

There was a place for me somewhere. I had finally gotten rid of some garbage that had been weighing me down; funny how that garbage seemed to be so light and so lovely for so long and now that I had gotten rid of it how much better I felt. I had gotten used to its weight. I thought it was something every man had to carry around with them, but like many other men before me, like stumbling through a dark room to turn on a light, I realized a woman simply wasn't worth it. She had been very good to me, very good, or so I thought. She encouraged me with my writing, but she diddled around and eventually went and got herself married. Like all things, she went bad. Everything goes bad eventually and women are no exception, although unlike a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk, a woman had the potential to be magnificent while she lasted. In the interest of full disclosure, I'll admit that I wanted her as my own wife. I never told her that. Now I'm glad I didn't, but for a long time I regretted it. Along with that garbage I had also ditched a few regrets, too.

Now, I found myself sitting poolside surrounded by many beautiful women, two of them Romanian, like an angel and a devil, Angelica and Irene. Angelica was pure and you could tell just from looking at her. Her eyes weren't squinted, but rather wide and innocent. Her meekness only added to her beauty, while her sister jumped around, shouting in broken English, wearing a corset, which made her breasts look like two overflowing glasses of milk. While I spoke with Angelica I could hear Irene trying to talk with one of the other girls. They were speaking about methamphetamines.

"How do you like America?" I asked Angelica.

"I like it very much." She said.

Neither of them seemed interested in me, so I decided it was time to use a well practiced trick I had learned. I began speaking about myself and how I was in the process of making a film. Their ears came to attention like a German shepherd, for it was just my luck; they were both actresses. I began working my golden tongue, the only thing of mine that was ever worth a damn. I couldn't work, I couldn't cook, I couldn't fix anything, I had trouble with math, but I could talk, boy. I suppose that's why I became a writer. Writing was just like talking, only you didn't have to listen to anyone talk back, and I liked that. At least I wasn't a liar. I was indeed making a film. I had just found investors for a screenplay I was in the process of writing. I was confident in my work. In fact it was the most confident I'd ever been about something I had written, but it wasn't done yet and the pressure at times was terrorizing. All that didn't matter while I was talking to my European vixens, I might as well have finished it and sold it for a million dollars, the way I talking about it. I told them about a book I had published and the poetry I wrote and it was something I would've want to kill someone else over. Truly, it was a despicable performance.

"How do you come up with your ideas? It must take a great amount of creativity. You are amazing." Angelica said.

"Well, that's something I strive for, so thank you." I said, phony as all hell. The friend of mine who was with me smelled what I was doing like a cheap perfume.

“I wouldn’t go and call him amazing now.” He said.

“It has always been my dream to be *in* something.” Irene said the best she could, searching for the right words with a few thick *uhhs* in between.

“Well, I’m happy to be the man who can make your dream come true.” I said. What a bastard I was, becoming everything I hated. I decided to pour myself another glass of wine and shut up for a while. We began speaking about their move to America. Angelica was twenty-two and now enrolled in the city college. Irene, who had just moved to America the summer before was nineteen and just now entering into her junior year of highschool. I couldn’t help but feel like a pedophile, offering these young, foreign girls a role in my film, as if I were some pornographer. My friend and I kept exchanging glances and smiles at that we were living a good life, pillaging, really. We showed up at a house, ate the food, drank the wine, chatted up the guests and then left with full bellies and even plumper egos. It was a delightful change. Throughout the years of carrying around so much excess garbage I had become a depressive. It wasn’t me. I didn’t believe you had to be miserable to create good art. I didn’t think you had to be anything to create good art, just an artist and the means to stay alive long enough to do something great.

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I had one novel in the can. There were also three poetry collections, not counting my very first one which was a total hunk of crap. When people asked about my novel I told them it was at the publisher, but the truth was I hadn’t submitted it yet. It took me two months to write, nonstop, of course. There was this old record I would play while I wrote it, no words, if there were words I couldn’t concentrate, just beautiful music that put me in the right mood. At the end I dedicated that book to the artist on the record. It only seemed right, for I don’t think I couldn’t have finished it without him. I hadn’t submitted it not because I didn’t think it was good enough, I thought it was damn alright, but I just never got around to it. I know it sounds crazy, but that’s the truth. One day I didn’t have the money for postage, or the other day I didn’t have the right sized envelope and then the next thing I know I get a phone call from a mysterious man about financing a film. That’s how fast it can happen. I often sat around and wondered how the writers before me could pull such amazing acts or such outrageous stunts and not get shoved down with the undesirables. Some writers would go years past their deadlines or demand insane things from their publishers and instead of firing them like the other 99.99999 percent of writers they gave them what they wanted. The publishers must have known they were special people with special capabilities. I only hoped I would be recognized as the same, and what did I do when my phone call came? I hung up. Life doesn’t usually offer up those kinds of phone calls, and I like to think of myself as a realistic man, so I naturally assumed he was full of the shit. That’s the oxymoron about being a modern writer, we bathe ourselves in realism, and we try to open a window to the harsh realities of human existence, but we are the most unrealistic of them all. You have to be if you’re going to be a writer. The odds are against you. You get used to hearing how you can’t do it. I now wish I would have kept track of how many people told me I would fail, so I

could write each one of them a personal letter of gratitude, for it was the hatred I felt for them that gave me the strength to keep trying. When the man called back he informed me that he was a painter named Harry Flynn I had met years before at a poetry reading. He remembered me and my work and was interested in collaborating. The next thing I knew we were off to make a film, now all I had to do was write it.

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I had just gotten a dog, Stanley. My previous dog as a child died on my birthday. My birthday was four days away from Christmas. I would have liked to get another dog on Christmas, but now I realize it would've been too soon. Chip was his name and he was a good dog. Stanley was a good dog, too, but a real pain in the ass. He'd shit and piss everywhere, and bite everything you'd put in front of him. He was like having a baby great white shark for a pet, and I decided while watching him bite my forearm, hand and fingers that he wasn't just trying to bite me, but he was trying to eat me whole. In the evenings when I wrote, he would come and sleep underneath my chair. I felt safe with him under me, and I don't mean that I would feel unsafe without him, but it was a peaceful feeling knowing he was under there. I could count on him being there.

There were multiple outlines and drafts of my screenplay, but nothing concrete. I had the story down, but I needed the fillers. I didn't want *fillers*, you see. I wanted one big beautiful story, from beginning to end. This was my one shot here. You had to make a masterpiece right out of the gate or you're finished. I liked writing at night because it was quiet and I could think, but sometimes the silence got to me and I needed to put on music. I was a music buff, a real know-it-all. I'd overhear people speaking about music and I'd think to myself, *what do they know?* I guess I was kind of a snob in that way. I didn't like people and I thought every last one of them didn't know shit from shoes. I had a talent for memorizing useless information like songwriter's names or the years that films were released and I thought that made me smart. Most people couldn't remember that stuff, but mostly it was because they didn't care. I could tell you every author's name and ten books they'd written from the last thousand years, but none of it mattered. It made me feel good. I had a heightened sense of self-worth and that gave me an edge on my fellow writers. I thought they were all bullshit.

Attitudes like that will get you far in life, but it is at the cost of being a prick. That says a lot about life. I wish there was a place that existed between weak and kind, but there wasn't. You had to be hard and mean to get anywhere. I really wasn't hard and mean, I just pretended. I pretended a lot of things. I pretended I got more girls than I really did. I pretended that I understood all the books I had read. I was really an 80% man. Most of the things I did I understood 80% of. I figured that was a good average seeing that most people had their heads up their asses all the time. I had guts, I knew that. I considered myself intelligent, despite the entire public school system begging to differ with me. I never thought of myself as unusual until people started telling me I was. But the one thing you could say about me was that I was unsure. I'll atone to that. I've never been sure of anything in my life. When I was a child my mother would take me to church

and tell me to pray to God. I hated it. I hated everything about it. It was long. It was boring. It really wasn't a place for children. At the top of the altar was a statue of man dying on a cross. My mother would tell me that that man had died for me. *For me?* I thought. I sensed that she wanted me to be grateful or feel guilty; I'm not sure which one, but I didn't feel either. I felt confused. The older I got the more questions I asked, and I would look at the man on the cross and beg for him to show me that he was real, but he never did. Later I was told that that was the trick, believing without seeing. That never made sense to me, and whenever I found myself hunched on my knees on my bedroom floor asking God to forgive me my sins, I felt silly. I didn't even know what my sins were, and here I was asking an invisible man to forgive them. Now as an adult I envy people who go to sleep at night feeling that they are loved, that God is watching out for them, but I would never trade lonesomeness for ignorance.

The truth is, I just don't know, so I don't claim to know, and I don't pledge allegiance. If I didn't want free, independent thinking I would join the military, and I think if everyone had that attitude there wouldn't be as many deaths as there are. Then again, if there wasn't death this planet would be overpopulated and our already limited resources would be diminished and squandered. I suppose there is reason for everything, even stupidity.

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I write in short bursts, but all throughout the night. I'll usually begin at around ten to midnight, and I won't quit until the sun is well up into the sky, shining down upon the world's flowers, so many of them not belonging to me. I peck at the typewriter and maybe squeeze out a paragraph if I'm lucky and then I push the typewriter away, toward the wall the desk rests against. I get up and walk around, pick up the needle on the record player and then drop it back down, walk over to my bookshelf and pick up a book. I read a few lines, but not too many because I don't want to start sounding like that book when I write. I usually just read the opening sentence, some are boring, normal, but others, wow, they hit you in the face like a twisted boxing glove and you wish you could start with something so brilliant, as if you could just start off that great, the rest would tumble out of you with ease. Then I sit back down and pull the typewriter close to me and begin again. Each time is like a fresh start. I look at each sentence like it was a new book, because who cares about form? Fuck it. I don't need it.

There is a nice woman in my life named Emily. I met Emily at a "get-together" a few years ago. This was still when I was entangled with my previous woman, but I'm sure she was off doing something terrible. Emily looked good to me. I didn't think about sleeping with her right away, but I couldn't help but notice her striking resemblance to one of my favorite female film stars. She never looked at me the entire party. If I were intimidated by people I would've been intimidated by her. She really was quite beautiful, almost like a flower you see from afar, but that's where I planned to leave it, beautiful and afar. The party was ordinary and full of ordinary people. I thought about leaving, I

thought about causing a scene, maybe even stealing something for fun, for the rush of getting away with it, but then Emily approached me and introduced herself.