

## Sunken Relationships

I was slouched on my kitchen chair, staring at the door and listening to my prisoner snore. Outside the window, Mexican cicadas were humming. The air was hot and dry and my shirt felt like glued to my chest. It was 5 o' clock in the morning.

He slept like a lamb. My mind didn't allow *me* to sleep. For the last twenty-eight hours, since I'd locked him in the darkroom, my head had been reeling with all kinds of unexpected thoughts and emotions. My adrenaline kept me awake non-stop. Simple archetypal hunter-prey relationship, I told myself. I couldn't dare to sleep. I had to guard my prisoner. All other needs were secondary.

On the table before me laid a sealed envelope that made silent exclamation marks erupt in the back of my head. I would have to send it off before the content was finally outdated and something would change significantly.

As I watched a single moth circling the naked lightbulb I imagined what it would be like to trade lives with it. Flying all night around the light. A Mindless creature without worry and pain. I wondered how long it would take it to fly from Mexico City to Houston. My eyelids closed and I slipped away.

Roads through the desert. Trucks. Me, buzzing. As I hit the windshield of a postal truck, I suddenly heard a scream. I jumped and found myself standing upright in the middle of the room, glowing alert eyes against the door.

"No! Mother! No, Please!"

As I realized that it was only him I sighed. At least he wasn't enjoying his sleep. I went over to the sink, washed my hands and splashed some water on my face.

"No, mother! Not the cellar! Please!"

With the water still running I yelled: "Jesus! Shut up in there, will ya?" But then I suddenly heard a low thump. I rushed to the door, unlocked the bolt and undid the chain.

In the back of the windowless room the rusty washing machine was humming, a ripped shirt and blood-stained pants tumbling within. Several cables hung blank and loose onto the floor but it still worked and rumbled. As the smell of the old photographic chemicals hit my respiratory systems, I finally spotted him. There he was, lying on the uncarpeted floor, still tied to his chair, the red bulbs lighting a bruised face. His lips moved and I thought I recognized the word: "Mother".

Suddenly his lids jumped open but were closed as rapidly again.

"I don't care if you're listening." I told him. "Listen to me, then! As you may have noticed this is a very unfortunate situation we're in. I'm sincere when I tell you that I don't know what I will do with you now. If we had never met, Lydia would probably still be there. So, even if I know that it's not your fault alone I'm holding you responsible. I can't blame myself. It would kill me."

He didn't open his eyelids again nor move his body in a way that showed attention. I felt like a fool, talking to a sleeping idiot. So I went over to the door again, locked the bolt, re-inserted the chain and was back at my table.

The moth lay unmovingly on the envelope. I wiped it onto the floor and put the letter into my pocket. The post office would open at 6 o'clock. It would take me some time to get there with my insomniac bones, I thought. When I went straight into the Mexican morning, I didn't even bother to turn off the lights

Lydia Fenrich  
Henry-Ford street 3,  
Block B, Apt. 25 c  
1636 Houston

The way he nodded yesterday to my statement about Kurt Cobain's suicide, made me believe that he understood, but his eyes were radiating a hollow ignorance, blank as ever. "Death is the best caretaker" I told him. I just wanted him to understand that life was not for granted, feeling it so painfully myself now, that you left me, Lydia.

Since you went away my thoughts have been circling around very harmful things. And I fear there's only one solution to the whole issue.

I know that every person is a rare species in himself but, this so called friend of mine always denied his multi-coloured craziness, pretending all the time to be free of any awareness concerning the rather unpleasant realities of doubt before bed, the contradictory gaps in between most actions and words. Not my problem? I know, Lydia. I was getting so angry at him sometimes that I became unable to listen to you. But everytime I met him in the bar or on the street, every single moment our paths crossed, critical feelings boiled up in my chest. And now I've done something that will force me to accomplish what I can't.

At the beginning he seemed like a nice kid to spend some time with. Not too interesting, not too annoying either. But as the hours were passing, there was always this nagging silence which spoke of ugly truths. If I weren't writing you this letter right now you probably would have stopped me mid-sentence since you already know how much he pisses me off. I know that you know, Lydia. But I'm in control now.

I tried so often to allude to the various problems of my personal, daily struggle, trying to deal with your absence but he just looked at me over and over as if I were a perfect stranger. When I told him that you were gone, he just nodded, and after a silent eternity, I didn't even expect an answer anymore, his round, passive eyes suddenly popped: "Why?" he asked like a frightened monkey. Since I couldn't tell him the whole truth I said that you left me because of another man which wasn't too far away from reality.

I don't know *what* he would do if he knew that everything was just happening because of him, because of his parrot-talk and ignorant role-playing games. Probably he wouldn't do much, this fool, sucking up my life, making me lose my woman for good.

Trust me now when I say that the personification of our troubles is being dealt with. It's just a matter of time. I probably can forgive you that you broke it off with me, but on the other hand I'm wondering what would've happened if I had just kept my mouth shut from the beginning. I don't know how I could have compromised our relationship over this idiot. And even if I don't like it, now I have to admit that you were right. I don't know why exactly I hate him. There's nothing specifically annoying about him. Maybe it *is* just my problem.

But now it's all too far gone. I don't even expect you to write back. But I still hope that you will have read this far.

This is my last letter, Lydia. From now on I will strictly follow our agreement. I promise I won't write again until I have resolved the whole business.

Yours Eternally  
– Gordon

When I returned from the post office, the sun was setting over my sleepless soul. I noticed that both windows of my Mexican rent-a-shack were black. Hadn't I been sure that I'd left the lights on?

I stumbled up the stairs of the front porch, pushed open the door and stood in the kitchen again. I heard the soothing sound of running water behind me but the lightbulb was dead. As the first rays of sunlight crept over the floor and touched the sink, my head filled with red hot air. Water was pouring off the rim to the floor, spreading under the kitchen table and pooling in the corners.

"Damn it!" I yelled. How could I have missed the fact that the Mexican sink didn't have an overflow hole? I hurried over to the door, unlocked the bolt, undid the chains and stumbled into the darkness.

I felt the water splashing and squishing in my shoes. Inch by inch I moved forward, hoping to find accomplished by accident what I couldn't bear. Maybe he had swallowed too much water in his awkward position. But before I reached him I heard a voice from outside.

"Senor! Senor Struck!" I returned to the kitchen without locking the door. Outside of the window I noticed the silhouette of a man against the blinding sun.

"Ah Senor! Sorry, to wake you! No electricity, I'm sorry!" He sounded like the caretaker. "Unplug all appliances! I fix problem. Uno momento, okey?" he said and vanished before his words could seep through my sleepless mind.

I splashed about on my kitchen floor and finally turned the water off although I knew it was too late. I sat down on my chair, moving my feet off the floor and waiting for electricity.

Between the fingers of spreading sunlight, I noticed a cockroach skittering across the flooded floor. I followed it with my eyes, as suddenly the light bulb above my head came to life again and the cockroach stopped right in the middle of the room. While I felt the smell of roasted chicken tickling my nose, my ears recoiled from a terrifying scream.

One and a half minutes later, under the red bulbs of the darkroom I found all my problems resolved in breathlessness. I could go anywhere I wanted to and do anything I wanted to. Now that he was gone.

Why write Lydia?