

FOR ME ONLY

KRISTINE LANGLEY MAHLER

AN ERASURE ESSAY FROM CH. 18 OF *THE SEVENTEEN BOOK OF ETIQUETTE AND ENTERTAINING*, 1963

Men need—if you're not absolutely certain of this, just watch their faces light up, an attractive jealousy, a husky way of looking at the one they want. Men are last to get in and the first to escape a sensible girl; they need a pretty girl, because desire's a sham. Scarcity leads a girl to present her value first-face: her unavailability.

A boy says *mine*, firmly, doesn't fuss about his love; it would make matters awkward. He passes a girl he knows, he touches his hat in a sort of half-salute. He stops to talk. He's a free agent. You choose to respect his walk, a low nod with a little shoulder action, but not the claw, the look.

He's a male, an automatic king. He doesn't scurry to the curb every time a girl's streetside, yet he doesn't cuddle arm in arm, your elbow a rudder to steer him back. You don't mind, but he doesn't take off his jacket when he's visiting. He's holding someone else, she's putting the sofa cushions on the floor in his fantasy, spontaneous lust you don't use.

He's near the end of his list with you, her busy signal a siren he can't avoid.

He suggests the movies, or whatever. Most girls hesitate, but you like the idea of date after date in public places, want to show off your impatient, wandering prize. *Me, mark me, notice as he buys the*

tickets smoothly, matter-of-factly; he treats me but doesn't bring flowers. He stays safe on the matter.

You're tall and casual; she's little and pins flowers to her bag.

He brings her into the conversation, a duty—his mother's best friend's daughter!—and he's as nice to her as he would be to a girl he really liked. It's his hand on a post, a path. She's taken, and he waits at a prearranged spot; he goes to do things he "never" does for a very good reason: conquest.

Inconspicuous until all the affected understand—to teen girls, a kiss is flattering, it's really in fun! You'd never brainwash or force—can't discourage a determined boy. It's humiliating to get out of control.

Be honest about it. Men will chase girls. If he doesn't catch you now, he'll find another. You go out on a date to break the impression you created; men don't change as fast as girls do when faded beauty wears out. Attraction for action's what all of them want. To believe in change? Problematic. So: a dance, a party, you dress to make men cum. He will have times of favor. You order, imperious, intent on some strong, masculine threat. Some men need to lose a bet. This is very important to remember when you're bluffing.

You cajole a boy to touch you, your arm bent at the point where he joins yours, aroused straight from the hips, just the trim for effect. He slides his date to service you, mocking her, attentive.

But you're a removable resource, Occam's heuristic, the next pick.