How Lost Can We Get?

by lisa rosenblatt

I glance down at the lines on her hand. Follow them over mountains and through wild rushing streams. She shrieks, making the curtains on the windows shake. A telephone rings. A hand waves hello. A car skids to a halt. ... A child runs across the street and sees it in time. It's off now…

I enter smoothly, sketch them out of a grey charcoal. The guard in the booth would not let her pass. But me, well, I get through. So I smile and say, sure, fine, let her in here. She walks, helmet in hand, down the well traveled path. Between leather jacketed backs and mugs of wine, paper plates balanced on gloved hands, mothers holding onto small children, a snatch of a beige coat, masses in front of the stands milling and two long black wool coated young men, well combed ear-length hair, fitting ever so perfectly onto their heads and behind their ears, and a woman with a skirt, she pushes her bike. bicycles, and wouldn't you know it, a dream.

Passing through the bakers, butchers, and candle makers, she (that is the other she) glances down at her hand. And why is it her (the other she), well that would have to do with the way HE told her to say it — he told her how to say things and she listened and when she said things “his” way they started to make sense. Not sense as in, oh, there is a bucket and there is some water and the water goes in the bucket and when the bucket has holes the water flows out of the bucket. No, they started to make sense, for example, like, there is a bucket and the water flows out of the bucket and then it would start to rain and she'd stare at the rain and wonder what bucket it was flowing out of. So you see, his sense and her sense got rather confused and then there wasn't much that didn't make some sort of sense: Time to leave that now.

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Specifically, casually, hands now thrust in pockets, they circle the spot. Watch it unfurl.

“Your family, that family is crazy, everyone of them hush hush, tweet tweet, a little screw loose — or a bird, what kind of bird they got there?”

And she, with a carefully knit multicolored cap and well-worn flat leather shoes doesn't say anything, nods a bit. He continues:

“Oh wheeee just kipping off the edge there, the two of them, mom and dad, they lie on those benches in the garden, heads perpendicular and say, ‘Do you know that cheese costs ten marks more now? It certainly is cold, isn't it?' They just say bullshit like that.” and he speaks — it is clear this here is his foreign tongue — with a bit of a twang.

She still just nods, a bit energetically, a bit reluctantly. “And your brother, he just goes in the fridge and takes what he wants, eats, sulks, barks, ‘yah, yah, ah ha ha ha,' and he, the ‘I'm a man, man, radical climber, rock conqueror‘ brother tells you, ‘Beautiful, hey, your kid, it's a little mixed up thing, hey — I've got to mention it — but, but, it's not... hey mom gibs mir noch ein apple thing, here, what is this?' Munch munch, ‘yah, it's just not me, that kid, it doesn't look like me, well, i'm perfect, so…'”

And she starts to look even more reluctant, a little back line-ish, even, at the talk of her brother, yeah, and he goes on, “And that whole side of your family, that whole bunch are a bunch of nutters, but your dad, he's okay, yeah, Karl Heinz, he's okay.”

and then she laughs, “Oh, yes, yes, but the other side,” her eyes opening wildly, neck craning forward intensely, “The other side, well, there was one that jumped with an umbrella, wanted to fly, wanted to fly and, just wanted to see what it was like...”

“Huh?“ he says and is truly at a loss for words of any language.

And she continues, eyes glowing a bit, though I'm not sure it helps the situation at all, and he puts his lips together, pulls his knee closer to his chest and stops rocking for a moment on the bench on the island in the park with the artificial palms.

And I've lost them.

Just as silent is quiet, is a mid-dinner's eve. The smoke hangs as the only consolation. Adjust hands down there at the ends of arms and decide upon a crossed position. Right there. They are long, sure, those interludes, sure, as long as a sigh between courses — tongue running around on both sides, back and forth over smooth surfaces, feeling each ridge, moving inside. And the arms. Were you going somewhere?

Establish the optimal... slam your hand down on the table. Wind your watch. Sure, of course it is about time. It is always about time, isn't it?

The hands in pockets, expecting, (can't remember what to expect?), how's that face go? She grins. I chew at the time, cracking well-worked gum a bit between teeth, carefully, going “uhm hmm, oh ya,” tongue holding its place, sliding around gum, hanging out when I stop. She sips on her coffee, sweetly. I stop sketching.

I hear nothing. Don't even know it is nothing. "Thank you, want more?" She (and now that is not at all the other she) grins.

Yes.