

SOUL SEARCHER

Staring into a spelunker's nightmare, like a cat with crossed eyes chasing his redundant prey, I found myself following her home.

Her hat was lopsided, angling into an attitude of 'who gives a shit'. I had to comment on it and that was upsetting, for her and for me.

She led me to a rickety stilt house on the edge of the bay with fogged in blisters meeting the soaking wet morning.

In the back, where her son played on his face, there was a garden: tomatoes, chard, wishmelons, falcken drops -- everything necessary for the good survivalist.

"I can't stay," I told her.

It was because of her affiliations. She had connections to the world of the living, a place I found dimly uncomfortable. I don't associate with those kinds of people unless there's a party. She was going to be my party, with her sticky mouth and her wet mound. But I was forced to question my motives.

We can't all be scholars and artists, we have to make room for the the real people of the world, the ones who ride the trains and keep the bees.

"Maybe next time," I said, slamming her Sausalito gate and renegotiating my solo flight across the duck pond.

But she wouldn't have it. "Wait," she shouted, skanking through the roses, slithering into an obscene display of desperation. "I want to show you something, something I created."

This tickled my attitude.

"You mean some kind of art, or what?"

"It's a writing, a good writing."

I had time, maybe. So I followed her into the houseboat. Upside down and greasy, it looked like the after life of a medieval skirmish... she was no home maker, I was certain of that.

"Come, sit, have a glass of sherry."

"About this writing..."

"It's right here," she said, slipping the paper in front of me like newsprint for cat litter.

"Can I read it out loud?" I asked her.

"Of course."

"Bowling balls were never meant to be transported long distances. This I know, because I had one in the back of my bronco and it rolled around and shattered the rear. I'm not even a bowler. It was given to me by the father of my child, at least I assumed he was the father of my child." I paused and looked up. "This child here, are you talking about the little guy in the back yard?"

"What difference does that make?" My question seemed to upset her, the hat assuming an even more offensive angle of mischief.

"I was just curious. Haven't you ever been curious?"

"Would you just read the mother fucker for gosh sakes, lands alive!"

So I continued. "Two rights don't make a wrong so I didn't say anything to that philanderer." I paused. "What does that mean?"

"I prefer that you don't ask questions, just read it straight through and we can talk about this writing afterwards, okay?"

"Sure, I can do that..."

I've always harbored strong feelings for snakes and robins, my favorite animals. I used to swing in the summer, underneath the elm tree, looking like Ann of Green Gables. Well, not looking like her, I'm much more beautiful, but feeling like her, certainly feeling like her. And now those times have slipped away into darkness and wondering. I kept the china upstairs where it would be out of the way, hoping I would one day meet the man of my musings, but he never came." I stopped, I had reached the end. "So this is your writing, huh?"

"What do you think?" she asked me.

"It reminds me of something Hitler would have come up with."

"Oh? And is that supposed to be a compliment?"

"Sure. He wrote a best seller, didn't he?"

"That's true."

Her hovering ceased. She took the seat opposite. "Now is the time to ask me about what I wrote," she said, sounding like a teacher with no teeth.

"No questions here, everything is perfectly clear."

"You're a thief and a liar."

"And what is it that I've stolen?"

"You've absconded with the meat of my writing. You can't take it into yourself and then act as if it isn't there. I crafted it in such a way that it sinks into your subtle spots, stirring up the shuffler in you."

"In that case, I will ask a question, but only one. Do you fish?"

"Fish for what?"

Now it was my turn to display a certain level of irritation. "Do you drop your words into the depths to pull out whatever may be there, without hesitation, without protection, without restraint. Do you do that?"

"No."

"I thought not. That's why your writing plays around the edges. It invites but it doesn't take one by the hand and dive into the naked lagoon. Does it?"

"You're the only one who has offered that criticism. I have a fatness of gratitude for that observation, I really do."

"Good. Now it's time for me to let you continue searching for the spaces between your words. When you've gathered a few, you can look me up again."