

In Search of Lost Zoey

Rokas Vaičiulis

You're a neet, lying in the bed in your tight dark dorm room, your face is lit by the dim lights of your cracked phone screen.

Dashing through the stories your mutuals posted on the Wired. Memes, selfies, memes, memes, artworks, infographs, memes... The multi-layered irony makes you chuckle, the fluffy animals make you feel comforted and safe. Even you become funny and fluffy to yourself.

It is three o'clock, the time when it's always too late or too early for anything you want to do. You just want to scroll, eat, continue scrolling, shower, scroll, masturbate, scroll, sleep. Rinse and repeat to pass the time, whilst notifications drone inside your unconscious.

“Getting bored? Strike up a convo with someone new!”

If your belly is growling, you know you're hungry, you immediately come up with takeaway ideas. What about the new convos, awaiting to be astruck? Well... you don't know if it makes any sense: you just want to chill, you kinda want it, you kinda don't. The typical you knows the persisting pattern: wishing you were alone, when you're with someone; wishing you were with somebody, while curling into your tear-soaked snuggly blanket.

The present, the concurrent, the old and the new bores you equitably. You don't want to impress anybody, you're just distracted, if not tired. Your thumb's reflexes are absorbed in perpetual inertia; you keep scrolling anyway.

It's the neurochemical dopamine production feedback loop that keeps you hooked and going. As a matter of fact, it is a blessing of the Wired now that you are more connected to everyone than ever, you hold all the relationship knots at the tips of your thumbs -- why shouldn't you be hooked and going? Even if the internet is a dark place, the dim lights of the screen soothe you.

But is that so, if I think more of love, will it turn me into a more loving and lovable person? Why then is daily life so profane, bleak and distant? Is that so, that if you wish for the rewards of being loved, you are tacitly obliged to submit to the mortifying ordeal of being known? "I just wanna live/laugh/love," your voice cracks whenever you pronounce it. Conflating the horny with the sad, loneliness with solitude, relationship with compulsion, anxiety with attachment, narcissism with mutual bonding -- you call that a habit.

No physical chains hold you, yet in spite of your deteriorating attention span, you do intuit there is a possibility that you're a mere prisoner of the Cave. One out of billion other incubator pods within the Matrix registry. Nothing is real. The limbo of mindless scrolling and swiping is a hyperreal shadowplay, simulated by an advanced intellect. Only back pain, sore eyes and anxiety are real. You've fallen, and you can't get up.



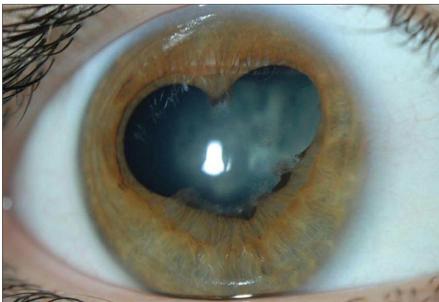
Why would one wish to fall lovesick, after all? When you have a deluge of personality disorders and mental illnesses creeping around?

You do believe in the exchange of chemicals, of oxytocin, serotonin, dopamine. Yet your libido is at an all time low, because of the excessive amount of antidepressants you've been taking. You're not really sure what's going on with you. Prickly, irritating dysphorias and insecurities spread through your mind and body like mold. You're continuously haunted by the romances, their pasts and futures that could-be. You don't know whether you're a man or a woman, neither or either, whether you're monogamous or poly. However, month after month, the financial polyamory tactic seems to be more and more feasible for you, as the cost of rent keeps getting raised gradually. As you fall for the perpetual thirst traps, thanks to your impulsive swiping. The Ethical Sluts for the Ethical Consumption under Late Capitalism.

“True love will find you in the end,” the innocent romantics daydream. “Love will tear us apart,” the melancholics weep. “Becoming lovesick will get you cured, baby,” the pharmacists assure. “With side effects of hastening your inner devastation,” the sceptics warn. Isn’t it that you become really powerful when you admit that you’re really wounded, when you begin to tolerate, if not adore, imperfections? That works for sure, at least in theory.

“We want what we do not love, and we love what we do not want” is a common formula to describe the alchemy between a merely innocent accident and a dirty necessity. You do know you can choose who to love and how to love, but you don’t get to choose the desire itself. You’re always caught up in a temptation, long before you could outsmart it and calculate it. The neuroses aren’t really ours, as some famous antipsychiatrists like to claim.

Your ego resists. But what if it all was a dream? The ego is your *dream*, sustained by desire and your rates of productivity. That’s the twist. You don’t know what you want.



The desires, in reality, are not about your “I” at all. Nothing inner or lyrical about it. That’s why the deficiency of your libido and productivity make you feel as if you were at the brink of inexistence.

Sex bots and simulations are not the perversities or distortions of human nature, they're the hypertrophied symptoms of our privatized thirst. Metaphors, as old as the language itself, have always been emulations for emotional and verbal intimacy.

Ghost stories, that is.

(“Written kisses don't reach their destination, rather they are drunk on the way by the ghosts,” Kafka confesses in Letters to Milena.)

The ghosts end up making out with each other at the intersection of art and technology, leaving you ghosted. You sublimate the rest.

Let's face the demanding reality - its slow and painful demise - authenticity and genuine love is nothing but a fantasy of the normies on the Wired. The only truthfulness and freedom of loving is in its artificiality and inauthenticity. Fiction, for short. A daemon, even, for Plato.

Fictional, daimonic love is the only love that were ever more *authentic* than the authenticity itself. If there are any butterflies whirling in your tummy, they must be holograms.

(The fact does not disturb you at all.)

“Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was myself. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritabily myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.”

-Zhuangzi

The shadow of truth always deceives. You can't outrun your own shadow, they say. For Bataille readers and alike, the only face of the truth is a bastard contradiction. "Beauty is the snare of the devil. Indeed, beauty alone can make tolerable the need for disorder and indignity that lies at the root of love." Here Bataille's snares of the devil and the seeds of love evidently follow the Nietzschean steps: we have demons in order not to perish from the truth.

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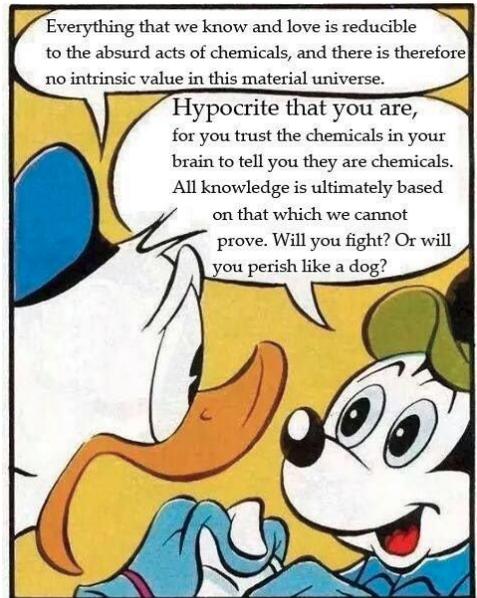
It's not so much about what you receive, but what you give.

I am abundant. I am loved. I am healthy. I am protected. I am deserving.

* * *

Perhaps all of it is, indeed, one giant hormonal conspiracy, as the dopamine-soaked feedback loops continue to excite you. There is always some conspiracy in love. But there is always some reason in conspiracy.

When there's a game, you play it, despite knowing that *it's just a game*. It protects you, it brings you blessings, health, unlimited ammo, and tender kisses. You love it, and it loves you -- *amor fati*, love of one's fate, you name it. It guides you, despite your ignorance of it. You kiss the dice as you throw them.



* * *

So who the heck is Zoey? Why Zoey?

Zoey! Where are you!

Is Zoey is a conspiracy? With a reason.

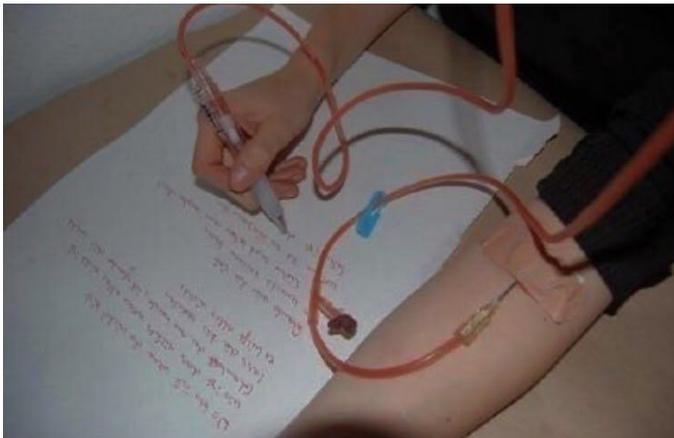
You'd never "find" Zoey, never meet Zoey in person, never run into Zoey while walking down the street or scrolling down your path of sexy faces of people you'd wanna date. Zoey is a replicant -- faceless, yet always wearing a mask.

If Zoey ever spoke a language, it would be inarticulate or misarticulate... full of typos and Freudian slips.

A love letter - no matter how long or brief - will always be a draft, endlessly needing additional writing and rewriting.

"No, no ... that's not what meant!"

A love letter *lacks* the language.



Don't be discouraged: Zoey loves to give and receive. Mere letter or two may suffice at times: TFW, GF, ILY, XOXO, UWU, DM...

After all, the bots will come to aid: they love autocorrecting your desires. They slyly predict your typing, as if you were a transparent template.

They suggest: "I love you...", "I want you to call me back...", "So tell me about your mother..."
Inasmuch as the bots serve Zoey, Zoey serves them likewise.

So yes, a letter to Zoey will always be a draft, of daimonic kind, of course. With guidance and sheer hermaphroditism... it's the temptation that makes it count.

Zoey's missing, but you know Zoey's here.

Paper size

Letter (8.5" x 11")

Tabloid (11" x 17")

Legal (8.5" x 14")

Statement (5.5" x 8.5")

Executive (7.25" x 10.5")



Rokas Vaičiulis, *In Search of Lost Zoey*

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