

## The Narwhals

*Argument: Following a brief but intense romance between Arthur, a poet, and Kate, a biochemist, a falling out occurs, whereafter the two former lovers recount the ups and downs, the traumas and the ecstasy of the relationship.*

ARTHUR: And suddenly I came upon a humble mystery. She showered me in freckles. Silent and subtle, she seemed, nor strived, to speak my language. ‘The moon doesn’t suck tonight,’ she’d murmur, silent as leaves fluttering in their transparencies on a distant moonbeam; lips near shivering ear. Through one another, we caught glimpses of worlds we never knew existed. And then she vanished! For eight months, I, and as I often do—lonesome habit—, elevated her, a simple notion, evolving, becoming a fantastic vision beyond perfectionist ideals, far, even, from the reproach of the relativistic seraphim. I had reached an impasse. I was omniscient. I, I admit, in earnest, was perhaps too perfect. Nothing within or without remained to be discovered or still forgotten. If any adventure did remain it seemed an effort unworthy of the while. Security had supplanted conflict. Boredom was my perfidious savior, anticipation my guilty pleasure, rarely was there a surpassing of the investment. Through rationality, feelings, ambitions, I sought answers that the scientists, with their impassive eyes, their rationality biased by a different root of ambition, would, even if they could, never justify.

And with little effort; with flights of absurdest fantasies of narwhals, disclosed through charming and sophisticated mumblings; with anecdotes of dripping arctic nudity, and the forty-seven others, and through the spittle inconsequentially beading past her rosy lower lip when caught off-guard by a fit of her rogue laughings; she did live, and even, beyond it. My love for her, it must have been there before she came. Through the unpredictable motion of jazz and a majestic sea of ordinariness—I discerned purpose. Sprinkled in freckles I hypothesized the sun (only recently returning to my side) must have sewn discerningly as a paradoxical cypher that I might peel away so as to understand her substantiality. My will bade me rip like a pleasurable bandage. I, simply, saw only myself; a crustacean whistling in boiling oceans. I recoiled! This, and how far from my needs! She knew my station, better than I willed to know myself. Helpless am I without the frail hands of a superior woman to temper my arrogant ways.

She knew everything I didn’t. Loved and saw little of what I knew to see. I’ve always adored humble wisdom. Self-loathing has kept me far from you smug intellectuals. Even in my youth, it had been, I fancied myself a Rumpelstiltskin of sorts; if ever I spoke my own name, surely I would perish! She observes me. Studies me, studies me studying her. What a fool I must seem. To think, she’s observed idiosyncrasies in me I never knew myself. Special, and when possible, understood—that’s how I wanted to make her feel, and that (‘how do you expect us to understand you, if you yourself won’t understand?’—when this didn’t impede her, not in the slightest...) is how she made me feel.

She seemed a masterful contradiction—and, oh isn’t she a noble fruitcake! She is a scientist, wise beyond disillusionment. And sometimes, in French, she’d defend the décor of

colored panels. With her resuscitative lips she exiled the old philosophy.—Insight and experience, tender, as if her breasts, only made her brighter, firm but without the impersonality of the utterly perky, justified her innocence,— beauty and understanding, were no longer immiscible! She *must* have been a genie! With wondering hands I explored her story. I contrived to prove her clipped wings were not those of raven. I could no longer believe! Not in my feelings, not in my ambitions, not, especially not, in my rationality, not even if I craved it as thus, —Oh the renewable comfort!—I was fulfilled in the ecstasy; if only we could dance our lives away... Queer and loppéd angel. I would have you not in any other form. Words could only fall short in expressing, or skirt around the depths of, my appreciation. Or perhaps she knows, or perhaps better, somehow treated proportionately beyond.

KATE: I had shut myself away from the obvious. He was indolent. He would never have committed to anything! Work, he posited, is beneath him. He thinks the world should be given to him without any merit on his behalf. I was a fool! He expects more from everyone else, but not from himself. How can this be just, two blind and lonesome people falling in love of such overwhelming power? He was overwhelming in all the right ways. Soon, I became smothered by the same. His eagerness for us to grow and learn from one another had me compelled to leave my lab, to enter the uncomfortable zone. Socializing does not come easy. I am slow of tongue. So is he, only he knows how to manipulate his shortcomings.

He expects too much of me. Am I not good enough? He will grow bored with me. All I want is a stable job and a routine. He seems to want everything and more. I recall him standing along the roadside, declaring, 'Something is missing.' I knew what he had meant. The grimaces on his face bespoke it all, amidst the glee and uncertainty. When romantic we would talk of science and art, and sweet nothings momentarily beyond the capacity of the everyday mind. He convinced me of the all-powerful nature of his conception of the ultimate sex. All conflated. He would keep it that way if he could, but it goes against his nature. Does he truly care about me, I sometimes must wonder, or does he drag me along to dredge one more morsel of inspiration from my loins? Telling me of the physical: there are limits to the understanding we can achieve through utterances, gestures, glances, etc.—let us release our uninhibited passions and speak for hours in tongues untainted by the limitations of words! This, I'm certain, is what he truly believed. And I mistook his honesty for the truth. This was my downfall. Being naïve to everything in reality, I succumbed to his views. I was powerless. Being far from him, I would fall into a sickness of soul, incoherency of the sweet and of the solemn.

ARTHUR: Those eyes of hers, they would possess an intrinsic intimacy and depth. I had never known so large a pair of eyes. They possess a Chinese charm. Her irides through rings of topaz glow and strongly over the normal brown ground state when she thinks, or becomes happy; or when she stares beyond the self of another and into the morning light. And if one had intact the visionary's know-how to endure till their splend'rous centers, one would understand the little girl brilliant and dressed like a 'sotan child in winter readying herself to board the bus to catholic school. With the naive enthusiasm of the starling bestowing the golden worm upon the glutton of the brood, 'I feel uneasy when I talk too much; it makes me feel guilty to talk too much,' softly, she would bathe me in the words of her blessings I would strive to absorb. The raw appreciation,

which she would gladly let accompany these, the tellings of the particle physicist grandfather, his routine at the university library involving one half the cookie, or her first successful proposition, ‘Wanna be best friends?’, to Antonietta, with the uninhibited security that only children might possess, back when she still wore her hair up—and to this day, alongside quantitative narratives of canoe adventures through the arctic, and some of which she did lead, she still maintains her childish purity; and she retains and hoards every nonmaterial asset that enters her grand routine, or appreciably so. In a triumvirate she continues to sleep, there in her twin-sized bed alongside a familiar duo of stuffed creatures, and which she had hidden when I first came over, afraid, perhaps that I would judge her. ‘Now I don’t care’, she says, ‘That’s how I know it’s love.’

KATE: For he had seen things that other men would not, and consistently outside himself; and things that were perhaps never there to begin with but that should have been. And that grimace, charming, adorable; and he, always as goofy as that agreeable class clown, court jester, the one who in spite of the favors continually curried will finally come to the realization of every jesting nature of his progressive impotence, would resign to a diminishment of his brooding; would take over his face. And it would be, and he'd no longer be contemplating, and he'd no longer be down at the lakeshore, no longer would he be hounding, no longer the integration of conceptions, of words, in some room, no longer along the midway, in some stale corner, etc., further, no longer—nevertheless, constitutively—in his pacings, deliberately about his mind’s ever-alternating climate, ‘desert, bakery...’ Being that the truth didn’t matter so much as the belief, and indeed sometimes the truth would seem more absurd than the belief—he would never pass an opportunity, nonetheless, to point out the contradictions of all philosophies, all reasons, a person might hold close; or, at arms length; only he never kept any of his own; perhaps at an arm’s length, from time to time, for a period duly scant of time—thus, of course, how else could he have had any other preference but rather it, on all accounts, nearly, to never have existed in the first place. For he should manage to avoid the politics of the constraints that have a tendency to encroach, viz., external and internal boundaries, as the sturdy magician pulls the rings tight, though not apart, for this would be prior to that time when it would be more beneficial than traumatic for them to be pulled apart... But this faculty must be confessed with an economy!—Ah, for he himself could then create that missing piece, e.g. there might be as much in this room, the theory is sound, if you might learn how to regard it, my dear, only there’s something to be said about being taught—a model works until the data doesn’t fit, so the model changes and works once more, until it no longer does... But look at me ramble, resigning myself to be thrown upon one more assumption of causality!— If the artist’s faculties might also diffuse by way of a set of inverse squares. Dynamic equilibrium might have already set in, yes, somehow contrived. Yes!, but he would have bestowed upon me a simple and offensive compassion for the pleasantest of his tormentors: now, would you find delight in relating, and can you relate to what I mean by, you can see more of the picture from the corner than from anywhere else in the room—then, assume a cubic earth, contemplate the gravity. Then, ignore the gravity. Then, here that the simple-hearted conman tries to see. Here that the janitor will begin to see as he dedicates himself to the cultivation of his trait. Ah, here that the woman will see, but no man would if he might have learned such vision, generously woman; etc.—But the poet must see it all, all at once, constantly.

And when it would leave him, he would grow insecure; he'd begin to hate himself, to be so weighed by what was missing that he would have a force upon him necessitating the jettisoning of his own worth. And when it returned, nothing would have ever been enough. And what am I missing? And what of the poem I cannot afford to render? Certain men live for the high, not that we don't all enjoy it from time to time. He lives for the opposite, and nothing between— instability: how else could one remain with him? He's inclined to run from all other things.

Life will never be pure enough. He must have extracted its essence by now. The art, his purpose. The ocean and I might have let him discard us for a handful of pearls. What a fool I must have been. To enjoy it! Even as he would trudge through me. Poor boy, insatiable fool. So versed, yet without a sensibility to the most obvious, unaware of him as are the ripples on the periphery of the surface above where the trout hangs suspended. He doesn't realize what he is, though that's precisely his aspiration; aspiring to learn to be how he has already become.

It was December. Deep dish pepperoni pizza; a bottle of champagne softly cultivating smoke; mid-winter snow flurry and a full moon unofficial humbling the darkest of blue and hazy skies. I should wear glasses more often. I had taken my eyeballs out. He had taken delight in the scope of his discovery: I deserve a Nobel prize for discovering you, if a PhD in you, ah I should defend you; adoring my form, my expression,— the impalpable beauty. 'A white t-shirt? Is that really all it takes?' And I would bask in the comfort of his company.

I didn't mind the silence. 'Talk to me,' he would say, and I would become nervous, forgetting everything I might have wanted to say. 'I have nothing to say, but I'm happy.' 'Well, I do love you,' he'd say, before slinking off, back into a welcoming of silence.

The plight of the poet; when will it end? Ah, the sight of the poem, at first, the magic of his words, they intrigued me; now though they mostly worry me. I recall the shoal of minnows, diverging as a ploy to confuse, to carve a ring around, play ring-around, the predator. And why shouldn't they take time to appreciate the magnificence, the compassion of its movements while still sufficiently fit to endure? 'That was weird.' 'Some like it weird(?)' 'There is grandeur in this way of... skirting.' And when his imagination would no longer alleviate him, he would turn to me, to hold my body tight, his awareness in full of the pike also and from the start within me, the one coiled in comfort and always on the verge of the astute perception of another's internal threat. The plight of the poet, and when will it end?

ARTHUR: We would journey to museums of art and then ourselves integrate to become a wondrous nuance of texture as we'd saunter along the folds of the canvas of the city. We laughed together upon a strange agreement: we felt common, ordinary. Ah, finally! 'Look at me now, corner bakery,' she had mumbled emphatically, blushing upon her own arrival, as the moon is wont to blush upon an arrival premature. We would take walks, above us she would observe the elevation of the tracks, 'Hey, that's not a train.' And she'd laugh, and then to keep the rest of her insights to herself, wily, she'd decide. And other times, then I would be one to say nothing (or, much less, even), either being in a certain mood, or those severe stupors, this obstacle, charming and welcome as sinister hurdles to the circus clown in a competitive industry, those times when I would delicately flatter her with the most nebulous of declarations, 'I like it when you talk.' — 'That's nice.' To think, she found in these more

worrisome aspects some quality to adore.

She displayed her artistry in the kitchen. I would sit upon her carpeted floor to observe her performing the intricate dance of her multitask, engaging every stove, the oven, microwave and sink, in a series of contemplated movements and extemporaneous strategies. How intent were those shifts of her eyes, calculated that twist of a torso, to carry on, as the thin strands of hair, the black severity of a hundred thousand lightless tunnels spanning and merging and sometimes they would gently curl and cast, perhaps I'll get to the story of how they'd cast, obviously they'd cast, or fanned across to embellish her intensity. And her cooking, it would cure my expectations. And at certain times, I would into her eyes wide looking be, arrested upon her downward gaze, the neck's bent and merciful curiosity, and I'd become rapturous that, in subtle certainty, beyond the limits of the imposing body, our minds had become, if but for a fleeting moment, not just merely entwined, and by a knowledge that this, obviously, is how it is, or that is how it must have been supposed to be.

KATE: I have seen rooted between the jutting rocks the tree done growing, shivering, dead and leafless. And why shouldn't a thing done growing desire some stay of its existence? I have seen the old brick cottage before the black balcony and the blacker door, and after the black balcony and the blacker door: bound within the triangle of the roof's overhang, the black door opens to breath in the renovations and the wainscot blushes. And I have heard of dreams; in them, men dream they are falling asleep. A vivid breach slithers by; desperate to take an important action, they very much are, and if they weren't so drowsy, they even would have. Everything must face a humiliating fatality. Once it had been for a lack of current, and now there's too much of it. I've decided to be confident of my own contributions. 'Life must be extracted.' *And the plight of the poet, when will it end?* I wish he would find a way to accept it, he'll never manage to render his poem. And I would mull, mulling as I would sneak, watching him pacing up and down Lake Michigan from my vertical bedroom window, mulling as he would bend to the wind, approaching the furthest reach of the promontory.

Ah, I have acquired a steady touch of it, whatever it is, whatever has been in possession of him since he was vouchsafed upon his coop. With him in me, part of my life, I would find myself no longer fitting into my own world. Nothing was integrated. Thus, how could I have believed this to be real? But I for once have no shred of worry. I am certain that—with responsibility, my principles—I will reach that plod of growth and shed his sensitive skin. His sense of changing the world, just to change it once more. His sense to be a force or factor, part and parcel, only to hope to be forgotten along with the rest of us, we content folk.

Standing as the maestro, he would await the breakers, summoning the fingers of Lake Michigan, which would spout over a head moonlit of disheveled hair, then crashing alongside the corrugated quay, the lake would attempt to pull itself up. To him, I'm sure sometimes it would.

But what a privilege it had felt in the moment: comfortable being a woman, confident with myself for being his woman, standing firm: 'Dance normally? I don't like it when you overpower me like that.' 'Did that hurt?' 'Not physically.' At other times, being appreciative of being controlled by a man who I knew adored me more than any... and I should cease attempting to deny the pungency of all the memories; my own and cherished prelude to such, his wandering nights... the first time the gentleness of his kind fingers, full of youth yet softly crackling; pops

of the admirations, the release of sympathy; as they would shift their caress, that first time they warmly crawled their way up, understanding to navigate my abdomen, wrinkling my black silk blouse of the white-patterned dots, slipping their way to the soft of my tender breast—always favoring the left one, *not just a breast, my breast*, to the first rapture of areola. Then the kiss. ‘I always wanted a boy to do that.’ My fear from the start was that if he should grow bored with me. I would roll and shudder and weep in the anguish of my fear, that one day he would notice, I’m just a Kate, that he would finally pull himself up.

ARTHUR: And she would paint in many-colored waters—and on days, those days, when wanton she would dance, and trample in the forbidden quadrant of Ramachandran—the biochemical structures that were, to her, the most aesthetically pleasing; and on days of rain, I’d walk her home in ignorance of the calculus, and with her, dance upon that, our muddy knoll, in a spontaneity and an abandon of her laughs, lovely—that laugh—when she laughs.

She was shy and she was, she would suggest, past deeper fits of concern, damaged. It took the mind of a poet to regard what wasn't plain to the senses of mere decent men, and she would beneath her bangs, so bold in the windy city, hide the proof that stamped her left brow with a sad, and substantial story. Nevertheless, her most prized animal is, and has always been, the narwhal; first because of a childhood book having to do with arctic adventure that her father had read to her, before bed, and years later, from a journal review, or a piece of primary literature, having to do something with that the tooth can act as a conductivity meter.

Her peers saw a side to me, and rightly judged me wrong. But with scientists—the ones worth half a damn, always, more or less, two-thirds right, but to a different question, and quick to forget, they discover to ascribe an intimacy to the way things sometimes are. But it takes wit of judgement. I have seen it!—It has to do with the steady reverb of the fibers when the tension sensitively is relieved; the beauty is as true as the twang is sometimes irrational, sometimes irreproducible.

And it was when she'd feel scorned—then and only then would she summon that something from the furthest depths of her mental capacities, though I would cherish it because at least she was no longer hidden. In the mornings, I would rise to bask in the warmth of her wrath. I would find the stuff for adorning her with my affections. I would amplify her courageous ugliness, and be nourished by her. Simple but refined, the strange solace of sentimental anchoring, shoring in a new reality.

And just as, she has always been fragile, delicate, terrified of all things unpredictable. ‘If I can't see it on a gel, it doesn't exist.’ Nightly I would kiss her, at length upon her forehead—quite the admirable honker—, and whence spreads the gloss of that feminine shimmer, to radiate to the remainder, the face, ears, nape, as I would remind myself that I, like Cézanne in the century before, seemed to be attacking the problem of volume, and how well is was doing. She was just a Kate: or so she'd say, against my praises, when I'd praise her in front of others. But, how fortunate, I would tell myself, that we had finally called into question the old philosophy, that through our laborious charity, we had recovered them: the idiosyncratic intangibles. She was also familiar, fair but blushed, her face would render me all, like that icosahedron porcelain jar at the Art Institute. Her freckles form not merely two dimensional structures of hexagons; they come to me in armadas of twisted boats. She was just a Kate, I'd come to accept, and— then I

might wonder: and what else should the world need?

KATE: His intention was never to damage me further, simply to elicit that sustainable happiness of a Northern girl's very pure childhood. I allowed myself to become too delicate for him. His strength, is it possible my daily acquiescence stemmed from its subtle pursuits, its altruism gently shading a root of pain and shame over his less caustic, his artful sincerity, the intensity that confused and made agreeable the notion continuously forgiven of paying off my discomfort in arrears?

Like the sleek soprano alighting to rise above and evaporate the hubbub of the choir; he would pierce me. My instincts would never bid me soar.

Oh, but who am I to ask for only gentle rain? What right is it of mine to ask him to change? To tell him, so that he might remove the thorn in the more heavily rooted wing? The tulips and the dandelions. It was there he found coherence. To suggest cultivating a patch of yellow roses, with which he may or may not have felt compelled to agree, and of course, it was possible for something to have gone amiss.

For the most part, his delicacies, his tenderness—this is what would give rise to the renewable hurt; the unendurable, the insufferable; I'm sure on some level this was unintentional. He would talk on me—with authentically smiling and tireless stare, and he'd speak of beautiful things, and then once the words flaked away, gradually an impression more tormenting than his necrotic spirit would be all that remained. 'Astounding. How little you must think of me. I don't think you're a bad person. I understand you.' And sometimes, he would explode. I would prefer it for him to explode. I know at least how to manage a hyena. There's something in those greenest, those gold-leafed, eyes; aspirations of a little boy. But that face is in constant torment. To love him, one must also be willing to weep at the foot of its cross, take a spear for this when this and this and none can no longer persist; only I never was fully capable of developing this, the maternal caring—not for another. I choose to escape. I'm self centered? And accosting me, I'm a fair-weather lover. How dare you! I am full of certain undesired thoughts of the 'if only.' But then again, look what's become of his mother. I don't need to be vengeful. I believe on some level he had meant it all. He really may have.

Had I dedicated my sanity to learning how to distinguish his many faces and their facets, I may have come to know his sentiments, to learn to separate these from his confusions, resentful hostilities, insecurities, etc. It would always bring me to tears, when I'd have to stand firm, to have the pain of remaining silent finally surpass that of the other, 'I wished to never have had to feel this way; to tell you: I don't know how I'm supposed to trust you.' Could I have oversimplified it more?—I seemed to have discovered his tender spot.

ARTHUR: Today, I returned to the Japanese Garden. The months must have surpassed me. The road to get there is now covered in ice. And the bike rack to which we once locked our bikes in that peculiar fashion, bringing laughter, is now in a foot's depth of snow. You pass under the pagoda to gain entrance, past a stoop of powdered snow. There had been only one set of footprints as antecedent to my own. The geese—they are still persistent; they still squawk like sentinels as you pass the pagoda. They've finally figured out how to fly in that wedge formation—dumb birds. But you were right, this should have been obvious, they don't go south for the

winter. I considered making a snow angel. I've always had an appreciation for forms that begin from the center and fill outwards, leaving unsolid boundaries. But instead, I decided to regard the bonsai—encircled by a fence of green wire mesh.

KATE: 'Hey, Narwhal.' For, there he was. In case he means it, I told myself, that he intends to come visit me tomorrow, I must remember to dress myself for such an occasion! Yet still I wore my grandma's brown and bulbous high-ankles. At the Field's Museum, Sue, a Tyrannosaurus Rex, takes center stage; the narwhal is in the basement. The basement! Oh, poor baby, such the injustice! How it was cute. I invited him to come visit me during the Jazz Festival upon the midway, as a passing formality in the previous day's conversation, though I was wishing he wouldn't take me up on the offer, and really, I wasn't expecting him to come, at any rate. The effort he must have taken to come find me. As I returned his greeting, he seemed to have the weight upon him to hunch down, as if eager to hear what I was mumbling up to him from under my breath. One of the many adorable things he would do, a sincere but minimal effort. I was caught off guard. I must have underplayed his sincerity, when he declared his intention to come and visit me. I never would have bet that such an attractive and intelligent man, rare to find the combination, might go out of his way for a girl like me. He had just come to pay a quick visit. It was adorable how he happened to lose the capacity to leave. He stayed with me. He took an interest in me. To him indeed it seemed the incisive and integrated understanding of *this Kate* held some rare key to his desired reward. I really do hope that he will be fine in spite of me.

Would I elaborate on how I fixed my bicycle tire? And how I ever learned how. Impressive, my calve muscles; I must ride a lot. I don't see any correlation. First he had offered me a sweatshirt, then he had danced the Macarena, then again; oh, not even in the ballpark, buddy; bought me a beer and a polish dog, mentioned in passing, herbivores and lengths of necks, how fit it must have made him, how strong he must seem. Was I impressed, his having the ability to reach the low leaves with his mouth; and then he began eating the leaves... Okay? I told him that I work in Cummings, the oldest of the research buildings on campus, the only one built when it was still fashionable to use flying buttresses to spice up a cornice, that 'I run gels. Gels, gels and more gels. Every gel like opening a drawer—will this one have it? I open a million drawers. This is what I do.' How curious he would be of our intent, of the vast import; how curious he had been of the approach I take to research.

After a long discussion with him allowed me to feel comfortable enough to put my shyness aside, we danced upon the grass, where the stage had been pulled apart. And later, sitting near to him, he came closer, to keep me warm, and I rested my head upon his padded shoulder, knowing it was right— 'I keep telling myself, you are too good to be true.'

From the start I saw, tasted, etc. only that I was privy to: what was to the west, and I mistook this for him, until it was no longer the resemblance of the mountains of Madrid through that window to the west, the skyline of Toronto to the south, Washington to the east, Guatemala to the North, and such and so forth. The surroundings were no longer needed. I had retrieved it, and suddenly the place that held him had become a place of its own.

'If we can get through this, we can get through anything.' I would contemplate all the plausible ways that this statement might come back to trap me in a stalemate. If we do not get through this, I thought to myself, I doubt I shall ever again be capable of the supreme love. My



body, in visceral contemplations of him, would tremor for hours, in uncertainty and anxiety and horror. For hours, he would hold my hand in times of need. He would say those words, 'You're my best friend,' or at times, against all reason, he would whisper, 'Everything is going to be all right,' and finally it would be sensible to think so.

He would venture a mile to my house despite illness, responsibilities—he sacrificed his work for my comfort. The self-imposed ignorance of a child. I blame him for this embarrassment, but I would need him there to comfort me when I felt alone, being vacant of my familiar self, vacant of the trust I once felt about the rightness of my decisions. He would tell me of my beauty, the joy of having my beauty surpass the foregone ideals. I ought to let him nibble by proxy at the purity of my contentedness—in the invisible ways that only his words can.

His experience with the sciences, he would say, is not so dissimilar from his experience with Christianity. Where he was once a devout believer, he'd since become disillusioned. 'Scientists are all catalysts. And this,' he'd say, 'this is the age of the catalyst. And they believe I'm the one who should be warranting their pity and concern?'

And it would all be out before he'd realize he was referring also to me, to the insecurities that he once had cherished. For in such moments, alongside all others, he'd see me as injustice rather than companion; or, and far from, a scientist, proud of my abilities, my knowledge, always ecstatic over my small and occasional triumphs; a woman humble in my dedication to a long, tedious day's work.

Growing arrogant, defiant; the professors are worried; thus I worry about him. Being that I'm not perhaps memorable for anything else, I fear this will become my reputation, my legacy. But who am I to ask him to change? Then again, how could I not, after this? How much more embarrassment must I take?

ARTHUR: And I had finally come into conflict with the gay, the hoary, mentor she has, will always continue, oh, why change now, (but she's proven it, she says she's been focusing on her strong points) oh, to worship; a woman!, oh, as two egos collide the sweet clamor. I'd always found myself siding with the well-intended heroes with a habit of coming up short. I would arm myself amongst Quixote, Bergerac, even her dear caricatures of Galileo, and Rosalind as a cherub. I tried to be chivalrous, but as she herself once declared, chivalry isn't dead, it's just on probation. Phoebe, the woman, my woman's goddess, by the biochemistry department's usual process: of elimination; such character and duty!, ever presenting herself fit to be loved, or, if not, if not deliberately, then praised!—so in one compartment: a woman; another: a scientist. On the whole of the organism, professor, (oh my, yes dear, quite the goddess of the meticulous woman scientists), the most inspiring of creatures, one can only be so bold to refuse to respect, to admire her, that charming quizzicality; what rare forms she has found!—and how to be a principal of discovery, and independent beyond mere research, and no longer longing, her—(I oughtn't to have doubted and pitied your goddess)—contentedness to sing the song of life, she is with fortitude swift remembering, very well, yes, the respectable monotone, quaintly humorous and quite plausibly sympathetic, and inflections compensate in quirks, with drollness of a soft-strayed intellect and much meddling, some days maybe odd how much she's come to be meddling. But she was once a damsel, you know. I danced with her once, upon a retreat, like a flower child, her potential smelled floral, of a flavor that inspires one to wonder, how much has a

passion, however niche, ever led you to squander?, but a damsel nevermore!, oh, but a woman!, dressed always in purple almost dark cotton, or patterned polymers synthetic ret, and amongst her should we all breath deep to relieve, to admire, for who in her absence would be the one to say: perhaps we shouldn't let the mice, cute and innocent as they might seem, parade on our horses, on our surpluses of rice, our preserved statues artful, unchanged.

KATE: With his capacity to commit remarkable welfare or to transform into the most animalistic of villains, and which would be left to the discretion of that something guarded and selective about him; honing, he would enjoy it, with a vestigial crutch of a gaze, possessing that strength which can only be seen in an animal not yet entirely healed but that has been at some former time much more severely wounded, with the eyes and calm entitlement of the lion only recently bowing his neck to the fullest bulk of his mane, the time he wore the Christmas wreath around his neck and roared in an experiment of timbre, well controlled. But there again he would be, attempting to relate to and to understand, brooding there from the sway of the tall grass, observing and still not saying a word, attempting to understand, observing and attempting again to understand, and again attempting patience, or zoning in on the weak and the unsuspecting, gathering all insecurities and shortcomings like stones for the execution or for his generous offerings— *insecurities are hardly the same as shortcomings, they're not of the same predicament*. What he'd make of these insights, was (he would like for it to be so) up to his discretion, but then there are always times... The line is a thin one, the one that separates genius and unstable courage; he leap frogs it, constantly. The serial addictive, and the ingénue. How bizarre! The moral of this story? It seems now, nothing changes. The intimate details, all that maybe ever changes. How predictable a course it must have seemed to the rest. Then I suppose not everything can be learned by an attention to fairy tales. 'Because all you know is school.' And then again, I will always fear anything but a science's pace of progress? But just a minute! Can we be honest, and dully straightforward? I am miserable.—Science! Progress! The most consuming of benevolent distractors.—'And that's because you, my dear,' he actually said it, —'You are a coward.' And he adores me. And of course he has his vices too, I've assured him. Yes, he says, he is an artist without a suitable modality for his talents, and that's hard to respect, he will accept, but would I at least endeavor to understand why I won't realize his ambition, why one like myself might be skeptical to its very existence? Is it that the ambition to reconcile, rather, has always been, I fear might always be, the dominant one; yes, this has the tendency to be very clear; and then, his mission: reformulating the questions, all of which have already been asked; mine, stability: to make pure the newfound answers. 'What's the chance, do you think, that someday we'll no longer be the fools we have been today?' 'Well, surely we can hope—' Does it seem natural, it must seem natural, perhaps, that I would begin to question my senses being in the presence so often of one who has chosen to scorn the ways of the academies, to call into question our very significance and scope. 'There is nothing left for me in academic achievement. It is the understanding that makes me content, a proportion of intimacy that brings fulfillment. And art, and art's purpose is to enrich. And she enriches also, then I suppose that's what I mean by *substance*.' 'And the times that were good?' 'Those weren't real.' I'm sure on some level this wasn't intended to hurt him. Oh, it would have made him happy. 'That's nice of you to say, that it's nice to see my face again, but I'm guessing it should be more bittersweet.'

I know that one day he will accomplish something, and I hope that he might know, then, that it would have made me very proud. 'Not a narwhal, so not jealous.' 'I think a narwhal would tend to treat anything within reach as substitute for a seal.' 'I'm sorry to hear they're feeling sorry for you. That your professor barraged you about the situation concerning me and the professors.' 'Left work, biked home in the rain...' 'I do strive for approval, but I can't change who I am, nor do I wish to.' Or perhaps I was too sensitive. 'There's nothing wrong with you,' he would say; he would, for the most part, believe, 'You are precisely the way I'd ever expect you to be.' Though there is, I feel guilty to admit, perhaps something to be said about the expectations of one who is as, let's say, *enigmatic*, as him, 'But goodbye, perhaps,— Narwhal.'— however well-intended, dogged, destined as he feels he is to be uncontrived—

ARTHUR: Sovereign she sways, in silence standing. Strumming the contours, confined and common as sharp, and staccato, seas and mesas purging articulate bluffs dramatic, through the ripples protesting her pallet-knife paddle with kisses, jeweled, perfidious; lips, confusion-glazed resonances flattering, if tuning-forks yet warped hammers, forkéd eddies, seethe foamy clashing contrasts refreshing, that alongside peers; poppies, pomegranates; prune, flare, skewer, her malleable toes— and from the pointed indecision of the compass blades a tolling, sans resound, yet romantic battlements parting, if beams wringing light annexing circadia, they do rebound— and breath!

She is wise enough to know of freedom's blindness, and free to blind her wisdom when enough she knows. The sun at its zenith props a halo upon her head. Freedom, and knowledge; expedition and love! Comedy and understanding; quantum uncertainty of god particles and calculus tagging proofs upon the asymptotes of infinity; adorn or defile, however suits the respective schemas—the two dwell in such absurd contradiction!

Longing for the other, until they conspire to innovate an overcrowding of the boundless—forced by the constraints of incompatibility, unsuspected—as is their tradition, into conflict, until the usage of providence is by some sham sacrifice returned, if somewhat less nearly, to the antebellum state of a moment gone by. And she dissipates it with a shrug.

She knows the price of milk on stamps and barter for oil by the barrel. And for what? 'For baptism by chivalry!' While the wind, it covets and in more profane abandon than the beaded commissions and bishops knighting agency to jetties, dutiful birdcalls, the most righteous of distinctions for the bright flecks on leopard-skinned crests curing casualties the gap-toothed mission bells once having cracked prudently slandering futurity, flayed alongside Augustinian saints, trading sandals for sensibility, blisters for callouses, &c.—aplomb, don't mind the honey it tastes like texture, who in antiparallel advance!

Rather reckon chaos that with slight leeway repeats!, approaching insight, half-measures of which a learned man will call god... *Alight!* And far between, with laughing lungs like bellows, fluting tempests flaring, 'And for perfumed inconsequence,' *algorithms yet hydromedusa green fluorescent Greek key folds*, love and irony never had rhythm! Because *motifs—tagging motifs!* *These*, refrain, lambaste not the creator, his compassion, she, his merciful stamina, sojourns on commandeering, *Harmonies surpassing harmonies, these*, hulks commandeering, *These are the ages of the catalysts*, causes, she does abet the wind, 'There is no science, there is no prettier lie, and for what?' And for what? 'And for loveliest conquests and

what not. I'd never just one answer, and for what?' *Causes commandeering hulks*, and without mockery or collusion, ungathered and gambling what— and for what? 'For sundown's broken toe! The anchors drop their straddled plunge, and kick to have my eddies stirred, and the mainsail lifts, and the top sail shifts, and arcs to have my winds embraced.' *Commandeering causing hulks commandeering causes hulking*. She charges upright, proud; a once-lighted candlewick; and with no desire to light the way—turns. She awaits the sun to blossom as the exile, contrapposto, upon her Pacific throne—concrete, magical.