

Thinking aloud.

In the future the entertainment won't differ, but the message might. As Herm prepares for a performance, he discusses a past relationship.

The ritual was underway. Each night Herm would start with a little barbers routine, it was necessary for his work as appearance made all the difference. The dressing room was well worn and sparse, a small and personalised environment with an array of tools and materials. Sitting in a small chair in front of the mirror Herms friend looked back at him motionless. Their relationship had brought a lot of people a variety of effects, the work they did together was undervalued, however it was the best possible way of conveying a science to a public these days.

In the past, Herm would wonder what his efforts really meant. Previously he had been a number cruncher, a data-clerk, somewhere between researcher and caretaker, tending to databases and the managers like a mother. At night he would either practise his routine, or scout the city for pub quizzes, tests of trivia. He often won but to him it was simply an excuse to get out and challenge himself on a higher level than the spreadsheets. Trimming hair calmed him, and as he worked, he slipped into a more open mood than usual, upon realising that it had been over two years since he was fired, and 18 months working the circuit, he felt a strange desire to exorcise his demons. He began telling a story, and his friend listened with intent.

"A man I once knew met an old friend, and they began spending more and more time with one another.

They found it easy, just being together, and at first this new relationship helped him, it gave him confidence, made him stronger in himself, more powerful even.

He realised he was in love not soon after, head over heels, it was like he couldn't breathe without her, morning to night all he did was think about being with her, regardless, nothing could get in the way of this thing he had found,....

They'd go on journeys, adventures together, sometimes finding themselves lost, without any idea of how they got there, forgetting where they began, it felt like she enjoyed leading him further astray, but he put up no fight, it still filled him with an unrivalled energy. Wherever they went, tangents, coincidences, everything they stumbled on made some sort of sense.

Slowly, he realised something, deep down he knew that he could never really have her, own her like he had begun to dream of, not all of her anyway..

..the more he went along with her on these journeys, he begun to realise that what he thought he knew about her wasn't really true, that perhaps she was out of his league, or something like that....

Occasionally he'd admit it to himself, that she was like an endlessly deferred future, an impossible love, something unattainable. Yet he felt so empowered and helpless at the same time, she became a siren, a fatal attraction, and he couldn't let go..

It got worse as he realised how trapped he was, and how little she cared. In fact she was omnipresent, everywhere, not just in his mind, and at one point he just stopped, he couldn't try any harder to reach her.

One night, he finally did it, he closed the books, went offline, and sat, still, quiet,

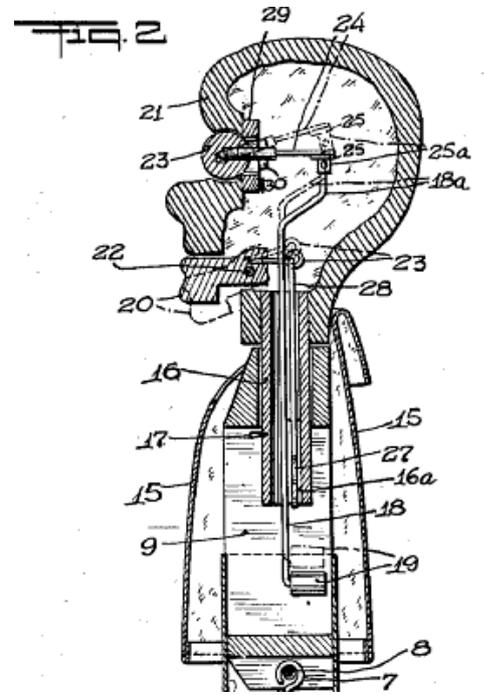
[we see the ventriloquist dummy from the front, Herm now fixes some wiring to the fake EEGs headset that the dummy wears, and then applies some polyfiller and paint to its neck]

He thought how stupid it was, the endless research she'd become, on subjects he'd never really been bothered by. His thirst for information had never been quenched.

His need for more, just like a drug had left him nowhere, and with nothing, the sleepless nights had stripped him of any feeling for any of it, and as he woke from his stupor, the rest of the worlds hunger seemed stronger than ever, and he thought about when he was younger, being told about greed, about his eyes being bigger, than his stomach.

In information he'd seen a universe of bits, all useful but contingent, and seemed like a force which was snowballing. Occasionally vectors of meaning appeared with a hint of the truth, something offering the sustenance he craved. He wondered how full up on the total noise that he'd become, how much until he stopped eating whats was served."

Herm finished brushing away the hair, careful not to mess up his friends jacket, he placed the dummy on his right arm, warmed up the expressions in the mirror, and had one last suck on a cigarette. He needed another job, but he had a talent for manipulation.



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