

EXCERPT

Recoil

a ten-minute play

by Karen Schiff

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CHARACTERS

MIRIAM, an elegant woman in her 60s

RICH, a mattress salesman in his 30s

TIME

The present.

PLACE

A mattress store in a suburban strip mall

Note

When one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked /

RECOIL

(Lights up. MIRIAM lies on a mattress staring at the ceiling. Her face is pained and drawn. RICH stands nearby)

RICH

Ma'am? ... Excuse me. Ma'am?

MIRIAM

Yes?

RICH

I noticed that you been lying there for a pretty long time now.

MIRIAM

Yes. I'm sorry. Do you need me to move?

RICH

No, no. You take as much time as you need. But if you need some help, you know, deciding, just let me know. That's my job, you know. To help.

(MIRIAM glances at RICH for the first time and looks him over)

MIRIAM

Yes. ... Yes, alright. Go ahead. Tell me about the mattress.

RICH

All righty, then. Now, ma'am, before I tell you about this particular model, let me run down the ten features to look for when buying any new mattress. And I'm not telling you these to try to sell you anything. Any good sleep professional worth his salt or should I say, his feathers, would tell you the same thing. Number One. Support. You wanna find a mattress that's gonna provide support for all points in your body, especially your spine. When you're / lying down--

(MIRIAM holds up her hand and pats the edge of the mattress)

MIRIAM

I'm sorry, my hearing. Would you come a little closer? ... Please.

RICH

Oh ... ma'am. We can't get on the bed with the customer. Company policy and all.

MIRIAM

Please. The store's empty. No one's come in for the last half hour.

RICH

That may be true, yes, but still, policy is policy.

MIRIAM

Have you made a sale today?

(RICH shakes his head)

MIRIAM (Cont'd)

This week?

RICH

Ma'am ...

MIRIAM

You work on commission?

(RICH sighs. MIRIAM pats the bed again)

MIRIAM (Cont'd)

Come. Tell me about the mattress. ... Please.

(RICH looks around and then sits on the edge of the mattress)

RICH

Like I was saying ... When you're lying down, your spine should support you the same way it does when you're standing up. Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, Rich, is that it? Well let me tell you, ma'am, it most certainly isn't. Support is very, very important, but well, here's the kicker – it's not everything. Which leads us to--

(MIRIAM pats the bed closer to her. RICH reluctantly moves in)

RICH (Cont'd)

Number Two. Comfort. If you're like most people, when you hit the hay, you're not thinking about support. You're thinking about comfort. If you've got a mattress that provides a lot of support, but isn't comfortable, you're not going to be happy. And if you're not happy, you know what that means. That means I'm not happy.

(MIRIAM reaches out and gently pulls RICH down during the following speech. RICH continues his sales pitch throughout).

RICH (Cont'd)

So what makes a mattress comfortable? Number Three. Thickness. Today's top quality mattresses are a lot thicker than they were, even just five years ago. Now, I know, I know. You're thinking, Richie, where am I gonna get sheets for such a thick mattresses? Ma'am. That's an excellent question. Comes up all the time. Rest assured—more and more manufacturers of quality linens are making sheets especially for today's thicker mattress.

(he now lies flat on his back)

RICH (Cont'd)

Any questions so far?

MIRIAM

No.

RICH

You sure? Cause I know it's a lot.

MIRIAM

I'm sure.

RICH

Ok. Number Four. Space. You want to make sure you've got room to stretch out. If you feel cramped, that's no good. Especially if you're going to be sharing the bed with someone. Number Five. Durability. What I like to call the core of the matter. Make sure it's built to last. Look for a steel core and a guarantee of at least ten years, which, I can assure you, all of our mattresses have. Now while we're talking about guarantees, Number Six. A good mattress warranty / covers not only time, but also workmanship flaws and product defects, too.

MIRIAM

Excuse me ... Excuse me.

RICH

Yes?

MIRIAM

I was just wondering. Could you skip ahead to number ten?

RICH

Are you sure? Seven, match your foundation to your mattress; eight, shop for value not the price; and nine, coil count really counts are all pretty important.

MIRIAM

Yes. I'm sure they are. And ten?

RICH

Ten. Well ... ten I think you got down pretty good. Sleep on it. Stretch out and imagine yourself in the comfort of your own home on your brand new mattress. Resting ... in peace. Because, you know, here at Mattress City, we don't sleep well, 'til you do. ... Any questions?

MIRIAM

How much do you weigh?

What?
 RICH

Around a hundred seventy?
 MIRIAM

Yeah. Give or take a few.
 RICH

Oh ... oh, that's perfect.
 MIRIAM

I meant about the mattress. Do you have any questions about the mattress?
 RICH

Would you turn, please?
 MIRIAM

Ma'am.
 RICH

Please. Turn.
 MIRIAM

(RICH turns toward her)

No, no, the other way.
 MIRIAM (Cont'd)

(RICH turns away from her)

Good. Now, just over one more inch. ... That's it! Oh my ... oh my, that's it.
 MIRIAM (Cont'd)

Ma'am?
 RICH

(he starts to turn)

No, no, please. Stay where you are. ... Oh God. Oh my darling. ... Oh ... Oh ...
 MIRIAM

(she sobs)

Oh geez. Oh Ma'am. Please ... please, don't cry. Here - let me get you a tissue.
 RICH

(he starts to get up. MIRIAM reaches out and grabs his arm)

MIRIAM

No, no! Don't move! Please, please don't move.

RICH

Ok, ok, calm down, calm down. I'm not goin' anywhere.

(he lies back down as he was. Uncomfortable silence)

RICH (Cont'd)

You want me to tell you about our free delivery service?

MIRIAM

No. You explained it last year.

RICH

What?

MIRIAM

The men were very nice.

RICH

You already bought a mattress from us?

MIRIAM

Yes.

RICH

Which one?

MIRIAM

This one.

RICH

Well, geez ... like I said, all our mattresses have ten year warranties. You shouldn't need a replacement yet. Just flip it around if it's getting a little soft for you.

MIRIAM

Yes. I know. I ... I can't do that. Not yet.

(short pause)

RICH

You know, ma'am, I really ... I really should get back to--