The Perfect Mango

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Psychoanalysis

I am looking for an analyst they tell me analysis might be my cure it might suture my brain make my mind whole recreate me in a way that might allow me to live with myself. I begin my search carrying my life in a little pack on my back the apostrophes the commas the colons the semi-colons tied to my feet question marks in my ears.

You are the first one I meet I have left my voice on their machines I wait for their calls. I know nothing about analysis I have lent out my mind before it didn't help I am scared. I am late you summon me directly into your office the room in which you will analyse me. The walls close in on me high ceiling dark furniture you have modeled your office after your title. This is the analyst the office says you are the patient. The office must be cold impersonal unassuming yet daunting with dusty books Freud on the covers papers covering the desk notebook on your lap. Lie down you say the couch is blue polyester you sit behind me your feet up you listen.

This office is different. I am facing you you are sitting in a black leather chair I can almost touch you. You are rich I am going to make you richer room in good taste large so posh. Elephants burgundy Persian rugs black leather couch large windows I feel safe here you will take care of me you are successful. Over your moustache you look at me I don't like your moustache your eyes are small
how did you become so rich? “You will pay me directly,” you say. Yes, I think. I am your decorator.

I am late. Why do you think you are late you ask. Because I didn’t leave myself enough time to get here I think but that will not do you will have to analyse it this will add to your reputation you will exist through me I will send you new patients you will include me in your case study.

Your office understated warm beige carpet beige painting on the wall beige couch. I cannot analyse you you say you need more than I have to offer you say. You were late you say you are not ready for me.

You talk about the light at the end of the tunnel about taking care of the child within about love and peace and shame. You sit in front of me I am interviewing you with my life you are my fourth analyst this is me dissect me show me your talents help me give you something to fix tell me if I can be helped. From across the room I look at you your face friendly expectant you can see me every Sunday too. Can you see me? Paintings made by your children on the walls stick men tractors bees scribbles you look at them with pride clutching your cup of tea. Why are you here you ask, tell me about yourself. I come to you fragmented have left my arms in Freud’s office my feet with the rich man my eyes in the beige room. I can help you we can help each other you say we must communicate with the child within come back tomorrow.

For a week I play analyst-hopping. Eleven o’clock with Freud twelve-fifteen the child-within two o’clock how much will this session cost. Five o’clock I am dead have written too many stories words unspoken have warmed your chair have paid for your new carpet your new painting your tea.

The child-within is boring me I long to leave the hour is too long. I must go I tell you I am tired I do not tell you I will not return. In the rich man’s office I talk about my analyst-hopping I am ashamed. I cannot help you the
rich man tells me you need analysis five times a week I
cannot give you that much time you must go elsewhere.

In the streets I feel alone. One more analyst my game
is almost over what if you won’t have me I will be alone
again what if I can’t be helped I will be crazy forever.

I will see you every day Freud tells me you will come in
the mornings lie on the couch tell me about your dreams
pay me in advance. I try not to notice that you are falling
asleep I need you I want you to exorcise my soul (these
are your words) I want to be cleaned out pink with spar-
kles not this deep magenta that hurts when I bend the
wrong way. I tell you my dreams I dream for you to write
them down. I am scared on your couch I cannot see your
face what are you looking at you eat an apple I can hear
your knife cut it into quarters it crunches between your
teeth you slurp your juice chew gum bite into a candy
fall asleep. I throw up the sound of your slurp haunts my
sleep I eat and eat and eat.

I return to you every day cry when I leave you open me
up do not sew me back together we are finished for to-
day you say you do not say goodbye. I leave walk into the
store fill the gaps you have opened stick them together
with cinnamon buns date squares butter tarts I throw up.
I return to you I have nowhere else to go. Every day I have
less to say I hear you snoring I can’t bear the slicing the
slurping the chewing I think of the combinations of food
I will use to stop the pain I long to turn around to scream
WAKE UP. I am quiet well-mannered I was taught to keep
my mouth shut don’t interrupt. What are you thinking
you always ask are you afraid you missed my words you
were asleep again. One day I tell you I am uncomfortable
perhaps afraid you might fall asleep what does it bring up
you ask this has nothing to do with me you say it’s your
father your mother your fear you say slurping and chew-
ing. I am quiet I have no words. You do not exist you tell
me you are created through other people you cannot bear
for them to fall asleep because you only exist through
their gaze. You are not looking at me you do not acknowledge me you fall asleep I do not exist.

The streets are cold heat rising from the snow bright blue sky I am alone I am not here this is not me please tell me who I am. I cannot dream I do not sleep my waking hours bland I am numb.

Today you tell me you cannot help me if I won’t speak I try to open my mouth nothing emerges I have no words you will fall asleep you kill me with your sleep. It is eleven o’clock I look at my watch what are you thinking you ask I don’t know I say when will this end one by one the seconds pass my watch has stopped. I sleep when I am awake I am not alive I walk through the streets throw up undigested food you tell me I am a monster a parasite I feel like a mosquito I suck your blood you squish me between your thumb and index finger.

I meet another analyst your office small unassuming you ask me about myself I tell you he falls asleep you are angry. Leave him you say he is sucking your spirit out of your body you say you do exist you say I will help you you say. My sixth analyst. I am scared I feel like a bouncing ball in one office out the other more food for your stories while I disappear. The next one is gentle you can’t stay with me you say you are too complex I will help you I will find someone for you I know where to look. I am tired I let you do the work come to see you once a week tell you bits about myself conceal others I am tired.

Now I have found you. My lucky analyst-number-seven. You do not promise a cure I can stay crazy this is me I am relieved. Before you accept me into your world you send me to one more analyst this time for an assessment you want to know if this is the right treatment I go to him.

Another office grey carpets this time I feel comfortable. Your face is soft you look at me when I talk you listen. I am nervous I want to hear you say that this will be my cure that I will grow into myself through analysis I want to know that I have been fighting the right battle giving
my body to a worthwhile cause. I tell you about myself soon I am talking freely I have found my language I can speak I laugh you laugh with me. The session is over one hundred and fifteen dollars to ask you for your opinion will I do well am I a candidate? Yes. You need a language you say you will create yourself through analysis you will learn to speak the pain you will make it part of you part of your experience you will write the story yes you do exist you say he was wrong you will soar you can fly good luck and courage you say. I am already flying you believe in me I am happy yes I will fly look at me I am flying!

Today I sit in your office purple walls orange chairs a couch in that other room a little further away. I do not yet lie on the couch you are preparing me first I must trust you you listen when I speak look into my eyes when I am quiet. Today I know I am alright we will not change me I am relieved I will not be cured I will come every day. We will work together I will tell you stories my fiction my truth you will piece the stories together sometimes I will dream you will record my dreams and we will analyse them together.

* * *

This morning we sit in a café jazz playing softly people walking in and out. Take out your map. We are going on a journey. Look carefully bring it closer to your eyes put on your reading glasses. On the right hand corner trace the thick red line with your index finger. Put the map down set it on the table keep your finger on the red line. Hold your finger. Stop moving. Where the red line stops look closely. Move your face down nose almost touching the red line look closely do you see the tiny purple veins can you see the faint traces of life look very closely move your finger take off your glasses. Follow those traces with your eyes surround yourself with the lines tie them onto your body dive into the map. You are the map. Now follow me.
You will need a microscope today we will follow that thin purple line which begins at the corner of your left eye. Feel the line with your finger explore the contours caress the bumps. This is our journey.

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I am fifteen years old I do not live here anymore my life is in my dreams I cannot see you I do not exist. I dream of another place a time when I feel no pain a time when I do not stuff myself with food a time when I do not hear you cry softly in your room. Sometimes you come home you are not my mother you are my child I hold you in my arms take care of you whisper in your ear. You are scared life is growing outside you feel the streets alive with people you come home to die. I know you must leave I am selfish I want to feel you here but you are not really here you have no home. Your child grows without you she is strong the cord severed she is neither mine nor yours. Sometimes I long to confide in you to tell you about the food that rots inside me the food I swallow without tasting the food that tries to fill the gaps. You have no ears you have left them with the books waiting for you on the desk by the window on the third floor of the library. You dream of returning to your books.

When you can’t leave when you must stay home you pile your books on the kitchen table the kitchen is out of bounds. You hold the key to my hunger my stomach screams for food it will not be appeased you are locked in for hours you sleep your head on the table I dare not enter it is your domain my stomach belongs to you. You do not eat the books are your food I am jealous my stomach demanding growing I am enormous I throw up your body perfect thin lithe never hungry mine ravenous. The two of you do not speak anymore you do not see him he does not exist. I hold him from you you can not breathe he swallows your air I am your bodyguard I am your body.
He does not speak he fills his lungs and goes to sleep the
lights are turned down we must not wake him. Sometimes he wakes he moves your books he is angry they are
invading the house his life is piled up with your books
you speak for him now he is silent you are reading away
his voice he is disappearing up down bipolar he is scared
he screams at you you cry you long for your desk at the
library where your books are waiting.

I am fifteen I dream of another place. Soon I will leave I
am old have already lived too long. She has grown up her
curls reach her shoulders she wakes at night her screams
leave cracks in the freshly painted walls. You scold her
these walls must not be cracked you say the house must be
kept clean and beautiful don’t drop the bowl don’t make
a mess don’t eat in front of the television don’t walk on
the carpet don’t enter the living room don’t leave crumbs
no dirty dishes don’t breathe too loud. She does not listen
she screams at night breaks your favourite bowl watches
television all of the time cereal on her knees. I am quiet
never disturb you I throw up quietly while my brother
sleeps he does not wake he waits until the house is dark
and then he moves like a cat strumming his guitar.

One day you enter my closet find ten pails of vomit. I
have to wait for you to go to sleep then I flush them down
the toilet during the day I throw up in my room. You find
the vomit you question me. I feel sick sometimes I tell
you. You are too tired to push me you say no more you
tell me I must stop. Yes I say I am relieved I go back to my
room I throw up.

No one must know I must be careful not to let them
see me I snap on my happy face put make up around
the dark circles of my eyes I leave the house and go to
school. At school I do not hear them I dream of my es-
cape I write stories in my head I take out my map and
trace my journey.

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