

Forced Entertainment
The Workstation
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Dear F.E.,

I'm struggling. For some time now I have been trying to write the perfect story; a story that couldn't fail to stir emotions within even the most resolutely *Simon Cowell* of characters. However, I appear to be unable to rouse the muse, whence my modern masterpiece may flow. And it is not for lack of ideas; for lack of characters, conflicts, places, worlds, words, and other such narrative paraphernalia. In fact, said abundance appears to be the root of the problem; 'root' being itself analogous with the very 'root' of the problem. And now I'm tying myself in knots – ironically just as 'root-as-metaphorical-root' of the problem subsequently ties knots in my narrative aspirations: images of vine leaves abounding. And no, that is not some Ibsen reference, though perhaps a more distinct reference to Lovborg here is apt. Tell me, do you find the 'vine leaves in his hair' as symbolically problematic as I do? Perhaps not. But that is for another time.

Yesterday I laid out the culinary ingredients of a story on my kitchen table. People cook up stories every day; in conversation, gossip, explanation, lying, television, film, BBC News 24 and certainly the Daily Mail: surely it is not so difficult if one puts one's mind to it? If one can spin a narrative yarn in immediate conversation – particularly if it is a lie – then given the opportunity to create with the luxury of time and foresight, even hindsight, the operation should be an easy one.

Not so.

As I surveyed my ingredients and summarily arranged them – events, characters, relationships, facts and psychologies of character – into an arborescent feature (like some sort of tree only Nabokov could find a family for) I found gaps – no, I found black holes – the world I was trying to create was distinctly one dimensional. It had a beginning, before which there was apparently nothing: this nothing accounted for the apparent nothingness of 'backstory', and no number of one-liners recounting relative events in the history of this world and its people, could fill that abyss. I could write of a 'past' *ad infinitum*. Furthermore, the edges of my world, its lateral ontology, crackled and shone with the limitations of a crisp packet; an offshoot of my perfectly formed oak tree and its roots: stopped dead. Disappeared. "What becomes of so-and-so when such-and-such happens?" My world was thus without future. It was *The Trueman Show Part II*. Its destiny set; the journey travelled before it had even begun; the narrative closed in on itself, its branches and routes cauterised. Motion suspended. Motivation consumed.

At first I refused to acknowledge the certainty of my narrative circumstances. Surely this was not *it?*; the image of the world retold? The image must be false. I must be failing; I am doing violence to the world and its rhizomatic abundance – I am the tourist with a camera trying to capture the history and future of the cosmos in one single frame.

How then to picture the world?

How then to write of it?

Only Schrodinger's Cat knows the answer, and in my mind's eye it's winking at me, purring at the thought that someone may discover the secret it guards – a secret that it wants nothing more than to share; a secret so fragile that to whisper it is to set it in hypostasis: the end of the *world-as-we-conceive-it*, whilst the *world-as-we-know-it* remains latent in the wings.

Why should any of this concern you?

It doesn't.

But isn't it nice to receive something without agenda for a change?

Prayers are offered to whichever deity one chooses to believe in, have faith in: but what of prayers between people?

An essential dialogue.

Or monologue.

Whatever. Who cares.

Kindest regards,

Qfwfq.