

Four More

Harried Tales

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*“One shouldn’t knock
another person’s hustle.”*

~ Eugene Robinson

The City

Summer 2014 I called a guy I'd met at Julie's house in Aix.

Julie was a theatre director, who'd seen me in a play a young Irish guy had put on, and then she cast me in the Barrie plays she put on.

Barrie is the Peter Pan guy.

Julie's husband is or was Jean-Michel Denis, a minor French painter of renown.

Look, I'm not a fan of pastel.

And Jean-Michel had a friend. I don't even remember the moron's name. We'll call him Serge.

Anyway Serge was a boozier and a guy who painted too and he lived at the top of a mountain in the French Alps. A rich person lived there and Serge basically cared for the place, the farm, the horse, whatever.

I said, ok, I'll call you, maybe I'll go there to give you a hand sometime. And I was going nuts in the Montpellier heat, plus my writing was drying up, a lot of frustration was setting in. I was drinking and holding on. Tension was unnecessarily high.

Plus, Serge tells me he has a seventeen year old daughter. Like, boasting that she's hot and I should meet her.

I definitely wanted to get on that.

So the guy says, come to Aix. I'll pick you up there. I get to fucking Aix. I'm going insane but holding on, I really need to get out of the city. He's four hours late.

I did what I could but I found a pub and tanked five pints. Shamelessly. I was gonna fork hay the next three days, get in shape a little again. Meet the daughter.

The motherfucker shows up, drinking wine. Tells me we're going to Marseille.

Dead south, to a giant city, instead of north.

I'm not even gonna begin exposing his idiotic reasons for that.

We get to Marseille, my buzz is still on but I know it's not a good situation. There's going to be a gap between the Alps and when I come down, around this guy.

He finally forces some old bitch he knows to let us sleep at hers but first we gotta go hang with her on the beach.

On the beach I can't stand their bla bla. I get more booze and find a Russian girl with her Mom. There and then I just flat out hit on the girl. Her Mom, there, telling me: you know, she's young. I give zero shits. Things were not going to end well.

Finally at this person's place we're eating something on the balcony and we start having a discussion about Soulages, the painter.

Serge says Soulages is shit, not even a painter. I love Soulages more than life itself. I tell Serge to chill the fuck out.

They start flipping out. She starts claiming that I'm being threatening. I hate her and I crush the empty beer can I'm holding (I slam it down on the counter, to make the dumb words coming out of her mouth stop).

I realize the situation is irreparable. I have no interest in reassuring them, absolutely none in apologizing: I pick up my backpack, I'm in flip-flops, as they watch in disbelief because we're so far away in the suburbs and it's the middle of the night.

So much had come so close.

I finally make it to the outskirts of Marseille. There's a pig station; I figure if I sleep close to there I'll be safe. In the bushes when I try to sleep there are hoards of rats.

Marseille has the biggest population of rats in the world. Slum guys check me out. I'm pretty sure they feel my vibe. Nobody approaches me.

Four hours later I force myself into the train station. Marseille St-Charles at night is an underground citadel. There's a market, gangs, activity all over. No police.

I catch the first train back to Montpellier.

I'm hammering away at my door. I let Ger use my flat.

Geraint is a miniature Welshman, used to be a drummer in a band that had a hit in the 90s, then a number of his years are unaccounted for, apparently spent in Israel. He's a great guy. Anyway I'm exhausted, hammering away, screaming because I'm convinced he's passed out and just being an asshole, not opening.

Ends up he's already at The Beehive, pub where he works at, cleaning up.

I make it back from The Beehive with my keys.

Two days later I sent out some text messages to Serge, telling him I was gonna come get him.

He'd basically insulted me over a text message so I told him I was gonna kick his old ass.

He said he had a gun (bla bla bla). Pretty shameful argument between adults.

When rehearsals for the play are back on I'm a bit worried I'll have to explain myself.

But if Julie knew of anything, she showed no sign.

I did well in the play.

Yuri, I may have told you this story, already. My brain is not what it used to be. And often times I repeat the same stories. Though there's a long list of stories, distant memories, that pop up now and then (maybe it's like that for everyone).

But I'm pretty sure I never told you this one like this.

Pressure is building again.

There are some things for which my patience is growing thin. The so-called Berlin scene is one of them.

Maybe this time I'll make it over the bridge?

Alignment

My better senses are telling me: Narrator, don't go in that direction. But I've never been one for rules.

When I was in my late thirties I was drinking too much and thinking about sex with underage women.

On my way out from the cinema I hit on two seventeen year-old lesbians. I didn't know they were lesbians. And they certainly weren't lesbians when I was talking to them outside of the cinema and then sitting on a terrasse, on the main square, having a drink with them. But I turned down alcohol, because the next day I was going to a Vipassana meditation. So the one in charge said no and I passed on getting cured by women, choosing galactic connection via sitting that would complicate my life (today I have a minor handicap and that's directly connected to meditation).

The year before that I'd returned overseas, to where I was raised. My father has always been mentally ill, but back then he was still not-mental enough to hire a sixteen year-old with giant tits. He ran a small empty hotel by a road that had once been the metropolis-bound highway.

Being close to a person like that is tough, but he and I always had our little ways. One of the things I'd do is that I'd openly tell him how much I love very very big tits. Talking like that made him uncomfortable, and that would make us smile.

I'm pretty sure he hired that girl, because he told himself, if I hire this girl, maybe my son is going to come home.

So the slut in me sees the slut in her looking at me.

But four days later a friend of mine calls.

Yeah man, I promise, no drinking. The whole thing, where I was, was far from everything. And people like me don't have a car. So he needed to pick me up and bring me back home and of course he didn't care. By four in the morning when I was finally back in my room I had felt the pure anguish, the aloneness and the weight of a loveless life, and I had had one beer.

And the energy of the universe that was aligning fell apart.

Nothing happened.

Hooked

Everything, from my most personal of situations, to the giant hole my surroundings are in, to the world situation, is like a science fiction nightmare. A low-budget thing. It's like I'm in a silent black-and-white film and outside somewhere there's life but I'm inside.

I blame alcohol. Maybe had I never touched a drop of it. Maybe had I got a good run-in (un bon élan).

This feels like a diary entry. Dear Diary, Please go away. Sincerely, .

Maybe the SQDC (the legal weed store) is the solution. Line up cannabis beverages and an array of joints (low, medium, high content).

I feel like a freshly pulled up deep sea bug, getting hauled up onto a deck.

This one time in the South of France I was sprinting through tiny cobblestone streets hollering the hook from an Eric Bibb song (Mandela!). I stopped right in front of a quiet guy, probably on his way home, and I said You think Mandela actually gave a shit about getting freed after twenty fucking years or I don't know how long? The guy gave it some thought, kindly saying Well, maybe he thought about a bigger picture.. what it meant? And I said No. No. He gave ZERO shits, and I ran off hollering louder. This guy from Argentina keeping up with me tried to apologize to the quiet person. All due respect, somebody should have apologized for them.

Fall in Love

Sitting in bed, after having gone to sleep at superstupid o'clock, and then waking up, because at some point the body, mind, soul and energy say *ne*. So sitting in bed, not even 7:30pm, she remembered the worker guy who used to come fuck her when she lived under the sun.

She had met him at a night club – one of those tacky smaller town places. Everyone there letting go: Maybe it had just been her. He had bumped into her, holding his ladyfriend's hand, and they had ground into one another, his lady's friends pulling him away (one of them had insulted and threatened her).

He had fucked her just after closing time, outside. It wasn't love in the conventional sense but she needed him, and she had taken his number. On regular basis he would show up in her room with a low ceiling under the roof.

One day, he told her, you'll see.

You'll meet a guy at the cash register. He'll be short of fourteen cents for his oranges.