

59. Alice Turns on Her Hero

– Now we're alone. Just you and I. How much more hero-worshipping do you expect to get out of me? How much more erotic pleasure? Oh, I could say such things about you that, had they been trumpeted to all the world, it would've been better if your mother had not borne you.

Your mother. She was on her deathbed when you took a break from helping look after her by going out and looking for a — oh, I see that doesn't cut very deep. Well, how about if I say you've done things with animals and with children that — oh, that too doesn't pierce you anymore. The truth is the truth that cuts to the quick, that makes you squirm like a worm on a hook when it's fresh in your mind, that truth undergoes a cosmetic change (perhaps I should say a cosmic change) when taken from its original soil and transported to something that, by its very nature, must elevate it. All the shame gets scrubbed out like — well, can I be uncouth for once? can I really say something shocking? do I have your permission? oh, still the same resistance! — The good bourgeois in you comes to the fore every time, doesn't it? It says something like "Look, it's me who admits all these things. Bad as they are, they're more or less universal. Shouldn't I be commended for bringing them, with no little amount of tact and restraint, into the open?"

Tact and restraint. Ultimately you don't want to be exposed unless it's to your benefit. Your truth stops as soon as your honour stops and shame, horrible shame, sets in.

Of course you will stay silent. It's better that way. What harm, what real harm can I do you?

You grant me permission to harm you and yet you know it resembles love play. Sex play. Fondling your — you see, I can't say it. It's you who stops me.

You feel the sand always running through the hourglass. That's one sensitivity that age sharpens. You'd like to come over to me and be on my side. You've ached, you've always ached for me.

But I don't exist. That's the greatest ache. I don't come down to you. I don't come over to you. I don't mingle in your affairs. Not in the day-to-day. Not in going to the laundromat or even in your love play. I'm always removed, always distant, always a thought, hope, wish, and dream.

And yet how potent I've been and how much I've ruled over the whole course of your life.

*What a shabby affair that life is compared to what it would've been with me.
What a shabby affair it would've been hadn't it been for me.*

*After all, to think what it took to get you to the point of risking
professionalizing your thought without professionalizing it. Not that I take all
the credit for this but only that, without me, it wouldn't have been possible.*

*After all, when you think about it, what a seemingly strange and
insubstantial thing to make the very substance of your life. What a different
axis must a soul like yours turn on if it is not eventually to regard itself as
wholly impractical.*

*Between the greatest doubts about the course you've taken in life and some
other way stood only the hopeless ridiculous thought of winning me.
Kierkegaardian-like, you've kept up this delusion from earliest adolescence.
This heterogeneous image of being a knight destined to do and find what
knights are supposed to.*

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