

Virs Rana

A PICTURE'S WORTH...

“Words and symbols are ghosts, wispy fogs of probability, falling for trendy formulae to fit the abstraction. So we must paint the picture, to procure the proverb. And once we draw the proverb, we must deem it worthy of being one, else we risk deception by a deviant puzzle maker, who may be us...” Van Arris

I found it while shuffling through the mail, before Kippy couldn't restrain herself any longer. She grabbed me from behind, ripped open my silk, front-button, collared shirt in dramatic fashion, clutched my shoulder-length hair, and jerked my head back to open my nape to her vampiric proclivities. Her purple black lips and gleaming ivories caught their mark, about three inches below my right ear lobe, while I studied what appeared to be an out-dated correspondence to my address, but without a return...

“You're not reading your mail!” she quipped, seeing my apparent indifference to her advances.

“It's a very unusual piece of mail,” I shared.

“Really? And can it get you off?” She trifled.

My eyes shifted from the brown crinkled envelope to her dilating pupils, overtaking her sharp indigo color with vacuous black. “I don't know; I haven't read it yet,” I challenged.

“Do you realize I am a Tantric master, intensively trained, highly desired?”

“Perhaps you take the master part too seriously. Sex should be a conversation, not a lecture.”

“Have you ever had a more excruciatingly pleasurable experience?” She pointed.

“Yes, the techniques are very effective...but...”

“Excuse me? You're introducing a 'but' into our relationship!”

“Come now,” I gathered, “all relationships have a conditional clause or two. Besides, it was you who said we needed more tests. That's a 'but'.”

“You are correct,” she affirmed.

“And it sounds like your ‘but’ is bigger than mine,” I pressed.

“Perhaps,” she said dryly, reconsidering the level at which we had been performing lately, “Very well,” she continued, “I will schedule the test. Now, I will transmute my energy body, and you will do the same, then you can read your mail.

“You sound upset.”

“I have too many orgasms to be upset,” she pronounced, as she *prised* out the door.

There it is, I thought, that ‘persistent insistent’ I called it; but Shakespeare said it best, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks.”

Like when she advised me last week, “Most men are like confused hitchhikers, sticking out their ‘glory thumbs’, hoping to hitch a ride in a woman’s cab; and when they get one, they can’t remember where they wanted to go, until they limp away, and stand erect again.”

“Maybe a woman should choose her fare more carefully,” I responded.

“Are you suggesting what I think you’re suggesting?”

“Only if you’re thinking it.”

“Cute, but not very clever.” she admonished.

“How can a man be clever around such a lady?”

She looked at me askant, as I stood with a poised and peaceful gaze that might mystify the most intuitive of vipers.

“You play well,” she said.

My desk light afforded a clearer look at the envelope, confirming the postmark as ‘June 1882’, though barely legible; some mock-up as a practical joke, dropped in my mail, was my first thought. But the elegant cursive writing and aged look and texture of the paper gave me pause, and my name was boldly written as the addressee

Next day I called the post office. and they said it was probably from their dead letter office, and slipped through the cracks, while they were preparing to send them to one of the mail recovery centers. “A hundred and thirty year old piece of mail?” I exclaimed.

“Yeah, rare, but happens,” was the response.

“But my house was built in the 1920’s.”

“Yeah, well,” began the drone...These guys had really heard it all, and their perfunctory behavior made me recall the conflict between getting flocked and going whacko for lack of deep penetration; pc’itis was the disease, with rants and raves being the gateway drugs, because subcutaneous assimilation was avoided like the affliction they didn’t know they had, “first house was probably moved or torn down. Plus you live in an area that still has the old numbering system.”

Yes, well, it was all so clear, nothing to get wrapped about, have yourself a glass of Merlot, unwind, call Kippy, even though she couldn’t draw that thing more precious than blood. So I played my day, threw hints at friends and acquaintances about receiving their merry jest, but no ‘fessers, and I was left with this looming possibility, which my imagination was only too willing to accommodate.

Kippy called back. She had demanded we get tested, after seeing a purple aura around me in the online dating picture I exchanged, with her, of me sitting on a bench in a train station next to a black cat she claimed was the reincarnation of Cleopatra. Kippy Suivus was a woman of considerable taunt and quirky circumstance, the most notable of which was her cultish allegiance to her psychotherapist, Winny the Boo, they called him, a Freudulent doctor, with yet another method for madness: Re-establish your vibrational modality by chanting your given affirmation in the performance of your yab yum yoga pose, a baptism of desire streaming into your pores, arcane words to frill your psyche, an enchantment for the impoverished spirit, and so we worshiped in the body’s witness to Divine presence.

Based on Resonant Frequency Imaging and Kirlian photography, the test would reveal the compatibility of our auric eggs, thereby dispelling any doubts regarding the mesh and mash of our meta-relationship. But that, alone, would not do, for the ritual only carries the message, in which, most mistakenly seek their salvation, and Kippy was no exception. It was like belonging to the flavor-of-the-month club, and there, I staggered. “You must commit to something,” she chided.

“How about a healthy relationship?” I ejaculated.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

"I don't know. I never had one." It was there I lost her. I had never liked packaged relationships, regardless of whose god was the attested creator, and I wouldn't wear a black beret with a purple ribbon hanging from the back.

"Why purple?" I asked.

"If you have to ask, you'll never know," she replied.

And there it was, my Sphinxian riddle. She was foiling to abdicate the alliance. No matter that my keen powers of observation and seduction rivaled those of Sherlock and Don Juan; she had found that chink through which to pierce our trothless keep.

After the test revealed she was a cool blue left and a hot red right, she had called me a changeling, a cool yellow left and a hot blue right. She cried, "Flux", and was no longer impressed; and in the throes of our last somatic interlude, she wailed, "Green and purple do not mix. Oh, we're in an awful fix!" Her final sigh was vanity, no high-amp angst or sappy hint of piercing-the-veil, just a cool draft of void, groundless, formless, a menu of synthetic hot, goddess echoes, and the shameless quiver of a romantic chill. So she would change her name to Penelope and await the return of her Odysseus...

A week had passed. And like any grinding gauntlet where lust betrays reason, there was a price, a need to re-obsess...How far am I going to drop into this through-the-cracks chase, I ventured. Any ripple in the dead calm, I cheered. I started tearing open the envelope on my desk, and stopped...Easy...If nothing else, the postmark and stamp might be worth something... So I caressed it, lifted the flap, and carefully slid out the piece of note paper. It was dappled with brown water spots. I slowly unfolded it and read the voluptuous scribing:

'My Dear Sir, The pleasure of your company is most anticipated, at our humble home, on 12th June, at 8 o'clock pm, for an evening of reading and discussing the poetry of Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelly and Mr. John Keats. Hope this finds you in good spirits. Sincerely, E.'

And there, below, was the address, not more than four blocks away, and further, like off the charts, as a matter of synchronous happenstance, June twelfth was tonight...Ok, fella, how about a little weed with that Merlot...When what began playing on my app rotation was the popular ballad, *Time After Time*. "C'mon", I

rallied, there had to be hundreds, if not thousands of coincidences in the evolutionary process, so what's a few more in the life of a protoplasmic accident...

It was a Queen Anne style house, surrounded by a pulsating mist, which refracted light into patches of spectral luminescence, with gables, and towers, and cupolas, fitted with gargoyle finials...And I stood before it, flashing on a school boy, about to give his first bouquet of flowers to his mysterious Madonna...This rapturous wonder spilled into the void of transaction, where image seeps shallow, when the ground lies fallow. Delusional, indeed, hybridized myths and fairy tales wrought by boredom and dogmatic programming...It's not just knowing the emptiness, but where it lies...I moved forward, passed the sign that read, 'Property Condemned', onto the threshold, and to the door. It was padlocked; I rattled it in frustration. I stepped back and looked at the windows...Perhaps...I turned to see if I might be observed by any passersby or neighbors. I looked at my watch, 8:00 PM. Rude to be late, I thought...Then, a click at the door. I whirled with manic anticipation, undignified for one wrought by so many grotesque affaires de coeur. Yet, one more roll of the dice, spin of the wheel, turn of the card was worth it. The lock had fallen open...I leapt onto the porch, paused to take a breath, and adjust my spectacles, ready to feast my eyes on the sweet delicacies of her ambrosia lips, her gently sloping glabella, accented by languishing eyelids, waiting to be flung open by my titillating lingual resuscitation, as she would burst into a Verdi aria...O yes, there is a goddess...

The interior was dank and musty, as the mist had invaded with its translucent shrouding of recesses and protrusions, animated by its shifting density. I wandered aimlessly, on creaking floors, through vacant rooms, conjuring forms I thought were real, my cell phone flashlight, the only illumination...As I rounded my way back to the entry, at the foot of the staircase, I heard the merriment and gaiety of distant voices, and one that rose above the rest, and though I couldn't make out the words, there was a cadence and timbre of eloquence I had often imagined. I looked up; too dark to see the top. My right foot rose and planted on the first tread. I hesitated, another clash with reason, what are you doing tilting at windmills? Then I remembered a retort from the Don, "*...too much sanity may be madness.*" I ascended the stairs...

When I reached the top, there were three rooms behind closed doors. I glanced at them, one by one, and at the third, a light glowing and fading, in the crack at the foot of this portentous portal; a vagrant seeking shelter from the elements, of course...I moved to the door and knocked, "Hello, anybody..." It clicked open...I was either being guided to my destiny, or led to my doom. Slightly ajar, I slowly coaxed it, wider and wider, waiting for a light to flash on, and a hearty, "Surprise!" to shatter this foregone delusion; it was, after all, my astrological sun rising today, but naught, but the warm breath of a breeze. It was, I felt, a very special room on the second floor. There was a different scent here than the musty odors which permeated the rest of the house, a floral wafting, like the trail of an Elysian sigh across a meadow, as if someone kept passing through, in and out of reach.

An old antique had survived in excellent condition, a writing desk from its design, and the number of suggestive ink stains only added to its character. What secrets it held, I could not imagine, this classic oak *escritoire*, decorated with aesthetic scars, and wearing the oils and sighs of eight generations. The dust had been priming to be recognized for years, so I traced the outline of a heart into its drifting unconscious...I bristled to know why. Something I saw or heard before I arrived? That couple kissing goodbye on the doorstep? That song on my music app? Or maybe I was on the verge of a lucid dream...

I bent down to pull out the top right hand drawer. And, therein, was an old black and white photograph, in a burnished black and gold frame, covered by a thin layer of glass, and a dusting of dust. I picked it up, and *She* looked back at me, with an immortal gaze, torching my soul, this woman, this bewitching Muse, this posing paragon posturing precise preludes punctuating predatory predilections presaging presumptive provocations toward perhaps, who was seductively demure.

The attraction was undeniable. She was poised on a period Savonarola, her right forearm resting on a sitting table covered by a silk embroidered cloth. She wore a Bristol taffeta suit. Her left arm was akimbo, with her hand resting in her lap, as it cradled a wildflower. Her look was slightly tilted to her right, which demanded she reset her focus to center, and her full lips betrayed the hint of a smile, her Mona Lisa smile, that unfinished resolution of a single note about to rise or fall, and I coveted the torment of this moment, her waiting patiently to be touched where she had never been touched before, and, in my hubris, I chose me to effect that intimacy. Her hair was pulled back across her ears and bundled at the back. There was no depth

of field from which to construct a familiar environment, only the glint of recognition in her piercing dark eyes.

My imagination grasped for some sacred geometry in the sculptured space carved by her hungry innocence: Alabaster skin with slight traces of bluish veins in her hands, her neck, and her pointed breasts, fevered by that forbidden rite of freedom, and I wanted to whisper in her ear, to shatter the stark pretense of propriety, “You drag me into dark and blind me with light!”

Enraptured, like emerging from Plato's cave and seeing the world for the first time, I wanted to hear her voice, her laugh, feel the torsioned grip of her arms and legs, taste the fired wetness of her skin, make her gasp for breath against the envy of death.

Who was she? I turned over the picture frame, maybe a note, a name written on the back of the photograph. I jerkily removed the leather backing, and a slip of paper wobbled to the floor. I ignored it, at first, and scanned the back of the photo, nothing. Fixated, I held it up to the light; I rubbed my thumb across it, searching for any indentation or scribing...The piece of paper...I put the frame down on the desktop and dropped to the floor. It was a brittle sepia. I quickened and surrendered. Do I really want to know? What? Anything? Just receive the gift of now, without trying to cause-and-effect it, I redressed. But I wanted to know ‘everything’. It was of a laid weight and texture, torn and folded over on itself. I opened the two sheets. It measured about 8'x5', ink written and faded, it was cursive, bold and sweeping in its execution. My goddess, she was on the page, as well.

It was a poem. I read it over and over, searching for some message, some clue. But I know so little about poetry, and why did I find this, here, now, in a piece of furniture, in a broken down house about to be razed? I wrangled to believe in synchronicity, destiny, kismet, but I knew better. Coincidence, of course, besides, where else would one find an old photograph with an obscure writing? But aren't coincidence and synchronicity arbitrary references to the same phenomenon? I have no idea of its value, as a poem, or a historical artifact. I only know it brought me closer to her than to anyone I've ever known, this woman lost in time. I share it now in the hope that it may elicit some substance, some shadow of how I felt...

COME SPRING

She wore a ribbon white,
Around her ankle fair...
She said it was a promise
Her soul was bound to bear...

She wore a ribbon yellow,
To catch her flaxen hair...
She said it was to complement
The boldness of her stare...

She wore a ribbon red
That set her heart aflame,
And thereby offer labyrinth
To any man who dare...

She wears a ribbon light,
To weave her Love so rare,
And cast his world adrift,
With kiss unbowed to share...

It was dated, April, 1872, and signed 'E of A'. As I said, I judge her poetry by how it spoke to me. I leave it to more educated minds to assess its artistic value.

I tried tracing the ownership of the desk to see if that would lead to a clue about her identity, but to no avail. I started making copies of her picture to send to selected libraries, museums, and literature professors. But I now stand in the light of day, and I will not move beyond this self-indulgent account. I can only speculate among common narratives as to the meaning of such an encounter

It was a fleeting suspension of identity due to the re-synchronization of scalar vector points along earth's meridians, a *déjà vu*. When Kippy Suivus had explained this to me before, I asked from which wing-nut cult leader had she heard it? It was based on scientific evidence, she scolded. I wanted to do more research on the subject. So the next time I was emboldened by that grappling force of desperado justice, I

gave her a call. Maybe she'd see my re-calibrated interest as further proof of my changeling vibrational persona.

"I was just about to call you," she said. "That whole Kirlian frequency thing was a scam. It's our stars that count, after all."

"You mean astrology?" I twinkled.

"Esoteric Astrology!" She eclipsed.

It was then I knew I had her. "Great...You know I've been thinking about that role playing dynamic you like so much."

"Really?" she cooed. "What did you have in mind?"

"I was wondering if you'd be open to wearing some nineteenth century clothes, pinning up your hair, and changing your name to something that begins with an E."

"Wow," she said, "I'm into it. What name would you like?"

"If you have to ask, you'll never know," I replied. And I dropped the call...

In truth, I have not been as cavalier about this experience as it seems. The older Chinese proverb said, "A picture is worth ten thousand words." no doubt diminished, along with our powers of observation. Some pictures are worth more, some less, some are worth no words, and some are beyond words. So I would say it's a relatively valid proverb, and relativity is currently the wave and point of things. I have grown more comfortable believing I have a fateful rendezvous with this mysterious lady, to the extent of projecting that I've seen her before, recently, in fact, the checkout counter at the patisserie, striding passed each other at the airport, crossing the street in front of my stopped car, watching her walk by outside the restaurant where I was having lunch, and, oh yes, that elegant pair of hands, I admired, pulling a book from the library stacks...I've heard, if you don't act on your impulse in the first five seconds, you'll forfeit the opportunity, and I have vowed never to do so again. I have begun writing poetry to her, as it is. Every day, I take out that photograph and contemplate E's eternal gaze, and that my words can actually move her, as hers have moved me.

Then I remembered, stories like this have been told before, as if they were an attractive cipher to satisfy one's desire, which in the context of reality means: 'You're looking for what you want, because you don't see

what you have.' Such clever sayings, we fashion, to diffuse our dreams. But it's not so much that our dreams are unattainable, as that we are too ready to dismiss them for their irrational structure. As science tells us, eventually everything will be measured with the proper instrument. That may be...As it may be that the proper instrument is not for measuring...