

Last night... was it last night? It was last night, right? It was last night. You wake up emotionally exhausted from last night. And yet on some level the day is looking up. The light from outside is a good color, not too dusty, and when you go outside to get a look around the air doesn't seem too smoggy. It's good when the outside world cooperates with you, with your mood. Maybe the nice weather is a key to open up that part of you that doesn't feel so bad.

You try to get some work done, just to keep moving. It's hard to keep at it, though, because nothing is due too soon. You go for a walk, and that's nice, and then you come back to your apartment and sit and listen to music on the stereo. Then you think, "I need green tea", which is a thought that is both true and untrue at the same time. You look around for tea bags, but can't find any. It's a bit early to go to Mitzi's, but after making yourself more presentable, you go there.

(waiting for margot, ep. 12)

Here in Mitzi's, you get your tea and you sit down at a table. You look around, bored, and someone catches your eye. You look away, but then decide to go talk to him.

YOU: I have nothing to do.

MAN: Neither do I.

YOU: What brings you here in the afternoon?

MAN: I'm an actor. And a waiter. This is my day off. What about you?

YOU: I'm a freelance editor.

MAN: So you could come here any time you want, and get work done?

YOU: I could, but usually I don't.

MAN: Why is that?

YOU: I like to keep a separation between work and socializing.

MAN: So where do you work? Another cafe?

YOU: No, usually at home.

MAN: So then, you don't have a separation between home and work. Is that what it's like inside your head? Always working when you're at home?

YOU: Yeah, I guess that's true.

MAN: You could get into trouble that way.

YOU: Yeah, that's true.

MAN: Don't worry, I've been there.

YOU: You used to be like me and now you're not?

MAN: That's right. Something I learned in acting class. "Patience."

YOU: How does that work?

MAN: Don't try to win.

YOU: Oh... because impatience is all about trying to win...

MAN: Exactly. Improv. In improv you want to avoid winning as much as possible.

YOU: Because winning cuts off the flow of the story?

MAN: Exactly. "Improv is a game where winning is losing."

YOU: I guess the point is for a story to happen, and that's winning.

MAN: You're right. But don't even want the story to happen. Your character doesn't want that to happen. You want your character to never defeat the other characters, but always want their heart's desire.

YOU: That's a good idea. I should remember that.

MAN: You will if you do.

YOU: I think there's another angle to impatience. Wanting to be saved.

MAN: Yeah. Sometimes it's hard not to want to be saved. But you can want to be saved like you want to win, by lunging for it or jabbing for it.

YOU: Yeah.

MAN: Impatience is like eating candy. You want something sweet and simple. If you're a kid, you might want to eat candy all the time. But the thing

about candy is that it leaves a bitter feeling inside of your body, no matter how sweet it is.

YOU: Right.

MAN: But the meals that don't leave a bitter feeling have a lot of dishes to prepare, to get the variety. And they have vegetables. And you drink water instead of soda.

YOU: Right. It takes an hour to make dinner.

MAN: But candy is there for you in the moment. Exactly.

YOU: So how does this relate to separating work from home?

MAN: You can think all you want if you have patience. You won't burn out your mind with aggression.

YOU: That's a nice tip, thanks.

MAN: As an actor, I have to learn how to not have boundaries to my thinking, and yet still not burn myself out. I thought you might have the same situation as both a freelance editor and a thoughtful person.

YOU: Why do you think I'm a thoughtful person?

MAN: Everyone's thoughtful these days, so I just assumed.

YOU: You're leaving?

The man finishes his drink.

MAN: Yes.

YOU: What was your name?

MAN: Darryl.

YOU: I'm Beth.

DARRYL: Okay, maybe see you around! I gotta go.

He leaves.

You sit, wondering if there's some kind of God who provides strangers at the right time. Probably not, right? But maybe so.

Time passes.

Julia walks in.

JULIA: Hello.

YOU: Hi.

JULIA: How are you doing?

YOU: I feel weird.

JULIA: Yeah.

YOU: But I feel a little better. I just talked to a man today, before you came, who gave me a good tip. "Patience", he said.

JULIA: How does that work?

YOU: You can be in your head all you want to or need to, but if each of your thoughts is like, not jabbing or lunging, you won't damage yourself as

much.

JULIA: What does that have to do with patience?  
Or with last night?

YOU: Well, the reason why people lunge or jab is because they're impatient for winning. Or for salvation.

JULIA: Okay, that makes sense.

YOU: I'm just now realizing this.

JULIA: You already realized it to a certain extent.

YOU: I know. But it helps to hear it this time.

JULIA: Yeah.

YOU: It's hard for you to be patient, isn't it?

JULIA: I haven't learned that lesson very well because I haven't been forced to. I never stay with the same past and future for long enough for it to have to sink in. A lot of endurance, not a lot of patience.

YOU: But you're aware of all this?

JULIA: Yeah, I'm aware of a lot of things.

YOU: So, then the connection to last night... I don't even remember all of what led up to last night, but I think it's not as likely to happen next time if I practice patience in each of my thoughts.

JULIA: Yeah, that sounds like it could help.

YOU: So what's going on with you?

JULIA: I've been having a hard time getting in touch with my dates recently. A lot of voicemails, or they don't return their texts.

YOU: How does that affect your overall relationship with your man?

JULIA: I don't know. I like to think that my dates are getting somewhere with him. I always used to think so. But I'm beginning to wonder if dating has anything to do with what's going on. Maybe I need to stop dating them / him. But I don't know what else to do.

YOU: You think that maybe they have to go away before you can find the one man that all of them really are?

JULIA: Yeah... but relating to them has to be important in some way, too.

YOU: Maybe you're learning how to relate to them, so that when they become their true form, you'll be ready.

JULIA: It's hard to say, because they're all so different.

YOU: I think a lot of people have to go through date after date and learn about the opposite sex until finally we're ready for that one person. How do you know that all these first dates are really the same person? If they're all so different from each other.

JULIA: I look at them and I just know.

You don't know why, but you believe her.

YOU: I believe you.

She nods, no smile.

JULIA: Yeah. I keep trying to date people I've never met before, but then they turn out to be him. I can't get away from him.

YOU: What if you tried to date someone you knew very well?

JULIA: I've thought about people like that.

YOU: Would Brian work?

JULIA: No, I don't feel anything for him.

YOU: But if you could date him, he wouldn't be this one man.

JULIA: That's true.

YOU: Anyone else?

JULIA: People I knew a few years ago. I would try to date them but we'd just be hanging out so it didn't work.

YOU: So you can't get away from this man.

JULIA: Well, I could quit dating.

YOU: But that's hard.

JULIA: Yeah.

YOU: What would it be like to meet this man when he's done becoming whatever?

JULIA: I think he would have no idea what he went through with me all those years.

YOU: Yeah, that makes sense.

JULIA: Maybe it would be his first time dating anyone. But I wouldn't have to teach him anything.

YOU: After all the waiting...

JULIA: Yeah, he would be a good guy.

YOU: How would you know it was time?

JULIA: Well, if we make it to a third date, that's a pretty good sign. Each date after that is good.

YOU: That would be a lot more than you've ever gotten.

JULIA: Yeah. But you never really know if it's for real.

YOU: Don't be too cautious.

JULIA: You don't know what I've been through.

You realize you've made a trespass.

YOU: Sorry. But hopefully there will be a way that you can really know that he is what he is, when that time comes.

JULIA: Yeah. Hopefully.

YOU: Maybe you'll just know.

JULIA: Yeah. But I can't count on that. There are a

lot of things I don't just know and I have to figure out.

YOU: Yeah.

A pause.

JULIA: I'm bored.

YOU: You want to play Patience?

JULIA: What's that?

YOU: The card game where you put the cards face down on a table, and then flip them over two at a time and try to match the ones that are the same.

JULIA: Oh, yeah, we used to call that Memory.

YOU: There's a pack of cards with the other games on the game shelf.

JULIA: Okay, that could be fun.

You get the cards and lay them out, face down, on the table.

You and she get to playing.

JULIA: Why is this game called Patience?

YOU: Maybe it's because you have to hold the cards in your head while you wait to see where they go.

JULIA: Okay. That makes sense.

YOU: But for me, usually, I flip a card and then have an intuition where to look for it. I just reach

over and...

You flip a card.

YOU: No, not that time. But sometimes it's the card I want.

JULIA: Because you remember where it was.

YOU: But it's fast and easy. I don't think it's the same kind of patience as that man from earlier was talking about.

JULIA: Yeah.

YOU: Well, this is a low-key kind of game at least.

JULIA: And it isn't over until it's over.

YOU: Sometimes you remember a card and then the other person gets it before you can. So you have to adjust.

JULIA: Yeah, that's something like what the man was talking about.

Joe the barista comes around cleaning the tables and sees what you're up to.

JOE: Patience! That's a game! Who's winning?

YOU: We don't know yet, we haven't finished.

JOE: Man, I remember playing Patience when I was in college.

YOU: Not poker?

JOE: Not poker, no way. We were into Patience in

my dorm. I thought I was pretty good, but then my roommate's friend started playing.

YOU: He had a better memory?

JOE: Photographic memory. But then I started using mnemonic devices. Never really caught up to him. But mnemonic devices helped me when I was a waiter. So it's all good.

YOU: Did you remember that guy from earlier?

JOE: Yeah, I overhear all your conversations! Lightly... I forget them all...

YOU: But you remember him?

JOE: Sure. He comes in here sometimes.

YOU: He said he was a waiter.

JOE: Yeah. I believe him.

YOU: We were talking about patience.

JOE: Oh, I get it... patience... a wait-er...

YOU: Yeah, I guess that is a connection.

JOE: I like making connections. Hey, I gotta get back to work. They don't pay me to charm the customers!

He gets back to work.

You and Julia play, quietly for a bit. You eventually finish pairing off all the cards.

JULIA: I have 12 pairs.

YOU: I have 14.

JULIA: Okay, you won. Want to play again?

YOU: No.

JULIA: I'm okay with that.

Brian comes in.

JULIA: Brian's here.

Brian is busy waiting to get his drink.

JULIA: Brian.

He doesn't turn to her.

JULIA (a little louder): Brian.

He doesn't turn to her.

JULIA (a little louder): Brian.

He turns.

BRIAN: Oh hey, Julia. And Beth.

Then it's his turn in line and he's  
engrossed in the transaction process.

YOU: What were you doing there, Julia?

JULIA: Calibrating.

You think that's pretty funny and you  
laugh.

YOU: Brian does live in his head. I wonder what

it's like inside there.

JULIA: I don't know.

YOU: It's not something you have intuitive knowledge of?

JULIA: I know some of what's up with him, but not all of it.

YOU: So you would have to figure out the rest.

JULIA: Yeah. But, uh, take your own advice, Beth. Don't try to figure him out. Especially not for fun.

YOU: Yeah, you're right.

Brian approaches, not having heard anything. He sets his drink down and sits.

YOU: Welcome to the table. We were just playing Patience.

BRIAN: Patience...

YOU: The card game.

BRIAN: Oh... it's been a long time since I played Patience.

YOU: Do you want to play a round of it?

BRIAN: No, that's okay.

YOU: Okay. How is your day?

BRIAN: First, how is yours? You were feeling pretty bad last night.

YOU: I'm feeling better. Just kind of emotionally exhausted.

BRIAN: Yeah, well, that's good. What helped you?

YOU: It's a nice day outside. And I had a good conversation with someone here earlier. Got me thinking about Patience in the first place. And then I played Patience with Julia.

JULIA: She won.

YOU: I wasn't trying though. Were you trying, Julia?

JULIA: No.

YOU: Then neither of us won or lost. The game happened, but no one won or lost.

BRIAN: Well, I think my day went alright. I went to UHW's library and looked around some philosophy books. Wrote an email to my uncle. Read through some of my parents' papers.

JULIA: Did that make you sad?

BRIAN: No, not very sad. They were good people and lived beautiful lives. So I try to learn from them. Should I be sad?

JULIA: No, you don't have to be. You're not wired that way.

BRIAN: Huh... usually people want me to be sad... but you don't think I have to be sad.

JULIA: No, you're not a bad person.

Brian looks at her, not with gratitude,  
but with a certain shining in his eyes.

BRIAN: Thank you for saying that.

A beat.

BRIAN: So what did the man have to say about  
patience?

YOU: He said that we burn out our minds with  
impatient thinking.

BRIAN: How does that burn out the mind?

YOU: When we have to win, or we have to be  
saved all the time, we jab and lunge with each of  
our thoughts, and that causes damage.

BRIAN: Interesting... patience is a virtue.

YOU: Are you a patient person?

BRIAN: In a way yes, and in a way no. I think  
according to this guy's definition, I'm not patient.  
But I think I seem patient to other people. And I'm  
okay waiting in line or things like that.

YOU: I'm like that too... patient in one way, but  
not always in the way that the guy was talking  
about.

BRIAN: Is patience always a good thing?

YOU: It certainly makes more sense at this time of  
life.

BRIAN: Yeah, I picture patience as being  
something you learn before you're middle-aged. Is

that true, Julia?

JULIA: It's true a lot of the time, but not all the time.

BRIAN: Malcolm X said something like it's good to be impatient to make things better for other people.

JULIA: Yes.

YOU: But if you're impatient, you burn yourself out or cause more damage than necessary.

BRIAN: So it seems like you have to have some impatient people to push things along, and some patient people to not cause harm or to fix things that the impatient people break in the process.

YOU: Maybe it's possible to be patient and change things at the same time. If you are a patient thinker, you don't burn yourself out, so then you can do more for other people.

BRIAN: You just have to remember to actually do that once you get there.

YOU: Yeah.

BRIAN: Maybe I do want to play Patience after all.

YOU: Okay, yeah, let's do that. Do you want to play, Julia?

JULIA: Okay.

You set up the cards and connect with each other by getting into the circling rhythm of turn-taking. You're more

aware of the score this time, but find yourselves all evenly matched. Brian and Julia tie with 9 pairs, and you are left with 8 in the end.

BRIAN: That was better than I expected it to be.

YOU: What did you expect it to be like?

BRIAN: I don't know... I guess I had some kind of expectation that I couldn't have put into words.

YOU: Do you get disappointed very often?

BRIAN: No, not really.

YOU: I don't, either.

JULIA: Yeah... life is hard, but I don't get disappointed.

BRIAN: Life is harder if you're not the kind of person to get disappointed.

YOU: In some ways.

BRIAN: Yeah, it's easier to be content. But discontent helps you get all the things you need, helps you fight other people for what you may need later to survive.

YOU: So in a scenario where people are in conflict, they need to be unhappy. But when we live in peace, we need to learn to be content.

BRIAN: People who are discontented can create conflict.

JULIA: But discontent can end conflict.

Sometimes.

BRIAN: Yeah, that's what Malcolm X was trying to do, I think.

JULIA: But then if people are too used to being discontented, they have to learn to be content once there is peace.

YOU: Maybe knowing where to be contented and where to be discontented is a form of patience. If you're impatient, you can't separate yourself from your discontentment.

BRIAN: Because you have to have contentment "NOW".

JULIA: Evil people can be patient.

BRIAN: Yeah, that's true.

JULIA: So once you become patient, you still have to not be evil.

BRIAN: And being evil will seem normal to you if you don't question it.

YOU: Julia, did you jump in with the "evil people can be patient" comment?

JULIA: What do you mean?

YOU: It didn't seem to follow what Brian was saying, exactly.

JULIA: There's an intuitive connection.

YOU: Okay, yeah, I can see that. Maybe it does flow, now that I think about it. If you think the

answer is to be patient, watch out, because you might still be evil.

JULIA: Yeah.

YOU: But if people can't follow the connection, they think you're lunging out impatiently. And then they don't take you seriously.

BRIAN: It's like we don't care how true something is, if it's spoken by an impatient person, we can't trust it. And patient people can say things that aren't true and people will believe them. So it seems like it's really important for good people to be patient.

YOU: Hopefully when two people speak patiently, the truth is clear to everyone who hears.

BRIAN: I think that's sort of how things work. At least it's clearer. Truths are both believed in and trusted, and what people are looking for a lot of times is, what person can be trusted, between the two people who make truth claims?

YOU: Like we organize ourselves into bodies of people first, then look for the objective truth second?

BRIAN: Yeah, and when there's less social conflict, it's easier for people to see whatever the objective or extra-social truth is. Easier to trust it.

YOU: So if there was a huge conflict over some kind of scientific fact...

BRIAN: Like, whether the Earth is round? If that conflict were big enough, people would have a hard time being sure it was round. Some people

would be sure one way, some would be sure another, and there would be a lot of people who couldn't tell in the middle. A lot of people who thought that probably it was round but they couldn't put too much weight on that belief. And people who wouldn't mention that belief in polite society. No need to offend anyone. Our lived lives mostly go the same whether the Earth is round or not, whether we believe it or not. Plenty of human beings have believed the Earth was flat and still got through life okay.

YOU: Could that ever really happen?

BRIAN: Well, there are a lot of people who believe the Earth is flat, at least numerically. It's certainly something that can make sense to people who live in the 21st Century in a developed culture. It could get big for social reasons.

JULIA: Isn't this like belief in God?

BRIAN: Yeah. Does God exist? That idea has been contested a lot for hundreds of years. A lot of people basically give up on that. They see God act in their lives or in other people's lives but then don't want to get caught up in cultural conflict, so they explain it away. It's bad form to believe that God really works in our lives. It's part of culture war, part of lunging and jabbing.

JULIA: But if we were all patient, we would be able to believe the truth?

BRIAN: Well, it would be easier.

YOU: I know in my life, sometimes I have to overcome some kind of inner conflict, or outlast it, for me to be able to believe the objective truth.

BRIAN: Maybe the inner conflict was the real thing, and the objective truth is just your prize.

YOU: Like we really just live in our "lived lives"?

BRIAN: Yeah.

YOU: That's like that Christian egoist guy saying that reality doesn't necessarily hold together, right?

BRIAN: Yeah, somehow reality is just what you experience it to be... and it's objective... and you don't know how.

YOU: But how do you communicate ideas like that to other people? Isn't that what's useful about reason? That we can come to consensus about a consistent external world?

JULIA: Do you believe me that I can have intuitive knowledge?

YOU: Yes, I do. I believe you.

JULIA: Can you explain how?

YOU: No. But I know that you know. Do you know how you know?

JULIA: No. But I know.

YOU: I think if I were a different kind of person, I wouldn't believe you.

JULIA: But you're not.

BRIAN: And some people are persuaded by reasonable arguments, while others find other

arguments reasonable.

YOU: I believe Julia because she's sorrowful. Anyone who really knows the truth ought to be sorrowful.

BRIAN: She's not always sorrowful.

She looks at Brian like "What, are you kidding me?"

JULIA: I'm sorrowful.

Then she laughs.

YOU: Maybe I just believe her because I know her.

JULIA: You just see me right here and you know?

YOU: I would have believed you if the issue had come up at the end of our first conversation.

JULIA: How would you know from just seeing me after one conversation?

BRIAN: Yeah, there are a lot of ways that she might not be telling the truth, whether intentionally or by mistake.

YOU: I just know.

BRIAN: Maybe you know as part of your "lived life" and not in an objective way.

YOU: No, it all comes together.

BRIAN: What if it turns out not to be true?

YOU: I guess I'm taking a risk.

BRIAN: But you don't really know.

YOU: Do you doubt Julia?

BRIAN: On what specific topic?

YOU: About whether all of her dates are one man, or if they are different men.

BRIAN: No... I guess I don't... But if I think about it, I do.

YOU: When you relax and don't think about it...

BRIAN: Which is sort of like being patient...

YOU: What then?

BRIAN: I believe her.

YOU: What if it turns out she's wrong?

BRIAN: I think she and you and I are living in a reality in which she's right. We're living in a space of what God's speaking to us. It's like a landscape that we travel through. And then, if necessary, we'll have to leave this place and enter the one where she's mistaken. The contrary of what we believe wasn't true all along. It will only be true in the future, if it becomes more trustworthy for us to believe it then.

YOU: So then the only fact is that we exist, and that God exists, and that we're following him, from place to place....

BRIAN: Yeah. I'm trying this idea on, but I like it.

YOU: It's a good place to be in?

BRIAN: I think so. I'm not sure yet.

JULIA: I have to go.

She gets up to leave.

JULIA: I have to prepare lessons for my class tomorrow. Yeah, another life as a teacher...

YOU: Okay, see you later.

BRIAN: Bye.

She leaves.

You and Brian realize you have nothing to say about this topic anymore, and you've been at this cafe for a while and need to go to the bathroom. So you go to...

## THE BATHROOM

A basic bathroom. The door locks, the faucet runs, the toilet flushes. Someone has put an air freshener in here but it doesn't smell too much like one. The paper towel dispenser appears to be broken but there's a roll sitting on a once-decorative table.

You use the toilet.

You feel better, and realize that you need to go for a walk.

You wash and dry your hands and exit the bathroom.

You approach Brian.

YOU: I've been sitting too much. You want to go for a walk?

BRIAN: No, I've got some reading to do. Maybe another time.

YOU: Okay. Well, see you later.

You gather your things and go.

You walk down the street. You walk down the street. You see a homeless person sleeping.

You walk past some pigeons. One of them flies away.

You go two blocks one way, turn, two blocks another, turn, two blocks another, turn, two blocks another, so that you arrive back where you started. Brian is still in the cafe but is busy reading so he doesn't see you through the glass.

You decide to call it a night.

[closing theme]

WAITING FOR MARGOT  
Episode 12 "Patience"  
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## COMMENTS

1. "Patience" is what we called "Memory" or "Concentration" when I was a kid... at least, that's what I remember. "Solitaire" referred to anything like the solitaire that was bundled with Windows 3.1. But now I learn that "Patience" is the broader name for a card game you play by yourself -- what I thought "solitaire" was. Perhaps this whole episode was premised on a faulty memory, or on a non-standard use of "patience".

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