions of pleasure, each fold there for a sweet purpose.

Her breathing increasing rapidly, now a flutter of bird wings, sighs getting louder and louder, she began to feel the flower opening its petals. Her back arched, she felt a numbness in the tips of her toes, she threw herself back, and let the inner tingling release itself as a vibrant burst of energy. From the depths of her soul and by the rivers of the heart, the feeling rushed through her very being, a waterfall of emotional, physical, and spiritual momentum racing to escape. It came in two waves, the second resulting in a louder moan than the first. As the orgasm subsided, a fulfilling smile crossed Rachel's face. Now she was ready to open her eyes.

The first thing that came to focus when her eyelids retracted were the dancing shadows of the trees on her ceiling. She lay there for a few moments and enjoyed the

dynamic canvas. The lingering pleasure was not at all like what she had just experienced but still something worth a smile. Rolling over and uncovering herself, she sat up in bed.

The clock was still twenty minutes from ringing. Chad was still asleep. For a moment, she wished those minutes could be spent in his arms last night, wherever he had disappeared to, or back in that tender dream. She yawned and decided to get up, figuring it would be better to get ready for the interview early. Her feet slipped out from under the covers, searched for her slippers, and having found them, carried Rachel to the bathroom. She floated across the reflection of the morning light on the hardwood floor.

She was a human angel. Not perfect, but with enough beauty both internal and external to give a man's heart wings. Rachel walked into my life quietly, calmly, almost unnoticed. You see, she wasn't a blonde. I have a thing for blondes. It was only a few years ago that her petite brunette frame strolled into my last class of the day. The first thing that drew all of my attention to her was her eyes, her touch of jade green peaceful eyes that just made me inhale and want to indulge.

Her beauty was mesmerizing; although I'm sure she knows that. My thoughts were all hers even when my eyes tried to focus on the rest of the world around me, so simple and ugly by comparison. But she wasn't blonde. She was the first breathtaking woman I saw who I wasn't immediately attracted to in any typical way. I was a void, filled only with fascination.

We didn't have a moment or anything. We didn't speak. She probably didn't even notice me.

Rachel did not notice her reflection as she walked past the bathroom mirror. She wanted only the liquid comfort of her shower. In a quick, hazy, early-morning moment she was caressed by the arousing water. With closed eyes, she briefly stood under the brisk flow and let it awaken her naked body. It poured out of the pipes and fed her skin with its heat.

The steam was a muted whisper around her sensual outline. She responded to the water, to the feeling of a new beginning, to the light refracting through the shower pane, making interesting shapes on her glistening skin. Twenty minutes is just right, it's just enough time to take it slow and enjoy the pretty little things.

She was prettier than any girl I had ever wanted to sleep with but I didn't want to sleep with her. Her very presence stirred something strange inside of me. This wasn't a female object to console me, to arouse me, or even to love me. This was a *woman*. She radiated with something indescribable, yet it shone as quietly as her beauty. In fact, you could get so wrapped up in her sexiness that you would easily miss it.

As Rachel stepped out of the shower, the tightly-wrapped pink towel felt snug in face of the chilly air that would otherwise bounce off her body. The fabric tickled her skin in a pleasant way. She looked up at her reflection in the mirror. Her hair was still dripping wet, leaking the tears of a mind a bit lost in worry. She had Chad's love, her ambition, and a fair amount of happiness, but this job was what would make her feel complete. Rachel yearned to be whole.

The towel started to slip and she caught the falling cloth as it was unraveling at her chest, which brought her attention there. She looked at herself in the mirror. Her petite breasts had never bothered her, to her they symbolized how the right man didn't have to dig deep to reach her heart. She gave herself a quick glance-over, happy with what she saw. She liked her body, it was almost just right everywhere, and that's how it should be.

What should friendship be? How did ours even start? She sat a seat or two down from me fairly often, which eventually led to a slice of conversation. I guess that's where it began. I was the first one to say something. I was fascinated with her but not intimidated. It felt like something new was born with our first hello. You only need one match to ignite a forest.

Rachel opened the heavy old door and stepped outside of her apartment building. The July morning said hello with a breeze that she felt dancing under her dark skirt. She began to walk south as her green blouse waved in response to the new day.

At least once per block she received the full attention of a man walking the other direction. She didn't respond. Not only was she happily taken but romance was the last thing on her mind at the moment. She had everything but this job. Her chin was raised as she walked, but not too much. Two teaspoons of confidence are much sweeter than a cup of arrogance.

The clouds above shaped themselves into a flock of memories from her past, following her. Hardly noticing the brightest the sun would be that day, Rachel entered a coffee shop.

We spoke often but never saw each other after we were done with that class. She began to read my work and tell me her heart's worries, while I entertained her honesty with my own. We were both romantics but dancing along very different paths in this world. It's a wonder we even crossed. She was an exotic flower of a girl who had no problem finding someone willing to pluck her up and take her home. I was a lonely little boy with poetic desires that were well on their way to being exhausted. It was as if she had not only her beauty but the company of all who could see it, while I was left only with the inspiration that arose from seeing someone as beautiful as her. Rachel could try to make her heart's fantasies a reality with numerous willing people, but me, all I had were my poems.

I didn't write about her often; only a poem here or there, the image of an intriguing brunette goddess every once in a while. After all, she wasn't blonde and that's all my heart chased in those days. She was there all the time: to listen to my heart's pursuits, to read my latest poems, usually before anyone else, and to relate our pain and sympathize when few others would. She listened to me. I listened to her. Long conversations that were an array of our moods occurred frequently. Minutes dripped into hours, which dripped into years. We never saw each other.

She stepped out of the coffee shop with a small French vanilla cappuccino in one hand, a ripe banana in the other, and a male hound at her heels. Her gloomier mood reflected itself in the changing sky, a shade darker now. He had tried to make friendly conversation as he stood behind her in line. She was polite about it but not the least bit inviting of anything more. He had that familiar smile and transparency to him. Rachel liked to wear her heart on her sleeve; he preferred to don his sleaziness. When he offered to sit together, she said she was getting her coffee to go. He took that as an invitation to follow.

My heart followed anyone but Rachel and she was there through all of it. She knew all about Kristina, the old childhood friend who sprouted back up in my life and replaced all that childish hate with adolescent longing. I told her all about Kristina's friend Katie, or "blondie" as I liked to call her, and she followed my emotional mistake to its bitter January end. She knew about Kayleigh, the fiery younger girl I dated from my old home down south. She knew about the other Kristina too, the cute, blonde one, a year older than me who I chased after she got out of a two-year relationship. She knew about

Lindsey and Joanne and L... My heart was our conversational diary but I could never see how her pretty eyes read it because I never saw them at all.

Rachel did her best to let the man know that she wasn't the least bit interested but he couldn't take a hint. When they had to stop before crossing a busy intersection, he made a particularly pathetic joke and out of pity she looked into his eyes. He saw a glistening piece of fruit waiting to be ravaged. She saw a slave to lust.

We talked about sex, quite often, actually. It wasn't the least bit intimidating speaking with her on the subject, letting her know everything I felt. I knew how to treat a girl but I always listened to her advice, always interested in the female perspective, always trying to understand her better, always wondering what she thought of me. I fantasized about her eventually. It was inevitable but it happened no more often than when I wrote about her. Both were surreal processes. It wasn't just sex in my mind and they weren't just words on paper. In those moments, deep in the comfort of a boy's dreams, she held me and taught me and understood me. And when I wrote, I tried to hold her and understand her. I tried to see those emerald eyes and explore their world without being completely awe-struck by their beauty. I usually failed.

I showed her even my work about her. I drew her. I told her that I'd fantasized about her. I told her that we didn't see each other enough. I told her when I questioned our friendship. If the thought wrote itself in my mind, it found a place in our talks.

The man found his place alone on the street as Rachel got in a cab and slammed the door in his face. For a moment she remembered something and thought to herself, "beauty is a curse on the world." She almost laughed, all-too-familiar with one of the meanings of the phrase.

Rachel was one of the few consistent things in my world. If you grow accustomed to and become comfortable with the negative things in your life, then what does that say about the positive? I clung to whatever light I had. I hate the word friendship but she was one of the few people I could honestly call a friend. In many ways, the lasting element of our relationship is something I severely doubted. It seemed so unnatural, in the life where I did nothing but lose people, here was this angelic woman who always remained. There was the loneliness, the depression, the drama, the long road trips, the blondes, and there was Rachel. I got used to it all. But if you get used to hell, how can you ever let go of a piece of heaven?

The taxi pulled away and Rachel looked up at the tall, menacing grey building before her. It mimicked the darkening clouds brooding above it. She walked up to the revolving doors and went through their glass carousel. If things went right, those doors would be her daily dance partners.

I watched her go through relationships too. She even had her spell of the single life, just like me. Her spell culminated in a more profound relationship, mine, in more drama. Oh, the things that loneliness will make you chase...

She lived in my neighborhood, just a few short streets down from me. We exited the same way. Our cars stood in the same left turn lane a billion times; my eyes, red with hatred, mocked by the red traffic light, hers awaiting the comforting glow of the green. I biked past her house several times; she had passed mine when she had driven to the car wash. We spoke for hours, but never in person. I always offered to meet, but for one reason or another it never came to be.

One October I did see Rachel. She told me she was often at a certain place around lunchtime on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I bumped into her on the parking lot, as she was heading for her car. I hadn't seen her in a long time but I couldn't mistake her for anyone

else. We shared a hug, she commented on my long hair, and I showed her a drawing I did of her and promised I'd make a copy of it and give it to her. We shared another hug. I don't even remember what she smelled like, other than sweet. And she was so damn beautiful.

I made a copy of that drawing that same afternoon. I came back to that same place around lunch time almost every Tuesday and Thursday, often missing my bus to work. She never got the drawing. I never saw Rachel again.

It was pouring outside. She walked out of the menacing grey building with a smile on her face. They should call anytime. She got it. She definitely got it. Things just clicked into place. At the moment, she couldn't think of a single thing missing in her life. Everything and everyone just felt *right*.

Rachel walked a little looser and more sensually, again almost floating. The rain just washed over her like a waterfall of pleasure. She was soon soaked but didn't care, she was twirling with a beautiful feeling. Her aroused heart thumped with a delicious happiness under that wet green blouse.

I left that world some time ago. I missed her. I missed her when she was nearby but even more so now. In the past, it seemed our conversations were all that bound us. There was no physical contact, no seeing, no touching, no movie-going, no star-gazing, no anything. But she was always *there*, nearby. Maybe, just maybe, I thought, one of our sprawling talks can culminate in a drive or a walk or a meeting, something, anything that could put us together, for a moment, an instant, some how, so I could see those eyes, those emerald orbs of peace, tranquility, and soothing beauty just looking back at me in life, lust, friendship, everything, anything. But no. Now she's gone. Now, even the possibility of seeing her again somewhere has melted away. If you even get used to the bad, how much does it hurt when the good is taken away?

Rachel moved on the sidewalk with an exuberant motion, almost dancing with joy like she used to do as a little girl. The street had no people, only umbrellas, the sky no storm clouds, only refreshing summer showers, but regardless, she noticed nothing and no one. She walked on through the puddles of today.

She stopped and closed her eyes. For a moment, Rachel could only hear the music of the rain. Her gorgeous eyes parted just in time to see someone walking by. He was a tall man with long, brown hair and a touch of infinite sadness painted in his eyes. He had no hat or umbrella and was also soaked. They looked at each other and kept moving.

Rachel closed her eyes again, smile still in full flow, and continued walking forward. I continued walking, my head drowning in the misery of today. Suddenly, her eyes burst open and she stopped. Her petite frame turned around to see the male figure moving away. She reached out and parted her lips ... silence. The rain drowned out everything. I felt her looking at me as I walked away with tears forming in my eyes. The great thing about this kind of weather is that no one can tell if you cry.

I loved Rachel once, in another universe, where we still had our souls but all the other circumstances were different. Maybe, somewhere, some how, that love still exists. But at that moment we were just two people on a sidewalk that led to nowhere except a friendship long forgotten.