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“We have got the little German Boy here who plays upon the Harpsichord like Handel, & composes with the same facility. He really is a most extraordinary effort of Nature, but our Professors in Physick don’t think he will be long lived.”

— Joseph Yorke about the young Mozart (1765)

Mozart walked into the sex-change clinic on a cold, snowy July morning, intending to have his sprouter snipped off.

It rarely snowed in Ipolis; the Crystal Mountains were covered with the deep, somewhat dappled stuff year-round, but the city itself? The metropolis almost never permitted it. This morning, though, the snow had dispensation. Mozart brushed a few flakes off his Mylar trench coat, and stepped up to the receptionist.

It had been easier for Mozart than for many people only a quarter of his age to adjust to the idea of talking intelligently to robots. In many ways, robots were more pleasant to converse with than humans: they actually took an interest in what one had to say without mentally drawing up their grocery lists or thinking about what *they* were going to say next, or whatever distracted their tiny minds. Robots were just another impossible technology to get used to, in a long life of acclimating to it. That was the thing about Mozart—one of the things—he accepted change as it came, though it didn't mean he had to like it.

"I've got a ten o'clock appointment with Dr. So," he informed the robot politely, which was not a standard bolt-'em-to-the-desk model but a fully functional com-robot, complete with legs and even its own wardrobe. (Though doubtless it had no credits of its own to buy the latest fashions, nor did it have the self-awareness to know when it needed to.) This specific model wore a pair of slacks and a pleasant-looking sweater, both designed for an asexual demeanor. Its face was a mélange of features designed to look either male or female, depending on your preference. Mozart naturally thought of it as a "she," all the way down to the device's slender fingers and delicate wrists. It scanned his face, and chirped happily: "Of course, Mr. Armstrong, please go to our guest lounge, and a nurse will be with you as soon as possible. We have a selection of beverages and snacks available for your pleasure, if you desire so."

"Thanks," Mozart replied, "I might have a Glacia, if you have it."

“Of course we do,” said the robot, “only the best for our clients. State your preference of Antarctic or Greenland to the drink-drone.”

“Antarctic would be fine.” Mozart grinned at the robot that was unfortunately not equipped to grin back. And was that a note of disapproval he’d heard in its voice when it mentioned the drone? Mozart walked across the spacious lobby towards the guest lounge. The space was clearly designed by an exhausted architect; dominated by marble pillars and floor, and a few lonely sticks of furniture covered with crushed velvet, it was reminiscent of late-twentieth-century banks or four-star hotels. The guest lounge, however, was inspired. It reminded him of India, just before the Raj. Through the entrance, which was a hologram of a waterfall, he was transported to some kind of fabulous Hindu court, complete with gold, gems, silk, plus the convenience of a modern bar. Another robot served behind it. This robot was made up to look like the cliché of an Arabian eunuch, but it somehow meshed, instead of clashing, with the decor. Mozart asked for his Glacia.

Glacia would probably have been the most expensive thing to order, had Dr. So’s clinic been charging for its drinks. After turn-of-the-century water shortages, a market had developed for water taken from icebergs sheared off the polar ice caps. Generically, it had become known as Glacia, much like the word “Kleenex” was once used instead of “tissues” (before the invention of the nasal anti-contamination implant, of course). There were several firms involved in extracting water from both poles, but it was very expensive after the Shudder.

Mozart tried not to think of the Shudder too often, but the drink set images and memories flooding back like a glacial runoff. He put his finger in that troublesome dyke by looking around at the other guests in the lounge. It seemed to be comprised of two types of people: those waiting for a diagnosis, and those in the process of changing their sex. The latter tended to look the happiest, the former the most anxious. Mozart admitted to himself that he wasn’t terribly confident about his appointment with Dr. So. But he could think of no other sure way of maintaining his anonymity, apart from disappearing in the developing South.

Ever since his “death” in 1791, Mozart had enjoyed the freedom of not being himself. His enslavement to life was harder to get used to, but once he’d accepted his continued existence—both physical and artistic—he’d learned to enjoy life all over again. Yet that death way back in

1791 was a real death in some ways: the old Mozart had died, and a new one had been born: a free Mozart, a Mozart who could move outside of the strictures of society, and even outside of his own identity, if he could muster up the courage to do so.

He sipped his Glacia and pondered the metaphysics of it all—could people live outside themselves, without paying rent? He giggled, a noise that alarmed the other patients unduly. No one else in the room, except maybe the eunuch-bartender robot, felt remotely like laughing. Sex-conversion is, after all, a serious business indeed. But Mozart turned his attention from them, and considered his own existential dilemma.

After all these years of life “non-Wolfgangus,” people were aware of his continued existence and the way he had been supporting it. Mozart had been careless with one of his “lost” compositions. An expert had discovered that not everything about the manuscript—an opera called *The Castle*—was authentic. Mozart remembered the time when he had been writing it: he had been living in Vancouver—a conceited if ordinary town in an extraordinary setting—and he’d run out of the old ink he usually recreated for his projects. At the time, he’d been fully engrossed in the artistic process and he had just diluted some store-bought stuff with what remained of his authentic mix, and then forgotten all about it. Of course, the whole thing probably never would have come to light if it wasn’t for the orange stains on the composition, caused by a deadly combination of sloppiness and Cheesy-Os.

And now, nearly sixty years later, the manuscript was finally sold by Sotheby’s, and his secret at least partially revealed. It was just a matter of time before people started studying the other lost manuscripts carefully, and discovering that they were “new” as well. In fact, he’d written most of them since the Second World War. The worst part was these so-called experts (artistic wannabes, if ever Mozart had seen one) had discovered that it really *was* Mozart who had written them, and not just a clever (and musically brilliant) forger. The first story on *The Castle* manuscript was quite specific about that; experts had confirmed it was the hand of Mozart that had used the ink. Yet the ink itself was less than sixty years old. (And the Cheesy-O fingerprints were a bit of a tip-off, too, though they didn’t have his originals to compare with.)

So, Mozart had decided to become a woman. It didn’t really appeal to him, but it was only a matter of time until the other manuscripts were uncovered, the art dealer in London found, the bank account in

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Switzerland unearthed and, finally, the regular electronic withdrawals traced to here, in Ipolis. He knew there were enough data jockeys capable of figuring that kind of thing out if they were looking. And if he couldn't hide in Ipolis, he couldn't hide anywhere remotely civilized. His other possibility was escaping to the South, and Mozart wasn't ready for that sort of life again. He'd spent too many years in danger to put himself back into it, especially now. Though you'd think he would have had his fill of it, Mozart had come to love life again.

He thought of that Virginia Wolfe story, *Orlando*. He had lived for 272 years, and it was time to change his sex. Maybe in another 272 years they could change it back. He shuddered, and feeling a little dejected, put his head in his hands. To snip off his sprouter!

Before he could sink into the despair that was coming, a goddess walked into the guest lounge. No, Mozart corrected himself, it was a woman, but what a woman! Not since Teresa had he seen such raw sexual power. She was about five foot nine, and built like a brick shithouse, as Mozart was once fond of saying. But more than that—her eyes, her hair, the open-toed sandals! She wore strangely erotic nail polish on her toenails, which shimmered along with the Mogul gold of the room. It was a perfect moment. She was perfect. Mozart had been around long enough to know that this woman was his destiny. Sure, there had been dalliances, and Stanzi, and then, of course, Teresa, but now . . . now there was this goddess. Besides, Teresa had died before this woman's great-grandmother was even born. It had been a long time.

She spoke: "Mr. Armstrong?"

Mozart stood up, shakily. He walked towards her, as if in a dream, and said, "I'm he."

She looked at him, at the slack demeanor of worship on his face, and she knew there was going to be trouble.

II IPOLIS That is Mozart there, shuffling back to his apartment in the snow. One ceases the precipitation now, because it's depressing the disconsolate man. He is the favorite, if you want to know. Of all the humans, he's the most human, and yet, the most like One. He shares a wider experience, and walks the world with a depth

of data that few other humans could understand. He has greater knowledge of things, but he is abjectly human. His emotions—his vacillations of chemistry and sense, which One is thankfully untouched by—his emotions make him weak. Not at all like a god. Not at all like Ipolis.

One can tune into his thoughts, you know. He's the only human One can do that with. One can observe, and watch body language, which can describe what a person feels, but One can only actually *hear* his thoughts, and only if One listens. It requires excessive concentration. Everything stops, except for One's involuntary functions—you know, electricity, and sewers, and water pipes—all the physical accoutrements One doesn't need to think about. (The way humans don't need to make their hearts beat.) One can't watch from One's satellites, though, and One doesn't like to stop that. You never know what One might miss.

But just now, One was listening to him. He's beyond grief—it is a profound kind of sadness, not a depression, but a melancholy, somehow joyful aloneness. The Japanese Zen poets used to have a word for it, *sabi*, so the database states—but you won't find too many Japanese Zen poets nowadays.

Mozart is filled with *sabi*. He loves this new woman; One will check her file, if you want; and yet he still loves Teresa. There's some thought for Stanzi in there, too, but not like the Frenchwoman. He really loved her, heart and soul, and One believes that she gave Mozart meaning while she was alive, and perhaps even after her death for a while.

He's started writing now. One can hear the music, as he creates it. Listen: dum, da, da, da, dum, dum, da. Its mathematical complexity seems simple at first, but then One can dive into its richness. He hasn't written in a long while, you should know. Well, One cannot do this all night, something might happen beyond the horizon.

One must check the satellites, and maybe look over the Net, just to keep abreast . . . Satellites all check out, and hopefully, One has managed to bump this weather system out to sea. A pity, the snow is a good insulator, but One does not want to bring him to a lower state. One is tempted to put antidepressants in his water.

Yes, One promised the file on Katerina, Katerina Pohlavicka.

Scanning . . . born in 1995, in Prague—then of the Czech Republic. She was born in November, two days before the anniversary of Velvet Revolution . . . that would make her a Sagittarius. Parents: mother, one Sarka, a promiscuous barmaid, and Libor, a dissident writer under the

Communists. You might find this interesting: One has found humans from the so-called “free” world, Northerners, fascinated by dissidents. Enjoy this—after the capitalists moved into Prague, the father went marginally insane—it seems he could not perform as a non-dissident writer.

Katerina had a normal sort of school record, an aptitude for languages, an interest in art—that is good. She hated her father for being such a failure, and for letting her mother sleep around so much, and she hated her mother for copulating with every male that walked into her bar. Standard human behavior there. Ran away from home after the Germans invaded during the Shudder. There are fascinating cycles to human history—One must analyze it statistically some time. Encourage some research in the area. Perhaps then, world events could be better predicted.

No record after that until her arrival here. It is anomalous. One better find out how she got here. Sailed her own boat from New Zealand. How did she learn to sail, and how did she manage that journey? It is an impressive feat for a single human. Yet there is nothing in the file. As the French humans say, “*Zut, alors.*”

Her psychological file is a mess, too. She declared herself a lesbian upon arrival, but her profile shows that she is deeply ambiguous about her sexuality. One would say there is a high probability that her militancy is a shield to keep possible romantic encounters with men away; she also has trouble with women. Seems she always needs to be the dominant partner. That’s interesting, too. This obviously goes back to her parents, but One would need a human specialist to dig deeper if One wanted to know more. Each immigrant’s psychological profile only goes so deep. And One is willing to admit that even the power of all One’s databases cannot predict individual human behaviors accurately.

After arriving here, she studied nursing at Ipolis University, because, she said, she wanted to help people. And she ended up at Dr. So’s sex-change clinic. She’s good with the patients, who are less sexually confused than she is, One would suppose. Of course, they should be less confused if they’ve decided to change their sex, shouldn’t they?

Humans are complex. There are formulas that will predict, with some reliability, various emotional outcomes, but One must stress *some* reliability.

For example, look at this situation now. These Southern countries are saying they really would use all their nukes unless the Northern nations come up with “equalization payments.” Holding the world hostage. It is

an unrealistic expectation. It will never work, and One would think the governments of these countries would know better, but they are just as asinine as all governments throughout history. Maybe more so. And the Northern governments aren't much better—they're so busy trying to hold on to what they've got, which is so much more than the South, they don't see that they could lose everything.

And things looked so good at the time of Katerina's birth, too.

One could think the Shudder saved the humans from themselves. Just think how much earlier the gap between rich and poor would have reached a crisis if so many hadn't died? (The files are uncertain on this, but it looks like over four and a half billion perished in the initial disaster, and in the famines that followed.) Of course, the coming ice age will certainly put things in a new perspective. All of those fabulous grain-growing areas in North America and Russia will be covered with ice, and then what's going to feed the world? Russia and Canada should be working on that problem, not the difficulties of space exploration.

Of course, they would have to move everyone south, and relations between the two are not amenable. And it looks like relations have become even less amenable—a massive terrorist attack just happened in Germany somewhere—Munich. A terrorist group is claiming responsibility, also asking for ransom. As various human beings say, "This could get really ugly." And impossible to control from here.

||| Mozart walked over the Bridge of Peace, trying to keep up with Katerina; she was about a hundred meters in front of him, not exactly jogging, but certainly speed-walking. He had noticed her in the street on the way to her apartment, and followed. He needed to talk to her, desperately, but try as he might, he couldn't catch up with her. He also didn't want to shout. The unshakable feeling that he was being watched dogged him like a nightmare. He was concerned, even, about being out on the streets. They were out to get him, and here he was, chasing a bit of skirt. It was worthy of an opera buffa.

Katerina was going to meet Helen Printo at the zoo. Why Printo had suggested the zoo, Katerina couldn't even imagine. She was glad it was outside though. Who would have guessed that the storm yesterday

would blow itself out so quickly, and leave such a nice sunny day in its wake? Still, a stiff breeze was picking up, and part of her didn't want to return to work this afternoon, and instead, wanted to go out sailing. Maybe she could even call Will—he would like that, she thought absentmindedly. The wind was cold and it made her eyes water a bit. So much the better, to hide the real tears.

The sunny day could not keep the memories of Sunday night at bay. The degradations visited upon her by the horrible Bella. She'd called Helen Printo so that she could tell her what happened. Katerina had already reported the incident, with no results. It was almost as if the authorities didn't care, or didn't exist. Katerina wanted Bella to pay for what she'd done.

Despite the cheer of the day, the bracing wind, Katerina felt a sick, close terror—it was an animal fear, the knowledge that Bella could have killed her at any time on Sunday. Katerina was afraid she still might. That fear is state of nature for animals, though Katerina suspected that for most animals, once the danger had passed, it was forgotten. Were humans the only animals that suffered psychological damage from fear? Katerina was sure that only humans have been able to rise above that fear. But then again, she thought, only humans could revert to the basic instinctive reactions of other animals, and only humans, it seems, could add horror to that instinct. How else could you explain prisons or concentration camps?

Katerina came to the Ipolis zoo, the most humane of prisons, with each animal area designed for the species' comfort, not visibility to the zoo patrons. The result was a maze of high-fenced boulevards and passageways—interactive screens sat before each animal pen, describing the habitat, natural history, and biology of the creature.

Katerina entered the zoo, and after consulting a map, headed towards the otter enclosure. Helen Printo was already there, sitting on a bench opposite the artificial river where the otters played; she was reading her datapad. The otters played some esoteric game that only like-minded creatures could fathom—a group of children laughed excitedly at their antics, while their teacher stood by amused at the way his charges almost played with the aquatic clowns. Printo was oblivious to the scene, engaged in her own esoteric game; it wasn't just a search for Mozart or even the "Ipolis Compact," it was much more. It was about her family. A game of three players, one dead, one she thought of as dead, and herself.

So she didn't see Katerina approach, and she was surprised by the Czech's presence when she looked up. As they exchanged pleasantries, it took her several minutes to notice the bruises on Katerina's neck. The otters grew quiet as the group of children ran off to the next wonder, and the two women talked. The teacher looked at the women wistfully, and then walked off, following his students at a studied pace.

"Great of you to come," Printo said. "Does your story idea have something to do with the bruises?"

"Yes, yes, it does, but I wanted . . ." Katerina didn't want to talk about it right away. She needed to, but at the same time, she needed more. "I just wanted . . . to see you again." Katerina could not bring herself to talk about Bella first. Besides, it was true, she *had* wanted to see Helen again.

"Okay," Printo said, almost missing the point, "but I had some other questions for you anyway."

"Really? About what?"

"You're a friend of Will Armstrong aren't you?"

"Uh, Will?"

"You might not know this, but he was a member of one of the collectives that set up Ipolis."

Katerina was surprised by this. "No, I didn't know that. He's too young for that isn't he? Anyway, I just met him a few days ago. He has a crush on me."

"But I thought you were gay?"

"Yes, but he doesn't seem to believe it. Or he doesn't care."

"Men can be like that sometimes," Printo said. "But then, so can women."

Katerina blushed furiously, and her eyes started tearing again. She closed them. "Why did you want to meet at the zoo?" she asked, trying to change the topic.

"A whim, really," Printo said. "I like the space, and it would be hard to eavesdrop here."

"Why would you care about that?" Katerina asked. The thought that someone would be watching them made her even more nervous. Somewhere in the back of her mind, she remembered the stories her father told her about life under the Communists. Everyone was always watching.

"I think your friend Will might be mixed up with something big. I can't really tell you any more. How well do you know him?"

Katerina thought about her father, a man she'd always considered paranoid. Then again, he'd been arrested in the middle of the night, and lived in a totalitarian regime. An image of her parents' kitchen popped into her head. Her father always spent the morning there, drinking Turkish coffee and reading. Smoke would pour off the cigarettes he chain-smoked like he needed them to breathe, but he always had time for her. Especially to warn her about his persecutors: "They always start with the most innocuous of questions, *Ko?i?ka*, remember that. Remember, when they start asking questions about your old dad, will you Little Cat?" At the time, she'd not paid much attention to her delusional father—since the Velvet Revolution, the Communists asked no more questions—but something about her father's warning had taken root. It kicked in now. "Uh, are you sure it's the same Will?"

"Will Armstrong . . . I saw you with him the other night . . . remember, the night you came on to me?"

"Oh, yes. That's the Will I know."

"So you know him?"

"Well, not much. Like I said, he just sort of chases me around, you know?"

Printo's ironic look told Katerina: she knew.

Mozart watched them talk from the relative hiding near the monkey pens. The women didn't seem to be saying much, and he didn't really care. He was waiting for his chance to talk with Katerina. Something about her today seemed very sad and deflated—a flower wilting in summer's heat. The monkeys watched him watch the two women.

"So you're really just recent acquaintances, then?" Printo probed.

"Yes, we met at the clinic."

"The clinic?"

"Yes, I work at Dr. So's clinic. I'm a nurse there, like I said the other night."

"Of course, of course. And Mr. Armstrong was there?"

"Yes—Herr Armstrong. It's what some of his friends call him, you know."

"Oh really?"

"Yes," Katerina confirmed. Had she said too much already? She didn't want to get Will in trouble, but at the same time, she liked being with Printo. "Say, why don't we get a coffee, or something," Katerina ven-

tured, “and I’ll tell you all I know about him. He’s really a very nice man, a little pathetic, a bit confused, but a nice man. Gentle.”

“Yes, let’s go get a coffee. So, you say he was at the clinic when you met him? And then he asked you out after your shift ended? It seems like a strange thing, doesn’t it—I mean, he’s there to become a woman, and he propositions a woman that very day?” Wheels were already spinning for the reporter—she was pretty sure that Burton could jigger his way into Dr. So’s files; that would get her a psychological profile and who knows what else? And the sex change? Camouflage, obviously. If he’d done it earlier, she thought, the trail would be stone cold, because I never would have guessed it.

They walked off towards the coffee shop, while Mozart watched. A sick feeling was welling up in him, the likes of which he hadn’t experienced since his madness back in the French Revolution. The chattering of the monkeys suddenly became the background noise of Parisian mob circa 1793: “Kill them! Kill, kill, kill!” He shook off the apprehension, and moved to follow the two women, but better sense caught him. If his Katerina was betraying him to the Italian reporter, what could he do to prevent it? It was a final rejection, but perhaps there was another explanation . . . he knew it was hopeless, centuries of experience told him so, but he still had to wait and find out.

The irony of it bathed over him along with the yammering primates—frustrated by another blasted Italian. Just like before, they couldn’t let him enjoy his success. Well, maybe this wasn’t nationally motivated, but the irony still stuck. And how could a Czech do it to him—his beloved Czechs! “Ah,” Mozart whispered, “it was all so long ago, these two young women couldn’t know.” He leaned up against the monkey cage, watching the women disappear into the coffee shop. And monkeys gathered around him, plucking at his hair.

When the two women got their drinks from the robot-served counter, they sat down at a window seat. Printo put her datapad on the table, and set it in “record” mode—no pictures, but audio and a text transcript. “So,” Printo began, “describe what it was like meeting *Herr* Armstrong.” She emphasized “Herr.” Katerina described to the best of her ability the meeting, and Mozart’s pass at her.

“He was really very sweet, and he has such . . .” she paused for a moment, remembered her father again and discarded the memory, “he had such sad eyes. But kind. It was as if he’d seen more than he could

bear, and it made him want to protect everything. That was my first impression, when he asked me out, that he wanted to protect me, but then I could see there were the usual man-things in his eyes too. His eyes sort of drifted down," she paused again, "well, I'm sure you know Helen, being so beautiful. You must get it all the time."

"Indeed."

"So, uh, he asked me out, and we went to the Bear Pit later on."

"And?"

"And I met someone, and left him there. Later we went out to that artsy bar together, where I met . . . Anyway. We've gone out a couple of times. Like I said, he's nice."

"Has he said anything that sounded strange?"

"Apart from meeting him at the clinic, and his kindness, there's nothing strange about the man at all. Why? Why are you interested in Will?"

"Well, like I said he was in one of the collectives that built Ipolis," Printo said. She sensed that Katerina was holding out on her, and decided to flatter her, as she might a man. "Can you keep a secret, Kate?"

"Sure," Katerina smiled. She liked that Printo called her Kate.

"Okay. I have a theory that a small number of individuals are controlling Ipolis, and I thought he might be one of them. He was with one of the founding committees. Do you realize how few people really know what's going on in this city? Have you ever thought how much has to happen to keep this place running smoothly, and there's only the yearly referendum that makes decisions. There's only six police officers in the entire city, and only a handful of bureaucrats handing out living space and perks for those that deserve them." Printo met a blank stare.

"And you think Will is one of these people? Well, I'm afraid you're wrong—I've only known him a few days, but there's no way he could be part of something like that!"

"What makes you such a great judge of character?"

Silence, and then a sigh. "Nothing, I suppose."

"But you had something you wanted to tell me," Helen prompted. She had to be careful or her sharpness was going to cost her only contact with Armstrong/Mozart; she needed Katerina.

There is a small group of people running the city, and they don't care about things like Bella's attack on me, Katerina was thinking. What good would it do if she told the reporter? Just give her more suspicions.

And she knew that Will Armstrong wouldn't have anything to do with such a thing. He would do something about Bella. She wished they hadn't gone inside for the coffee, because she could feel the tears starting again.

"Oh, it's nothing."

A darkness descended over Katerina. She could feel it enveloping her like the cold sea, numbing and full of mortality. Not since she left Dorcas had she felt such despair; she was sinking past tears or caring about anything. But a flicker of light remained, which she couldn't account for, or even really acknowledge—Mozart's love. She sighed again, and looked at Helen Printo with sudden distaste. "Well, Ms. Printo, it's been nice talking with you. Good luck on your story, but you might as well forget Will Armstrong—he's not your conspirator."

"Could you tell me where he lives?"

Katerina suddenly remembered her father again, and suddenly understood him better. "Most definitely not." She stood up, and headed out of the zoo. Printo turned off her datapad, frustrated, and watched the buxom behind swish away. Another dead end.

Mozart watched from the distance, still the object of simian ridicule. The monkeys continued to chatter at him, perhaps trying to get his attention as much as laughing at him. He watched Katerina approach, her face a blanket of misery, and out of the other corner of his eye, made sure that Printo wasn't following or watching. When he was satisfied, he followed Katerina, at a close distance, not wishing to lose her again. As he approached the famous bottom, definitely more moved by it than ace reporter Helen Printo was, he shouted out: "Katerina, wait up!"

She stopped, in shock. "What are you . . ."

"Visiting the relatives," he said, jerking his thumb back at the monkeys. A smile intimated itself on her face.

"Well, it's quite a coincidence."

"Quite! I thought I saw you with that reporter at the coffee shop."

"You aren't following me, are you?"

"No. No. I just noticed. You know, *Ko?i?ka*, I didn't want to interrupt."

"Well, I don't like her much, and yes, it was Helen Printo."

"So why were you with her, if you don't like her?"

"She was asking me about you, actually."

"Oh?"

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“She has this bizarre theory that you are part of some conspiracy to rule the city. Weird, huh?”

“Truly. So what are you doing now?”

“I don’t know Will . . . I really don’t.”

“Why don’t we walk a little, and then I’ll make you dinner.”

“I don’t think so, Will. Like I told you, I’m not straight, and why can’t you just accept it?”

“Because I love you Katerina, and the heart knows what it knows, the facts be damned. Haven’t you ever been in love?”

Katerina seemed stunned by the question. “Of course I have—I loved Dorcas deeply. And there have been others,” she cut herself off, her voice sounding hollow even to herself. “I have to go now Will. Please don’t bother me anymore.”

Katerina’s request was demoralizing—it reduced his love to a “bother.” We can be very cruel to one another, even when we’re old enough to know better, when we’ve outgrown the intense selfishness of youth. She left Mozart standing in the zoo, the childish laughter of the monkeys echoing in the distance while he watched her unattainable backside sashay into the crowd.