

The Millennial Dream

By Lianda Burrows

“For the purposes of communication we’ve invented something called language which is hugely dependent on the construction of a stable self. The only true thing is silence. Unless you want me to be mute, know that I acknowledge the fundamental meaninglessness of everything I’m saying and let me continue.”

“Go on,” you say, smiling.

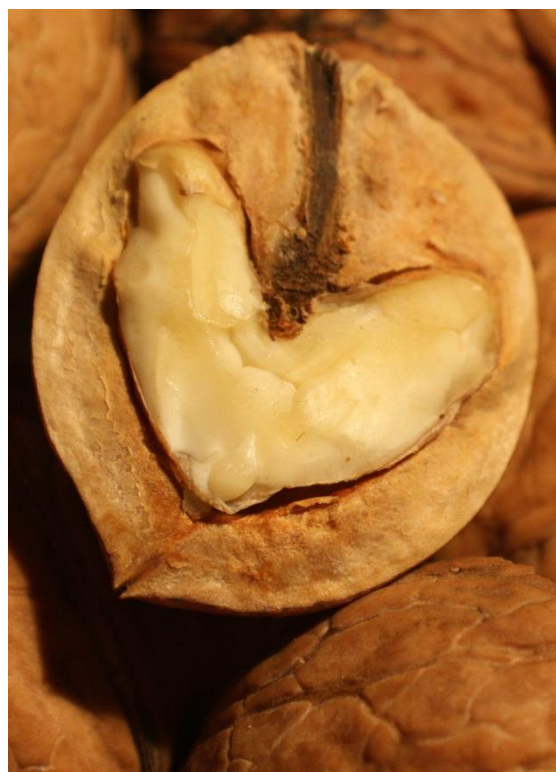
You arrogant shit, I think to myself. Why do I date these arseholes?

The rewards for wellness are abstract and hollow sounding. It is, in a sense, sheer vitality and the options it affords us. It is the absence of prolonged, unabating physical suffering. It is sleeping and the requisite wellness we feel when rested. It is having breath.

It is having my mind back. The ability to be engaged or disengaged. The capacity to rest. Ignore. Enquire. Digress. It is the fluid mechanics of daily living.

I abandoned myself. In order to be well, I abandoned myself. I find it hard to articulate what this means. I had to abandon myself. I had to become inconsequential, I had to see myself as the small, insignificant voice I was.

I was a disembodied mass whose skin felt warm when the sun hit it. Whose body felt



weightless in water.

I returned to myself, in time, but abandon myself still in pursuit of life.

You do not know this. You told me you loved how I held eye contact with you. But I was not there. I had abandoned myself to you, I suppose, or to the experience. There is always a voice that needs to be kept at bay. I am a body on top of another body. He is warm. He smells like summer. What he thinks is nothing. It is no business of mine. Or the universe. It is more of an abstraction than the body, which is an

abstraction still. It doesn't matter. You will both be dead soon enough. There is a light breaking through behind your curtains, which are drawn against the wall.

He will leave me. And return. And leave again. I will be inconsolable for days where in my youth it would have been months or years. And in a few months I'll wonder how you're doing. Did you get the job with kids? Or the flying service?

Walking home hand in hand one night a homeless stranger told me to take care of you. His brother. Ha. You assured him I was a good girl. But what of the fact that you don't—and never will—need my care? Or want it. The pants here are yours. They're his. He's got my number. I'm the one trailing, flailing about in the wilderness, unable to keep up. Not him. Strident man. Serious man. Serious opinions. Except about art because you hate art—and books, they're all shit. Regardless of what your sister thinks.

You are grand at trivia. You've memorized all fifty odd states. You invited me out and said later that your gym buddies wanted to come. I couldn't work out a way to take that as a sign of adulation. So I didn't. It joined the patchwork I was working on, beautifully ornate in my head—with artisanal tassels—entitled “signs of disinterest.”

Ah, but to hope. I hoped a bit more. Then I asked.

“Why did you wait until after we had sex to ask me this?”

“Well, I wanted to have sex. And I thought you'd be more honest after you came. You told me you were.”

“Damn it.”

“I'll leave.”

“Don't leave.”

“It's fine.”

“No. Have dinner with me first.”

“Okay.”

I hate eating out. A further concession. You bought me dinner. Congratulations. It's seen a renewed interest in walnuts and goats cheese in my life. We both drank diet soda which struck me as weird. You were a nice body to be in my body. To lie with on the grass in the sun while you apportioned the muscles in my back. I could have loved you, but I didn't.

I almost loved another man and you reminded me of him. To be fair—well, not fair—I think I possibly did love this man. A bit. I was well on my way. But I don't love like I used to. I don't let go and jump in. I think, “Oh God, this is a bad sign,” and proceed from there.

This other man, we'll call him V1. I refer to him as V1 and to you as V2 because it is confusing otherwise. I helped him pack a suitcase to leave me. I told him to unpack it to check for the keys he'd lost. He sent me a photo of the keys when he arrived home and said, “you should have made me check.” I was too polite to insist.

Jesus Christ—I have to interrupt myself here. What the fuck are you doing with these arseholes? Is P just another arsehole? Last night he said that his friend is going overseas, ostensibly to be married. “I said to pick one with sisters and leave the younger one for me.”

You were a nice body to be in my body. To lie with on the grass in the sun while you apportioned the muscles in my back. I could have loved you, but I didn't.

I almost laughed. “Yeah, I don’t think you’re supposed to tell me that.”

“It was just a joke.”

Was it a joke? Am I an idiot? I digress.

No, I’m going back to this point. I said, “Yeah I’d been wondering if you had this side to you and you just confirmed that you do.”

“What side? The chauvinistic prick side?”

“Yep.”

“It was just a joke.”

Oh the jokes I’ve been told. I digress.

I told V1 that I was too polite to presume his idea of having already checked his luggage only included a feeble, cursory glance. It seemed rude. Of course, it occurred to me.

“I’m sorry for being a dick,” you said. You’d been drunk on your last night, “out with the lads,” and I came over in the morning. “I feel so bad, so self-loathing... I hate myself.”

“Well... I still like you?” I softly offered. We both laughed.

But we didn’t talk much after you went home. I missed you. I miss you still. I can treasure the fact, at least, that you “think I’m a brilliant person” but can “only offer friendship” as you will be in the UK indefinitely. “I know this probably isn’t nice to hear...”

“Dude,” I interrupted. “It’s fine. I’d assumed

as much months ago. I kept in contact because it seemed odd and slightly jarring to simply... remove myself.”

“Yes, me too.”

I wasn’t upset by your message. I was angered by your presumption. I thought you were too short for me. I found you simpering and sickly sweet at times. I congratulated myself for finally liking “a nice guy.” I—regrettably—actually had a boyfriend but felt spurned. So I turned to you. And you—now you come back to me, still with my boyfriend, and tell me that you’re not going to marry me and you know it’s going to be difficult to hear? Jesus Christ. I am a caricature of a person.

I would like to be wanted unambiguously. I would like to want someone unambiguously. Preferably, both of these things happen at the same time.

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