

The Lady on the TV Makes Me Feel Bad

I'm going outside to die a little, does anyone need anything while I'm out? was said to no one in particular, just the room, and no one said anything back, well actually, no, someone coughed. So, cough back. No cough back to the cough back. Okay, tough crowd in the coffee shop tonight, yikes, dammit, stand there and look around. It's healthy to be social, the lady on TV said, try small talk. That was just a bunk first attempt, try: push hair behind ear, yeah, that's an awesome confident look. Ready, take a chance, say: How many grandparents do you have left? Does anyone here like a nice long hard stare at the wall? ...A passionate fuck on a sand dune? Art? ...No? What an uncultured crowd! Okay, that's better than boring open-ended questions like What do you like to do in your free time? I hope it's not waste time, because this question is wasting my time, let's skip that part, let me riddle you this: Fire or water? Which is the worse way to die? Fun fact: we die a little more every moment. Anyone care to come die with me outside for a second and have coffee on the patio together? ...Okay, what do you like to do in your free time? No one says anything back, not even a cough, just the sound of a ceiling fan pushing silence around.

The decision: die alone instead. Do not let anyone love you. Make life a solo activity, prove independence. Break away. Feel sorry for yourself a little, that's allowed. Then the sound of a door opening, then retracing steps, "wait, could I have something to-go?" then the sound of a door opening and then heavy wood shaking around a click click of metal. Bye-bye.

Outside, there's a view of a terribly average looking pedestrian man standing across the street on a cell phone, a little grey flip-phone. One of those Motorola Razors. Is this 2003? It's a good fit for him, that man is just as lackluster. There's just really nothing very special about him at all, what a shamefully boring looking guy. Maybe he hasn't upgraded his phone because no one really calls him, no one really needs to. It's just that no one feels they need to check in with him because, rest assured, he won't have anything new going on for him. He's doing fine, thinking about getting a new job, hasn't met "the one" yet. He's neither impressive nor disappointing, he's just okay.

So, perhaps he's not the best at keeping friends because he's not very interesting, but he is a master of light conversation, he makes small talk with just the right amount of eye-contact: little to some. So, he can still make a connection. And so what if they only know each other for a few minutes, if that? That still counts for something. His friendship tactic is entrapment, he probes for obligated responses. That's his way.

Maybe in an elevator: "So, how's floor 6?"

Or in the hotel pool: "Is the hot tub full?"

Or maybe in a hospital waiting room: "So, is your dad going to make it?"

Well, maybe not so much the later. He'd actually prefer not to rattle up any familiar death prospects with strangers, that's too daring, and he doesn't tread into deep water.

That 2003 Motorola Razor is going on 15 years. His razor burn is going on three hours and his face is very irritated. He didn't get an answer on the first time he tried calling, so, naturally, he redials. Come on, come on. Pick up, pick up.

Hello?

Finally. He's been trying to reach Robert all afternoon. The pedestrian man does the whole chirp chirping away thing, chit chat, "he said she said;" and he's a loud fucker when he's

on the phone. He has to be, though, especially right now, considering the busy street traffic. Such an assumingly unassuming pedestrian man he's being with all that noise, a real prick. A disease. Hey fucker, are you lost? Just build a home and raise a family of likewise fuckers in that patch of sidewalk over there. The pedestrian man puts his free-hand-not-cell-phone-hand on his hip and stands there looking like the lost fucker he is, mumbling more than talking, but yelling more than mumbling, and heckling this Robert person on the other line more than anything at all.

Oh, my god.

No, don't look at him, that's way too confrontational. Try to be polite, two wrongs don't make a right. This man especially is not used to being looked at, obviously, judging by how very average he is, a little too average. He's so average that he could not possibly catch anyone's eye; it'd be awfully intrusive as to even catch a glimpse, he's just not used to that, so, especially don't look this pedestrian man. This white in "it to win it" T-shirt loose-fit blue jean key jingle balding man, off-brand Ray Bans razor burn man, nothing special. He's so conventionally conventional that he's made a statement: there's no need to look at me, there's nothing here.

Don't look.

Be polite.

Someone came out here to feel sorry for herself, so, give her a little privacy. Let her reflect on her feigning existence all on her own right now. The lady on TV would say, The world just wasn't ready for you yet, but don't worry, you won't be alone forever. Just try being social, she'd say, you don't want to die alone, do you? She's never said that Everyone needs to die by themselves sometimes, at least for a little bit. No one says that.

He's loud, but not louder than the thought of dying alone.

Convince yourself that's what you want.

Don't let him take that away from you.

Die alone for another second.

For even this common typed girl-at-the-supermarket-who-buys-into-the-marketing-schemes-used-by-corporate-companies-who-type-their-food-products-as-"organic"-in-a-way-that-they-have-only-been-clearly-marked-in-big-green-letters-as-**organic**-in-so-that-they-appeal-to-those-who-would-like-to-feel-better-about-where-their-food-comes-"from"-because-that's-progressive kind of girl to notice a painfully average someone him would have him wondering like How could I have possibly gotten her attention, just me alone? What does this mean? Does she see something she likes? Should I look at her now, make small talk?

Is this love?

Don't give him the wrong impression.

He realistically couldn't have gotten her attention in any other way other than talking very loudly on a cellphone right across the street from her. Not exactly a "don't look, honey" kind of man, but rather a "could I get a pack of Marlboro golds, special blend, no, go up one, the gold pack right there to the left" kind of man. "Just asking, but do these here gas station sexual enhancement pill things really work? Not gonna buy them though, just kinda curious." He doesn't say it, but he sure does think it. This pedestrian man is just so sadly average that it'd make him question how average he wasn't being. He wouldn't know what to think. He wouldn't know what to do.

Don't look, honey.

Okay, I won't.

Maybe if I hold my breath, I will appear as a statue. Find a steady position to hold; quietly: sit down in patio chair, scoot close to patio table, lace fingers, cross legs. Look up at the traffic light on the corner. It's the color that makes the cars stop. It feels so bad to know why I don't want to look at him.

If it happens, don't say: We didn't have a connection. That was an accident.

If it happens, don't say: I didn't mean to make you feel lonely with that.

Honey, don't let me look. And if I do, don't let me say anything at all.

Hello, are you there? Oh, Robert, it's me. Hey hey! What's up, my good guy friend! Yeah, I didn't mean to embarrass myself so badly last night, tell me, how bad was I? And don't even begin to tell me it wasn't bad, I know it was. I just get so silly, just totally let myself go! Hey, did Carol see? Were there pictures? Please erase the pictures, please don't show them to me, don't show anyone. You hear me, don't show anyone those fucking pictures, Robert. Especially not Carol, how late did she stay? Tell her I'm not that kind of guy, I mean, what kind of guy does a somersault in the living room unprovoked, I'm actually very shy and normal. Oh, Robert, please, don't tell me I tried to get into the hot tub, no! At least, did anyone come in with me? No? I cried? About what? Hold on, Robert, I think we have an eavesdropper. The traffic light turned the color that made the cars go; the statue blinked. It gave her away.

Okay, sorry. Robert? Robert, are you there? No one can hear us, no worries. Were you worried someone could hear? I sure wasn't. Were you sure to talk to Carol about my behavior at the party last night? Have you told her that I am indeed actually a shy normal guy and could not be any other kind of guy? No? Well, why the hell not? You work with that beautiful bitch, what do you do, just sit in silence at your goddamn desk in your stupid fucking office all day, not even talking to anyone you work with? Not a goddamn good morning? Good afternoon? Honestly! I am not a circus animal here for your entertainment! I am human, Robert. I am not something to laugh at, and all you can kiss my a-s-s, especially Carol. It was alright knowing you. Alright, okay, I am done. That's enough out of me. I'll talk to you later, have fun in Key West, I'll be over here in Key East far as f-word away from you, alright? Bye, good fucking bye.

Poof: the flip phone was flipped down extra hard. See, that's a real power move. If only Robert could have seen that, then he'd understand just who the hell he was fucking with. If only Carol could have seen that, she'd be so impressed with his very strong hands. No, I give up on Carol, I give up on all that. I really messed up big time. Oh, you beautiful bitch. Crack: the flip phone was thrown down extra hard. It shattered all over the pavement, all over it. Don't let Carol see me like this, don't let her see me at all. I don't want her to ever look at me again.

Find a steady position to hold: the pedestrian man covers his face and the statue dies alone for a moment.

Oh, she was something, she was different. She had things to say, and not average normal kinds of things, they were always very unusually beautiful things. I wanted to take her out and hold her hand in public and I wanted everyone to see us holding hands and I wanted them to know we were in love. I wanted them to see how much she meant to me just by the way I'd be looking at her, I'd want them to see what I saw when I looked at her, I'd show this world just how much I loved her, just by the way that I look at her, and I would hope that everyone who sees her loves her just all that much. And it's because she deserves all the love in the world. We'd look so special together, so perfect, so good, we'd be so happy together that every single person would look at us and wonder what our secret was. Sometimes, I sweat a lot, but I would learn to control it. Discipline myself, buy expensive cologne, start taking B-12 vitamins, start

smoking American Spirits, practice crying in a way that does not make me look sad but instead handsomely emotional, maybe start frequenting a bar and getting to know one of the bartenders because that's probably impressive. I used to see couples holding hands and think that what they had just wasn't meant for a sadly average unassuming pedestrian man like me.

It'd be like: Look at us, her and I, having love. To say that I did that with someone. I want to do Love with that beautiful bitch, Love with a capital L. I want to change her car's oil and buy her a Valentine thing like a cool boyfriend guy. I don't want to just look at love any more, I want love to be something that looks like me. She made me feel like I could figure all that out. It made me feel so fucking disgusting for just looking at her.

The traffic light turned the color that made the cars stop; the statue blinked.
It gave him away.

It was at that moment he decided that he'd move on, find another very beautiful bitch like Carol, a girl who was even more beautiful and more bitchy but in a good way: like she'd kicked doors open with her foot instead of pushing them open with her hands and spit on the ground sometimes. Carol was kind of homely but very hot at the same time which did confuse him, especially because she always said very strange unusual not average things like Dying alone is the safe thing to do, I think that's what I want for myself. Maybe I'll go to more parties and on a few dates and get fucked spontaneously in a home improvement store, hopefully Home Depot, in the screw section because that's funny; lead some very nice guy on because that sounds powerful and dump him even though we had a chance and he'd be the only boy who ever understood my obsession with Bonsai tree gardening and he'd even gone out and bought a chainsaw for me, just because I love the sound a chainsaw makes, and he'd even rev it up for me when I got all sad. And I would never let myself get too close to him, I wouldn't want him to feel like he could keep letting himself love me like that. The lady on the TV says it's healthy to be social, but she never said that could probably be substituted for organic food and making friends with the northeast corner of my room.

From across the street: Carol, is that you over there saying those very unusual things that turn me on very much? Across from across the street: Hello? Did I just hear someone very terribly average say my name? "Yes, it's me."

We were both at that party last night. Remember?

Sure. That crying guy alone at the party, that was you.

I really let myself go.

Why were you crying?

Because I wanted to love you.

I'm sorry if I ever let you feel like I could let myself love you back.

Carol was at that party last night looking for one of those very cool stylish Berlin boys that could only found in the dance clubs in Europe who do lines of blow off the floor and also off her ass if she's lucky; someone with very awesome expensive cool guy glasses that she could throw off in a moment of passionate love-making in her uncle's bathroom at family Christmas, not an average guy who's idea of a good time was holding hands in a public park, promising her Las Vegas someday when she knew he didn't have the money. The later was too realistic. People really let themselves do that, they really let themselves get that close to someone. There's something really terrifying about that, she couldn't figure out why.

Write it down, figure it out: What does it mean to be close to someone? Walking home together after a night out, just us two? Holding hands? Then running ahead and doing a little twirl in the 2am streetlight just because I want to impress them? And they'd be there, just watching, being so impressed by me for doing something so simple as that, so impressed that I just exist in front of them doing a simple little thing? For someone to be so impressed by my simplicity, is that what it's like to be close to someone? What's so terrifying about that? And why does it make me feel so disgusting for wanting to know what that's like?

She didn't expect to find a pedestrian man crying alone in the hot tub at that party last night. It felt really wrong to look at him. It made her want to go home, so, she did. Why? For no real reason.

Oh, look at that poor pedestrian man, crying for no real reason! everyone said. I'm going home, no one said. Carol left without saying bye.

That crying girl alone in her room, that was her. She lets go sometimes, too. Wondering why she won't let anyone love her, right? Why won't I let anyone love me? There has to be a reason. Little sad alone girl hoping Bonsai tree would listen. It always did. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you.

The lady on TV never listens.
She makes me feel really bad.

Look, I hope you die alone if that's what you really want.
And I hope you die in love if that's what you really want.
I hope you die alone starving in a hole and no one loves you, you beautiful bitch.
And I hope you die before the person you love so you don't die alone, you painfully average looking pedestrian man.

The traffic light turned the color that made the cars go.
Dash in. Do a somersault. Turn the street the color that looks like love.
Die before the person you love so you don't die alone.
And he did.
And she dies alone for another second.