Your working model of love · About 4 minutes

When Steadiness Feels Quiet

Telling unfamiliar ease from a relationship you do not want

Lunch with Jules was easy. On the way home, Elias realizes he has no idea what to make of how quiet it felt.

Someone can be dependable, considerate and entirely unsuitable for you. You can also enjoy a steadier connection and mistake the absence of anxious guessing for a lack of interest. The word “quiet” cannot distinguish these experiences by itself.

Elias and Jules are fictional. They meet for lunch, talk about local history and disagree comfortably about a film. Jules arrives on time and seems interested. Later, Elias thinks, “There wasn’t much excitement.”

What does he mean? He might have enjoyed the conversation without spending it checking for approval. He might have appreciated Jules’s manners while feeling little curiosity about another meeting. He might genuinely be unsure.

Give the word some detail

Instead of asking whether quiet is good or bad, consider what happened at the lunch. Was there pleasure in the conversation? Did Elias want to know more? Could he express a different opinion? Did he feel seen, bored, relaxed or some mixture?

Those questions are more useful than declaring that he is rejecting healthy love because intensity feels familiar. Earlier relationships may have made uncertainty familiar, but that possibility must not override his present wishes. Nobody owes another date to prove they have a secure attachment pattern.

Differentiation theory contributes the idea of listening to another person while retaining a considered position.[1] Advice about whom you ought to want can be considered without becoming the authority on your desire. You can reconsider an impression without complying with someone else’s preferred conclusion.

Elias could want another lunch, prefer friendship or decide not to meet again. Jules’s interest matters too. A private decision to explore does not guarantee a shared next step.

Attraction, respect, enjoyment and shared values contribute different information. Dependability should not have to stand in for all of them. Nor should intensity excuse repeated unkindness or unreliability.

There may be something to discover when ordinary uncertainty exists alongside continued interest. A second meeting can be just that, if both people want it. Where contact is unwanted or coercive, there is no requirement to continue gathering evidence.

Take a moment to remember the lunch. Try completing the sentence “Quiet meant…” in more than one way. One version might be, “I liked being there without wondering whether I would be rejected.” Another might be, “We were courteous, but I didn’t want to know more.” The distinction changes what another meeting would be for.

These reflections do not have to produce a decision tonight. Sometimes a more precise description is enough to keep you from arguing with an experience you have barely begun to understand.

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You can value steadiness and want aliveness. You can also discover that a considerate person is not a person you want to date. Paying attention to the actual encounter gives you a better chance of telling those possibilities apart.

This lunch gives Elias a quieter place to ask what he actually enjoys.

If Elias finds himself thinking fondly about the disagreement over the film, that is something to know. Whether he wants another lunch is a question he gets to answer.

Companion reading · The Love We Expect, the Love We Can Receive

Full pathway companion · included with paid learning
Pathway introduction: Your working model of love (public introduction; full modules require access).

Sources and further reading

[1] The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family. (n.d.). Differentiation of self. Source.

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