

Cursive

by Bantlebroth

Warmest of heartfelt greetings, my dear Gisele. I hope this letter has found itself to you in timely fashion and with good spirits.

I pen this tidings with you in mind having finished several experiences, including one of baking of all things as it reflects to your previous correspondence.

You may possibly share a laugh, be it of sympathy or solace, that having read your challenge to bake such descriptively scrumptious muffins in the last letter received, that I, too, felt compelled to roll up my sleeves and give it my best. The mission: chocolate fudge brownies.

And you would also be allowed a smile of foreknown conclusion, as you yourself have experienced first-hand, for having predicted how that turned out.

For sake of both brevity and hand cramps, I shall simply state that the brownies I created were the most wonderfully delicious foods I may have ever made. They were certainly the largest, as I couldn't dare risk reducing the recipe's allotted measurements to portions more... suitable... for someone of our demure stature.

Gisele, have I let slip that I have chosen the word 'demure' to describe our condition? If not, then allow me the privy now if you would. Ah, but I digress.

Somehow, more ingredients went into the mixture than what ended up on me. It truly was an endeavour! Lifting those heavy cups and spoons. And I daren't step onto that scale for fears that I believe are quite rational.

We are demure now, you understand.

Having endured the baking process to its completion and ingested the most wonderfully scrumptious treat, despite looking as if I, too, were a brownie, I have decided to cease the baking of such complex creations henceforth; a submission to fate which I suppose you've addressed as well.

Although I was following vicariously through your written account of your event until I chose to place my feet in your remnant footsteps, through all the motions you must have also danced prior, ultimately this is merely the end of a shared joke between the two of us. Peas in a pod, we are.

Well. As long as we can both be proud of mine and yours successes in these final culinary delights, then I think we've both gained humour from the outcomes. That alone is worth the effort, I sincerely believe.

Such are our lives, Gisele. Thank you for lending me inspiration toward one of the final reiterations of normalcy which we may remember.

And now, as an adjunct, please join me as I tell you about what came next. I've begun my journeyhood into the world of home carpentry!

Gisele, do you remember those illustrated tales we so enjoyed in our youth, the stories involving a St. Bernard that would trek into the mountains, searching for forlorn individuals caught in the chaos of calamity? Whether it be an avalanche or a blizzard, that four-legged saviour would bound through the inclement conditions with haste to retrieve its charge.

There would be a supply kit slung around its neck, presumably containing first-aid and other survival necessities, although I seem to recall that humourists found delight in replacing that item with a cask of brandy, meant as a warming agent for those the beast came upon. I did laugh upon that memory.

Hmmm... Perhaps I should precede this revelation with a brief anecdote of its catalyst, an incident that happened to me earlier in the year. Bear with me as I relocate to more comfortable surroundings.

~

Ahh, much better. I am now beneath a knotted oak aside the babbling brook you and I immersed our toes into oh so long ago. Currently, I am lying against the slumbering chest of Marcus, and his rising and falling breaths feel quite similar to a softly rocking ship upon calm waters. Stray threads of his hairs occasionally obfuscate this page, and so forgive me any errors I may scrawl. These are adverse times and I am in adverse conditions, clearly.

Sometime shortly after the thaw of Spring, perhaps, Marcus and I were patrolling our homestead. Straddling his neck on our walks was becoming an increasingly cumbersome outcome— I believe you may have reached that milestone yourself recently— and so on that day I chose to walk alongside Marcus with my hand held outstretched, just beneath his jowls. My stride was on par with his, though he needed to slow his gait to match.

Well, if my attention wasn't drawn to the nearby flora budding, and to the honeybees, they are so large now, aren't they?

It was my fault truly for not looking at the ground beneath. And just like that! I had fallen into a crack.

Now Gisele, please let me state that no harm had come to my person, save for the bruises to my ego. I admonished my folly even as Marcus' overbearing face appeared above, hovering from the opening far overhead, fraught with worry, the whole of his being eclipsing the light of day entirely.

If I may share my heart for a moment, it was that darkness within his bestial dominance which I feared more than anything, but as I said, only for a moment. Marcus would never willingly harm me, and I know that as much as you share the feeling with your own Clara.

Incidentally, how is Clara? Did her ear heal after that scuffle with those crows? Please update me if you can; I do worry for you both.

In that small pit I shouted to him with reassurance, letting him know of my situation, but he is a dog after all and must have either misinterpreted or ignored my tone of voice, because dirt suddenly exploded above me, hailing down upon my demure form with fury and vigour. Marcus had thrown his paws into the soil, shovelling it away without use of his claws in what I assume was an act of ferocity and desperation where my own safety was foremost in his mind. Of course, this is all speculation on my part.

Between mouthfuls of earthy particulates and dusty air, I attempted further to call out, to somehow reason, that he should dig around my area and not directly down upon me. Yet, my words were swallowed as the efforts of his ministrations trapped me with ground risen higher and higher around my helpless form.

Knowing there was nothing further that I could convey to dissuade his fervent activity, but with the understanding that the whole moment in time would be but a brief one once concluded, I resigned my efforts to communicate with Marcus and instead opted to lift the neck of my shirt backward onto my rear hairline. From that crouched, slunk position, I was able to use the space beneath the fabric as a makeshift air pocket.

Seconds later, I was buried in full.

Seconds more, and Marcus had grabbed my collar in his maw and dragged me right out of the crevice and back onto the surface, onto the displaced soil mound a safe distance away from the remnant explosion of a crater where he'd dug.

The entire ordeal took maybe two or three minutes at most, and Marcus' worrisome needs and affections became that which I prioritized in the aftermath.

And now as I write this note while lying against his side, I cannot escape his presence. Even in moments requiring privacy he won't leave me, a fact, to which, I am grateful.

~

Ah, dusk, and another shift of location. Marcus and I have just finished our suppers — there are berrycakes to go with my tea, and I have added a little gravy to Marcus' collection of prey — and now we lay by the stoked fire where I might hopefully finish this letter to you.

Having now shared the peril of my own folly from the start of this year and the recent success of baking in an endeavour I've not been accustomed to, there came a time that I decided what was in store for my future.

Marcus has been an especially faithful companion since our cohabitation — so much so I'm certain my life has been prolonged by his presence — and so I've decided for

my declining years that I should create somewhat of a living condition under his protectorate.

Under his chin, perhaps.

As such, I have undertaken the effort to become the brandy of his cask.

The challenge was two-fold, (1) in manipulating a newly-introduced world of tools of which I was formerly ignorant and oblivious toward, specifically woodworking I suppose, where my previous strengths of crafting the written word held no transferable equity. Oh how times have changed. Equally as difficult has been (2) designing first of all what requirements would accommodate me through inclement weather and untraditional circumstance, and secondly how it would all be contained within the confined and protected enclosure. All of it: chairs, beds, cupboards, stairs. These needed to be decided upon and implemented, and I cannot say whether my choices were the right ones. However, what's done is done, and I have no regrets.

Days ago, prior to my beginning this letter, I completed the outer shell of the cask and secured it to Marcus' forechest so he could be acclimated to its weight. It is now a matter of working continually on the inner elements, the home proper, so that when I become so demure that I fit inside the contraption, I will be in a world of comfort.

The time is late and Marcus is snoring lightly. If I may impart two key words to hold dear should you choose to follow in my footsteps this time, it would be this: shock absorbers.

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My dear Gisele, I have returned from a breakfast after a good night's sleep. Do you have radio at your access? The radio here has been broadcasting an ongoing stream of light jazz instrumentals without interruption for days now, and I have no criticism to their unceasing selection, but I do wonder if those in charge have become too demure to control the technology anymore.

In the quiet times, I often wonder if we, too, will end up as relevant, as longstanding, as is the handwritten system of cursive.

Gisele, we near the end of the final page and I haven't enough story to fill only one page more, otherwise I would need a hundred. I shouldn't want to impart upon you a book of ramblings.

And yet, I would trade a library's worth of penmanship for just one more conversation in your presence. I know you feel the same.

I will send this letter via the usual methods and wish deeply that it makes your location. Please know, however and before we are gone, that I have always admired your strength and perseverance. I will attempt to follow in your magnificence.

And should...

Should these words be lost and scattered to the winds of ages as a result of whatever calamity may befall us, then to you reading this from my future, whomever you may be and wherever you are, I likewise wish you all the best with whatever challenges you face, no matter how big or small.

To you and your companion, all my love,