

## Why Is Everything So Far Away?

I live in an underground basement that is built like a corridor with a maze of doors at odd intervals and a ceiling fan that emits cobwebs of light. To go upstairs, where the real home stoops, I have to first stroll through not only a initial set of stairs, but also an intermediate passage that is wide as a mezzanine yet dark and indistinguishable and from a shaft of light sun speckles fail to sustain a vision as it wavers and pixelates. The walls are drab canvases of gray and smudge paint, breathing trickles of frost through the lifeless crepitation as much as the night outside does.

Days here progress like TV channels: higher in number, stagnant in quality. On these more or less typical days sweet-sugar packages made for coffee and sex are unintelligible signposts for my wanderlust that otherwise serve as vivid arrowheads for others who eventually crave more intense lusts and loves. Because of this, two psychotherapists deemed me loveless. The third called me dangerous. And that may be so.

But if that were so, then let's take what I consider to be my most enlightening vessel for self-diagnosis and experiment: glorious, but, so sorry, so dumb, Erika. After I had manipulated her (I-don't-know-how) to sleep with me after we went on a mountainous excursion by a number of sinuous rivulets, she then stuck to me like a limb, furrowing her nose into my chest, and promised to remain my extravagant whore on the side. Sex was good, but something was missing: that something where sexual energy was charged up to a palpating point—think of

blood rushing to the heart, beating like a house snare—to the singular beam of focus that leads to a rattling groan and then vanishes! (Now this time, think of a thermometers breaking point). I'd thrust, I'd groan, she would be relieved, but incomprehension scattered my mind yet again like a spark of pixels. I truly was loveless. Erika had a voluptuous figure and plump butt that perhaps five years ago would've left my lance up in public. Now, all that was just an amorphous flicker.

Office humor was the worst of it, however. Light, calculated jokes between co-workers were playful tinkering that in my most dragged mood I wouldn't even feign a tried, cracked smirk; but that is perhaps due to my humor being one that insists upon being surprisingly realistic, if a bit harsh. Not to mention I loved racist jokes. I always thought that there's no better ice-breaker to a green-jacketed Negro, who sang Parliament and arrived inordinately early, than to ebonically joke about crime-related stereotypes. Twice I was talked to for that incident, one carefully by upper administration and one with shrieking rage by Lionel.

For two weeks, I hadn't locked eyes with shy Charlotte. To be perfectly honest, I think despite our discrepancies and shortcomings she was one to fully understand me, even if from a pitiful disposition. With blinds shut, so immersed in my work I practically swam in a ballpit of letters, I found the watery constellation quaking in her vermilion pea coat and the brighter-than-orange freckles on her otherwise screwed expression, the same inescapable highlights that have always bred an otherworldly beauty and pastoral innocence extinct nowadays. However, I was naïve, and being naïve I found out that when men enter into a woman's world a flurry of chaotic sign posts and weathered warnings depress him, change him.

What happened? Oh, the storm caught you in the middle of your walk here. So hours later no rain had ceased, and I demanded sincerely, gentlemanly, that I alone walk her home.

Although worried, she said yes! Many times before when my flesh crawled with felicity at having a woman I knew to be prey, an ongoing tension shackled me to inertia; but this time, the same unresolved tension compelled me spew something from a vacuum. And in most people's minds, I would hope it game-changing as a spell:

“Listen, Charlotte.....despite anything you've heard about me I'd like to say that what I love about you is your intelligence, more precisely your acuity, and if you'd like to accompany me for some coffee next week?”

Her answer? Why not! I thought the “love” in there too strong, rightly so. I learned by punishing criticism to strictly monitor my mind when talking and reacting. The results were miraculously abysmal.

Days leading up to our date I'd skim the pages with a fresh dab of ink, pace and reflect with a black cup of coffee, waiting for the calendar to cartwheel into my destined night. To my dismay, no energy seemed to travel between us nor could I sense a scent of any sensation that allowed me to read the contents of her mind or personality. Throughout our date, it was my awkward stumblings that I slapped myself for; but those were actually my heroes. At every serious digression, like when I explained grimly my intentions for my writings to inspire a generation of rebels and perhaps tyrants, she shook hysterically with laughter. When I dipped my finger instead of a provided spoon to mix my sugar into the coffee, I said I'd rather have it tasted from my own prickly fingers (in reality, I totally forgot about the spoon). She thought me interestingly unique.

After a while, dates passed along like clouds, bloated with her faceless image and indistinguishable from the rest. All the freckles, loose outfits, the slender calves, the rose under

lip, all their splendor drained away from me after day one. Of course, this was no fault of her own. I became then an inert blob, a void: I don't know why, I'd keep fingering the signs to decipher the impenetrable script, but movies, books, like people themselves, I only saw the surface. And sometimes that surface would dwindle and melt into a wan humdrum.

The life that fills the ordinary person is a teasing gnosis for my kind who is damned into dreams of breaking into that iridescent afterlife, where living becomes automated, naturalized. My owners above me, the ones who allowed me to pay only a pathetic amount for my humble lodging, every month or so they'll buy, say, a velvet sofa, and no matter the force or contemplation I undertake, it seems that an infinite number of successive steps have to be maneuvered, adjusted, precisely undertaken so I fully experience its tender warmth, the relaxation the sofa ensures.

Charlotte called me crazy for not spending more time up there even though I had unlimited access. It had been things like this that made her notice my unique relation to the world weren't one of being "positively" unique, and her resulting silence finally blotted me out. Once again, office hours were filled with no one to talk to. It was as if the timeline between Charlotte and I was severed, and, slowly, like sentient wires and gears, "before" and "after" became one long, intellectual stream. Little by little, I toyed with the idea of murder.

Not because of any philosophical crusade against humanity, or my recent miserable state of affairs; but with my newly-found detachment, I could actually do it, and only a projection of pathologies would be faint in the distance, nothing like the boil and sickness that had hit Raskolnikov. Who knows? Perhaps it was my calling, my appointed arched vault that like a

corridor opened me up into other realms of reality. 'Real' reality. My tinkering, however, diminished almost quickly due to a moral nudging.

I write this from the same café I had my first date with Charlotte, a refuge where, like an office window, I can view a moving population without a swarm of eyes making me shrink back. Per usual, this Sisyphean fight against my condition is leaving me with narrower methods, as the more I plunge into the depths of Erika or my landlords newly crafted pool the more I seem to just receive a scatter shot of informational bits that only imply an imagination, a delight, a tangible life. I'm tracking progress, slowly. Both in my entries and on the wall, where in that dream-filled day I'll carve an exclamation point larger than the population of tallies, as it looks to peak into a stellar explosion. With such sights settled, I'm afraid that if I do decline more into this selfless, deconstructed darkness, I may feel the exact opposite of an orgasmic birth: a recession into the dislocated bits of mind, drifting further and further away into the palpitating points where I valley into one singular swoop, and then vanish.