

FLETCHER

INTERIOR PEOPLE

Leander is away with his dad for the weekend—that's how it works, one weekend a month—and so Fletcher gets to spend the night with Cassandra.

—Come on, honey, she says, while he's on top of her. He's inside her for the first time. He has her hair in his fist. —Come on, baby, she says. —I want you to come. And he does.

—My God, he says, after he's rolled off of her. —You're amazing.

—I bet you say that to all the girls, she says, and she sticks her finger in his ear.

—It's been so long I can't even *remember* what I say, he says.

—Hmm, she says.

—Sorry if I'm a little rusty, he says. (He doesn't think that she got off, and he's worried about that: he's not sure if he should be doing something more now or what.)

—Honey, she says, —you were a star.

—Is there anything, he says, —that you want me to do?

—No, baby, she says. —You just rest.

He removes the condom and she takes it from him, and heads off into the kitchen.

—Water, she says, as she goes.

He tells himself that he'll start things up again when she comes back: he really thinks he could maybe bring her to some state of *animal passion*. He'd like that: that way he could be sure that she was *really* having a good time, and not just humoring him. He's worried that she's standing out there in the kitchen thinking *oh my God that was the worst time I ever had*.

She climbs back into bed next to him and passes him a glass of water. He tries to

drink without sitting up, by lifting his head just slightly; water runs out of the corners of his mouth and down the sides of his neck. —Hey, Cassandra protests. —Drink right.

—Not thirsty, he mumbles. And he drapes his arm across her belly. *Okay, let's go*, he tells himself. *Time for round two*. But then he closes his eyes and drifts off into sleep. When he opens them again he thinks *you just fell asleep*. And then he closes them again.

He wakes up some time later and gropes out for her but she's not in the bed with him. The light is on in the front room; he can hear fingers striking a computer keyboard. —Hello? he calls blearily.

—I'm out here, she says. —I'm just putting together some notes.

—OK, he says, and he falls back into sleep.

When the smell of coffee wakes him in the morning he's still alone in the bed. He pulls on his boxer shorts and goes into the kitchen and finds that a coffeemaker that's started automatically. He has to retrace his steps before he can find her: she's asleep on the couch, entirely hidden beneath an afghan. He clears a spot on the coffee table: the *clunk* her mug makes when he sets it down causes her to stir slightly. She pokes her face out, blinks, groans, pulls the blanket up again. A book slides out from under her head and hits the floor.

Fletcher picks it up: it's a book on Eva Hesse, who he doesn't know anything about. He sits down and flips it over, reads words on the back. *In many ways, her works were "psychic models," as Robert Smithson has suggested, of "a very interior person."*