

*I wanted to tell her. God knows, I wanted to. Seeing back, I should have but when is the right moment? When, out of this mess is the correct time to sit down and say “Darling, there’s something I need to talk to you about?” or “darling, have you got a second?” When? But that’s not how it works, is it? Life carries on. To act or not to act, that is the bloody question. But when to act, to take a stance, make a decision for better or for worse? There are no answers of course. Just whispers floating infinitely on the sea breeze waiting to be caught by life. Oh, no. Any breeze, all breezes. In the air of our life. And we catch them all right, we catch the echoes. We walk straight into them without even knowing. A tangled web of invisible lines that shape our lives, present, past and future all wrapped into one ball of coherent time. Coherent to whom I wonder?*

“Haven’t you even read *Fahrenheit 451*?” I said as the smoke from my cigarette drifted to the stained ceiling.

“No I haven’t.” The drawn statement started. “What’s that got to do with us anyway?”

“What’s it got to do...Why bother? Why do I bloody bother? Eh?” There was a pause just long enough for me to whisper “forget it: it doesn’t matter,” and stub the remaining half of the fag out.

“No, go on. Tie this one in.”

*I didn’t bother. I sat glumly on the chair just staring at her eyes. Not into them, but at them. There is a difference. To stare at them, is to see their colour and texture. To stare or to look into them, well, that’s where their secrets lie in safety. And they do lie. They also live, bright and glorious in all colours of the rainbow, all moods known to humankind. They assume different identities, different guises depending on the situation and moment. Is there any stability in the eye itself? The eye is the casing, the treasure chest to the bounty. The*

*conjunctiva is the teary handle. It can appear plastic with its shiny surface and sometime glazed effect. But don't be fooled, don't be taken in. The eye is also the chameleon when suited, when threatened or when aroused. Changelings not only exist in the physical but in here, here in the eye. But that's not the true beauty, no. True beauty is deeper, further along the cords. Further along the pathway to thought.*

“I seem to think you love your blasted books more than me.” The arrow was fired.

“Don't be silly, it just that...that...”

“What?” Her head tilted.

“That I need both. I need time to have both. You must understand. When you go out shopping, why do you go?”

“What do you mean ‘why to I go?’ To buy things.”

“Really? Is that why you go? Deep down, is that *why* you go?” It was her turn to pause. Softy she spoke as if someone had wiped her words with cotton wool before they arrived at my ear, “No, no I suppose not. I shop to get away, to escape.”

I nodded slowly, “What else?”

“To think. To be myself, to fill my emptiness.”

*The organ of sight is full of light-sensitive cells. Millions of rods and cones converting millions of images into patterns of nerve impulses. Impulses, impulsively journeying along the branches of blood vessels. Do they think? What makes them controlled? What makes them have choices? Nothing. They venture down, around, up their optic nerve containers oblivious as to their effect. They self-fulfil, they impulsively transmit their messages to their predestined resting place. But what do they see? They see beauty, the true beauty: the thought. Of course they don't see the collective mass of the cerebrum, the lateral ventricle, the fornix, the*

*lentiform nucleus, the occipital lobe, the parietal lobe, the corpus callosum, the caudate nucleus, grey matter, white matter. What does it matter? On and on the labels keep tumbling: hypothalamus, pituitary gland, pons, cerebellum, longitudinal fissure, optic chiasma. No, at the eye, not into.*

“It matters.” The belief as stretched as the voice high. I repeated the reply. No words were said.

“It matters because of what happened between us, what we shared.”

“And what exactly did we share?” The words tender not harsh, struggling to comprehend. I picked up another cigarette, lit the end and inhaled.

“I loved someone else before you.”

“I know,” came the interruption. I stared for a split second.

“Someone who I loved, or thought I loved.” I saw her eyes flinch slightly.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Please, it’s important.” She smiled a small smile. “I met her at a bus stop. She was a mass of luggage and wore a black hat. The rain had been thin so her skin was not shiny like a gloss photo but matt. Her smile was broad, red and friendly when she asked ‘is this the coach to London?’ I was glad she asked me. Whilst I replied, I noticed how beautiful her nose was: largish, with soft contours and at the top wrinkles formed when she laughed, causing her eyes to narrow and in turn look seductive. I looked into those eyes and witnessed sparks of colour exploding quickly and just as a lull formed another would burst, showering her face with glitter. In time, when I looked at my reflection, I saw traces of her glitter. At first one or two pieces, then as the days, weeks, months disappeared, my reflection shone out to me. The

sparkle was her sparkle although now, now it had changed. The sparkle had become mine.” I inhaled another long, slow drag of smoke and waited. She stared at my eyes.

*Possession can be dangerous. It works both ways of course. Is it a merging of two into one or two into a third? To see the other, an other is not necessarily to actually see them. Their image can be deceitful and fleeting. Whether the deception is purposeful is not revealed on first encounter. It may never be revealed. That is, if you would like to know the truth. Some can live life in the illusion not aware of the trickery. Others are aware and choose the warm, safe denial option. Many are aware but have no choice. That is the language of possession. Saying ‘She’s my wife, he’s my husband, she’s my partner, he’s my lover, my girlfriend, my boyfriend, my mistress, my bit on the side, my soul mate, my, my, my, my!’ The connections people make reverting back upon themselves. The invisible lines no longer drifting on the breeze but themselves possessed and spun around bodies, controlled and trying to bind any other in their reach. Ownership cannot be placed within love. It has to be given freely and is not to bound and gagged, suffocated and crammed with other objects. It has to be separate.*

*And the rest? They are the chosen few. Theirs is the truth: what you see is alive. The other image is the truth. Not only an image but a real being: the other to form the solidity of the third.*

“This girl. She was the one you left for me, right?” The words sounded gentle and the intention behind those words were probing.

I did not answer straight away; instead I chose to hear her silence. When the silence transformed itself in my head I nodded and said, “Yes, yes it was.” I swallowed and seeing her eyes wanted more, continued.

“I loved her or thought it was love but when I met you my whole concept of love crumbled. The more I was with you, love re-wove itself and at first surrounded us like a warm blanket but then, then it became us. I was you and you were me. I wanted you in my blood, under my skin, my flesh, my thoughts. And then you were. And I was happy.”

“And now?”

“And now? Now I know we are inseparable, even if this thing rips us apart. I know and you know. The stars at night know.”

“Do you still love her, still in love with her?”

“No, no I don’t, I’m not.” She relaxed.

“Then what? What are you trying to tell me?”

*The view from beyond the Earth’s atmosphere is light. All-powerful, all fulfilling. Light takes eight point three minutes to touch the Earth from the Sun. The journey from soil to the stars is four point two light years. To reach the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, the time travelling would be five million years. The other way takes no time for time is suspended. It is not slowed or quickened but paused whilst the readjustment occurs, the new alignment one has within the ball of time. Once experienced you are never the same again, never. The stars touch your soul and speak the ancient language of acceptance. For a second and at the same moment for eternity, your whole spirit hovers above all. Your knowledge is complete. You know. And what you know can not be spoken in language, not words. It is within you, living, breathing and solid. The answer is why you exist in the flesh, why you start to descend, why the stars know you have to return and guide your soul to the temporary. All the while you know the decision is right, you know the stars are not ready for you and you not ready for them. The knowledge inside knows a star is reserved for two souls. One and one make three.*

“When I first met you, love was dormant. Patiently waiting but passionately fuelled. My head and heart were under an illusion of love. I could not feel the true love already there. The love I had for her was still real, still valuable to me but somehow we both knew the illusion would slip silently away. When it did, the clarity of love awoke and began to fill the spaces left. The joy quietly built until eventually love’s hands gently lifted my eyelids, softly touched my heart and there you were: the star I was not ready for. The unique journey continued and we had joined together. I realised love’s hands were your hands.”

Her head was tilted down and her eyes appeared glazed and distant. I exhaled more smoke. We sat. The silence was calm and she was beautifully still as if inside a dawn of peace broke or a red, fiery sun had set.

“And is it still like that?”

“Yes. And you?”

“Yes, yes it is.” Her eyes remained distant.

“But what?”

“It’s when it’s just the two of us. When we are alone and the world is shut out. It is. But when I return, the emptiness returns.”

“I’ll wait for you.”

“That’s unfair, I can’t ask you to do that.”

“You’re not asking, I want to.” She smiled but kept quiet. “Besides it’s written in the stars!”

“And you’re not in reality!”

“I am. I’m in *our* reality.”

“And what exactly is that reality?” She moved her head slightly and a wide web of light caught a thin band of greying hair at the temples so that the contrast between her dyed red hair and her natural colour appeared greater than the truth.

“Our reality is you and me on the same level, the same wave-length. A reality where we are on the same side, where life is simple and full of love.”

Another smile formed. “Yes, that is our reality but not the real reality. I wish it was. I’ve wished for a relationship like this one all my life. As a girl, I longed for my shining Knight to sweep me away from all the drudgery, from all the crap, from my father but nobody did. I was rescued from one abuse to the next. When an adult I still, at the back of my mind, held onto that dream. We would live in a far distant kingdom - as equals of course- I, a Lady and you, you the Knight. Well, with you we’ve managed to travel through the danger, through the forest and we’ve found our land, we’ve uncovered our castle of happiness. But it’s a dream. One thing is always wrong. Either the situation or the timing and in many cases the wrong person. Once a foot is laid on the wrong path, a wild vine ties it to that path. The danger is not knowing if the path is the right one for you. Sometimes you can wriggle out and set yourself free, free to step on another road but other times the vine wraps tight, holding your foot to the spot. There are few warnings and you start to believe it’s okay, it doesn’t matter because you still have the other foot free but before long the vine begins to tighten and cut into your flesh drawing blood, so you put your other foot onto the same path for extra stability but that’s the error, the fatal mistake. As quick as a key locking a lock, another vine has snapped around your other foot. This time the vine starts to crawl, crawl up your leg, gripping harder and harder. Your hands become useless as several more vines lash in and you’re trapped, you are trapped.

“But with you, you saw my state and cut through my vines, strongly and with stealth. You lifted me up and set me free again, my girlish dream began to breathe. Not only hacking away my vines but the world’s, so eventually I could feel the sunlight streaming from the stars and caress my spirit. I could actually see, and hear the sky, the openness. You gave me time, which so many failed to do, to be me, be myself without any pressure. You let me rest and listen to the silence that we created, if I wanted. And I did want to.

“Then, when the vines slid back, at night when we were apart, they fixed me down again, refusing to let go until you awoke. I had no strength left to fight the battle, so many years. Sometimes it was easier that way, to drop and be covered by the thick, hairy arms, which bound and suffocated me, claiming me as his possession. The longer I was covered the harder air could find its way to my lungs. The dream almost squeezed from me and no sign of a new path. The vines covered me to such an extent, you thought I had ventured from you. You believed I had carried on towards the castle without you or I had turned back and chosen another route with another Knight waiting but all the while I was buried by my past. You were so close but could not see me. You still wait, trying to fathom where I went, which path I picked. Do you know where I am?”

*The planet Venus is almost identical to the Earth in size. Venus’s character is completely in contrast for being the nearest place to hell in the solar system. The surface is a torrid, volcanic, continuous flow of lava. The planet’s diameter is twelve thousand, one hundred and three kilometres and is an average distance from the Sun of one hundred and eight million, two hundred thousand kilometres. Venus has no known moons and circles the Sun in two hundred and twenty-four point seventy days. Its orbital speed around the Sun is thirty-five point zero three kilometres per second. The Earth’s diameter is twelve thousand,*

*seven hundred and fifty-six kilometres and is an average from the Sun of one hundred and forty-nine million, six hundred thousand kilometres. The Earth has one known moon and circles the Sun in three hundred and sixty-five point two-six days. Its orbital speed around the Sun is twenty-nine point seventy-nine kilometres per second. The average distance between the two planets is forty-one million, four hundred thousand kilometre or zero point seven two astronomical units away. The Earth's heart is solid iron reaching a temperature of four thousand Degrees Celsius, encased in an outer core of liquid iron. The atmosphere is seventy-seven per cent nitrogen and twenty-one per cent oxygen, breathable for humans. Venus's core is also iron, encased in a rocky mantle but its atmosphere is mostly unbreathable carbon dioxide and has pressure ninety times that of Earth's. The Seasonal Tilt is twenty-three point five degrees for the Earth's axis to spin once every twenty-four hours. For Venus, its axis is tilted two point seven degrees from the vertical and spins once every two hundred and forty-three days. Venus is the only planet to spin in the opposite direction.*

"I'm not ready to leave." Her eyes looked deep into mine.

"I thought you were, no?"

"No."

"It doesn't matter, we have all the time. I can wait."

"I don't know if I can."

"What?"

"I don't know if this, us, will work any more." Her eyes disconnected from mine.

"It does, it will."

"I don't think I'm ready yet. I've got responsibilities."

"I said I can wait. I know this is right."

“Right for who? Right for you, maybe. I just don’t know any more, the stress is too much.”

The silence came. I tried to smile but found my mouth not responding. She lent towards me and placed her lips upon mine. I could feel the love, my love, seeping back into my body and the emptiness returned. She looked at my eyes and I looked at hers. She lingered a fraction then she was gone. The sound of the catch on the door was greeted by my faint whisper “I just wanted to ask you to leave your husband.” My words met the silence once more.

*The Horsehead Nebula is a massive dark cloud. Dense matter breaks into hundreds of protostars who begin to increase in heat at their hearts. Eventually, each protostar shrinks independently and becomes denser. The nuclear furnace inside this young star erupts creating violent stellar streams of stardust. After the stardust has dispersed the material in the disc surrounding the star will condense and shine brightly and steadily virtually unchanged for millions of years. The shining blue-white hydrogen is burning, counting down the moment of death and begins to swell. The gravitational power in the star’s core fuses helium atoms into carbon and its extended outer layers are cooling and glow red. A core of iron is formed and the stars panic and try fusing its core. The iron burns energy and tricks the star into contracting further still its core. The star shines brighter than a billion Suns as it self explodes. The star has reached supernova. The universe is light: all-powerful and all fulfilling.*