

Gimmick Point

I

I can't afford a private retirement home! How do elderly people earn a living when they have never been wage earners or worked in a company, nor been artisans or business owners?

At twenty, some see morphine as the solution, but later on, you find yourself clinging to a very unsafe walker, even with four wheels...

At 76, I now live in a care home—a retirement home for artists, with a specialized unit; *unit* for autistic people. I am an artist; I transcend conventional narratives. Local residents are either surprised by or accustomed to my escapades; with rare exceptions, they are kind. Otherwise, I could shove my tongue up their asses.

How do they earn a living—those who reach the age of 80 without having endured the mind-numbing, exhausting, and soul-destroying toil of the proletariat, or—unless they turned to crime to amass a nest egg—the marginal existence of high-stakes thieves seeking to secure a safety net for their impending decrepitude and senility?

They settled me into a living space designed for disoriented elderly people with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders.

I have no gender; I reject them all, and the woman's work of my consolations is kept warm. Integrating the care facility into the urban fabric facilitates partnerships and opens the residence up to the outside community, or so they say.

So, I regularly leave off my bracelet, put it aside and slip away to wander the neighborhood.

It is others—local residents, whether surprised by my escapades or accustomed to them—who bring me back, for I lose my way and, very quickly, no longer know what time it is or where I am.

It is true that I have always been vague—I have never liked mooring lines. I never liked being tied down. That is a fact. As a child, my mother used to laugh at me about that. She would chase me around the dining room table with an extension cord in her hand, demanding that I get down on my knees and beg for mercy.

I owe it to her for being the first in a long line of humans to slice open my eyelids with the scalpel of their reality—mine as well, since we shared it.

Through successive transformations, I cut myself off—sometimes by proxy, sometimes directly and without a filter. I won't list them; I won't name them.

From the molt to the insect—there lay my sex, my breasts. Then my vocal cords; it was another artist who tried to amputate them from me late in the day. I bear him no ill will, for every amputation marks the threshold of a new *exuvia* and another *imago*.

The local inhabitants are far less favorably disposed towards me. Stubbornness and cruelty!

I've encountered species far more hostile, obstinate, and sectarian than that; it's par for the course when it comes to the purity of a form—one must play Procrustes.

And thus agree to lie down on the bed. To let oneself be amputated—it is so gratifying, when you think about it. We all have something to pare away, to cut off, to castrate.

And I wouldn't mention my addictions—the doses needed to get through it all. Directly across the street from the nursing home sits a bar under an apartment complex.

Here goes!... This is my life's appendix.

II

I'm jaywalking.

Some crossed paths with me enough times to recognize my harsh behaviour. But what can you do? I'm an artist, a child of Procutes. For I have practiced the oldest professions in the world, and whatever didn't kill you didn't make you any weaker, either.

Much like schizophrenia for certain artists, an embraced and accepted vulnerability is an essential string to my voice.

Oh, the ecstasy of fragility—its balance. It is not that I have become hardened; but once stripped of everything, what could possibly touch you? The wind?

In the meantime, all the social amputations. I welcome them!

While awaiting the next stroke of the bow—castration! I am really delighted about it! You have to catch me while I'm busy scratching away at my itch-fests. I welcome the blows that detach me from myself, but I don't like being plugged into a wall socket, and I detest retractable leashes.

So, I'm jaywalking, and always running *off the tracks*.

Being forbidden to do something—that is what's at stake for me now. It's something that stayed with me from childhood, and later on, I politicized it instead of somatizing it.

The Rollator pulls to the left and drags me along on downhills, while even the slightest incline becomes an obstacle.

Most of the time, since the sidewalks are too narrow and treacherous, I make my way along the gutter.

The staff at the care home were used to my escapes! They yell at me, but I couldn't care less.

Hello, the French kiss—if there's only one tongue left because the other one was torn out!

A quality study had established that the Arty unit was the most challenging for personnel, who would either crack under the strain or fall completely under the resident's spell.

I have encountered extremely dangerous species—such as elapids, and not just the kind that speak easily—as well as what is truly the most dangerous stretch of tarmac on the planet, given all that artificial land development and soil sealing.

So, asphalt my tongue—and I wouldn't budge an inch!

There was no middle ground, resulting in significant staff turnover. The nursing manager was cool, but HR was absolutely furious!

Hello again, the French kiss: think seven times before you castrate my tongue—or, at the very least, roll it around in your own stubborn mouth! The locals are either surprised by my escapades or used to them. On the other hand, the people from the surrounding area are less familiar to me.

It's a public residence; I can't afford to splurge on a private care home, and my family consists of friends I could count on the fingers of an amputated hand. And I'm not even talking about my addictions—the doses needed to get through all this.

How do they earn a living—those who reach their eighties without having endured the mind-numbing, exhausting, and deadly toil of the proletariat, or—unless they turned to banditry to amass a nest egg—the marginal existence of high-stakes thieves trying to secure a safety net for their impending decrepitude and senility?

Sixty years ago—and ever since—I had thought about morphine, but as time goes by, you find yourself clinging to your Rollator!