

CHAPTER NINE

ACQUIESCENCE

"The concert was amazing, absolutely the best symphony I have ever heard. It rivaled a good rock concert for sheer cathartic power. My proud violinist told me that the composer had been tortured by his love for a woman, that this masterpiece was the result. His own catharsis, I presume.

"We went for a glass of wine apres. I could see that he was attempting to initiate the same sequence of events. This time I noticed that he never asked me anything about myself, that his idea of conversation was an endless flow of personal confessions. Am I doing the same thing to you? I promise I'm not looking for a blow job.

"Was I unfair? Maybe I should have burst in with my stories. Maybe we were mismatched. Maybe my energy wasn't strong enough to meet his head on. Maybe he was an innocent who didn't deserve what I did to him. I think it was an immature reaction on my part. On the other hand, given the same exact situation, I would do the same exact thing. We had gone beyond words. I had been tricked into participating in a bizarre and unequal relationship. A basic aspect of my dignity had been violated. I was determined to free myself. I'm not sorry I did.

"At the symphony, over the requisite Yuppie wine, he showed no remorse. He wanted more. I read somewhere that the greatest sin against the soul is to treat people as if they were things. He lived inside a fine glass bubble of ego. I broke the bubble and though I wish he hadn't bled so much, his life might have been the better for it. He could have learned that women are people too, that women have stories to tell, that women are capable of advanced strategic maneuvers, that women are not only worth listening to, but require attentive respect the same as men, that women are worthy adversaries.

"You want me to tell you what I did. I'm thinking that you won't like me anymore but, what the hell, that's up to you, isn't it?

"We finished our wine. We walked to the bus stop. On our way we passed a phone booth. I said I had to make a quick call. He said fine. I pretended to call someone. We continued walking. We waited for the same bus. We lived in the same neighborhood. He told me something about the internecine struggles in his music school. The bus came. He hadn't invited me to his apartment, or insinuated his way to mine. He assumed he needn't make the effort. He climbed up the bus steps, put his money in. I remained standing on the sidewalk. The bus driver had the light. People were staring. Time stood still in the lovely way it does sometimes, that bit of syncopated silence. All eyes were on me.

"You go on," I said. "I have a date."

"His face went dead pale. The bubble shattered. The rarefied air he was used to was suddenly replaced with regular old gaseous city bus air. The bus driver shut the doors. I waved. He stared, calculating his losses. He was staggered.

"It was a long walk home. I ran over and over the evening in my mind. I laughed aloud. I wondered whether I had blown a good thing. Perhaps that night he planned to make love with a generosity of spirit, create that music in me as well as in himself, enjoy a communion of souls in sensual bliss. I doubt it.

"He didn't know my address. These were the days before answering machines so I didn't have to worry about his leaving me nasty messages. I decided not to answer the phone that night as I was supposedly out with a lover. The phone didn't ring. I wasn't worth the effort. For awhile I worried that I'd run into him in the grocery store, but I never did. He faded away. Poof. Gone.

"Maybe the shock of diesel air exploded his lungs, reducing him back to his elemental parts, throwing him back into the universal compost heap. More likely he got his bubble repaired by the assiduous services of another designer wastebasket."