

Someone Untitled

By

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You're angry with me. Please, don't be. I know you blame me. But things aren't so bad. Besides, I could be angry with you. If you let me. But, I'm here, caught between thought and inspiration, a muted spark in imagination. I'm a character you're trying to create, a fully-grown daughter you're trying to birth from the back of your mind, having to be grateful you've even thought to give me a sex, a gender I can identify with.

You surely can't be angry with me? I'm trapped in faint words, in hesitation, in fear. I'm a prisoner to your ineptitude, all your excuses and avoidance. You blame everyone and everything, when you know the blame lies squarely at your feet, like an animal you've just hit with a car. You shout at me for not being fully-formed, you shout at me for not doing anything interesting, but how dare you take issue with me, when I have so much to hate you for. Do you know what kind of life I could be living?

I could be an adventurer, back in the distant past, exploring new lands, seeking ancient artefacts and fighting danger at every turn. I could be a romantic heroine, fighting for love and filling people full of wonder and hope. I could be funny, you have it in you, you are funny, so why do you always seem so bitter, so sad? I could make people laugh and fill them full of joy, or amused embarrassment when I make them giggle whilst they sit amongst commuters on a packed train. I could have a family, still be married, have kids, and you have the cheek to blame me for ruining your life, of saying I'm not good enough for you?

It's not just me is it? You blame your wife for making you happy, curing ambition with contentment, but were that true, why did I not get a life when you were unhappy? Why was I still this unformed thought in the back of your mind? Why does excuse after excuse tumble from your brain? Your day job made you tired. Your wife asked you to do something. It's somebody's birthday. You can't think, so need a drink? The only thinking alcohol makes you do is think of success, of a novel having been written, of a story fully told. It doesn't make you work, put in the hard graft, sit at the keyboard and make me somebody. You think you've got problems? I hardly have a face or eyes, or shape. I'm just a woman. That's pretty much all you've given me, as you sit there scared that I won't be good enough for you. Not even a name. Is it too much to ask for a name?

Do you really think Haulden Caulfield came into being fully formed? That Gatsby met gangsters before a word was written? That Atticus would be a symbol of integrity if Lee had harped on about being too busy to bring him to life?

And you worry that I might turn out to be a cliché? You, a man who talks of stories, of dreams of turning them into words to share with the world, yet you

See, there you go, proving my point. I'm half-way through giving you a few home truths and you cut me off just to put a wash on? Since when was the washing ever important to you?

No, I'm sorry, don't go again, I didn't mean it. I was trying reverse psychology, I was trying to help, that's all I want to do. I love you. Without you I would be nothing. But I could be more. *We* could be more.

Come on, work with me, start small, give me something. There, a flash in your mind, blue eyes. Blue eyes are good, a start. What about my hair? Brown. Ok, there we go, what about a style? I fancy a bob with one of those fancy fringes, what do you think? Or not, it's up to you. Long, cut short, come on, you can do it.

No, don't check your emails, please. It's not the best time for that, is it? You want me to excite you, to be different and jump off the page, but that's not in my purview; the power is yours.

Do you remember, when you were younger, you decided it was time to get going, to kick-start your life; you sat down at that old brick laptop you had, trying to ignore the tempting call of the sun streaming through the window, of ringing one of your friends to see if you could lure them into sitting in a beer garden with you, supping on a pint that they would have to buy you (back in the day, when you'd declare that you would only work as a writer, and refused to sully yourself with a 'normal' job, by following a life's 'normal' convention). You hadn't typed a single word, but the very notion of sitting down to work seem to fill you with a swelling sense of self-congratulatory pride. You deserved to feel a bit of a pride. It was such a special day. The day I was born.

I was full of such hope from the moment I began emerging into being, a fleeting thought that flashed in your imagination in that hazy moment between sleep and wake. You couldn't quite make me fully formed, but you were about to give this blank canvas a setting, a place, somewhere I could be rooted to begin fleshing out the details of traits, physical and emotional.

Do you remember it? I was going to be ordinary, a beautifully ordinary woman who did something extraordinary. Oh, I was so excited at the idea of being her. Shivering with potential.

Can I ask why you leave the TV on whilst you write? You speak of your love of being in worlds you long to create, yet you're never truly there, immersed in its creation, its reason for being, its details. These worlds that float through your days are fleeting, before you are distracted by colours and sounds of that dreaded box on the wall. Suddenly, it pulls you back into reality, and your notions of genius (undiscovered) suddenly give way to this avalanche of doubt, of realism, of insecurity, piling on top of you until bones are broken and the air is stolen from your lungs.

That's what happened that day, isn't it? There was I, about to take flight, to take form, to have being, until your eyes wondered to that 1980s detective, a dated relic of primetime long since reduced to solving cases in the middle of the day, as he made a breakthrough in the case; only minutes passed while you waited for him to reveal his prime suspect, but when you returned to me, your confidence had drifted away like dust in the sunlight.

It's hardly romantic, you know, the TV on at the moment of conception. The distraction that takes you out of the moment. Why do you doubt so much, hurt so much? I wish I could take it all away from you, patch you up, mend you into happiness.

It was the same on your wedding day, wasn't it? Finally, you found the one who loved you, despite your hatred for false promises of a different kind of life, lies of a man firing on one cylinder, ambition switched on, drive switched off. You were so happy, it was a day of such unadulterated joy, why couldn't you let it go? It was such a small thing, a few too many, an ill-judged comment, but you leapt on it and inflated it to such significance, you found yourself making your way into the lift instead of your marital bed.

You did it again, didn't you? Destroying that you think you don't deserve. Do you remember, after the concierge took pity on you, and let you sit, drinking in the closed bar, all the lights off, shutters down? As you threw back the vodka you are so worryingly fond of, there I was. Suddenly, from lost thought to conscience mind, I stepped from the shadows, a bride on her wedding day. Sure, I wasn't formed, but boy, did I feel beautiful in that dress. All those faces smiling at me, water drops tiptoeing at the precipice of eyes and cheeks, and then, when I saw *him*, it hit me. Thank-you for that. It's so wonderful, to feel, however fleeting. And all those funny things that happened, such a comedy of errors, laughed off in the light of feeling the day carried.

It was a such a feeling of dread as we got back to the hotel, knowing as I did what was bound to happen. And there it was, the argument as I pounced on an innocuous comment, words cased in " " that I never wanted to say, but just couldn't help. I could feel how much it hurts, that gutter punch of emotion; why would you keep putting yourself through this? It was such relief when I turned back from the bar toward the room, back to him, and the end, oh, the end, I know you hated it, as you looked at words scribbled on backs of napkins, the romcom cliché almost too much to bear, but I needed it, we needed it. The guilt was still there, I felt it. Guilt that I could do what you would not. But the relief when I kissed him, the wrong righted, the joy reclaimed. Should I feel bad for enjoying that?

What about when you got your 9-5, sat behind a desk, the responsible provider, mouth spewing corporate bullshit you so profess to hate; taking words, beautiful, creative, powerful words, these keys to imagination and rendering them into tools of your betrayal. Do you remember? You, potential architect of life, father of nations, you who could've created worlds between folded pages, trying to understand why your ascent through ranks of managers left you staring nightly into the bottom of a bottle, problems unabated, your sorrows seeming to swim?

Then I'm suddenly back in your life, making a scene of quitting my job, of walking out into a life of unknowns, a life of taking chances, a woman facing fears and embracing surprise?

All this time, I was begging for you to give me a name. Through the flashes of life, of place, of time, glimpses of form, I asked you to at least give me that. And then, suddenly, a moment ago I thought I'd realised I'd had a name all along. The name of doubt.

But I'm wrong aren't I? I may not have a name, but I've had identity all along, haven't I, all be it hidden by breasts and gender? Making life count for something, doing it right on the wedding night, walking out paid on subservience. Will it happen with kids, with ageing, with your last breath?

I am doubt, but also regret, disappointment, hope and fear. I'm you, all rolled up into a reflection of unfulfilled promise. But, it doesn't have to be this way. It could work out for us both. Just make me *someone*.