When the Old Dance Starts Again

RELAPSE WITHOUT DESPAIR

> *The old song will play again someday.*
> *You just won't owe it the whole night.*

It will happen. Some tired Tuesday, some stressful season, the sharp tone, the closed face, and suddenly the old choreography is back mid-spin like it never left. And with it comes the most dangerous thought in this whole process: nothing has changed; it was all an illusion. That thought is the cycle's last and best weapon. Do not hand it the win.

Recovery was never the absence of relapse. It is relapse getting smaller. Fights that once ate a week now take an evening. Distances that lasted months now last a day. The measure of your progress is not that the music never plays. It is how quickly one of you hears it, and how much sooner, each time, a hand reaches across.

So plan for the bad night in advance, the way sailors plan for weather. Agree now, while it is calm, on what each of you will try to remember when it comes. This is the cycle, not the truth about us. We have found each other before and we know the way. Even reaching the morning after counts. A late repair still arrives, and every one makes the next storm smaller.

THE BAD-NIGHT PLAN

1. While calm, write a short note together titled “For the night the old dance comes back.” Say what is true about you two.
2. Add a line from each of you: what I'll most need to hear, and what I'll try to remember.
3. Keep it somewhere real. A drawer, or a note on your phone with both your names on it.
4. After a relapse, whoever recovers first offers the smallest bridge: a touch, a text, the repair phrase.
5. Within a day or two, debrief as teammates. What hooked us, what helped, and what got smaller compared to before.

WHEN IT’S HARD

The hardest relapse is the one after a good stretch. The fall feels farther and more damning. Say this to each other in advance: a bad night after ten good ones is not the truth breaking through. It is the exception that shows how much has changed.

TO SIT WITH

After your last big fight, what actually brought you back? How could that path be shorter?

What one sentence would reach you at your worst? Have you ever told your partner what it is?

OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris