

FOUND ON GROUND AT L.A. ZOO

Antoine Wilson

Dearest Bronwyn,

As much as I regret having to do this in a letter, I'm afraid that the current state of affairs renders this the most attractive of all possible modes of communication. I will put it plainly, then: it is over between us. What follows is my declaration, as it were, of independence, containing, with as little beating around the bush as possible, the reasons why this is not going to work. You may wish to stop reading here, as my practical point has been made, and I have nothing left to reveal but some rather unpleasant aspects of your character which, I'm sure, you would prefer, as is your habit, to ignore.

There are so many places to begin. I will start with the most obvious. Your facility for spite is unrivalled among our peers. It is not that you are excessively cruel, as is Leopold's Glenda. (Remember when she broke young Barbarus' arm for stealing her bananas?) Nor do you revel in exacting your revenge undetected, as does Rufus' Iris. No, the uncanny fortitude of your spite, Bronwyn, that which makes it the most unattractive of all spites, is your inability to forget. Thus, like one who strays too close to a lion in his youth and loses a limb, he who has done you wrong continues to feel the sting of his ancient error for the rest of his life.

Your prodigious memory, while it still seemed like intelligence, attracted me to you. But now that it has been revealed for what it is, I recognize that you are no more intelligent than any of us. On the contrary, your over-reliance on your memory has dulled your wits. You are like an idiot, banging together an extremely complex, ornate set of building blocks. But still they are merely blocks, and still you are merely banging them together.

You are watching me write this. I just looked up and caught your eye. I fear that I may have looked away too quickly. You know I'm up to something. You're giving me that look—the one you give me when I promenade with Leopold and Atticus—your eyes wide open in disapproval, your lips curled

back to show all of your teeth without the hint of a smile. You are a fount of censure. Which brings me to control issues. We are all nit-pickers here, to be sure, but your excessive attention to every detail of my life has proven tremendously stifling. Is it not my right to masturbate whenever and in whatever tree I wish without having to enumerate and document my puerile pleasures for your scrutiny?

Shall we move on to selfishness, then? (Are you still reading, Bronwyn, or have you stuck your head in the sand, like our neighbors up the hill?) As of late, I have ceased stroking your hair, once a favorite pastime of mine. This is because every time I embark on said enterprise, I seem to render you supine and insensible, unable or unwilling to reciprocate. When one gives of oneself, one should not expect to receive anything in return. Nevertheless, after some time, one begins to get annoyed. Which brings me to ingratitude. Whenever Mac or one of the other servants arrives with a perfectly palatable plate of food, you ignore his entreaties and immediately rush to the door—ridiculous, since you know as well as I (from the incident in which feisty Casper was shot and killed) that we are not permitted beyond it. Thus, you have often forced me to fend for twice as much food, lest you starve.

To be candid, I knew about many of these personality traits when we began, and I was willing to overlook them, captured as I was by your more positive attributes, the details of which elude me at the moment. But *the incident* changed all that. I will unfold it here from my point of view, if not for your enlightenment, then merely for the record:

You were tending to the youngsters, as I recall, bathing and grooming them, and you appeared rather busy. Not wanting to disturb you, I conscripted Leopold's Glenda, and we retreated to a remote corner of the compound. We were simply enjoying some playful coitus away from the prying eyes of the community when you suddenly appeared on a rocky promontory and commenced flinging excrement upon our backs. Now, I understand that your reaction that day constituted no transgression in and of itself. Everyone likes to fling excrement now and then. But behind your action covered the more insidious issue of your motivation. When your missiles hit their intended targets that day, I did not feel the heat of simple anger, as did Glenda. (She has vowed revenge and is plotting her retribution as I write.) I had an epiphany of sorts, and I was able to discern a message from your flying feces. You were declaring that I was yours and yours alone. As sweet and heartfelt as this message may have seemed to you at the time, it has disturbed me deeply. I have told you again and again, Bronwyn, I will not be possessed. Fling what you like at whom you like, but I just have to be free. It's my nature.

Best Wishes,

Bobo