The Gesture of Destroying

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Moira began destroying things before she was born.

While still gestating in her mother’s belly, Moira destroyed her mother’s figure, complexion, and social life. By the eighth month, she had destroyed her mother’s sense of youth and possibility, while also destroying her father’s peace of mind, and plans for the future. This previously amiable and easygoing couple had, however, planned for a child. So these particular forms of destruction were absorbed by Moira’s parents, who adored each other. It would take more than pregnancy to ruin their marriage, they told each other, through their eyes and fatigued smiles. But even as an embryo, Moira could sense all the things that awaited her in the wider world, beyond the nervous tattoo of her mother’s heartbeat: things that would soon turn naive and unblinking faces towards her, not expecting the fearful purity of her strike.

When Moira was born, she permanently destroyed her mother’s capacity for intense physical pleasures, just as she destroyed the doctor’s eardrums with her preternatural and piercing shrieks. The newborn’s skull was abnormally hard and obstinate, launching her into the world like a torpedo, or blunt
ice-breaking frigate. The mother’s screams matched the child’s; although the latter’s contained a cold fury that the other’s did not.

During her first year of life, Moira destroyed the sleeping patterns of her well-meaning guardians, and with it, their general equilibrium. As a toddler, she destroyed the toys that were brought to her with parental trepidation. She enjoyed the texture of the synthetic hair of her dolls between her teeth, before ripping them out from the roots like a wild animal. She enjoyed pulling the arms off of soft toys, and tearing down the mobile of colorful birds that hung suspended above her crib. Moira’s parents feared that she was somehow innately feral. But feral creatures are not evil. They are simply wild. Undomesticated. Moira had a method to her malice, and gained great pleasure from its deliberate and unclouded purpose.

By age ten, Moira’s father had rebaptized his daughter — silently, in his own thoughts — Kali. This rather gangly suburban goddess — so unprepossessing at first glance — had indeed, by this stage, succeeded in separating her parents. Once or twice a year, Moira’s mother would occasionally meet her ex-husband at a diner downtown for lunch, punctuated by long pickle-flavored pauses, on condition that he not bring “the child” with him. By this stage, this very same child had swiftly destroyed her father’s career, which had once been very promising, before this young demon arrived in their lives, with her pockets full of powder kegs.

As a teenager, Moira destroyed the self-esteem of any fellow students who dared to approach her, as well as the teachers who tried to help this problem child, with the dirty blonde hair, and the red-tinted eyes. By this stage, Moira’s destructive tendencies were so natural to her, so effortlessly executed and enjoyed, that she didn’t necessarily realize she was doing it. By now, there was little intention to her thoughts, words, or actions that could be deemed cruel. Destruction merely followed in her wake, as if she was a Pacific Rim tsunami, reborn in the shape and aspect of an adolescent girl. When, for instance, Moira found herself alone in the high school art room, surrounded by the recently fired clay animals — the ones that her peers had lovingly created
with their clumsy, childish hands — she barely even registered that she was being destructive, as she tipped them one by one on to the floor, leaving a crunching blanket of archeological shards for the janitor to sweep up; his head shaking at the Sisyphean senselessness of his vocation.

On occasion, however, Moira would begin to reflect on her destructive nature, and wonder if she was as evil as everyone said she was. “Does evil feel evil?” she wrote in her diary, before destroying the book that very same evening; page by page, fed into the fire that she made in the garden. (Despite her natural attraction to fire, Moira felt that arson, when applied to more ambitious projects, was cheating — outsourcing destruction to an element other than herself, and thus robbing her of the right to take most of the credit.) As a young woman, she read about her spiritual ancestors: looters, vandals, barbarians, pirates, pillagers, soldiers, and terrorists. She enjoyed the tales of explorers, and other imperial agents, who brought destruction to new worlds by camel, sail, train, or inside their own sneezes; just as she relished the legacy of bankers, investors, and real estate “developers,” who developed only their own images of the future, like film negatives in the sun: bleaching the lives and livelihoods of others into a bright oblivion. Reading about such economic rapine, she felt keenly the difference between a picturesque ruin, and a demolished building: the latter being infinitely more noble and satisfying to her soul. And yet none of these agents of destruction rose to her impeccable standards, since they all put taper to wick for a reason; albeit an unjustifiable one. They all destroyed with an alibi, an excuse, a mission, a calling, a plan, or a signature from the authorities. This belittled their achievements in her eyes, since they were not pure. These were means towards an end, whereas Moira’s actions were only a series of ends, each their own unique and uncompromising terminus. Of particular interest to Moira, among these imperfect kindred spirits, were the Luddites, who destroyed machines in order that they themselves could be able to continue their productive work. This paradox confused and troubled her. As did the tales of her pseudo-namesake, Kali. A goddess of destruction, who
cleared the cosmic way for rebirth. Was there no hope of a pure destruction, then? No possibility of irredeemable havoc?

As a woman in full bloom, Moira liked to get drunk and tip over chessboards in dark cafés. This occasionally led from astonished and heated words to sexual congress. But her addled sensual companions would soon run scurrying from her bed, clutching their clothes, and counting themselves lucky to have escaped at all. At such moments, flushed and exhilarated, Moira would lie alone in her bed and fantasize about the universe before the Big Bang; its inky void seducing her with its restless absence. The mythic moment would build and build in her mind’s eye: nothingness itself, pressing on the window pane of existence, like black snow, forcing itself through a cabin window during an avalanche. And just as the explosion of cosmic matter ignited in her brain and body, she would shudder with conflicted excitement. All that sudden substance, appearing *ex nihilo*, and now awaiting destruction. Destruction wrought through the violent collision of black holes, the spectacular collapse of dark stars, or through the more subtle and exquisite demise of entropy itself. The sheer, pitiless unfolding of inevitability.

At such moments, Moira’s consciousness was as sharp and focused as the poisoned tip of Time’s Arrow itself. (Zeno be damned!) She respected the universe for destroying everything it creates, eventually. Whether this was God’s sinister plan, or some allegorical blind watch-maker, it didn’t matter to her. As long as there were broken springs, smashed coils, warped gears, and other delirious detritus strewn all over the floor of this divine workshop. Indeed, Moira wished that she herself possessed the patience and maturity—not to mention the infinite lifespan—to watch the universe destroy *itself*, like a snake eating its tail. But she was in fact too addicted to the thrill of destruction to delay her own gratification. She was too habituated to the feeling that the gesture of destroying created within her; distorting her thoughts, her face, her body, her behavior into a kind of fearful grace.

She simply adored being abhorred.
By the time Moira reached middle age, the autumn years beginning to curl their dry and flaky fingers about her, she had stopped thinking about destruction altogether. And yet it continued to trail all about her, like a black wedding train, or dark plumes of blood, blossoming in a warm bath. The lined reflection in her mirror seemed increasingly surprised that she herself was succumbing to entropic forces. By virtue of her own inhuman instincts, she had presumed that she was exempt from mortal, even physical, laws. Had she been seeking freedom all this time, through her destructive gestures? No. That would have been too human; resulting from a banal and pragmatic self-interest. The modes of destroying she now deployed so unthinkingly, like the condensation of breath or the scattering of bird seeds, had nothing in common with the everyday experience of mere disruption or disturbance. (Both of which could be traced back to certain psychic alloys forged between self and world, in the touchingly deluded interests of the former.) That is to say, if Moira had tipped over the chessboard while in the midst of playing the game, then she would no doubt have a reason for doing so: to avoid losing. Such a gesture would have been a perverse form of respect for the rules of the game, and indeed for her opponent. But to disturb the chessboard sitting innocently between two strangers, and disrupt their game? This is a very different relationship to one's fellow man, and the gestures they expect, in order to maintain a bare minimum of civilization. Such an act is senseless and anti-social. And therein lies its special tang, for those rare souls who truly put no stock whatsoever in either sense or society.

When Moira died, her own purity of action remained, echoing off all the walls that she had ever touched, and aloof from the usual ambivalent compromises of her kind. Indeed, her own death was a tour de force, no less impressive for being imperceptible to the outside world. Every failure of nerve, organ, tissue, and cell was the result of her own will and attention; accumulated over many agonizing, ecstatic months, and turned inward. She did not fight the forces of finitude in her body. Rather she welcomed them, like a lavish and indulgent host. Her system
became so reversed that she seemingly breathed in carbon dioxide, and exhaled oxygen, to better fuel explosions of the future. Flowing now into pure stillness, emptied of both perception and intention, she finally destroyed her own stubborn tendency to avoid destruction, leaving only the temporary contours of hollowness itself.