

Destined Like A Great Idea

By Dave Olson

I knew I was completely in love with her the night she made the bean soup. Fourteen kinds of beans in a crock-pot like a suburban housewife would have done. She blushed like she meant it and I told her I loved her, and it still sounded inadequate, as sincere as a postcard. I felt stupid afterwards like she always made me feel, not stupid like regrettable but more adolescent like I should be awkward and nervous and gangly. But I'm not sure I was because she seemed to think was witty and occasionally brilliant and she kissed me. She kissed me often and she was gentle and fluid and involved and right. Not like she had had a lot of practice (nor did I ask, undignified I thought) but she kissed with the reckless precision that would humble you if you let it. Like someone carefully destroying you in a friendly game of pool without you noticing, like it would be a waste of their time if they weren't fully involved.

This is good, I said and sometimes I thought she thought at least the same about me, she was more vocal and always aroused.

I liked this, all of it. Especially when we were in the desert in the spring or when she would tell me stories about Spain or when she would see me on the street and follow me for blocks before she would yell to me or when she told me about her sister and herself and how would gently touch the brashest of my artifacts or when she would eat with her fingers out of the jar and how she would lie on the bed and watch everything I did. Watch me fold my socks and brush my teeth and when I twirled a pencil like a drumstick when I would write a letter. She looked and watched and stared with the eyes of a statue or a madman staring at the sun knowing that he couldn't really go blind. Unnerving at first then only lovely and the thing that has made me cry the most in my life. Cry big, sloppy silver tears.

I would have watched her too but my clumsiness and uneasy eye could never have done the same for her. I could never do anything that flowing and pure. Instead I wrote her poems, poems borrowed for here and there at first and later more self-conscious and bewildered and I would present them

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to her like a genius waiting for a world in return. She never said a thing, just one pressing, random kiss. I think she put them carefully in a box, probably with a ribbon on it, but I never did see one and I never did ask. I stopped looking the day she told me she thought I was destined for greatness. An astrologer told me the same thing since my birthday fell on the day four planets lined up and the end of the world was supposed to come or at least Niagara Falls was going to start going backwards or upside-down. I took this and used it for an alibi and told anyone who'd believe it.

I was a great hockey player until I was fourteen and gave up trying to skate backwards and I was a great liar and storyteller and kids loved me sometimes and I read a Kafka book and James Joyce's Ulysses to the end which is almost a great thing to do. I had been to some great places and met some people who were pretty and great and now I'm only great at cooking Ukrainian food, filling out forms, juggling any three objects and changing the oil on my car. I remain a good liar when necessity dictates and I do eat healthy and I do plan on being a great uncle if any of my brothers could convince a woman to conceive.

Aside from the justifications, I waited for the destined

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part she meant and watched the seconds and weeks tick by in the corner of her patient eye. I would touch her eyelid; she would close her eyes, smile and blow the bangs from her face -- it was then that I would remember to thank all the prophets and gods I could think of.

She listened to me carefully when I was spoke on the phone with someone, and always knew where I was. The canvasses, she painted me on were always five foot, always body length portraits and hazy backgrounds. I was usually dark purples, gray or brown and always in broad, abrupt brushstrokes. Sometimes with a beard and my hair down and tangled. The eyes were always looking straight on. They almost followed me around the room. She was deliberate and calculating in her work. I wasn't that thin in real life either. My skin wasn't stretched over high cheekbones and I wasn't pasty and gaunt and emaciated like that. She smiled when I sat still so she could set the lights right.

Sometimes on the nights when we sat on her brass bed and listened to scratchy Patsy Cline or Robert Johnson records, she would tell her dreams and nightmares about me finally finding peace of mind or something as blissfully confusing and intangible and she meant it. I said sometimes I felt

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that I would find all the comforts and joys if things were more predictable and I knew one morning I would wake up and my hair would be silvery white or that I would be getting something great in the mail every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for the rest of my life or that she would have the same glorious, vivid expression on her face every morning or that I knew the sun wouldn't go down some days and I could go mow the lawn at three in the morning like they do in Alaska.

Only then could I worry contently about important things. About walking around like a chosen one, being as brilliant as a great idea or as enlightening as a car burning on the side of the road. I would go kissing all the babies and telling jokes and stories before I had to shatter and fall and get around to dying.

And my love would be there, sitting in the other corner of the room on the footstool, hands between her knees, looking. Looking and watching. Deliberate and aware, looking exactly like she was exactly now, her eyes filled with metaphors, something about infatuation and control, the spirit glinting and winking in the corner.

And me, sitting across from her, not being able to talk

or say anything, and I couldn't even look back at her,
because I just couldn't, or shouldn't, or I didn't know how
to look at her when she was right in front of me, waiting.

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