

The Relationship...

A short story by L. Lisa Lawrence

It was one of those perfect Pacific Northwest evenings. I had gone to bed early with a good book to the sound of gentle rain falling outside. The kind of rain that is relaxing and drowns out the cares of the world, not the kind that overwhelms a sump pump and breaches the temporary roof repairs.

This was the earliest I had been to bed in recent memory. I was actually relaxed and drifting off into a rare and peaceful slumber that would be that elusive, "good nights sleep" that I have heard about from other people. I no longer had the cold that kept me up coughing over the last few weeks, nothing was sore or achy and I wasn't stressed or worried about anything.

Everything was just perfect...

Until...

"Psst... Hey!"

"HEY!"

I pretended to be asleep.

I needed sleep.

I don't get enough sleep.

My one and only goal in that moment was sleep!

Nothing else, and I had made that very clear before going to bed.

I was so cozy, so comfortable and wasn't about to be roused from my rare, sublime dream state for anything.

Yet the persistent one, persisted... "You can't fool me, I know you're awake. Come on, we never talk anymore, you're always so busy."

"Seriously? Now?" I muttered retreating further under the covers, resisting the urge to unleash a string of entirely inappropriate expletives.

Yes, I had been stupidly busy between working too many hours, a new promotion, grad school, and exams which left me very little time and energy for anything else.

I almost gave in to guilt, but realized that one of my life lessons has been establishing and defending boundaries and engaging in badly needed self care. At that moment, that meant sleep.

"I have to be at work in a few hours; some of us actually work for a living you know... Unless the house is on fire, this can wait until morning." I stated, perhaps a bit less gently than I could have, rolled over and went back to sleep, slightly less relaxed than before.

The next morning as I sat in front of the fire, all by myself, enjoying my morning coffee and

had some time to deal with the issue, I wondered what could have been so important in the wee hours of the morning.

It was obvious that I wasn't going to find out, based on the stone cold silence in the room, so I grabbed my raincoat and headed to work, still feeling more than a bit snarly about being woken up the night before for what was in my mind, no good reason.

Fast forward a few hours when I made the mistake of surreptitiously checking my phone, and you guessed it... "Hey! Let's talk"

"I'm at work, in a classroom this week. I can't just take a break because now is a good time for you. This is going to have to wait until I get home." I replied. I was starting to feel like a broken record, Come on, that one is a boundary that shouldn't even be up for negotiation.

"I'll make time right after dinner; you'll have my undivided attention." I promised.

There! Compromise! Isn't that what relationships are all about?

I arrived home to an empty house; well, empty other than the sound of one pissed off BadKitty whose food dish was empty. No purring, no rubbing up against my legs, just more incessant demands. I proceeded to refill her bowl with dry food rather than the canned food she was demanding even though she knew it wasn't time. She looked at me with disdain, turned tail and walked away, giving me a good dose of the ole pink eye. A bit later, she did decide to acknowledge my existence as something other than as a cat food dispenser and poop scooper by sitting on the floor directly behind me and then nosily regurgitating a slimy hairball where I was most likely to roll my chair back into it or step in it.

After eating a container of sketchy left over lasagna from the back of the fridge, I prepared to give my full and undivided attention as I had agreed to do in what I hoped was a mutual compromise.

I put on something a bit more comfortable, lit a fire, poured a glass of wine and moved to the couch.

Where I waited, and waited...

and waited some more...

It became obvious to me that my compromise and preparations were not going to be sufficient.

Once again, I was stood up and I asked myself "why?" Why do I continue to be surprised when this relationship proves time and time again to be based solely on what the other party wants, needs and desires-my physical, emotional and time needs be damned?

Relationships are hard, some more than others.

This is the one I just can't seem to walk away from, the one that that infuriates and impassions me, the one that can make my heart sing, or like last night, make me face the

harsh reality.

My muse...

is one fickle bitch...