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Desire is a Funny Child

I have come to the age where making lasting friendships is not my objective. Now, finding someone that does not annoy me or offend me long enough to have a cocktail with is my prerogative. Susan falls somewhere in between. I tolerate her enough to have a drink with her. The best friend days are over for me. I have plenty of old friends that I keep in touch with on Facebook or the occasional text message, and some even call me on my birthday.

Now when I go out I don't expect much. I don't think I am going to have the time of my life. Instead, I hope that I will be pleasantly surprised with the outcome. I have started to identify with Pothos, the god of unfulfilled desire, the son of Zephyros (the west wind) and Iris (the rainbow). Oh, sweet variegated passions of love! I am drunk, and when I am drunk I muse on the Greek gods of love and desire. It's a strange group. I find myself at times wishing I were Pothos, who caroused with the winged gods, Eros and Himeros. They fluttered around the heels of Aphrodite. I know I can't really be Pothos because I am a woman, but I guess one can say he is my alter ego. He represents perfectly the recent state I have found myself in, after another heartbreak. I sound jaded. I am, and I believe that is what happens when you reach a certain age—nothing really excites me anymore. I go with the flow hoping, sometimes praying, that something amazing will happen to me.

The Greek gods knew how to deal with the idea of being smitten with someone- disguising it with the ribbons of naughty thoughts and wanton affections. I like to use the old fashioned word smitten, which reminds me of my grandmother's generation when boys and girls were smitten by each other. When boys and girls dressed up to impress the opposite sex, not to get laid, but to play the game of love, and have a night

on the town for the fun of it, nothing more. It was just for the fun of it. I like to think that cocktails were mixed to inspire conversation and to loosen the tongue, not the libido. I was doing this at the party. I was having an intoxicating conversation with a younger man from South Africa; he could easily be described as an Eros with his blonde locks, and well-toned body. I was smitten with him and he with me. I liked his look, and he was interested in mine. We knew nothing of each other and that was the magical part of the whole exchange. Maybe what was so magical about it was that we were both drunk, and that was what made the conversation so interesting. And yet, does it really matter what provoked or inspired the general interest in each other? What felt good was the idea of being desired by someone who I also desired- isn't that the real Aphrodisiac! And yet, somewhere in the crowd lurked the Erotes, playing havoc, for I was pulled away from the good-looking South-African of Dutch decent, and whisked away by my friend to meet this supposed Zeus of a man that had cast some spell upon her that she was so betook with desire that she had to leave the party at 9:30 to meet him at a bistro across town, because it was convenient for him.

"What does this guy do?" I ask, popping an olive in my mouth. The first olive is for life. "To life." I say to myself. "A life well-lived full of lust and beauty, sweet talk, and flattery, weddings and wedding songs, yearning and desire, and all those lustful feelings that captivate the soul, and make for a fun life."

Susan stares off in the direction of the doorway. It has begun to snow.

"He is a surgeon."

"What sort of surgeon?" I ask, taking a sip of my drink.

"I don't know," Susan says, looking toward the door

"My god, that would have been the first thing I would have asked." I say, thinking to myself that Susan really is a strange one.

I take another sip of my drink and listen to Susan go on about how this surgeon is originally from Iran, and that his family fled to Canada before the Iranian revolution. His mother is French- Swiss, which is why they went to Montreal and not somewhere in the United States. The story does not make a lot of sense to me, and the way that Susan is describing it leaves a lot of gaps in the story telling. But in a way it is not important of where he came from or how he came to live and work in the United States. We all have our history, and some of it, is really unimportant.

Yet, I wonder how a French- Swiss woman married an Iranian. I become more intrigued but also judgmental. A Persian, I think, with a little French-Swiss sprinkled on top. He probably speaks with a sexy French accent, and looks the part of being Hedylogos, the god of sweet talk and flattery. "Oulala," I say, this one could be a catch, a Rock Hudson minus the gay part, an Alexander the Great, also minus the gay part. My heart is all a flutter.

"How old is he?" I ask, pulling the second olive off the toothpick with my front teeth. This one is for luck I say to myself as I chew it slowly. "You know, to get lucky, to have a bit of luck in the game of love, maybe this French-Persian will come with a sexy Eros of a man, and luck will have her way with me. I will bat my eyes. I will be the personification of persuasion and seduction."

"Oh, I don't know," Susan says, taking a quick sip of her water, "I think around fifty."

"You don't know much about this guy," I say, thinking that Susan is really out of her league with this guy.

"Where did you meet him? I hope not on Match.com?"

"He came to one of my art shows; you know the one I had with Kate and Marie"

Yeah, I know the two women she is referring to; the deranged painter that goes around dressed as a fairy, and the half-wit of a poet who thinks the end of the world is coming tomorrow. Just throw in a writer who muses about Greek gods when she is drunk, and it is a happy wedding party.

"When was this?" I ask.

"Last week."

"And he is just getting around to asking you out now?"

"He just got back into town."

"Oh, right."

"He has a house here in the village, and he comes back every two weeks from Arizona."

"Sounds like he is some big shot surgeon."

"He bought two of my bowls," Susan says, taking a quick swig of her water.

"A real spender."

I wonder what this surgeon must look like to be interested in Susan. He must be odd, because Susan does not attract surgeon types, not so much for her looks, but mostly because of her personality. Susan attracts the types that are homeless, jobless, or psychopathic. Her last guy was the local mechanic. There has to be

something not quite right with this guy, especially considering that he asked Susan out on New Year's Eve, which really is not a date because I am with her. And yet I can't say much about myself because I am alone on New Year's Eve. Loneliness has a way of bringing the strange in all of us out, and at the oddest of times. I consider it a type of cancer that eats away not at bone and flesh, but the soul. It is a soul disease. I feel it now, creeping and engulfing me.

"Where is he?" I am starting to feel the cocktail take hold of my inner being. I am starting to feel a bit melancholy.

"I don't know, maybe I should text him," Susan says, quickly looking at the door.

"You should really order a drink. You keep looking at the door as if this guy is your white knight coming to rescue you from the boredom of your life."

"Please don't be a bitch all night."

"Sorry, that was not nice, I will try to keep my thoughts to myself, but I wonder if this guy is gay?"

Before Susan can answer me, the surgeon is walking through the door, bringing with him the cold. I shiver. Despite his good looks in the Mediterranean sense, there is something odd about him. He is no Zeus. He is a Pan, disguised in a Sheepskin, in order to hide his hairy black goat form.

I take a slow sip of my martini, and watch the introductions unfold in front of me. The problem is that Susan is overzealous, and surgeon is reserved with his greeting. There is an awkward hug, and then the mumbles 'Hi.' The man's gay. I feel it. Just look at him in his tailored camel colored slacks, and crisp checkered blue polo shirt and dark blue sports jacket. He is too manicured to be straight, and he is too attractive to really be interested in Susan. That is, unless, he is into women that look like little boys. That has to be the attraction.

He leans down to shake my hand. I notice that his right eye droops. I wonder if he has had a stroke. Or maybe he has a fake eye. I had a friend back in high school that lost her eye in a car accident. She had a fake blue eye and used to pop it out in class to freak us all out. She had a lot of scarring around her eye socket. This surgeon has no scarring. In fact, his skin looks perfect. He has no real wrinkles, and he has a bit of a glow to his face. I bet he just got a facial today.

I bet this Pan is musing to himself right now, whether he wants to fuck Susan or not. He wants something easy and quick, which is why he chose this evening to ask her out. There is nothing wrong with a

curiosity fuck. He is fuck-able, tall, dark and handsome, but again, something is off. He is sexy with his salt and peppered hair cut above his ears. I can tell it was once jet-black, but of course with his heritage, his olive skin makes him appear to be a bit romantic. But, I don't think he has a romantic inkling in him. But, then he orders Champagne! "Oh, Pan, I see through your bags of tricks." I, of course, say this to myself. My head is spinning.

I down my drink, and slowly take the last olive from the toothpick with my fingertips, for lust. The lust that comes from desire, grabs your soul, shakes you inner being, makes you crazy, out of control, drunk texting, and in the morning, you pull the covers over your head and wish you were dead.

I like to think that my grandmother's generation was not so desperate—that things were done with a bit of class. Doors were held open, and men picked up the checks because that is what men did, and women played the part of looking pretty while crossing their legs and dragging on a Camel cigarette before the fear of lung cancer made everyone stop smoking, because it no longer looked sexy. I want a cigarette. I didn't care that he is a thoracic surgeon, some big shot surgeon from Houston, revered in his profession. I overheard this bit of information when Susan asked him what sort of surgeon he is. It was again awkward in delivery, like an interrogation, but at least she got the information. Knowing, what sort of Surgeon he is, says a lot about him. I mean, if he was an orthopedic surgeon who only operates on old people, that would be plain dull and very unsexy.

"How is it that your mother, a French-Swiss, married an Iranian?" I can't help but ask this; I find it very important. I find it interesting how two very different people, from extreme cultural backgrounds married and had children.

He smiles at me, showing off very white teeth. I think he probably has had them bleached just like he gets his fingertips manicured. I notice these small details with people. The man gets a manicure, he uses some high-end facial cream, and he cuts into people.

Before he can answer me, the Champagne arrives. He clears his voice, and makes a toast. "To new friends!" He clinks my glass, and then Susan's. I look him straight in the eye, and can't help wonder what happened to his right eye. It has to be a fake. I just know it because of the way his right side droops and his right eye socket waters. I can't help wondering what it feels like to only see the world with one eye. Is he only seeing

half the side of a person, half the side of a situation, or maybe it is more like a third eye? Where is he able to really focus, and see everything for what is real?

I study him as he ignores my question and turns to Susan. He probably thinks I am strange as well. I have been told that I am intrusive with my questions. I realize that I should have kept that question to myself, but really how the hell did his parents fall in love? I imagine his father is a real Persian, tall and sexy that fell for a blonde-haired buxom French-Swiss woman. I bet the love making was hot and passionate. And yet, this man is so reserved.

He does have a nice head of hair. I could see why Susan is smitten with him. He has nice hands as well, rough to the touch, but nicely formed. I have a thing for hands. I don't like Susan's hands. They are too small and dainty. I look down at my own hands. I have working hands despite my manicure. My hands are starting to look old. I have a couple of brown-spots, and they are starting to get wrinkled.

After a glass of champagne Susan becomes more animated than usual. She is dressed in a black pants suit, which elongates her small frame. She even put on a bit of make-up and, for once, brushed her straw hair. She is not a pretty woman, her features are plain and unmentionable, but tonight with three of us drinking it brings a blush to her cheeks. She looks cute, almost doll-like.

I try to concentrate on the conversation. It's all a bit ostensible, the conversation and the clinking of champagne glasses; three strangers coming together to celebrate a new year. I glance at the surgeon. I want to find purity within the whole farce. He smiles over at me.

It is a friendly smile. I smile back but then it hits me, he wants to go home with both of us. He was not here for Susan; he is here for a bit of strange. He is not gay; he is a Peacock! A Pan, who wants a bit of entertainment, he wants to watch two girls get it on, and masturbate like Pan did in the forest while he watches his nymphs play with each other.

It is a sense, a feeling, and now it all makes sense. That is why he invited both of us, instead of taking my friend out alone. He thought Susan was gay with her boyish looks, which is why he asked her to bring a friend. I excuse myself from the table and make my way to the bathroom. What have I gotten myself into? I have no desire to sleep with Susan or to sleep with the surgeon.

I wish I had gone home with the South African, but going off with the younger man would have done nothing to revive me. My numbness is my shield at the moment. A romp in the sack with a total stranger was

not going to permeate me, heal me or even delight me. Desire is a funny child. Like the wind, it comes and goes caressing at my arms and face, and whispers in my ear that all will be all right, but laughs at me when it decides to leave, playing havoc with my emotions, even though I knew that the one I desired was no good for me, devoid of true intimacy. But still my body yearns for his touch; even if my body knows it will be short lived. I want that touch again. Regardless, I will not cry I say, as I flush the toilet, smooth down my skirt, and powder my nose. I return to the table to find Susan sitting alone.

“Did he leave?” I ask.

“No, he went to the bathroom. Listen, before he comes back I’ve got to tell you something.”

“Yeah, I know already he wants to have a threesome.”

“How the hell did you know that?” Susan whispered.

“A feeling,” I say, taking the last sip of Champagne.

“He wants us to go back to his place and have night cap.”

“Fine, let’s do it but I am not sleeping with you.”

Susan laughs, which is strange to me but I laugh too, and then the Surgeon returns, looks us both up and down, “Shall we?” he asks.

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No one is going to fall in love tonight. No one is going to totally give themselves to the other. Falling in love is not a possibility. I wonder, as I watch him get in his car, how many times has he been in love? I no longer feel as if I am capable of ever losing myself to another, not after the last mishap. Besides, does it really matter at my age? Falling in love seems so remote to me now that I feel my numbness is my true love; a love that will not subject me to the phlegmatic disputes that occur after a man grows tired of my body.

We follow him down the road to his house. I need to pee and I am no longer tipsy. But I am going with the flow, hoping that something enchanting will happen. Hoping this man will surprise us both and something magical will happen. I close my eyes. It is 11:30, and I will bring in the New Year with strangers.

His house is a hacienda; the rooms are huge and cold. He makes a fire in the living room. I do not remove my coat. I pull it closer around me and take a seat next to the fire. He is meticulous when placing the logs in the fireplace. Susan takes a seat in between us, and he brings us both a shot of brandy. I sip mine slowly, letting it warm the back of my throat.

Susan smiles over at the surgeon. It's a child-like smile, innocent at that moment, when there is pause in the conversation. What is she up to? Does she think she is some Nymph? Here to enchant? My mood has grown sour. Susan is going on about her travel to Italy. She is rushing along in her speech. She is engaging in a serious conversation too quickly. I listen to Susan go on about how she became an artist. I am bored with the whole conversation. What does it matter? Does she really think the surgeon cares that she tromped all over Italy by herself? Does she really believe he will remember her tomorrow? Does it really matter if some stranger remembers you tomorrow?

I do not want my recent breakup to make me bitter about love. I want to remember the finer points of the romance, how he brought me coffee in bed in the morning, how we spoke of the trips we would take together, the sex. But my body was not enough, my mind was not enough. I had asked him, "do you fundamentally like me?" and he had answered "Yes, but there is something about you that I am not sure about." I knew it was over then and there, that he had met someone else. I thought younger, prettier, more interesting. I was wrong. He met someone older with two children, and a house in the suburbs. He moved in with her. I see him occasionally on the road. I flip him off. I know it is childish, but the pain at times is unbearable. The rejection is suffocating at times that my disease of loneliness takes a toll on me, and all I want to do is sleep. At least in my dream state I am a fairy. I am a nymph and a goddess with winged gods, fluttering at my heels.

"Let me take your coat." I hand the surgeon my coat. He takes it and hangs it up for me. He is very careful, again meticulous in his movements. There is something staged about him, like he has played this game before. Susan is still talking, asking questions about his house. He pours some more brandy in my glass.

Yesterday I had called my ex-lover and asked him once again why he had left me for another. He said he didn't want to get into it again. He was tired of explaining himself. It was over, and I had to move on. And finally as if he was tearing off his own bandage, he confessed that he saw no future with me. This new woman comforts him, and he wants to be with her. Is it so simple, so easy that at one moment you are laughing and sharing secrets with each other, and loving on each other, and the next moment you no longer want to be in the same room with each other? The platitude of the whole situation make me sick, a sickness that I wear like an old scarf around my neck, trying so hard to breathe in the essence of something magical

only to find that it only stinks of years of perspiration. Now all I have is my pillow, which smells of my sickness, and this makes me very sad

Susan with her small hands rambles on, and the surgeon is starting to lose a bit of interest in her. The conversation has gotten too serious, too soon. I want to interject something funny but my lips are numb. I want to shout to Susan to stop the serious talk, and just flirt. Flirtation is essential; to have a serious conversation, one has to start off with a frivolous one, like flirting before fucking; like fucking before the confessions of love. I know like all women in a given situation, Susan wants this man to perceive her as more than a fuck. But the script has already been written and we are just players, hoping that the ending will be more romantic than the set up. "Romance," I want to shout, by throwing my drink in the fire, "is all an illusion, it is all a farce. Love is strapped with needless demands." I look at Susan now, the fire has died down, and suddenly I feel giddy. I want the surgeon to romance my friend, to court her, to make love to her, to appreciate her quirky disposition. I want my friend to have a night of passion, to let go of her fixed set of rules of how a conversation should proceed, and how a man should perform. I want my friend to feel charmed, like I was with my last lover, the one whose breath upon my neck sent me into a reverie. I want my friend to feel complete with herself as she lies beside this surgeon after a night of passion. I want her to feel comfort.

I fall asleep in the chair, I awake in the morning, and find someone has taken off my shoes, and thrown a blanket over me. I am cold and hung over. The surgeon is seated in front of me. He is showered and shaved. "My parents met in Geneva at the university." He says, crossing his legs. He is handsome, I think, as I blink myself awake.

"How do you take your coffee?" he asks, getting up.

I wonder how he kisses, and again I wonder if he has ever been in love.