

Wild Dreams of Reality, 11

by Jerry Ratch

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I took my first shower away from home as if it were a ritual cleansing. It felt especially good, even exciting to be taking a shower in the bathroom of another woman. Why was that? Maybe because it didn't have marble around the bathtub, and it wasn't elegant or exquisite. That was part of it. Here I could bathe without worrying whether the soap was leaving spots on the tiles. It didn't feel like I was being relegated to taking a shower in a straightjacket. Parker's house was just your basic house, and I could scrub off my old existence, singing to myself any lyrics I wanted. I could whistle if I felt like it, and I could breathe again, and suddenly the word Hallelujah flew out of my mouth. "Hallelujah!" I said, not overly loud, but *Hallelujah!* anyway.

Parker and I lay down naked on the bed together, and when I touched her she was already wet, and I thought: *Man, this is incredible!* My soul rose up to the surface to see who this was. She had an incredible touch and sought me out as I grew hard in her hand. Her fingers seemed to understand how to handle me. Perhaps working in clay had brought out their natural awareness. Parker made me feel alive again. That night I found what I'd been seeking — the one being on this planet who was meant for me to be with, and to love.

We fit together like we were made for each other. When we made love our hearts met as if in a high wind in a flurry of wings above us. When I entered her, she opened to let me in and welcomed me home. Her mouth sought out mine with a true hunger, and as we kissed I could see the beautiful structure of the bones along the sides of her face and the way the hair of her eyebrows grew out naturally. Everything about her was alive and natural. The dense

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bunch of hair between her legs, curling where it began to grow down the leg just a little, then turning into a soft natural down, a reddish-brown like the reddish-brown hair on her head. The ultimate beauty lay in those large dark eyes, because when she looked at me I felt at peace.

I'd been with Parker before, I didn't know where exactly, but she was someone who'd been lost to me until this time. As we made love I saw in my mind an image of fields of wheat, but it was as though it were from somewhere else that I was unaware of, a place I'd never actually been in my life. And when I came, I couldn't help it — I simply laughed. The breath that had been pent-up inside me went rushing out by itself. Without thinking I laughed and laughed, it felt so good to be inside her. I could feel our souls intertwine as though we had been cleaved somewhere in the past and we had now become rejoined.

"It sounds good to hear you laugh," she said. "Laughter is close to pleasure, and one of the names for God."

We held one another all night long.

The next evening was Friday. Parker roasted a chicken, some potatoes and carrots, and we devoured everything. It was the beginning of the Sabbath, and Parker lit candles.

"The Sabbath is a foretaste of heaven," she said. "Tonight is for the sensual self, the pleasure of sex. It's a natural part of life. Sabbath begins with lighting two candles, one for each of us, one for the masculine and one for the feminine. You wave some of the light into your eyes. Like this." She made a scooping motion with her hands and brought them up to her face.

"You capture some of the light with the hands as if it were water," she explained, "washing your eyes with the light." Parker went ahead and did this. She smiled, encouraging me to do the same.

"You do this," she said, "in order to wash away the exertion of the week. You're supposed to forget about the consuming pettiness of daily life. Starting on Friday evening you shed those

concerns and focus on the enjoyment of the moment, the touch and pleasure of the flesh."

I was fascinated by this explanation. I had forgotten to nourish the soul in these small simple ways in my life, and my soul, I realized, had dwindled to almost nothing. It had acquired a kind of dryness, and finally there'd been the inability to enjoy life at all as it went by, always concentrating as I was on the future. I had forgotten *my Self* in this bleak picture, and *the moment* as it occurred.

We made love in the light from the candles with the shadows flickering on the walls of her bedroom. And as I made love to Parker, I saw in front of me as if on an inner screen — while my eyes were closed and I was deep inside her — a picture of a flower, an immense flower that was opening outward. For a long time afterwards we lay still. Finally I said, "I had this incredible vision when I was inside you." Jumping out of bed, I wrote down this poem, then read it to her:

Flower

*Sitting on the surface of it, near the entrance to its sex,
A tiny child sitting up.
The flower enormous, and the child sitting in the white light
That is almost granular.
These might have been blocks of sugar around him (the child too
Could have been solid sugar.)
The flower white with huge petals opening out, and fringes of
red,
Deep red or crimson.*

When I was finished, Parker asked, "Does it have roots?"
"What do you mean? I was looking at the flower."
"Yes, I know, Philip." She got up and hugged me, holding me close with her nakedness pressed against me. We stood gazing at each other in the full-length mirror.

"What do you think it means?" she asked.

"Well, I'm not sure. All I know is that I saw a child there inside you."

"Is that you?"

"I don't know. It could be you. It could be us, I don't know. I just saw that child sitting up in sunlight, in front of the opening to this enormous flower." Then I asked: "Why did you want to know if it had roots?"

"Whether it has roots or not, and the way the roots grow, shows the depth and strength of the flower that you saw."

"But I was only looking at the flower itself, and the light."

"Yes."

"I wasn't aware of the roots."

"Yes, I know. Think about it."

I nodded my head.

Changing the subject, she asked, "Would you like some slices of pear and maybe some cheese?"

"Yes, I'm famished."

"I'm so glad you don't smoke," she said. "I hate it when a man has to have a cigarette after sex."

She went to the kitchen, and I walked naked into the living room. There were pots with plants all over the place.

"What are all these plants? Are you a gardener?"

"No, these aren't mine. I was baby-sitting them for a friend."

"Oh," I said. "Is he a boyfriend?"

"No. Actually these are Samuel's. He didn't have anybody else to take care of them while he went on his vacation. He was gone for a week, and they would've died."

"Really?" I mulled it over, turning to look at the group of plants. "And so you get stuck with his plants? How come they're still here? This one doesn't look so good."

"Samuel has been slow about picking them up. I don't know, maybe he's getting tired of taking care of them. This one has bugs. Here," she said, cracking open the front door and pushing the

thing out onto the porch where there were plenty of other plants. "These all have bugs. I've got to spray them. Samuel hasn't taken very good care of them."

She turned on the light in her study. "You can put your things in here for the next couple of nights. I'm going down to L.A. to visit my parents. Do you think you can survive on your own?"

Taking her face in both hands, I looked at the structure of the bones that were so European, so exotic and alive, and her eyes that were fathomless, that seemed to contain history. I replied, "I'm not sure."

"I love your touch," she said. "Your hands are so gentle and soft. I love it when you touch my face like that." I kissed her full on the mouth again and felt myself starting to get hard.

"If Samuel isn't your lover," I asked, "why did he leave all these plants with you? Isn't there anyone else who would water them?"

"He's a good friend," Parker said. "He lent me his car when mine was in the shop, so I owed him a favor. He believes in making people feel obligated to thicken the friendship."

"Yeah, so he can get you in bed."

Parker laughed quietly. "He had a good two years of opportunities to get me into bed, and it never even got close. I'm not interested in Samuel sexually," she said. "He has problems getting involved. He only took me to a movie one time, saying he had free passes, and then at the end of the night all he did was give me a little peck on the cheek when he drove me home."

I had to laugh.

"This is no joke," said Parker. "Mostly we just see each other one morning a week for coffee dates. That's when he tells me everything he did over the past weekend. But there was one of those weekends of his, I will never forget. It was the weekend of his birthday. He'd thrown a birthday party for himself and never even invited me. Then he made the mistake of telling me all about the party. What he didn't realize was that he had invited a number of my girlfriends. They had already asked me why I wasn't there. I had to

tell them I was out of town, but they knew I was lying. I was really embarrassed."

"Why didn't he invite you?"

"That's what I wanted to know, so one day I confronted him. He admitted it was because he didn't want any of his male friends to meet me. He was afraid I would end up liking one of them more than him."

Parker shook her head, and her hair fell over one of her breasts.

"What I think is, he's afraid of making a commitment and then getting hurt. He's never even been in a long-term relationship. The fact that he's starting to seriously look for a house to buy is a major step for him. I never thought he could do even that."

"Well, I don't," I said, "have a problem making a commitment."

Parker looked at me, smiling. "You sure don't." Then she asked, "Where is your brother? I heard him coming and going a few times, but I never see him. Do you think we should invite him in or something?"

"I'll throw on some clothes and go see if he's there."

