

Charlotte's Nexus

by Savannah Schroll Guz

At night, Charlotte circulated in the corner of his stone hovel, watching him. Through her outspread particles, she felt his internal energy changing, diverted as it was by an accretion of feelings and aspirations, which sought, but no longer found, an outlet. As their malignant force grew, his mind took on a sickly yellow glow.

In his letters to Rudel, he said he felt as if someone were watching him. *I know you don't understand this because everyone is in love with you. But, Hans, Fortune has been unkind to me. I am hunted like game. Even this letter, I know, is a folly. It's only a matter of time before I am rooted out.*

He became convinced that The Mossad would come for him, would wrench him from his bed, hook his feet to their transport, and flay his body by driving in circles over sandy soil and jagged rock. He had dreams of this agony again and again, and he would wake gasping for air, tangled in damp bed clothing, his heart beating so loudly he could hear nothing else. And so, he spent many nocturnal hours pacing the hovel's cold flagstone floor, seeking the piercing chill of each uneven square against his feet. The cold stones were confirmation of his sustained freedom but also, he felt, a portent of his eventual incarceration.

Feeling he was eternally observed, though seeing no one, he became inclined to flee residences without notice. He whittled his possessions down to a few portable items and became a living ghost: there one day, vanished by morning.

Yet he could never escape Charlotte.

Charlotte learned to concentrate her metaphysical girth so that she could place her multi-generational fingers inside the doctor's head. She sent painless electrical impulses through his neurons, and consequently, he lost the pathways that lead to memories of his experiments, memories he had reveled in during his most profound moments of desolation. She also allowed parts of herself to circulate through the doctor's body along with his unoxygenated blood. She

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found, as was true of every living being she inhabited, the undeniable allure of falling into and traveling along with the blood tide, obliged to move by the force and beat of something faraway and primal—but relentless and unavoidable. It was, some of her older facets told her, so much like love. Rushing away from the source, nearly drowning, coming back again...and again...and again...until the drowning could be mastered, managed, sustained.

While passing through his cranium, dispersed among many cerebral vessels, Charlotte increased the expansion of her particles. She pushed outward, corrupting the cellular network, distending the intricate lattice of collagen and elastin. His vessels elongated and curved under the increased pressure. And he never felt a thing, except perhaps, a rise in his sense of uneasiness and an inexplicable tingling in his feet.

