

CHAPTER THETEEN

Writer's can treat their mental illnesses every day.

Kurt Vonnegut

Remember I make a point of my disbelief in the usefulness of psychotherapy? Even quoted statistics to back up my point that it's rubbish? That going to a psychotherapist doesn't make you feel any better than not going to a therapist?

Plus, there's my *No one knows shit* theory.

So I went to a psychotherapist to un-worry Mom about stealing her pain medication and guess what? I *immediately* felt better. I mean even before I sat down.

An Up Moment just when we need it!

This Up moment was based on the fact that the psychotherapist was a woman, an *attractive* woman. A woman who couldn't say No even before I asked her anything. She was stuck with me for an hour a week.

And guess what I said when she right up front asked me what was bothering me?

You think it was something about the nightmare I was going through with my memoir, with my demented editor? Or even the fact that Mom was very ill? Or that I was *self-medicating* to feel normal? Or something about the growing sense of existential dread I was beset with? (I know: I haven't previously mentioned the existential dread I was beset with. Seemed pointless.) Or that sometimes when I'm writing, or rather, staring at the blank page, my forehead will bleed, metaphorically speaking?

No. My answer to her query was this: "I can't seem to get laid."

My visits to the attractive female psychotherapist got interesting. I say interesting because we took to playing mind games with each other, rather than dealing with my

psychological problems, which I don't think is supposed to happen in psychotherapy sessions. Well now, hold on. *I* was principal perpetrator of the mind games, come to think of it; she was mostly the target, the quarry, although she did pitch in towards the end. See, I didn't look at my time with the attractive female psychotherapist as psychotherapy sessions; I saw them as *dates*. And my agenda on these dates was predictable, especially given my answer to her question about what was bothering me: I wanted to have sex with the attractive female psychotherapist, and in the process see the attractive female psychotherapist naked.

If you're thinking that this was incredibly cynical, especially since I was supposed to be un-worrying Mom, you must remember two things. One, I don't believe in the tenets of psychotherapy and, Two, the goal, the *raison d'être*, of the attractive female psychotherapist was to make me feel better. And I was quite sure that I *would* feel better if I had sex with her. So, see, in a sense, I *was* behaving *in the spirit* of the tenets of psychotherapy.

I didn't tell Mom about this, of course. My theory that having sex with my psychotherapist was the real road to feeling better. She'd have flipped. I just told her I felt better after the sessions, which made *her* feel better, less worried about me. And I *did* feel better, no question, I mean right from the get-go and through the whole process, right up until the end when I made a big mistake, which big mistake was right up there in magnitude with sending my demented editor the previous editor's edits. My feeling better probably had something to do with having meaning in my life. Something to shoot for. For example, the existential dread I'd been beset with faded into the void, so to speak. Or at least I didn't mind being beset with it anymore.

There were problems to surmount in having sex with the attractive female psychotherapist, the main one being the inconvenient legal and ethical barriers to a psychotherapist having sex with a patient. So there was that. But, see, at the same time, our ostensible relationship as psychotherapist and patient offered a big advantage for me: I could steer our conversations virtually anywhere without coming off as an asshole or lunatic, as long as the perception was that my agenda was related to the psychotherapy process; to my feeling better.

And in a very real way I *did* want to feel better. But you already know that.

My initial blurt about what was bothering me – not being able to get laid – was an advantage here, although it would not have been an advantage on a regular date; that sort of comment is usually a poor opener. What I did was back off on that, let it hang, let it spread its subtextual blush over everything to come. In our initial sessions/dates I blabbed about other stuff – I was in this for the long haul and did not rush my agenda -- my goal being to show the attractive female psychotherapist that, One, I'm a sensitive person, and, Two, a helluva guy, notwithstanding my apparent psychological problems.

And over the weeks of our sessions/dates I made major inroads. Proof of this is that I'd got the attractive female psychotherapist to talk a lot about herself, her private life and so forth, in order to prove to me that she was a sensitive person, plus a helluva gal, a gal who would be perfect for a helluva guy like me. I don't think this is supposed to happen in psychotherapy sessions.

Toward the end, when I sensed the time was ripe, via clever segueing I'd developed as a nonfiction writer, I *eased* our conversations back to the subject sex. I mentioned a woman whose name you've heard before in this context: Maria. I described

how sexy Maria was and how a couple years previously I'd had a wild affair with her down on a Caribbean island – this island, the one from which I'm writing, by the way. I also described a woman up at Montauk on whom I had a wild crush, and that I hadn't acted on the crush because women were saying No even before I asked them anything so I figured it was pointless. This was Lisa, the woman with whom I've fallen in love at age 55, possibly for the first time, back in 1998. Also in the context of having sex, or, rather, *not* having sex, I described the Cat Woman Incident and my date with Clyde and his non-ex-girlfriend. Then, when I repeated the observation that I can't seem to get laid, can't find anyone who would have sex with me, the attractive female psychotherapist opined forcefully – passionately even -- that, based on what she saw in front of her, she didn't understand why I couldn't get laid. (She also said something disparaging about Cat Woman, that Cat Woman no doubt had *issues* that had nothing to do with me, words to that psychobabble effect.)

With the above passionate assertion on the part of the attractive female psychotherapist I figured it was pretty much now or never, so I leaned forward, riveted the attractive female psychotherapist with a look and said, “How about we meet at a motel and get right to the point of all this?”

The effect was immediate and electric. I'd only seen the look the attractive female psychotherapist shot me back twice before: from the young French girl on the beach, as described in the opening to this narrative, and again in the mid 1990s on this Caribbean island. I'd had sex with a German girl, a tourist I'd picked up at a hotel bar. The next morning while she was asleep I left the room for something, maybe to take a shower; I recall that when I came back I had a towel around my waist. I stood there looking down

at her and suddenly she woke up and looked at me and her eyes went unfocused and they visibly dilated in the most astounding way. It was a look of pure lust.

The look of pure lust on the part of the attractive female psychotherapist was very brief, a second or two at best. She quickly collected herself then did a poorly crafted segue back to some crapola we'd talked about. Her not dealing with my blatant proposition was actually a good sign – short of ripping off her clothes and breathlessly blurting that she couldn't wait for the goddamn motel, which I didn't expect anyway. It was a good sign because she didn't get outraged and throw me out or otherwise reject me. She was, in essence, saying she'd think about it. Life experience has taught me that if a woman is going to *think* about having sex with you, having sex with her is pretty much a done deal.

But here's where I made my big mistake -- and if there's a tragic flaw involved in this incident, this is where it comes in. In our next session, while the attractive female psychotherapist was presumably still thinking about having sex with me, I told her I'd recently called Maria down in the Caribbean, which I had not. I was trying to goose the attractive female psychotherapist in her decision-making about having sex with me by asserting (in obvious subtext) that she had competition.

Mentioning Maria in this context was a mistake, although not the big one. The big one was when I said words to this effect: In talking to Maria I'd mentioned the possibility that she come up for a visit. I was lying here too, of course, since I hadn't called Maria to begin with.

I suspect that what you're thinking right now will depend on your gender. You're a male, you're thinking "What's the big deal? How is that a big mistake?"

You're a female, you're shaking your head and thinking, "What a jerk!" and maybe adding as a mental parenthetical that I deserved what was coming next since I'm such an asshole to begin with.

What's coming next is this: The attractive female psychotherapist yelled in my stupid, hangdog face that there was zero chance of my having sex with her! And I could also forget about seeing her naked! Or she might as well have yelled that stuff, based on the *look* she shot me and her tone of voice when she said, "Oh really?" To seal the I'm-not-having-sex-with-her deal, she picked up her notebook (which she hadn't touched in weeks) and jotted something down, possibly a note about how much more psychotherapy I would need to straighten out my sorry ass.

But the point being: I then called Maria and *begged* her to come up for a visit. In retrospect, my having begged Maria to come up for a visit was the attractive female psychotherapist's doing. I was only peripherally involved. And Maria did come for a visit, which is another story.