A Ladies’ Man

Check out that elegant elderly man leaning against a rock by the seaside. Eyes shut, he pretends to be asleep. He has done the same thing at the same spot at least 170 times in the past 60 years. He may seem weak and drowsy but we mustn’t underestimate him. After all, he is a man who’s been vacationing at Kakos Gialos beach for three days every summer, cataloguing the various lady bathers regardless of age, appearance, personality or availability.

This amusing pastime started at a tender age, the result of his boredom during the summer holidays on the island, accompanying his widowed mother. He desperately tried to become an avid reader, but soon found it a very tedious process. He then scavenged for shells. He thought that this “collection” was exciting but soon realized that the shells themselves were absolutely useless to him in the end. In some instances his findings were actually quite alive, as their little gooey tongues peeked out to lick his fingers. He was horrified at the idea that they would stick on him forever or perhaps, over the years, he would eventually be sucked inside their little dwellings. Ultimately, he obtained a little notebook and decided to keep a list of all the ladies that came and went on the beach and lawns around the Hotel Galini.

This past January, his basement flooded and as he was going through his personal notes, he located his first ever entry: “Mrs Alise. 38 years old. Hump. Her boobies are big like melons. She sat with us at lunchtime. When they brought the watermelon, i didn’t want to eat it. Mommy made me eat it. It was veri, veri, veri not tasty at all”.

It was a collection of 60 notebooks of approximately 1.800 entries, around 30 women per summer. The most frequent comments had to do with age, measurements of crucial body parts, level of interaction (or lack thereof) with the subject involved. There were also a handful of recorded occasions that, even to the untrained eye, an imperceptible emotional entanglement was discernible:

“25 years young. Hips as wide as the ocean. I greeted her once but there was no reply. I greeted her again and she turned the other way. On the third greeting she covered herself with a towel. Possibly deaf-mute. Obviously a hairdresser. A proper man – a commoner most likely – might take it upon himself to make her happy. Not I!”

“48 years old. Particularly attractive for her age. I most certainly commented on the fact. Compliments are always welcome. Very intense gaze. Thankfully, our discussion didn’t progress. Enduring such a gaze for too long could prove troublesome. A little affability goes a long way, ladies!”

“18 years old from Peloponnesus. Orange peel skin. I encouraged her to stay away from carbs for a spell, for health reasons. She was obviously touched by my affectionate disposition. She ran crying into the sea. I believe we shared a very vivid moment. A shame it didn’t occur again”.

“35 year-old Italian. Extremely tanned. Much too tall. Dangerously dark-haired. I moved my towel to a safe distance. These sexually liberated Europeans are not trustworthy”.

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“30 year-old literature teacher. Beautiful thick hair. It was a moment of weakness (I was suffering from heat stroke) when I expressed my love to her. Since then, she has been acting strangely, demanding time from my time. I informed her that she was free to find the happiness she deserved. A decent man must firstly and always be a generous one”.

This procedure of documentation slowly developed into a habit that the man couldn’t easily let go. Interrupting his conversations with the ladies became more frequent, as he had to run back to his room and write down their attributes before he forgot. Later, he started taking notes during the interaction, initially by pretending he needed to use the restroom, then by hiding his notebooks under his towel or the table. At some point, his addiction got out of control and the recording took place in the presence of his subject, even concurrently with her narration. A number of ladies were too polite to inquire. Actually they didn’t want to be rude to a gentleman who showed an interest in them. Others, upon seeing his notebook and realizing what was going on, were eager to share their inclinations in the hope of taking up more pages than any other woman. Only one was indignant upon the sight of it. For that reason, (not surprisingly, if you ask me) an entire notebook was dedicated to Theodora.

Miss Theodora was his first and only entry in the summer of ’92, when he was at the delicate—for the standards of this particular man—age of 43. She had approached him first, when she saw him writing (“Charming 35 year-old. Middle class. Puzzled gaze. Why?”) - asking him if he was a poet or just an author. He replied he was a collector. When she asked that he be more specific, the conversation took a very wrong turn: “She is an eruptive personality if not a little scary. She called me a “pervert”, a “dunce”, a “misogynist” (such vocabulary!). She also found my “sick little hobby” quite pathetic (sic) and then went about building a wall between us, bending her umbrella all the way down to the ground”.

He saw her again at supper. He tried to approach her by sending over a pink cocktail that promptly ended on his head. But fortune (originally) favours the bold. Theodora was staying in the room adjacent to his and only a short wall separated their balconies (there is also a three-page analysis about Theodora’s swimsuit but we don’t have the time or space to elaborate here). In the dead of night, as she was enjoying her cigarette, her legs resting on the balcony rail, our hero exclaimed thus: “Theodora, I admire you!” Theodora was so startled that she flew out of her chair sending ashtrays, ash and cigarettes all over the place. She stood in front of him horrified. The man ran inside his room: “Cone-shaped breasts, quite feisty. Upon hearing my voice, she automatically brought her hand to her heart. She breathed irregularly. It was obvious she’d been waiting hours for a sign. And so I obliged. Time for bed now”.

At breakfast, Theodora, holding the bread knife, addressed him directly. “She informed me that she was a hard-working woman and I should leave her alone to enjoy the few vacation days she had left. I promised I would personally take care for her peace and quiet. During her morning sunbathing, I successfully thwarted three ambitious young males, two irritating tennis players, as well as a toddler that was building a sand castle next to her towel”.

Her yells… Her yells had a profound impact on him, especially around his mid-section. They made him feel strong and a wee child at the same time. They made him feel—“Damn it!”—like he was alive! No other woman had ever raised her voice to him. Very few objected openly, even when it pertained to their diet or fashion sense. Who was this well-structured creature that made his own structure crumble all around him? That afternoon, as Theodora strode up towards the Hotel Galini, he realized that all his previous encounters with the fair sex were terribly reminiscent of the rustling of the eucalyptus trees along the shore: respite, stupor, lack of stimulus. When her delicate little hand landed determined and resilient
on his left cheek (he was guarding her room door at the time), our hero was internally shaken from his inguinal canal all the way up to his tear ducts. That’s it. For the first time he felt like “living in my own skin”, “the self I carried around and the self I was, became one”.

Their coexistence proceeded thus, with Theodora having accepted her fate – occasionally addressing him – while he extended his stay as long as he could, in order to write down as much information as possible about this exotic bird of paradise that had so aroused his curiosity. A brief anthology follows:

“Another day and I was extremely generous. I offered her my lips. She turned me down. What comes easy in life is never appreciated. Ungrateful Theodora”.

“All morning I’ve been pretending she doesn’t exist. It must hurt. She hasn’t taken her head out of her book all day. She is clearly avoiding all aspect of reality”.

“She thanked me for setting up her umbrella, even though she could have done it by herself. I placed my hand on her thigh. Her expletive vocabulary towards me was unbelievable. If that’s not passion, then – damn– I don’t know what is!”

Theodora left the island one windy Sunday in July. He was sulking as he stubbornly carried her suitcase to the port. At the last minute, he turned and ran off without saying goodbye, forgetting to give her the letter he had compiled the night before in a feverish state. The final entry about Theodora is dated a month later; a clipping from a phone book (in ’99 he found the nerve to send the letter to this address but the recipient couldn’t be found). After that, in his recordings of women, the word “dull” is quite frequent in his notebooks, whereas his accounts become shorter, more seldom until they stop entirely ten years later.

The elegant elderly man leaning on the rock pretending to be sleeping is still eyeing every lady bather within one kilometer radius. But Theodora is not among them this year either. He persuades himself to cheer up. He will always adore the fair sex. The letter in his pocket can wait another year. Laying on the towel next to him, his 98 year-old mother who had been in a state of trance for some time – was she dead or asleep?—gets up, makes sure he is where he’s supposed to be and goes for a dip.

*
Sea Urchins kiss

Chapter One

A typical Sunday noon. Mom is cooking her hand in some tomato sauce. She sets the table with the other hand but blood messes up the tablecloth; she apologizes. Dad doesn't give a damn; he has a prickly moustache and a new bird shotgun in the shed. He's holding the baby sister in his arms, a cigarette lit between his fingers. The baby sister looks like a pink ball that you're not allowed to kick. You don't know if she's of any use at all, or why your folks bought her from the gypsies. She does smell nice – so what? The other day when you bit her, you caused such mayhem that you were grounded. Your dad is a handsome man who is even handsomer when he gets angry. You love him more than you love your mommy, even though your mommy loves you more than he does. These days, however, it's the baby sister they love most, even if they don't know what she's really good for. Once they give her back, you'll have the big room all to yourself again. You'll buy a fish tank and put in a shark, like the one your dad caught last summer and had it exhibited in the freezer, hacked to pieces. You felt sorry; you wished you could put it back together, slice by slice. Yes, a fish like that but alive. It will scare the pants off people. No one will come into your room again. You'll do whatever you want; dance to girly songs or even cry sometimes.

Owning a shark will make life easier. If you read to it out loud, it will learn Greek and soon you will have read all the same books; you will have someone to talk to, communicate in secret words no other people or fish will understand. You will teach it to stand on its tail fin and invent a hydro-inhalator –a snorkel stuck inside a plastic water bottle– and you will go everywhere together. They will all be so terrified they'll stop putting worms in your hair. They'll carry your school bag for you and when they find a rare sticker, you won't even have to ask. Some days, when you're tired, the shark will keep an eye on mom and dad to prevent them from putting their fingers in sockets and you will be able to sleep soundly throughout the night. If you want a shark to make your life easier, the sister's got to go.

Alas, your sister stays put and instead of a shark they get you a baby turtle. Your mother feeds you the hand-and-tomato stew as her right sleeve hangs limp and empty at her side. You don't like the food, you say nothing and count five more bites. Next Sunday, your mother has no hands left and she feeds you with her mouth. The Sunday after, you stealthily drop the baby turtle in the pot. The shark never arrives, so you can't give it a name, so you name it after you. Your sister doesn't fit in the pot; instead you read to her aloud so that she learns Greek. Her life with you in it will be so much easier than yours.

Many Sundays later, you meet a girl named Ersi and she becomes your shark. Ersi chews iron and blows it out in bubbles. Ersi eats bad guys for breakfast and selfishness for supper. Ersi kisses you with her hands and you grow new skin. She looks at you with her enormous empty mouth and she waits; you take too long. Ersi locks you tight between her steely thighs and two months later she takes the bus back to her village; she has some thinking to do 'cause she's carrying your baby. She loves you but you are both too young and penniless, and of course you're a fag, aren't you?

As Ersi mulls things over, June arrives. A man curses your mom and dad; you get excited. You jump on his motorbike and he takes you swimming to Serifos island. The motorbike is a really bright tacky shade of orange and doesn't go with any helmet. He feeds you meatballs that some Mrs. Margarita made; they are so greasy they make your stomach turn; you say nothing. If he says they're the best in the universe, then it's your problem. He keeps you naked all day on Lia beach as you are slowly roasted alive and when he gets...
bored he throws a peach far into the sea and sends you to fetch it back with your teeth. He loves to watch your ass as you go in and your loyalty as you come out; he owns you. You suck at swimming, you pretend you’re a dolphin while praying until you reach the shore. You’ve stared death in the face, but he takes the peach and languidly throws it back in the bag; dick. You’re almost literally torn in half by your boner. But he folds his towel happily, takes his hat and up the hill he goes. A thirty minute trek through spiky bushes; thorns prick you all over as you climb the mountain like a tortured Jesus. Then back on the motorbike, more chafing; another dusty road, more rocks as you bounce up and down. You have a back problem; he knows, you’ve told him about it; it’s a family affliction – too much bouncing and then you’re crooked for days. He doesn’t care, he’s off. Vroom vroom and roaar roar and swish swish and bump. More bumps as you’re ripping through the ether and you think “fuck that, we’re ripping through the ether now”. When have you ever ripped the ether before? When have you ever been ripped in two? You fall onto the sheets with the salt still on your bodies. Cum and salt, mixed together. As Ersi mulls things over, days will go by; the first days of your life.

It’s mid-June as the orange motorbike heads up Piraeus Avenue. The man who cursed your mom and dad takes you to his place and you oblige as if you don’t have some place else to be. It’s noon in Pangrati. One can melt iron outside. Inside, the fan blows and scatters the man’s papers all around you; the man who cursed your mom and dad, who took you away to Serifos, who ripped through your ether and didn’t bother asking if you wanted to stop by your place first. And as the papers swirl around, words start falling all over you. New, pretty, difficult words; words you’ve always longed for but never knew existed. They seep into your skin; you build a spine out of them; you wear them like Sunday’s best; you become an incomprehensible sentence that is the answer to all of your questions.

You cum in tears. You make an excuse and go out for cigarettes. You get cigarettes but you call Ersi too. You are not sure what you’re going to say, you feel sorry for her and hope she understands before you say anything – your voice has changed, can she tell? She can’t hear you, she’s drunk, dancing, shrieking. Vile music spews out from the receiver, pierces your skull and makes you nervous; you feel violated – enough with the ugliness. She’s dancing and shrieking – she won’t go somewhere quiet. Ersi has crossed over. Ersi is now one of the bad guys. Ersi is the life you hate. You are horrified; your knees buckle and you start shouting. You’re screaming at your nice shark to get rid of “it”, you don’t want it, you’re not going to live the life she wants, damn it, you won’t, she’s smothering you! Ayour shark moves away and the repulsiveness dies down and you hear your voice hitting her mercilessly. Then Ersi, this kind and lovely shark, does something brutal: she shows understanding. She doesn’t cry, nor does she scream; she doesn’t send you packing; she just says "I understand.". Now, half the person you were a little while ago, you return to the man who’s expecting you, waiting to hear you say "I did it", and you say “I did it”.

You see Ersi in your sleep. She’s crying while stirring the contents of a pot with a spoon wedged in her mouth. In it, a baby and a tail fin are simmering. She’s standing on her stumpy end with no bad guys to eat. Suddenly, she forgets how to cook or what she was meant to do in life and you take advantage of her confusion. You devour what you can from the pot. Your stomach is ready to burst; the man sleeping beside you enters you before you even wake and all is calm again. You get back on the motorbike and as you ride down the highways and fly over potholes, a stench fills your nostrils. That foul odor from the room at the end of the corridor, where your mother was hospitalized; the room with the ether tanks. This goes on for days, three to be precise. The final reckoning—or so you believe—comes on the fourth day, three seconds before you’re splattered across the asphalt. At the moment of collision, you think that if Ersi hadn’t played her being-a-saint card, you wouldn’t be here playing the martyr.

Thud.
To benefit the ungrateful

A mercy fuck was all it was. He blew it out of proportion. It was August, Athens was deserted, afternoons were torture and all were out of sight. The city lovers loved themselves between the sheets and later, with moist fingers, texted: “I’m hungry, have you eaten?”, “Where have you been?”, “Let’s go see a movie”; new copies of old features. Deep down they all craved one thing: a hard fuck with chips on the side, and a little tenderness.

She doesn’t text. Lying under the a/c, she’s reading a crime novel, rhythmically scratching her cracked heel with her fingernails. Permanent inhabitant of Kypseli, attracted to death and nail art. Twenty nine, beautiful and miserable. They promised to take her on holiday this year, but nobody did. They disappeared in thin air, insisting they’re a bad influence, yet only want what’s best for her. She’s not worried. When the rain comes, they’ll be popping their little heads back up like mushrooms; erect, glistening, rested from their vay-cay with the in-laws. No, she’s fine. It’s a shame though, that no one will get to see her tanned, sand-covered ass as she gets up from her towel for a dip in the sea. She’s sure it would have been a momentous occasion for any onlooker.

He texts. Sitting in his underpants at the kitchen table, texting all the pretty ladies, hoping to get lucky. He lives where he works, at a rental somewhere on Alexandras Avenue, next to sterilizers, casting molds, and diplomas. He’s sixty five and it shows. He loves dental calculus removals, psychotherapy and his ex-wife Alice, who took their kids to the new boyfriend’s house for August. He counted on taking the kids for the holidays but the plan fell through the new guy has a pool and two dogs and plays bass in a band. He’s not worried. Come September, the kids will be back all tanned and bleached, asking for fatherly hugs and new Nikes. No, he’s fine. It’s just that he won’t get to fuck Alice by the shore. He’s been getting off on that thought for the past twelve years. He still thinks if he hadn’t been too embarrassed to ask, Alice would never have left him.

The cracked heel and the underpants talk for the first time at six. Small talk: hey, how are you’s; compliments; it’s hot; Athens; no holidays this year; little white lies and what are you up to tonight. They arrange to meet at nine. More small talk: same drink, same island they didn’t get to go; you know Makis; meatballs with greens; Cancer with Libra; when did you separate; there have been a few since but no one worth mentioning. They are back in the car by midnight. Even more small talk: bad break-ups, now they’re acting Swedish. Plus: Celexa, Effexor, Prozac and stuff. The ride concludes at one.

She felt sorry for him. He was a gentleman; he only took his hand off the stick shift for a little touch, just along the arm; he held no false hope. She was the one who said “stop here” and “park the car and come to the third floor” and also “bring me some cigarettes, if you find any.” He raised his thinning eyebrows in surprise and simply obeyed. He couldn’t find any open kiosk and he didn’t want to be late. On the other hand, if she’d already changed her mind, five packs of Marlboros would tip the scales in his favor, right?
He bought seven packs just in case and knocked on the door. Whiskey was already served. “No ice cubes, sorry. I ate them all,” she said, chipping away at the last one between her teeth as he stood there staring at her mouth moving lazily. He should have bought a whole carton. Pushing the seven packs towards her, raising his thinning eyebrows again, clearly impressed by the magnitude of his generosity, he expected an equivalent reaction.

She took the cigarettes, stacked them on a shelf and just said “cool.” Does she get seven packs for free every day? Does she know how expensive cigarettes are with the added tax? Does she know how far the nearest open kiosk is at this hour? She just said “cool” and laughed. She didn’t say “you think you’re gonna fuck for less than a carton?” She didn’t ask “how is it not to fuck for free anymore?” or “is this going to happen to me? Will a young stud just sit there looking at my wrinkly neck while I roll up a joint to distract him?” She also didn’t admit that she would fuck him even without the cigarettes, if only to see how an old timer climaxes.

“Cool” was all she uttered because she didn’t want to sleep alone again tonight. She wanted the confirmation, wherever that came from and wherever it led, and because deep down she knew that tonight—or any other night—no woman would take pity on this man and spread her legs for him. Moreover, deep, deep down he probably knew this too and would hold her tight until daybreak. He’d grab onto her firm tits of 29 years, slide into her tight little ass and breathe in the scent of her sleek neck, grateful for his savior and lost without her. In essence she, the great benefactress, the saint protector of all invalids—with her back turned, of course—would be able to sleep sweetly in the arms of others who for the first and last time would not be able to breathe without her. She said “cool” because seven packs of cigarettes was cool. She stacked them on the shelf and downed her drink, without noticing he had raised his glass to cheer.

“I like you. I like you a lot”, said he, as if he had chosen her among dozens of candidates, glass still in the air. What a surprise, she smiled. He went on in all seriousness. “I’ve never been so open with a woman I’ve only just met.” Happens to everybody, she didn’t say. “You’re not like the others,” the expert said. You’re like all the others, said she on the inside. “You’re smart, understanding.” I’m only curious, you moron, and desperate, and horny.

“I like it that you listen without judging.” I’ve been judging you silently for the last four hours. “I told you about my history with Alice...” Your what?

“I’ve never mentioned this before to any... You understand...”

“No”.

“I mean...” Something profound, I’m sure.

“To a woman I’m taken with.” Press pause; feeling a little wet down there.

“Anyone else would be hysterical by now, listening to me going on and on about my ex.”

Right.

“And, to your credit, you didn’t take sides.”.
That little story with your wife was pathetic. Especially that scene in the car, returning from a long weekend when the radio was playing their song—not your song, hers and his—that she sang so passionately in your face, with the twins sleeping in the back seat, and you responded with “I’m happy you’re in love, baby.” To this day you think you meant what you said, that you’re so progressive when it comes to love, a forward-thinking European. Well, you’re not. You’re just some mediocre, mushy middle class sap that pretends to be the dignified victim out of cowardice and weakness. The whole thing made me feel sorry and disgusted at the same time. Probably because deep, deep, deep, deep down I fear I too would say the exact same words.

She put her hand on his and motioned him inside, as one would do to an old dog that got too tired from its brief walk. He followed her to the bedroom and he gave away his mouth to her for scraps. Fueled by booze and equipped with a rake-like tongue, she climbed on top of him and got down to business. Putting in the time, working on his lips and teeth, she melted steel and tore apart cables; separated alloys and got rid of all the rust; sucked out all the waste, as if she had struck gold. He just lay there stupefied, eyes closed and mouth half-open, moaning silently, quaking and shuddering, until he became an amorphous greasy dough, spread out under his maker in total bliss. As she searched for some expression of pure worship, she noticed the lips she’d been kissing; that sobered her up fast.

Drawn in, wrinkly and thin, as if his mouth was slowly swallowing those lips, as if life was taking back what was rightfully hers; one breath at a time. The bitch didn’t flinch; not out of terror or even respect for the patient. She then gazed at his neck, where it sagged under the ears, his thinning brows, the sunken eyes with their eternal expression of ignorance and bliss. When she made her way further down, checking out his feeble hands, his milky thighs and that small crooked penis, she thought the only way to put this man out of his misery was if a better man came along and put an end to him.

He was oblivious. He smiled as if he deserved this treatment, as if he actually provided something to all of this. She smiled back with reserved disgust revealing her teeth, and he thought they could use a deep clean with all that nicotine. That thought turned him on. He didn’t share. Not all women are ready for grown-up games. Although this one seemed way too eager—how many had she banged?—best not to reveal much yet. Not before he’s sure she’s equally salacious. These days, you don’t mix business with pleasure from the first date. You can’t fuck a patient in the dentist’s chair without trust, planning, and verbal consent anymore, even if she looks meaningfully at you as you order her to “spit.” Even if she’s a lover first and a client later. It was fortunate that Alice came along twelve years ago; the leather medical chair was money well spent.

“Now it’s your turn,” he said tenderly behind her as he slipped his hand inside her panties. She sighed lustily as was required and made room for him to go deeper as she closed her eyes. He wasn’t aware, but his hand wasn’t his anymore. It belonged somewhere else, to another man’s body, a man who was now far away. “Shut up” she said, “shut the fuck up” she snapped with heavy breath as he kept asking if her little pussy liked it, she cunt, and she’s oh so wet, and he’s -oh oh- drowning. Little did he know it was important not to make a sound at such a crucial moment in this fantasy. He thought it was a game and stayed quiet.
She closed her eyes again and took up the fantasy where she left off; when Fotis had abandoned everything and everyone and was back in Athens to hide in her bedroom. That had happened abruptly late one August evening, when no one expected it, nor - interjections for attention here- looking forward to it. Fotis had come in silently (in her fantasy he had a key), he lay next to her and proceeded with his distinctive gesture before this passerby’s voice interrupted it. Back to the gesture where Fotis was now carrying out as if for the first time. He moved his hand in her clumsily, timidly, as if getting to know her body all over again, after so long and so many gestures. Circumstances had changed, so had the touch – yes, that must be it.

It was the two of them now, free, pursued by all, fugitives, outlaws and prisoners, tangled in a frenzied love affair that would soon be crushed by reality and yada, yada, yada. Anyway, they were, going at it, swept away by wild and unprecedented emotions, before the great destruction and punishment of two lovers committing the most heinous crime of wanting to live together, building their happiness on top of other people’s suffering; a very, very dramatic moment. It wasn’t until he started moving his mouth down her back that she realized her dream was way too sentimental. The fantasy was blown away when this foreign tongue decided to suck out her vital organs, causing her such unbelievable pain that Fotis’ whole life flashed before her eyes. She saw him getting married again, making a home, playing with babies, leaving her bed still drenched in sweat, to hop on all the ferries of all her Augusts, disembarking over and over again, on a loop, on Greek islands loaded with Filipinos and overflowing pools.

Certain that the cry was one of pleasure, the participant put his back into satisfying her even more. “That hurts!” she exclaimed, this time loud and clear. The foreign head popped up from between her thighs and looked at the heartless wench with childish confusion. He was no longer the solemn bespectacled gentleman but a face covered in fluids, from his diminishing eyebrows to his wrinkly neck. Too late to back out now.

Closing her eyes again she ordered him to proceed “with love”. And the participant obeyed again. To the letter. Which was strange as he never showed signs of such comprehension. However, on hearing the magic word he immediately moved from ignorance to deep wisdom. He bowed with respect and kissed the mount of transfiguration. He gently climbed up its summit and then slid back down to its base. Then up again, then down; over and over and over, from the springs of Acheron, to l’origine du monde, from man’s first cave, to the moon. The tongue that previously resembled a lizard, had transformed into pure poetry in motion. It was, unfortunately, apparent: the word “love” transformed any pussy into all that is Alice.

It took him a while, but the revelation hit him hard. There he was, staring at a wide open pussy, actually looking at it for the first time, definitely not the one he was nostalgic for. This was hairless, almost childish, with red bumps where hairs were supposed to be. A bony, hard clit that obviously hadn’t been shown the necessary affection at such a sweet age. How was it that it fell into his lap so unrefined? Where were all the men its age? What was more important than this? When are they supposed to enjoy this holy communion? Ah, the arrogance of youth, my friends, the rise and decline of youth. Thwarted narcissists, those eternal sons who instead of fucking advance. He blessed them for the gift he was now receiving in full. Here’s another kiss, my spurned little beaver, fruit untouched and sulky, to be savored by me alone. Do nothing, let me show you. Stay open for me. You need me as much as I need you.
The owner of the fruit didn’t stir. She let out a light sigh now and again, before falling back into lethargic silence. She wasn’t imagining anything now. It was enough that this older gentleman was worshipping her pink cookie as if he gained extra lives and gold coins before the final level. No Fotis would have ever eaten her out like this; not now or ever. She knew they were all too full of life with too little time for such feasts of love. This one on the other hand, was the exact opposite. Why not gratefully devour the juices of his hard work? She rolled to her side, brought her knees to her chest, leaving him ample tender meat to suck on for the entire night. She then closed her eyes and slowly sank in sweet and suckling slumber.

All this possibly took place around 6:30 to 7:00 in the morning. He went nonstop all night and was now busy thumb-fucking her, as light started coming in through the blinds. She opened her eyes and noticed a pair of men’s unevenly trodden orthopedic shoes. They stood there, tongues erect, watching her ceaselessly as she rubbed herself on something soft, gentle and short. She felt sick. He had burrowed in the nook of her neck, whispering all kinds of horny gibberish. Her stomach tightened; she didn’t know who to pity first. She couldn’t flee or give back what he had offered. If that happened, she’d have to offer something back.

She slipped her hand behind her back to touch him – out of politeness, pity, or maybe even gratitude – and felt a cold, trembling little knob in her palm. She didn’t know what to do with it. She felt it moving helplessly in her hand and squeezed it occasionally to help it along. It tried to take shape but it was futile. The shoes by the side of the bed watched stoically, hopelessly. How many times did they bear witness to similar defeat?

Then something came over her and she tightened her grip so hard as if to choke it. The man squealed playfully, thinking this was a game. But she wouldn’t relax her fingers. She turned to face him, looked him straight in the eyes, pitifully, squeezing harder. He was baffled, he whimpered it hurt and tried to back away. Her fist stayed there, rigid. The man smiled half-heartedly, acknowledging that this was a nice little game but it was time to stop. She laughed. He clenched his teeth; she stiffened her grip. He leaned over for a kiss -maybe that would ease her- but she bit back and the tightening became more rhythmical, like an inflation bulb in the hands of a wacky nurse. She was hurting him and she liked it. She didn’t know why – because. It turned her on to see him shaking, holding back yelps, as he wriggled in pain because of her. She felt good; vindicated after everything she offered up the night before.

He eventually came on her stomach, not at all like an old timer. He lifted his eyebrows again as if commending her, then fell on the pillows and closed his eyes. Pause. An awkward pause. A small drop slowly wandered from her stomach onto the sheet, tickling her. His mouth was a gaping hole again, but lipless this time. She figured it would start swallowing the nearby areas of his face before eventually reaching his eyes. Then those would diminish too, until only brows remained and he could only see his trachea. Even so, the rest of his skin should still be entitled to a little tenderness, like it is its first day on this world. Time is too harsh on people. He wreaks havoc on them yet doesn’t relinquish their thirst for touch.

Similar thoughts went through her mind as she lay on her back to prevent the semen from dripping. She ran to the bathroom, opened all the taps and vomited discreetly not wanting to wake him up. She gazed in the mirror; she looked a hundred years old, but her lips were succulent and red, content with all the kissing. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d seen them so vibrant. She discovered two bite marks too – one on her arm, the other on her neck – a sign that someone had given a damn. It’s not trifle. It was
August after all, Athens was deserted, afternoons were torture and all were out of sight.

She would see him again. She’d take a deep breath and see him again. She’d get hammered, look away, avoid the chit chat. She would meet with him again here in her bed, to once more save him from himself, his tired body and this relentless August, to save herself through him. She told him “I’d like to see you again” and lightly stroked his cheek. “Me too”, he said, “Me too...” However, he made it clear that he wasn’t looking for a relationship at this stage. He wanted to be clear. He was seeing other women. If she was ok with that, of course they could meet again. It was nice. Thanks. She should take care of herself. She shouldn’t smoke that much. Have a nice day.

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Translated from the Greek by the author