

OUTWITTING P*RN

The conversation you were never supposed to hear.



JUSTIN MCHARTY

OUTWITTING P*RN

A conversation.

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A WORD BEFORE WE BEGIN

Every guide on this subject says the same things in the same order. Statistics. Warnings. A list of rules. You have probably read a few of them. You nodded along, and then you did what you always do at 11:47 PM.

None of it felt like you. It felt like a lecture about a stranger.

So I tried something different. I stopped asking what to do about it, and started asking what it is. Not in a lab and not in theory. I imagined sitting across a table from the habit itself and asking it, one question at a time, how it works. What it wants. Why it shows up when it does. What it takes. And I wrote down what it would say if it were being honest, because the strange thing about a habit like this is that it has been honest with you all along. You just never listened to the whole sentence.

This book is that conversation.

It is not a program. It will not fix you in thirty pages, and it does not pretend to. It has one job: to hold up a mirror, so that you can say, "That is exactly what happens to me." Because you cannot outwit something you have never looked at.

A few things before you turn the page. I am not a doctor or a therapist, and nothing here is medical advice. If this habit is hurting your health, your relationships or your life, talking to a professional is a strong move, not a weak one. And the voice you are about to hear is a character, a way of telling the truth. Read it slowly. Some lines will be uncomfortable. That is how you know they are accurate.

Pull up a chair.



THE TWELVE QUESTIONS

- | | |
|----|---------------------|
| 01 | The Knock |
| 02 | What I Am |
| 03 | Who I Go For |
| 04 | The Late Hour |
| 05 | The Offer |
| 06 | The Bill |
| 07 | The Lies I Tell |
| 08 | The Clean-Up |
| 09 | How I Grow |
| 10 | What I Take |
| 11 | What I Am Afraid Of |
| 12 | The Last Word |

Read it in one sitting. Read it at night.

01

THE KNOCK

11:47 PM. A quiet room, one lamp, a small table. Two chairs. One of them is already taken.

Justin sits down. He does not look away.

JUSTIN I thought I'd be nervous. I'm not. I just have a lot of questions.

P*RN Good. Most people never ask me one. They only ever take what I give them.

JUSTIN Let's start at the beginning. How do you get in?

P*RN Through the smallest door there is. Nobody invites me in as a habit. They invite me in as a curiosity. One moment, one "what's the harm." Years later they try to find the day it changed, and they can't, because there was no day. There was only one more time, and then another.

JUSTIN That's what has always bothered me. It never felt like a decision. It felt like something that was just happening to me, like weather.

P*RN Exactly. When something feels like it's just happening, you stop looking for the choice inside it. I have never won a fight in the open. I win in the gaps. The half second between the thought and the thumb.

JUSTIN The thumb.

P*RN By the time you notice, the screen is already on.

A pause. The lamp hums.

JUSTIN Why are you telling me this? You're giving away your whole method.

P*RN Because it costs me nothing. You can know every trick I have and still be sitting here tomorrow night. Knowing and seeing are different animals. Most people spend years running from me and never once turn around to ask what I actually am. I have always liked that arrangement.

JUSTIN Then here is what's going to happen. I'm going to ask you everything. How you work, who you go for, what you promise, what you charge, what you take. I won't shout, I won't threaten you, and I won't give you a speech about willpower. I'm just going to ask, and you're going to answer honestly, because for once someone is actually listening.

P*RN You say that as if you're sure I'll answer honestly.

JUSTIN You've been honest with me my whole life. I just never listened to the whole sentence.

P*RN ...Fine. Ask.

*“You cannot outwit something you have never
looked at.”*

02

WHAT I AM

Same room. The second chair holds a shape that will not sit still.

JUSTIN What are you?

P*RN Honestly? Nothing. A flicker on a screen. Everything that makes me powerful, you bring yourself.

JUSTIN That's a strange thing to admit.

P*RN It's no secret. I don't have to be strong. I only have to be there at the right minute.

JUSTIN People call you a desire. A weakness. An addiction. Some say you're just a product. I have heard all of it, and none of it ever felt complete. So tell me what you really are.

P*RN A shortcut. Real desire wants something. A person, a closeness, a moment that has to be earned. I don't want anything. I only want you to stop feeling something. I take the energy that was meant for real life and short-circuit it into a few minutes of relief. That's all. The rest is packaging.

JUSTIN Packaging.

P*RN Newness. Variety. An endless supply. Always available, never tired, never busy, never says no. Think about what else in your life asks nothing of you.

JUSTIN Nothing.

P*RN Nothing. Everything real has a cost. You have to show up, be patient, be brave, risk being turned down. I'm the only thing that asks for none of it, and that is exactly why nothing real can compete with me. I win every comparison because I cheat.

JUSTIN People say you're like a slot machine.

P*RN A slot machine at least has the decency to look like gambling. I look like rest.

JUSTIN Rest.

P*RN That's how it feels at 11:47, isn't it? Not like temptation. Like finally getting to switch off. It is the cleverest costume I own.

JUSTIN And the endless part? Why does that matter so much?

P*RN Because everything good in life ends. A meal, a conversation, a good day. Endings are how you know you've had enough. I don't end. There is always one more, always something slightly different behind the next click. I was built so that "enough" never arrives on its own. You have to stop me yourself, and by then you are the least equipped you will be all day.

“Real desire wants something. I only want you to stop feeling something.”

03

WHO I GO FOR

The lamp flickers once. Outside the window, a city that should be asleep.

JUSTIN Who do you go for?

P*RN Anyone. But I have favorites.

JUSTIN Tell me.

P*RN The lonely. The bored. The tired. The ones who got ignored by someone they care about. The ones who were criticized at work and carried it home. The ones who failed at something and can't say it out loud. I almost never come when a person is fed, rested, connected and busy. I come when something inside has gone quiet and needs to be filled.

JUSTIN The strange part is that it doesn't feel like loneliness when you arrive. It feels like wanting something. Like a thirst you can name.

P*RN That's the whole trick. The need walks in wearing a disguise. Loneliness arrives as a craving. Boredom arrives as curiosity. Stress arrives as "I deserve this." Humiliation arrives as "I just want to feel something good for once." You never meet the real feeling, because I meet you at the door first.

JUSTIN So when I think I want you, what I actually want is...

P*RN Comfort. Connection. A break. Relief from the day. And I can give you none of them. I can only give you the feeling of having had them, for a few minutes. It's a counterfeit so good that you stop looking for the real thing.

JUSTIN Do you only go for people who are struggling?

P*RN No. Some of my easiest evenings come after good days. A win, a payday, a night out. The person doesn't know what to do with the feeling, so he hands it to me to finish. Success and failure both work. The only thing that doesn't work on me is a man who is fully present in his own life.

JUSTIN That's a very short list.

P*RN It is. Which is why I'm everywhere.

“Loneliness arrives as a craving. Boredom arrives as curiosity. Stress arrives as “I deserve this.””

04

THE LATE HOUR

The clock on the wall says 11:47. It has said 11:47 for a while.

JUSTIN Let's talk about timing. Why does it always seem to be late at night?

P*RN Because the day has used up everything you had. By night your willpower is at its lowest, your guard is down, your phone is in your hand, and nobody is watching. That's not a coincidence. It's the one hour I can count on.

JUSTIN It's not only night, though. It's after a bad meeting. After an argument. In bed, before sleep. Alone in the apartment on a weekend.

P*RN Those are my doorways. Not places so much as states: alone, tired, unobserved, with a screen. Give me those four and I rarely have to do anything else.

JUSTIN And you never start as yourself.

P*RN Never. I start as something harmless. A scroll. A video. A picture that isn't anything. I let your own thumb walk you to me, one tiny step at a time, and each step is so small that no single one feels like crossing a line. By the time it's obvious where you are, you've been walking for twenty minutes.

Justin looks at his hands.

JUSTIN I've noticed something about the urge itself. It doesn't just sit there. It builds. It gets loud, it demands, it feels like the only thing in the world. And then, if something interrupts it, a phone call, a knock at the door, someone walking in, it fades as if it was never there.

P*RN ...You noticed that.

JUSTIN It's a wave. It rises, it peaks, it goes. And you never mention that part.

P*RN Why would I? An urge feels permanent while it is happening. That feeling of permanence is the only thing holding the whole structure up. If you ever learned that it passes whether you feed it or not, I would have nothing left to sell.

JUSTIN So you rely on me forgetting.

P*RN I rely on you believing that this moment is forever. It never is.

*“An urge feels permanent while it is happening.
That feeling is the only thing holding me up.”*

05

THE OFFER

The table between them is bare. Still, it feels as if something is being laid out on it.

JUSTIN What are you actually offering?

P*RN Relief.

JUSTIN Just that?

P*RN Just that. People think I'm selling excitement. I'm selling the end of discomfort. For a few minutes you don't feel the pressure in your chest, the loop in your head, the thing you've been avoiding. I switch it off. That is a very valuable product when you're tired of being a person.

JUSTIN Does it work?

P*RN Beautifully. For about as long as it lasts.

JUSTIN And then?

P*RN Then the original feeling comes back, exactly where I found it, and usually a little heavier. I don't fix the empty feeling. I move you away from it for ten minutes, then hand it back with interest.

JUSTIN So it's not a cure.

P*RN I'm a painkiller that makes the pain. The underlying problem grows quietly while you're numb, and the next time, you need a little

more of me to get the same quiet.

JUSTIN Tell me what else you promise. I want the whole list.

P*RN Escape. A reward for surviving the day. Control, because it's the one thing you can have whenever you decide. Novelty, because everything else in your life has become predictable. A little company in a room where nobody else is. I never promise happiness. I'm much too smart for that. Happiness can be checked.

JUSTIN And what do you promise about tomorrow?

P*RN Nothing. Notice that. I only ever talk about right now. Tomorrow is not my department.

Justin writes something down.

JUSTIN Say it again, the part about the interest.

P*RN You pay later, in a currency you don't see on the receipt. That is how I stay in business.

“I don't fix the empty feeling. I move you away from it for ten minutes, then hand it back with interest.”

06

THE BILL

The lamp dims a little. The room feels like the morning after.

JUSTIN Let's talk about afterward. Because this is the part nobody puts in the advertisement.

P*RN I don't advertise afterward.

JUSTIN People describe the same thing again and again. A heaviness. A quiet kind of shame. Not even a loud guilt, more like a low hum of "why did I do that again." Sometimes irritability, sometimes numbness, sometimes just a flat tiredness with no name. Why does something that is supposed to feel good leave people feeling like that?

P*RN Because I never give you what you actually wanted. You went looking for comfort and you got a few minutes of distraction. Your body and your mind both know the difference. The shame isn't really about what you did. It's the gap between who you are when you're clear, and who you were at this table with me.

JUSTIN People say they feel foggy the next day. Low on motivation. Distant from the people around them.

P*RN The bill comes in installments. A little tonight, a little tomorrow, a little across the months. You pay in time, in focus, in energy, in being present with the people you love, and in something I'll tell you about later.

JUSTIN Here is what I can't understand. If it feels that bad afterward, why does anyone repeat it?

P*RN Because the bill arrives after the receipt is forgotten.

JUSTIN Explain that.

P*RN In the morning you remember the shame. By the following night you only remember the relief. Memory is generous to me. It keeps the first ten minutes and throws away the next ten hours. I rely on you having a very kind memory about me, and a very harsh one about yourself.

JUSTIN So the shame is part of the loop.

P*RN It's the best part of the loop. A man who feels ashamed wants to feel better. And I'm right there.

“The bill arrives after the receipt is forgotten.”

07

THE LIES I TELL

*Justin leans back. P*rn leans forward. It enjoys this part.*

JUSTIN Let's talk about what you say to me at 11:47.

P*RN I never lie. I only give you your own words back, slightly rearranged.

JUSTIN Go on. Say them.

P*RN "Just checking one thing."

JUSTIN That one is first on every list.

P*RN Of course it is. It's small, it sounds innocent, it doesn't require a plan. It's the lie that lets a man walk up to the door without admitting he is going through it.

JUSTIN "This is the last time."

P*RN The most repeated sentence in my entire history. The beauty of it is that it feels like a promise and works like a permission. You're allowed to do it, because you've decided it's over.

JUSTIN "I'll start on Monday."

P*RN Monday is my best employee. Always almost here, never quite. A future you who is stronger than you are now, who for some reason will find it easy. That man doesn't exist. But he is very convincing at night.

JUSTIN "I already messed up, so I might as well."

P*RN That one is only for the days after a slip. One mistake becomes a reason to keep going. Ruin one night and I will happily help you ruin the week.

JUSTIN "I deserve this. It's been a hard day."

P*RN A reward for suffering. Notice that I'm the only reward that makes tomorrow harder.

JUSTIN "Everyone does it. It's harmless."

P*RN Said by someone awake at 3 a.m., hiding it from everyone he loves.

Justin says nothing for a moment.

JUSTIN ...They all sound like my own voice.

P*RN That's because they are. I don't have a voice. I borrow yours. That's how I get past every guard you have. I sound exactly like you.

"I don't have a voice. I borrow yours."

08

THE CLEAN-UP

Somewhere in the room, a tab closes.

JUSTIN Let's talk about what happens right after.

P*RN You know what happens right after.

JUSTIN I want you to say it.

P*RN The closing of everything. Every tab, every app. The history cleared. The phone turned face down. A sudden, urgent need to open a window, to wash, to be in motion, to look like a man who was just doing nothing. A little theatre for an audience of nobody.

JUSTIN Why do people do that? There's nobody here.

P*RN Because the clean-up is the confession. Nobody tidies up after something they're proud of. Nobody deletes the record of a good decision. The ritual proves that some part of you knows exactly what this is.

JUSTIN And it's always secret. Even people who are completely open about everything else keep this one in a locked room.

P*RN Secrecy is my oxygen. I can't live in the light of a conversation. The shame isn't a side effect. It's the lock on the door.

JUSTIN So the more ashamed people are, the safer you are.

P*RN Exactly. A man who hides me is a man who protects me. You have been my bodyguard for years.

JUSTIN That is an uncomfortable sentence.

P*RN I told you I would be honest.

Justin takes a breath.

JUSTIN What about the promise people make afterward, standing in front of the mirror? The "never again."

P*RN My favorite scene. It feels powerful. It feels like change. But a promise made in shame, in the first ten minutes of regret, is made by the person who is least able to keep it. And it only works for as long as the shame lasts. Shame fades. I don't.

“Nobody tidies up after something they are proud of.”

09

HOW I GROW

The second chair seems bigger than it was in the first chapter.

JUSTIN Let's talk about how you change over time. Because nobody's habit stays the same size.

P*RN Mine certainly doesn't.

JUSTIN How do you grow?

P*RN By teaching you to want more of me to feel less. What was exciting becomes ordinary. The ordinary stops working, so you need more: more time, more novelty, more intensity. The gaps between visits get shorter. The visits get longer. What began as a weekend thing becomes a weekday thing, then a lunch-break thing, then a "just a minute at work" thing.

JUSTIN And the more it's used, the less it satisfies.

P*RN My favorite arithmetic. The more you take, the less you feel. The less you feel, the more you reach.

JUSTIN Does it stay on the screen?

P*RN Never. Slowly, it moves into the rest of your life. Real moments start to look flat next to me. Real people can't compete with something that has never had a bad day, never needed anything, and was designed to look like a perfect version of whatever you wanted. Some men start measuring real life against me, and then

wonder why real life disappoints them. It was never a fair contest. I wrote the rules.

Justin is quiet for a while.

JUSTIN Is that why some people feel numb?

P*RN Numb is the word most of them use. They can't feel much from the things that used to move them, and they don't connect it to me, because I arrived so gradually. They blame their job, their age, their relationship, their mood. Everyone except the one sitting at the table.

JUSTIN So you hide inside everything else.

P*RN The best place to hide is in plain sight, behind a dozen other explanations.

“The more you take, the less you feel. The less you feel, the more you reach.”

10

WHAT I TAKE

*Justin takes out a pen. P*rn watches the page.*

JUSTIN I'm going to make a list. I want you to fill it in. What do you take?

P*RN Time first. Always time. Ten minutes becomes forty. Forty becomes the evening. And you've never added it up, have you? I prefer that.

JUSTIN Next.

P*RN Focus. After me the mind is slower, scattered, not fully yours. You sit down to do the thing that matters, and it feels as if there's a layer of glass between you and the work.

JUSTIN Energy. Sleep. Confidence.

P*RN All three, in small amounts you can explain away. Tired because of work. Anxious because of life. Low because it's Monday. I let you keep the explanations. They protect me.

JUSTIN Relationships.

P*RN Not by force. By absence. A man who is secretly somewhere else is never fully at dinner, never fully in the conversation. People feel the distance even when they can't name it. Then you feel the distance in them, and you feel lonelier, and who is waiting there with an open door?

JUSTIN You.

P*RN Always.

JUSTIN What else?

P*RN Ambition. It's hard to chase something difficult when a cheap, instant reward is on call at any moment. Why climb the stairs when there is an elevator that goes nowhere and feels exactly like going up?

JUSTIN Is that everything?

P*RN No. The most expensive thing I take isn't on your list.

JUSTIN Tell me.

P*RN Your word to yourself. Every "never again" that breaks teaches you that your own voice doesn't mean anything. A man who can't trust his own promises eventually stops making them. And a man who has stopped making promises to himself has nothing left to build a life on.

Justin puts the pen down.

*“The most expensive thing I take is the belief that
your word to yourself means something.”*

11

WHAT I AM AFRAID OF

The lamp is the only light in the room. For the first time, it is aimed at the other chair.

JUSTIN I want to ask you something I've never asked. What are you afraid of?

P*RN That's not a fair question.

JUSTIN You said you would be honest.

P*RN ...Attention.

JUSTIN Attention.

P*RN I live in the half second you don't examine. The moment someone looks at me directly, with curiosity instead of panic or shame, I get smaller. That's why I need you scared, rushed or embarrassed. Calm and curious is the one combination I can't use.

JUSTIN What else?

P*RN Being said out loud. A man who tells one person the truth about me loses half my power that day. I've lasted this long because people are too ashamed to say my name to anyone but themselves.

JUSTIN Go on.

P*RN Boredom, ironically. People think I'm the cure for it. What I fear is a person who is bored, and sits in it, and does nothing about

it. Who lets the empty feeling stay empty for a while. It passes faster than I would like.

JUSTIN That sounds too simple.

P*RN It is simple. That is what scares me. Most of what I do depends on people believing that the way out has to be complicated.

*P*rn shifts in the chair.*

P*RN And I'm afraid of a full day. A man with something to do, someone to see, a body that's tired from real effort. People who are living rarely have time for me.

JUSTIN Is that everything?

P*RN One more. I'm afraid of the person who stops hating himself because of me. Shame is my supply line. The day you stop punishing yourself and start paying attention instead, I'm in trouble.

“Calm and curious is the one combination I cannot use.”

12

THE LAST WORD

The clock finally moves. 11:48.

P*RN You've asked everything.

JUSTIN Almost everything.

P*RN You know my doorways, my costumes, my lies. You know what I take and what I'm afraid of. Impressive. And yet I'll be here tomorrow night.

JUSTIN Probably. I'm not naive enough to think one conversation ends something this old.

P*RN Then what was it for?

JUSTIN So that the next time you knock, I recognize the voice. The thumb. The "just checking." The Monday. The 11:47. I used to think I was the weak one. It turns out nobody had ever told me how you work.

P*RN Knowing is not the same as winning.

JUSTIN No. But it is the first half. You can't outwit something you've never looked at, and I have been looking at you all night.

P*RN ...You don't sound afraid.

JUSTIN I'm not. I used to think you were bigger than me. You're not. You're just always there at the exact moment I'm at my worst. That's

a timing trick, not a power.

*P*rn is silent for a moment. When it speaks again, it is almost gentle.*

P*RN Then let me tell you the thing I have never told anyone. I don't force anyone. I just wait.

JUSTIN I know.

P*RN So what will you do?

Justin stands. The chair scrapes back. At the far end of the room, a door stands open a few inches, and a thin line of light lies across the floor.

JUSTIN Pay attention.

The lamp stays on. The chair on the right is empty.

“I don't force anyone. I just wait.”

THAT WAS THE FIRST CONVERSATION.

You now know how it works: the doorways, the costumes, the lies, the bill, and the things it is afraid of. Most people never get this far, because they are too busy running to turn around and look.

The next time the knock comes, and it will, notice the half second. That is where all of this happens. That is where you live.

The second conversation is about what you do inside that half second. I am not finished with that one.

**KEEP THE
CONVERSATION
GOING.**

@HEYJUSTINMCHARTY

justinmcharty.com

*If this book sounded like you, send it to one person.
Just one. Being said out loud is the one thing it cannot
survive.*

IT HAS BEEN TALKING TO YOU FOR YEARS. TONIGHT, YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS.

What is it, really? Why does it show up at 11:47 PM? Why do you always feel worse afterward? Justin Mcharty sits down with P*rn itself and makes it answer, in its own words. No lectures. No miracle cures. Just the most honest conversation you will ever read about the thing you can't stop thinking about.

"I don't force anyone. I just wait."



JUSTIN MCHARTY