

writing in loops

by Peter DeWolf

Antique pens better allow an old soul to express what needs expressing.

She sometimes catches herself adding loops (and loops) to the ends of words.

She taps the pen lightly against her chin. She taps along to a song she hasn't heard in months. One of many things he introduced her to.

Extra care must be taken when writing his name.

A single, boring line crossing the T would just never do.

Swirl it.

Love it.

She's very good at blocking out the disconcertingly silent pressing of Ultima keys all around her.

She wonders, briefly, how Ultimas so quickly took over from all other communication devices.

Her father told her about a time when telephones and personal computers were separate items.

One of many stories he told her.

From then.

In whispers.

She occasionally glances and sees how wired in everyone is.

She's not judging them.

She's... pitying them.

She shakes her head.

Smug superiority is not a good colour on her.

Turquoise is.

He loves her shoulders. This causes her to play with the thin strap of her sun dress.

Even when he isn't around.

She wishes he was.

Soon enough.

Well... not soon enough.

She pulls a tiny piece of folded-up paper from the back of her small, pink journal.

She reads the first lines:
there are days
when we speak
with no syllables
stressed
because every word
between us
is
vital
powerful
and soft

She reads his writing in his voice now. She's not sure when that started.

It may be her favourite thing in the world.

She writes.

Lost.

Transported.

She sometimes wonders if she'll ever go so far that she won't be able to find her way back.

She writes that too.

She slips one shoe off.

Then the other.

Flats.

Many other short girls would wear some kind of heels.

But the only discomfort she wants while writing is with the words and feelings.

She doesn't even want that today.

She writes about a morning.

In the near future.

She writes of a persistent ray of sun.

Of sleepy kisses.

She rubs the back of one leg with her other foot.

His love of her legs is beginning to win her over.

She writes of tangled sheets
And hair.
Pulling.
Playing.
Her fingers guide the pen and tell the story, but her other senses
shout out ideas.
She's lost now.
Far away.
In his arms.
She wonders how long she's been smiling.
And if anyone else has noticed.
She knows better.
She unnecessarily writes his name in the most necessary way.
She writes.
A door is violently opened and slammed against the wall.
She is pulled back from her smile, as a cadre of men and women
in suits pour in.
They surround her.
She squeezes her pen.
The leader comes in.
You can always pick out the leader, she thinks, by the level of
smugness.
His is off the charts.
"You know what you've done," after he clears his throat, in
something between a question and a scolding.
"What have I done?" she asks, with brown flashing eyes more
defiance than they ever have before.
"Article 1436 b."
"I'm not familiar..."
"Miss, you've received the training. I have your digital signature
right here."
He projects a giant image of a fingerprint from his Ultima screen
to the wall.
She feels all eyes on her.
The men and women in suits.

The other coffee shop patrons, with their unseeing stares and uninvolved fingers poised over their Ultimas.

"Miss," the leader continues, "the law states that all writing must adhere STRICTLY to SEO standards. Which is why pen on... paper is not allowed."

"How do you know what I was writing?"

He points to a camera behind her on the wall. It is small, sure, but she's become an expert on spotting them.

She knew it was there.

"Drop them," he demands, with his eyes on his own Ultima.

"I won't," she says simply. Softly, but with conviction.

"Rules are rules, miss. Did you vote for Pepsi Co. to run this country?"

"Actually I voted for Coke..." she lies, having really keyed in "independent thought."

He recoils, as if the very words, echoing in his ears, cause him pain.

"Be that as it may..." he nods at the biggest suit.

Big Suit grabs her journal from the table and throws it on the floor, and twists her wrist until she drops her pen.

Two other suits grab her arms and begin dragging her out.

"Don't you people see what is going on here?!?" she screams.

The patrons barely shake their heads.

They are pitying her.

A female suit covers her mouth.

And they are gone.

Out the door.

The patrons quickly go back to their Ultimas.

A coffee shop employee scurries over, picks up her pen, journal and shoes and tosses them in the trash can.

On the front of the can reads, "Litter — Box and bag brought to you by the fine people at Polynational Plastics. Polynational plastics, where your trash is our treasure."

Touch screens are silently touched.

Coffee is efficiently distributed.

Pleasing, but not too pleasing, music begins playing over the PA system.

A little girl — maybe six years old — slides down from her chair and tiptoes away from her distracted parents' table.

She gets to the trash can. She looks both ways.

She fishes out the antique pen and quickly stuffs it in her pocket.

She smiles and she skips back to her seat.

