

James Terault

Daydreaming

A light beamed down on my head. My wrists, bound to a chair, stung. I looked around the darkness, seeing nothing beyond the small cone of light that encapsulated me. I began to sweat, a worried expression most likely painting across my face. I was enveloped in silence, till suddenly I could hear the crackling of a voice, attempting to say something to me. I could barely understand it, so I tried leaning to where I thought it was coming from in the darkness. Slowly, I registered what it was saying; or, more so, asking.

“Tell me...” it whispered. Tell you? Tell you what I would shout back at it. “Tell me... about yourself.”

Me? I don’t know, I don’t think there’s much to talk about.

“Nonsense,” it warbled, “there has to be... something to say about yourself.”

You’re asking a lot of me you know. How am I supposed to tell you anything about myself when I don’t even pay attention to what I do? I just am. I’m just a normal guy.

“I’m just a normal guy,” I said plainly.

An older man, with graying hair, tapped his pen on a notebook. On his wrist bobbed a leather watch. I stared at it. I wondered why he needed it. There was already a clock on the wall by the door I had walked through. And the rest of the room was awful, nowhere close to my style. Weird posters of motivational cats ordained the walls, some hanging on for dear life against some sort of stick, others sipping coffee or looking out windows. What

they said, who cares. The man tapped his foot. He must have noticed my attention was drifting, again. I hoped it would continue. Maybe this time I would end up in the Amazon! Then he cleared his throat. I guess I should give him some attention.

“Listen,” he stated, attempting to make it seem as though this was important, followed by my name. “If we want these sessions to be productive, then I need you to be willing to open up to me.”

“Open up? That’s all I’ve been doing Doc!” I pleaded. Was it really that hard to believe I could’ve been a normal person? He said something, but whatever it was must’ve not been important because I still can’t even remember it. I looked around the room some more, this annoying complex room, with objects here and some bookshelf there. A potted plant sat alone in one of the corners, housing some sort of well maintained shrub, although of what kind or variety, I would never be able to tell you, because I know nothing about shrubs. The bookshelf was like one of those large wooden ones, the kind some mystery book would keep a secret room behind with a book acting as some sort of key. The books on it though looked bland and boring, nothing interesting at all. The window was nice though, with a good view of a pond around the back of this office. I wondered what it would feel like to throw the Doc’s notebook into the pond, what kind of noise it would make. Suddenly I realized he was looking at me, expecting an answer for something. Well damn, not really sure what to say. Why don’t you help me here?

Hm, not a bad choice, I’ll take it.

“I’m not a big fan of blueberries.”

The Doc looked up from his notes slowly, squinting his eyes at me. He struggled to understand what I just said, and strains out a desperate “What?”

“You asked me to talk about myself, to open up,” I explained. “So, there you go, I don’t really enjoy blueberries.”

He rubbed the bridge of his nose under his glasses, sighing. Is this him angry?

Then, he began to slowly stand up from his couch. He suddenly threw his notebook to the other side of the room and snapped the pencil he had been using in half. He untightened his tie, clasped his fist into his open palm, and cracked his knuckles.

“Fine then.” His voice had gotten deeper, and way more gruff, closer to that of a wrestler. “Since you won’t tell me about yourself, I’ll beat it out of you.”

I shot up out of my chair and took a fighting stance; loose, but controlled, strong. “I’d like to see you try old man.” We circled around each other, creating a ring in the center of the room. In cultures beyond, they called this “The ring of Death”. Someone was going to die here. The Doc kicked over a coffee table that had been sitting next to my chair, sending it careening into the wall, smashing on impact into a thousand shards of wood. He looked at me dead in the eyes, like a lion to a zebra. He was sizing me up. Finally, he stopped, and so did I. I slowed my breathing, time began to slow down, and I could see each of his moves unfold slowly in front of me. He took up a brawler’s stance and charged at me. He threw a hard right jab. This guy’s an amateur. I easily slipped between his guard, deflecting his jab with my left hand, before wrapping my right arm around his arm pit, pulling his

whole body forward and using his momentum against him, sending him flying over me. I threw him to the ground with a resounding thump, and as he lay there, I raised my foot and sent it sailing down into his face.

I chuckled to myself, seeing I had won the fight. The Doc, however, decided to interrupt me. "You seem to space out a lot."

I thought about that assessment a bit. Do I really? I feel as though I only do it when I'm bored. Like everyone else. "Not any more than you would," I said.

"What were you thinking about?" He leaned in closer.

"Oh, nothing really, you wouldn't want to know."

"It is my job to know." Wow, real snarky. "The reason you're even here is for me to get to know what you're thinking. That way you can get better."

"Get *better*?" I used air quotes for that, "There is nothing wrong with me. The only reason I'm here is because that ass hat-"

The Doc raised his hand, signaling for me to stop while I was ahead. He was right; I was about to say something I would regret. I eased back into my seat.

"Why don't we just end today's session? I don't want you to become aggravated."

He clasped his hands together and gave me a condoling look. Was I really that pitiful?

"There is clearly something deeper here that I hope we can explore next time. How does next week, say, Wednesday sound?"

I agreed to this contract, as if anything would change whether or not I even showed up next time. I stood up and made my way to the door. The Doc gave me a little wave as I opened it and stepped through. The waiting room for the office was pretty small. In fact, this entire office in general was pretty small, maybe big enough to fit like 3 cars in. There was only one other “patient” waiting outside on the red quilted chairs. The chairs were nice; they were like the ones at the normal doctor's office, but they actually were designed by someone who gave a shit about your butt. The way it conformed to you and pleased your every need was quite nice. Anyways, the guy. He was a south-east Asian man, heavier set. Each of his breathes were labored, like a half-broken AC unit still trying to keep a room cool. I only know he was south-east Asian because when he was giving his information to the front desk lady, he had a very heavy accent and she asked where he was from, to which he responded “Cambodia.” She had no idea where that was, but smiled all the same.

Speaking of that receptionist lady, I really disliked her. Not because she did anything incredibly wrong to me, or because she didn't know where Cambodia was, or because when the man, whose name was Vanna, turned back to go sit down, she rolled her eyes and let her smile slip for just a moment before I came up to the counter. None of that, it was mostly because she reminded me of someone. And not like that longing kind of remembering someone that you save for that one ex you wish you could still be dating. This would be closer to that ex that tried killing your cat or tried running you over with a moped. Your own moped, to be precise. Not that you own that moped anymore, because she missed you and drove it into the gutter on the side of the road. Now the receptionist didn't act anything like this hypothetical ex, just looked similar; same burnt blonde hair, some

clear skin and greenish eyes. She even wore very similar glasses. I was pretty scared the moment I walked into the office and saw her. It took me a moment to realize that it wasn't who I thought it was. It would be weird if it was, because there is no way she could sustain a real job like this.

The receptionist looked up from a magazine she had been idly reading and smiled at me as I left through the front door. "Have a good day mister!" She called out towards me, though I never responded back. I don't know why exactly, but I still feel bad about that. What if I had said something back? Just a simple "You too!" would've been fine.

I didn't bring my car to the office, so that meant I would have to walk all the way back home. Which I didn't really mind, it would give me a lot of time to think. I stuck to the side walk and made my way on.

It was honestly a bit of a weird spot for an office like that; isolated, in the middle of nowhere, thirty-to-forty-five-minute drive just to the outskirts of the city, in this random forest that always smelled like swamp and bugs. Luckily for me I suppose I lived in that forest that smelled like swamp and bugs. Some other people lived in the area as well, although they had no idea who I was really. I never went to any of their cookouts. Last time I went to one, the court didn't really enjoy my actions.

Just as I was recalling such a lovely memory, one of those neighbors I mentioned came up to me out of the blue. They had been sitting on their lawn I guess, and had seen me passing by, and thus decided to try to strike up a conversation with me.

“Hey there!” He called, stamping over to me. He was an older man, somewhere in his 70’s, and walked with a bit of a hobble. It honestly took him a surprising amount of time to get over to me. “I can’t recall ever seeing you around before, mister,” fair enough old man, I don’t think I’ve bothered to meet you anyways.

“Well then, consider this our formal meeting then, huh?” I reached out a hand for them to shake. They had a wide smile on their face, revealing a few missing teeth. Their skin was cracking, and their white beard almost shone in the sunlight, if it wasn’t for the fact that it was so thin. He put his rough hand into mine and began to shake it. For such a frail looking old guy, he sure had a tight grip. Guess they don’t make them like they used to. Except I don’t think they made them this strong. Wow, ok this is actually starting to hurt what the hell is wrong with this guy.

Eventually, I looked at the old man's face. His smile had faded away, and he was looking at me square in the eyes. For the first time in a long time, I felt fear. His eyes were filled with genuine and sudden hatred, that had been so masterfully disguised under the wise grandpa act. He reached his other hand into his old man jacket and pulled out a pistol, no, revolver? Ehhhh, no we’ll stick with pistol for simplicity’s sake. And pushed it straight into my chest. I looked down at the barrel, feeling it pushing against my shirt and coat. When I looked back him, he said to me, in a raspy tone, “This is your end, as it was your father’s end.” Then, he pulled the trigger.

I didn't even hear it fire. All I felt was the pain. The searing pain, coursing throughout my entire body. The next thing I could see was the sky; I had fallen over now, and was staring straight up, bleeding out on the black concrete. The old man approached from the side of my vision, and stared down at me. As everything began to fade around me, he smiled again. Was this really it for me? Was this how the story ends?

Damn, I was really getting into that one too.

Then, I was home. I rubbed my eyes a bit. I was kind of tired after everything I did today, which was nothing at all. Maybe I was just tired of not doing anything. Who's to say. Oh what's that, what does my house look like? Does it matter? Fine, I'll come up with something. It was a small, quaint brown house. Some of the shingles on the roof had fallen off and really needed to be replaced before the weather got worse. There was one window in front, a big living room window that I often left open; the AC doesn't work so well. It sounds like a Cambodian man, so I don't really use it. Not because I dislike Cambodian men, but because it just sounds annoying. The front door had a little awning that you could stand under while opening the door, drunk, in the rain, or snow maybe. How's that? Do you want me to go into deep detail about the door? What kind of wood it was, where it was made, whose hands made it? How when that guy goes home to his wife and kids and tells them that he can't move his fingers anymore because he works 12 hours a day? It's just a door. There's a hole in it, but that's fine. I did that, really. But you don't want to know about that, I'm pretty boring.

After getting in, I slumped down on the couch. I'm not writing this because it's a special thing for me to slump on my couch, since it is what I do just about any other day, but it felt important to mention. I stared at the ceiling for a moment. I swear I could see a tear in the middle of it, some sort of deep dark gash. But then I blinked, and it was gone. And I blinked again, and it was back, but it had moved. In fact, it kept moving. And it was wet. I was tearing up, I guess. I don't really know about what, I just was. Maybe it had something to do with the receptionist. Maybe it was that cookout. Or that Cambodian man. That fat bald man. I tried emulating his breathing, thinking maybe he used it as a way to stay calm. He didn't. He just needed the extra air. I already knew that. I tried closing my eyes. I tried letting a new story, a new moment, something outside of this, outside of my life, take over and do the driving for a bit. Nothing came. I was so normal. Is it wrong to wish for a more interesting life? A more daring, risking life? A life where there is nothing wrong with me? But there is nothing wrong with you, I'd say. You're literally talking to yourself, I'd bark back at me. That's like, number 1 rule of thumb you're not ok behavior.

"Well what do you know, you're not a doctor." I said.

"I'm not saying that there's something wrong with me, the Doc was."

"Who?" I choked for a second, trying to hold back something. "I don't know any Doc. Haven't we been home all day? And why would you even need to go to a doctor, no one's forcing you, you know."

I stopped for a moment. I leaned forward in my couch, staring straight at my tv. It was off, and through its black reflection, who other than I was sitting there, looking back at me. I was still here. I thought for a moment.

Hey, I might need your help on this. Hey, I'm talking to you. Yeah, YOU. Am I going crazy, or did I dream this *entire* day?

Well, that makes more sense then. Thanks man, you like, saved my whole thing here.

I stood up from my couch. There was a strange malaise over me. Boy, was I tired. Must've been a busy day. And my eyes were super sore. Was I staring at a really bright computer screen or something all day? Busy day at work, I guess. What do I do for work again?