

Salvatore Difalco

I'm Doing All Right, Jack

Let me get this straight. My exclusion will stand for atmospheric reasons. We have yet to disclose all the evidence, we have yet to state our case, we have yet to make our beds. All this pointing plays with my head. I look in the mirror and my face resembles a bowl of fruit. How did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this? The feeling moves on and encounters another disciple of the truth: a man wearing a pale blue seersucker suit. Hello, sir. We don't want to confront our greatest fears out in the open. Better women and men led better lives because they chose the path of least resistance. When I came to the fork in my existential road, I took the dark way, the barking dog way, the crow's way, the serpentine path that led to the ominous castle enshrouded in cloud. Yes, we did drugs back in the day, but no one told us what the consequences would be, say, twenty years down the road. Well, I'm here to attest to the damage caused by all that experimentation. My mind is essentially a Jackson Pollock. When people ask how I get by, how I survive, how I keep from getting locked up in jail or a sanitarium, I respond with a dumbshow of strangling a person in a standing position. This way the message becomes the messenger, or somehow the message enters both the mind of the strangulation candidate and the observer. The strangulation candidate has one of those faces that make you despise the human race. It is the arrogant mouth most of all, the stupid eyes, the implied enormous and grotesque self-regard. Do you know why I am strangling you? I ask. Of course, words are like the teeth in his mouth and will only exit with great force. I recall a time when I could actually tell a story and not burst into hysterical laughter.

Johnny Garcia's Two Hallucinations

No mushroom king, the woods sighed around him as the color red began to glow wherever it existed. We had planned to sit around a fire and exchange prophecies, but Garcia looked pale and his eyes reminded me of a dog turning away from a bear as it closed the space between them, intent on bloodshed. Was it a bear he spotted in the woods, or Bigfoot? We laughed and laughed. We laughed and laughed. He cried. The funny thing is, no one knew how far he had fallen into the abyss between his ears, no one could read it in his darting red eyes, or see it in the spittle of his lips, black paint drips in the moonlight, the rest of his face an ivory mask. The witness speaks from the comfort of unchallenged memory, regarding his recollection as true as any other, though most of the others had ceased to exist within the parameters of his consciousness. We ebb and flow as watery beings pin our grimaces to the ground, when what we really desire is the fire of stars, the galactic inferno, caressing us with promises of warmth and infinity. Garcia saw the universe as a grimacing clown, mocking his very existence, jabbing him in the ribs, spitting in his face. Hence he sprinted into the woods, naked and screaming as though someone had told him the truth about the end of his world.

Things About Me That You Find Annoying

Challenge me to a duel. I will arrive early at the designated site. I will bring a man in a black suit and white cotton gloves with a leather case housing the weapons. And we will do our thing. Call me a madman for imagining I can continue spouting nonsense and yet find ears big enough to hear what I am saying if not understand it. Sometimes I don't understand why I am what I am, but I didn't fish through a hat and draw a piece of paper with my function or my detailed back story written on it. A waste of words. We be what we can be, I heard a man say in the subway the other day, older dude wearing a black beret that I wanted to knock off his head, just one of those things, just one of those things.

Hot Wheels

Costume me appropriately lest I offend the bantam pukes surrounding the house of dreams I built in my dreams and actualized with sentence by sentence construction. They wear Boy Wonder Robin masks and whine like little monkey sirens. You guys, you guys. Everyone's a pretender. Everyone owns a boat. I own seven vehicles because I liken them to toys I had as a boy. I never drive these toys, I play with them ...

The Patient In Recovery

Looks bemused. You asked for a summary. I glanced at the aluminum clipboard and noted the notes written down with an arched right brow and a hooked finger encircling my lips intelligently. You're not dreaming, sir, the anesthetic has yet to wear off completely. If you can hear my voice, that is to say if you can understand what I'm saying, nod. Nod only once, sir. Nod only once, sir. Can you sit up, of course you cannot. I could jump on your chest now without your defensive intervention. Not that I will do that, but admittedly the temptation is all too real and almost impossible to resist given your vulnerable condition and the blank look on your face. We fly in our minds, all over the fucking place. No one can see where we're going, no one can look inside and point out the amphibologies stretched between our synapses and offering corrupted fruit as a harvest. In time, my reasonableness will diminish and perhaps I will wear a new set of teeth, sharper and more visually disturbing than my own. I dream of this. I dream of this more than I wish to admit. Just as I am loathe to admit I listen to atonal music almost exclusively. Harmony and melody can suck my dick as far as I'm concerned. How artificial, how positively reeking of artifice. I will not show you a false face, sir. I will not shake your hand with the fingers of my other hand crossed behind my back. I will, if time permits it, guide you out of the fog and slide you gently into a fugue state so I can manipulate you further.

Perplexity

One two three four the window opens and I am able to access all the information about myself that exists in the world at the current moment. We're talking about only so many entries. I have lived in the shadows most of my life and refuse to enter into the light unless I have guarantees that no one is willing to offer, hence I remain in the shadows sucking dank air for sustenance, drinking dirty water, eating my own dander. You're being dramatic again, says the little voice in my head that I've grown to despise. How do I silence it? I recently asked a friend who'd been through years of therapy. He told me I needed to find a hobby. The more tedious, the better, he said. Tedium will save your soul, contrary to what the industrious claim in their quest for nothing. For in the end, all their efforts amount to zilch when stretched out over a galactic time line. Meanwhile, someone's mother hangs laundry on a backyard clothesline even though the day is gray and rain more likely to fall than not. Her Betty Crocker garb and vapid smile possibly fool some people, but I see madness written large in her visage. What she wants, what she wants, we can only guess. Maybe she wants to stab the guy who told her she would be cast in a more progressive production, where she could ditch the apron and remove her dentures. Be pliable, friends, let your imagination enjoy the bitter but musical blooms of the sickened tree.

Violenza

We agreed to bury the hatchet, but my foe didn't really understand what that meant. Suspend the violence, I explained. He told me in no uncertain terms that violence is why he lived, violence is what brought him meaning and joy. A good dust up, a shoot out, a knife fight, a ram-like butting of heads, this was his jam. I threatened to kill him quickly if he did not agree to the terms. What were the terms? he demanded to know. Lay down your weapons and empty your soul of rage and hatred, I said. He said he didn't hate me. I asked how that was possible. I don't hate you, he insisted. I just want to fuck you up. But why? I wondered. We had done so much damage to each other, it seemed futile to continue. I don't hate you, he repeated, but we have unfinished business. So I have to kill you? I asked. He said yes, that was the only way, unless he killed me first of course. We stood there facing each other like two close-talking gunslingers about to throw down. My question, and it is a simple one: would someone from the nineteenth century understand me? I mean, my words, my style, my vibe? What about people in the twenty-first century? Do they understand me? With that I buried the hatchet in my foe's forehead and his puzzled expression was worth a thousand slurs.

Ear Beating

Gabby kept talking. I don't know what she was going on about, but I was losing my shit. My ears burned, my stomach fluttered. The weather helped in no way with its intermittent rain and woolly clouds and evil people waving spear-tipped umbrellas around like a bunch of savages. Nobody does this better perhaps than the people who brought you eider down, but in some sense all these things were possible because people enjoyed being assholes, it was in their nature and nothing anyone attempted could change that. And it's easy to get the tenses wrong when you're thinking in the abstract, when your thoughts form a kind of noise reduction device to block out the horrible run on sentence spitting out of Gabby's mouth. Are you listening? Are you listening?

And Then There Was You

Sometimes I have to stop and look around me to make sure I have not deviated from my path. As my mind wanders, so too my legs. When you lose yourself in thought, it's easy to travel around the city and have people stare at you like they think they know what is going on in your mind, or at least they can guess. I am talking about the ordinary citizens of this city, the masses who shuffle around like cleaned-up zombies, scarcely able to articulate a normal civilized greeting. O pain of stomach! O shredding nerves! O loss of patience with my fellow zombies! When we finally achieve what we had blueprinted, will we stop shuffling around? Will we become fuller and yet lighter of foot? Will we consume the air like savages of fire? All is best when all is lost—ask the believers who will know when they meet their messiah.

The Tenth One

Promised less action than the first nine, but more density as the plaque and the cataracts worked overtime to layer their sweets. When he awakens next morning, the hand to the heart can only mean one thing: the moment has come for dancing. Raises the other arm and sways. Put your hand in the air like you just don't care if it gets hacked off. The other hand keep pressed to the chest as the heart kicks like a spicy fetus. Everyone, everyone, come and see what has happened in the smoky anteroom. Wear your pointed hats, please, or confirm your obligations to opposing religions—aye, let it not be so. But if it's so, tolerance is a word bandied about promiscuously in this era and we introduce it in tux and tails with an ebony walking stick, tap tap. Deep bow and then the Royal Canadians play a little swing tune that's gets everybody wearing old dark clothes and looking at least ten years older than they actually are. I say we can enjoy the company of people we abhor about as much as a punch in the nose and then at least we enjoy the bleeding for whatever it's worth. I say we punch our way out of this stinking paper tent. I say we didn't have to make nine mistakes and then still make a tenth.