

Sparagmos

Once upon the protean moment of Time's Myth, one of Stephen Dedalus' bastard sons, Suicycliarus Snow, found himself lost in the place beyond the pines. Somewhere along life's path, he had taken a right instead of a left at Albuquerque, and wound up in graduate school, where he fell hopelessly in love with a dark-haired ice-queen-coquette named Pandora Pygmalion.

He languished away an entire school year trying to get her attention. His mother, Avellum Snow, had warned him about such mistakes, right before he left home. You hear me about them girls in them skirts, damnit. College girls always be the downfall o' boys like you. Now be still now! She wiped a smudge from his face, making him stumble backwards under her thumb.

He approached Pandora first with roses, then with poetry, but she turned her nose up at these. Suicycliarus spent the next six months locked away in toil, painting a nearly life-sized portrait of Pandora in Renaissance-ish oil. He framed and mailed the cumbersome canvas in a shipping crate that required a crowbar to open (he sent one of those separately, ahead of the painting, with a note: **<3** *Keep this near the front door. You're going to need it.* **<3**).

Instead of finding deterrence in her subsequent lack of a response, Suicycliarus took Hope from the lack of a cease and desist letter. Instead, he simply inferred from the situation that with some girls – to some girls, rather – flowers, and pictures, and thousands of words'-worth of lyrical ballads were worth about as much as his opinions about the principles of Art and Aesthetics would have been to a communist mathematician. So Suicycliarus took to the internet. He began to lurk on Pandora's Facebook and Instagram. After a month of research and investigation, he finally found her on Tinder. Her profile made it clear why he hadn't been able to get anywhere all year. She had three sentences in her About section: *Only in to Dudes w/ wings. If you can't actually fly, don't even bother to swipe right.* **<3** *Sorry Guys!!!*

There was a scandal on campus the next day. Channel 2, Channel 3, Channel 4, Channel 5, Channel 6, Channel 7, Channel 8, Channel 9, Channel 10, and Channel 12 – all had cans and crews on the scene. Channel 1 and Channel 11 were covering a less sensational story, two towns over, at Bellerophon Farms, where there had been a report of livestock mutilation.

At first the students just thought it was a large bird. Maybe a condor, or something. Then they began to suppose it was just another surveillance drone. It was the Dean of Humanities who saw something that made him cross himself for the first time in forty years. He began to pray, and dialed Emergency Services. He told the phone that a very odd man with enormous wings was – as-they-were-speaking – flying around in a restricted airspace, scaring the Jesus out of his student body, and would they please send someone better-equipped to handle this type of situation, right away, please.

Pandora was sitting under a tree in the main lawn, rehearsing her role as Linda Loman. She was so absorbed in committing her lines to memory that she failed to notice any commotion at all until she heard a man with a bullhorn announcing to someone his intention to shoot them. She closed her script in time to see the impossible man of her dreams, the one she knew she had no hope of finding, in this world or the next. A sexy thing with feathers, loping around the sky in vulturous circles, on the verge of becoming more than a silhouette, but remaining slightly too aloft. Pandora rose to her feet and stepped into the open. Almost immediately the report of a rifle reached across

the lawn to her ears, echoed by the sudden tumbling of a corpse through the air.

It does not matter whether it was Fate or some anomaly of Newtonian function which brought the mangled lump of Suicycliarus Snow to an abrupt state of rest. What matters is that Pandora Pygmalion was less than ten paces from where he became partially embedded in the earth. She changed her major, and began learning to paint. She deferred the role of Linda Loman to the understudy.

The winged man had been several hundred feet in the air when he was shot by police. The force of impact had been powerful enough to shatter the bones inside of him as if they had not been dense. His body ruptured in several places, but thankfully (somehow) did not explode completely. The student body, as if suddenly inspired as a whole, descended upon him in an ecstatic-cenobite-frenzy of many fingered hands, almost immediately. It took over twenty minutes for authorities to recover remains of Suicycliarus. By that time, his wings were missing, torn from him. A significant portion of his organs had been removed, as well. Taken by those who wanted a memento of the day there had been a man with wings among them, surrounded by an army of would-be onlookers, united by the feeling that things would never be this good again.
