

The Serious People of New York State

Ellen Sarnov was a serious woman. She had a serious job and interacted with serious people, and was giving a serious presentation on a gloomy Tuesday afternoon, when suddenly she was overcome with spontaneous bouts of forceful orgasms. They plagued her one after the other, contorted her face, dampened her underwear, quivered her legs, and made a bona fide disaster of her slide on mortgage-backed securities.

Upon rushing to exit the awkward breathlessness of the room filled with board members, her first instinct was to blame both her husband and her countless extramarital affairs, who had failed on every opportunity to give her orgasm at the appropriate time. This line of reasoning ended in an imagined pent up entity of unrealized climax living just behind her pelvis, which had chosen a terribly unfortunate time to manifest.

Her second instinct was to believe in punishment of a karmatic nature. The foundation for this was that she had, at every opportunity, shamed and emasculated men who were unable to control their own climactic instincts in her presence. Neither was correct, and though it would not help her in regards to the job she would inevitably now be terminated from, it might serve as some comfort to Ellen to know that the incident was entirely out of her control, and had nothing at all to do with her or her sexual history.

Had she not rushed out of the meeting (which, by all accounts, was the appropriate thing to do) she would have noticed that while almost every mouth in the room was open in shock, there were two mouths present that were exempt from that expression:

The first was her own. As noted before, her lips were twisted in pleasure and were issuing the predictable moan associated with such things. The second was the mouth of a young, slightly overweight professional in a neat, navy suit with a red-checked tie and clean-pressed white shirt. His name was Steven Darrow, and his mouth curled up at the corner, so discreetly as to be mistakable for a twitch. It was not a twitch. He was amused at the manifestations of a thing he had orchestrated.

Allow me to explain:

In his youth, Steven Darrow had on countless occasions suffered embarrassment on account of a proclivity for severely premature ejaculatory reflexes. Once, in college, after a girl had left his dormitory in an unsatisfied hurry, he was so distraught with his own shortcomings that he regressed to a childlike desire for resolve; "I wish," he whined into his lonely mattress, "that I had a lamp with a wish-granting genie, and that it were here right now."

What followed, he was not expecting. A lamp appeared in his naked lap, ancient but with a well-polished, matte gold finish, and from its spigot rose a red cloud, which immediately assumed the form of a genie. "Well," said the genie, "you have one wish. What is it?" He seemed very conscious of maintaining efficiency in regards to time.

Nevertheless, it is undeniably strange that Jacob did not have to even chance upon the lamp, and that wishes were granted before he was in possession of the mystical object. We could spend all day discussing the validities and logistics of what transpired, but it is wholly inexplicable and the reader would do best to simply accept it as fact and move on.

Steven certainly did. It must be noted as a commendable feature of his that he took the sudden arrival all in stride. He was an avaricious young man, and was instead more interested in why the genie only offered him one wish, and not the traditional three. This concern he verbalized, to which the genie replied that the first and second wish had been the existence of the genie-wielding lamp and then its presence.

Being a reasonable person, and one who was opposed to kicking a gift horse in the mouth, Jacob decided to graciously accept that he had only one remaining wish, and spent it on obtaining the ability "to make any woman come at any time."

Unfortunately (or very fortunately, depending on perspective) he did not add what was, for his intended purposes, a very necessary stipulation; he made no mention of his own sexual prowess being the cause of the female's sudden orgasm.

There was a twofold result to this negligent omission. The first, and less exciting, was that Steven's sexual capabilities underwent no noticeable

improvement whatsoever. The second was that Mr. Darrow found himself now bestowed with a far more sinister power than he had originally sought.

His first attempt did not go so well. Afterwards, he lay beside her in silence, not even having broken a sweat, and turned away in embarrassment. His first thought was how foolish it was to spend all that time removing clothing. The second was 'just come, dammit.' Normal thoughts with quite abnormal consequence. Steven Darrow had discovered his superpower.

It was not without limitations (a trifling fact, which he learned while watching the first lady speak on television) but to an otherwise painfully ordinary boy, it was enough to provide him, at least for some time, with a sense of purpose and some small bit of happiness. Lamentably, it was not a sustainable sort of happiness, and certainly not enough to fill the void in his life, which it will be difficult to portray without explaining the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth...

The Unusual Circumstances Surrounding His Birth

Steven Darrow had the unusual predicament of being born in precisely the location where he would be buried. The knowledge that life will amount to very little net mobility is heavy one, and the weight of it on Steven's shoulders almost crushed his will to live. However, this was not the most unusual circumstance surrounding his birth.

He had been birthed by his mother (which is typical) at her father's funeral (not typical, but by no means supernatural). The birth was unexpected for several reasons. The first is that Emily Darrow was a large girl, and it is conceivable that the telling signs of pregnancy may have evaded her. The second reason is that she was not pregnant, which was a direct consequence of the third reason; she was a virgin. Nevertheless, here is how it happened:

Some time into her father's funeral, Emily Darrow's uncle (brother to the deceased) fell suddenly unconscious. The black-clad attendees huddled around him, leaving the elevated coffin unattended by everyone except for Emily Darrow, who

could not pull herself from the coffin's morbid siren. She was not paralyzed by grief; her senses were simply engaged in something else.

She heard a high-pitched whining issue from the casket, which had inexplicably swung open. Inside was not the corpse of her father. There was only a naked child in the folds of a man's suit, awash in a filmy crimson coat of placental blood.

Turning away in shock, she cried out to the funeral hunched around her collapsed uncle, none of whom seemed to notice anything strange, only to find the very same child before her in an elegant black stroller. Her family stared dumbstruck, not at the child, but at Emily Darrow herself. The coffin had sealed itself back up.

"Poor thing," her suspiciously long-lived great-grandmother audibly whispered, "husband dies Monday, baby's born Wednesday, father dies Saturday." Yes; it must be admitted that it was a decidedly catastrophic week for Emily Darrow. The string of misfortune was somewhat mitigated, however, by the fact that she only remembered the final tragedy. She had no recollection of engagement, marriage, intercourse, pregnancy or anything surrounding these milestones.

To Emily Darrow, the child came as a complete shock, and for years she treated him as if he were an alien. For this reason, it is not altogether shocking that from a young age, Steven Darrow had dreams of becoming an astronaut and returning to the unknown space where he felt he might belong.

As he grew older, it became painfully clear that he had not the intelligence, physical capabilities, ambition or general competence that one needs to perform astronomical duties, which brings us to a point that might have been wise to mention earlier:

Do not think that the ominous circumstance surrounding Steven's birth have been made known to suggest, in any way, shape or form, that through the child's veins flowed something divine. Do not think that his immaculate conception was indicative of great things to come.

No. Truth be told, he was an overwhelmingly average child, and if judgment had to be passed on the topic, any reasonable person would have called him

downright pathetic. From an early age, his belly hung over his belt, the skin of his face was red and raw with pimples, he panted upon climbing stairs, he was erroneous in problems of the simplest mathematical nature, he was the last in his year to successfully read, he was in his teens before he managed the coordination to catch a ball – the list goes on.

It certainly did not help that each fault was exponentiated by Emily's palpable disgust, which served to further estrange the child. In fairness, the basis of this disappointment in her own spawn was a fault she perceived not only in the child, but in herself as well. You see, she had no foundation upon which to build an image of the phantom who had stolen her virginity, her love and the normalcy of her life. So every fault in the child was inherited from either herself or the man she had unwillingly succumbed to, and failures in either were understandably not so lovely to recognize.

But enough with the secrecy. It gets damn exhausting, doesn't it? It's time to shed some light on the father...

To Shed Some Light on the Father

Henry Dolidge was prone to taking vacations of the whimsical variety. It could be relied upon with a high degree of accuracy that at least once a month, his wife would awaken to an empty, neatly done-up half of the bed. Her husband's thick, embossed stationery would be placed on the pillow with the elegance of hotel chocolate, and upon it some variation of the message, 'Katherine- off to Nova Scotia! Be back Wednesday! Love, Henry.'

Now, you might think that such grandiose spontaneity would be a cherishable characteristic in a man, and that its evidence in Henry Dolidge made him a man with whom it would be great fun to be friends. This was half true, and those close to Henry found his sense of adventure to be intoxicating.

The false half is that Henry had never once left the comfort of his hometown of Brooklyn, and, in truth, was dreadfully afraid of unfamiliar places. When he took such leaves of absence, he would simply drive his camper down to the abandoned parking lot beside the river, camp out for some time and fill his days with fantasies,

reading, low-intensity exercises and, on occasion, masturbation. He would come home Wednesday evening feeling refreshed, with tall tales of the places he had been and the people he had met and his wife would listen wide-eyed with rankest excitement at the wild nature of the man she had married.

Only, it wasn't in earnest that she would listen. She had become enlightened as to the true nature of his excursions when once, he had reportedly gone to Asheville and she had chanced upon that very parking lot in the late hours of the night to discover that, not only was Henry not in North Carolina, but he was furiously masturbating to a dirty magazine.

At the time of the discovery, she had slipped away unnoticed and decided then and there to never reveal to him her knowledge. The reason for her discretion was two-pronged:

The first, and sincerely foremost, was that she believed the marriage would not survive it. This was on his behalf, not hers. She felt no great betrayal on his part – what did she care if he took refuge in his car sometimes? – but reasonably believed that the shame of it would cause him to fall apart at the seams. This was a clever hypothesis, and eventually would be confirmed. In fact, the only thing that bothered her about it in regards to betrayal is that when she had chanced upon him, there had been a tube sock around his penis (this was not the part that bothered her – on the contrary, she greatly appreciated that precaution, as they shared one car between them). What bothered her was that on the sock's dirty white cotton, the name “Emily” was written in big red letters. He had, on occasion, mentioned to her that the name of their first-born would be Steven if male and Emily if female, but now she suspected, correctly, that he had always loved the name in a more intimate way. Indeed, Henry Dolidge had believed he would marry a woman named Emily right up until the minute he proposed to Katherine. Wanted an Emily, found a Katherine. So life goes, Henry.

The second reason that Katherine never revealed her knowledge to Henry had to do with the nature of her discovery of his true Asheville itinerary. If you did not wonder what Katherine Dolidge was doing in an abandoned parking lot during the late hours of the night, then you should have (and I advise you to investigate the

going-ons of any relationship you may be currently engaged in). If you did, your suspicions were well founded; she was having an affair with Jacob Sarnov, a local tax attorney.

They would sneak off at night – and occasionally during the day – to a variety of obscure locations. Katherine was not really so fond of Jacob, and he was not a very good lover (as his wife, Ellen, has already made known through narrative devices). In fact, on the night they had found Henry in the parking lot, she had meant to end forever their adulterous relationship. However, she decided to sustain the affair out of noble obligation to her husband; she feared that Jacob might surreptitiously spread the truth about Henry's vacations if there was not sufficient motivation for him to keep silent. This prediction also turned out to be a clairvoyant one, and it is difficult to not feel at least a slight twinge of shock that such an insightful woman could have ended herself up in such a mess. But she did, and the prediction about Jacob came true:

Jacob Sarnov chose to expose Henry's fraudulent adventures at a most public and inopportune time: namely, during the eulogy Jacob gave for his own deceased wife. Ellen Sarnov's month of May was up there with the worst months of May ever had (now remember, this month is home to the Kent State Massacre, The Hindenburg's arrival in Lakehurst, the violent ending of the Renaissance, etc.). What began with her losing her job over something entirely out of her control, ended with her diving head first off the Brooklyn Bridge, down, down, down into the East River, from where her body had to be fished out and plopped into a coffin.

Jacob Sarnov stood beside this coffin, in front of a microphone, and gave his eulogy. While it began with the heartfelt grief typically expected of one at their spouse's funeral, it took a turn for the worse towards the end. Jacob sighed and looked up at Henry Dolidge through a veil of tears. 'She's gone now,' he said, 'to a better place. She has truly gone. I wish that she had not, that I might find her camping out in an old abandoned parking lot, fingers wet with herself, and we could laugh at the pathetic joke she had played on everyone and make love out of happiness and because she had already put herself in the mood with the help of a dirty little magazine.' Then he winked in Henry's direction.

Understandably, the funeral parlor wasn't sure what to make of the speech. They temporarily attributed the strangeness to grief, but, as these things go, by the next day the entire town knew of Henry's secret.

Women would turn away and make poor attempts at stifling their laughter, men would ask if they could come along to Mexico next month, teenagers would vigorously shake their hands before their groins in mock masturbation. Worst of all, he could not bear himself to look at his wife, or at anybody for that matter. He never raised his eyes again.

On the last night of his life, Henry Dolidge looked sadly out of his bedroom window at the lawn below. He took Emily out of his sock drawer and lovingly recolored her name, so that it appeared in dark crimson letters. He kissed Emily on her crusted cheek and went down to his car. He placed her in the passenger seat and parked the car just below his bedroom window. On the windshield, he drew a large red target with the marker he called 'my other wife's lipstick.' The marker failed towards the end, to which Henry exclaimed, "My other wife's lipstick is running low!" He went back upstairs, wrote a letter, left it on his done-up pillow with the elegance of hotel chocolate, and dove, head first, out of his bedroom window, and into the dull red dot on the windshield of his car.

At the many noises (the shattering of glass, the thud and crack of windshield and bone, the car's alarm), his wife awoke and ran from bed to what remained of the window. The whole neighborhood emerged to see Henry Dolidge's body, as it lay sprawled and broken on the dented hood of his car, with his head poking in through the cracked windshield.

Only once the police had left, and the last reluctant watchers went off back to bed, did the deceased's wife turn back to the bed and see the note on the pillow. It was written in her own lipstick. "Katherine," it read, "gone to hell!"

Gone to Hell

Now, one takeaway of the story so far may very well be "be careful what you wish for." Don't think I mean that in the traditional sense. I mean, very literally, that

if you are so fortunate to be granted a wish, be very careful about just what it is that you are asking for, down to the last bit of syntax and word choice.

For example: down the hall from Steven, there lived a scrawny Korean boy who always felt inferior for never having any chest hair. Truly, it was other things that made him an inferior physical specimen, but this was the one he focused on, probably because he thought that not much could be done about it. "I wish," he once said, staring at himself in the mirror, "that I had some chest hair." Suddenly, just below his nipples, there appeared many strands of long, blond hair. "I wish they would go away!" They went away. "I wish to find great success in life, both financially and in terms of happiness, the former becoming apparent no later than my 24th birthday." Now, *that* was a wish.

But rarely in life do you ever get the chance to make one wish, let alone two, and regretting a gift is a terrible fate. Steven Darrow learned this the hard way. He turned cruel, used his serendipitously acquired power maliciously and would cut women down at every opportunity. But this brought him no happiness, and in July of the same year that he so embarrassed Ellen Sarnov, he too jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge.

Now, it should be said, from a statistical standpoint, that people who jump off the Brooklyn Bridge are generally a successful bunch, at least as far as that final endeavor is concerned. It was not the case with Steven Darrow. He fell, down, down, down, landed comfortable in the East River, swam awkwardly through the pollution to the dirty shores of Brooklyn Heights, climbed out on the rocky beach at Dumbo, walked back up the bridge, jumped once more, and floated in the East River, not dead but defeated.

This should not have come as a surprise to Steven Darrow though, who had recently been forced to recognize several immunities in himself on account of numerous failed attempts at suicide. His immunities included: the severing of the ulnar artery in his wrist, the inhalation of oven gasses, the excessive swallowing of sleeping medication, the severing of his own jugular by razor blade, and drowning in the Hudson (this last one was the worst, as he had sunk himself by locking a

weighted belt around his waist and upon failure to drown was forced to walk up the filthy river floor underwater, which was predictably unpleasant).

So he had given up entirely. He had given up on life, he had given up on death. He wandered the streets like some predatory poltergeist of New York, pointing at women and making them quiver. He would threaten women into intercourse by exhibiting his power and promising to visit them at work if they did not climax during sex with him.

He thought about his mysterious failure to die, and these morbid thoughts would temporarily curb his reflex, and then he would become excited upon that realization and then it all would go to hell and he would try unsuccessfully again to take his own life.

Of course, by this point you are aware of the foundation for this ultimate failure of his. If you are not, then here it is; it is impossible to kill an idea when the mind that birthed it is still pulsing with electricity and with blood.

So it happened on that same fateful twilight when Henry Dolidge went to hell, there was a long-legged, full-breasted blonde atop Steven Darrow, who had been successfully drawn in by his threats. He was digging his nails into his palms to counteract pleasure with pain, when suddenly the tendon in his arms went slack, the light went out of his eyes, his heart stopped beating, and he died. The blond was not aware of this untimely execution, maybe because the lights were off at Steven's request, and maybe because he was an intentionally lifeless lover. In any case, she continued on and brought herself to climax. Her legs trembled, her ribcage fluttered, she called out, bit her lip, and clawed at Steven's lifeless chest. She rolled off of him, blew the yellow hair from out of her face, regained her composure and said, with understandable vehemence, "alright, now leave me alone you poor, miserable bastard." With that, she hurriedly gathered her clothes, returned them to her body, stormed out from his apartment, ran down the stair, out of the building and into the rain, leaving Steven Darrow dead on the mattress, with a smile dancing eternally on the corner of his lips.