

Just a Few Iterations of Joan of Arc

Relative to the big, scary unending cord of time, the Fifteenth century wasn't so long ago. In fact, it seems like just yesterday the English were decimated in the *Battle of Patay*. A lowly commander and a small band of surviving soldiers sent running back to their motherland, dodging admonition with tales of a female soldier with supernatural powers. Public scorn shrouded the remainder of John, the Duke of Bedford's military career, but as we all know, legend of the French heroine only grew.

I believe women possess a brand of strength that is truer or perhaps (forgive me) 'extra'. This is not based on some romantic posture, but rather, logic. *An evolving character in this story.*

The following blurbs are about different women, some real, some imagined. Not so much as articles in the defense of my argument, but fodder for the consideration of reincarnation and other un-answerable questions...

What is more un-malleable than instinct? And what brand of instinct is deeper than a mother's?

Is love something a boy should aim to defeat? If so, can it be beaten?

Did John, the Duke of Bedford really believe Joan of Arc held supernatural powers? Do we?

~

E.L.H. of Arc

This boy had to have been 4 foot something, standing in the small hall between the master bedroom and the master bath when he asked *this question*. His mom was trying on different earrings for a date.

He was used to her going on dates. If anything he shared in the excitement. Not because he was conscious that love was something a single mother in her late thirties held as a mystic lottery, but because he was so connected to her still. He was a momma's boy. Still, at eleven years old, he couldn't have fathomed he

would someday sleep in a dorm room with her not down the hall in the case of a bad dream. Move across the country? Forget about it.

He doesn't recall what they were talking about before he asked *this question*. Or how he had even heard the word or if he knew what it meant. But, naive to the severity of the enterprise of bearing life, he asked blankly,

"Mom, have you ever had a miscarriage?"

She didn't answer right away.

"Well???" he asked.

She continued with a new set of earrings. Holding her hair behind her ears and turning to each side. Without interrupting the ritual, she calmly answered that this was the kind of knowledge she would be keeping to herself.

What?! She wasn't going to tell him? He didn't understand. *Mom always had the answers to everything*. To bend his mind around the notion his Mom couldn't answer something was one thing. But something she simply *wouldn't* answer? What... the... F... was... going on?

He dropped it and he never asked again. The mind does nest the most peculiar details. To this day, he can see how the gray dust collected in the rusty slits of the closet door next to him. How the carpet felt worn and pressed thin in the middle of the hall, but soft and full of life at the edges. More than anything, in this moment he remembers how it felt when his Mom became a person unto herself. A person with secrets as sacred as earrings you wear on a first date. A woman that didn't have to give him the answers to everything.

~

Z. of Arc

She walks down the maternity ward hallway. Each step ginger, felt through her legs into her belly. Her body weary and vibrating like a cornfield after an F4. Labor had come sooner than expected, no yellow sky to portend its imminent hostility. She holds different parts of herself, ensuring they haven't betrayed her completely, as she makes her way closer to the nursery. Any remnants of the storm, even one small gust would be enough to put her on the hard tile. Still, she persists, unwavering. Like a tether through her bosom, she is pulled down the

hall at an even pace, parallel to heaven.

Finally, she stops and tries to breathe in the new life she watches through the window. A nurse touches her back and insists she get back to her room to rest. She doesn't acknowledge this. She just watches. A diaphanous web seems to connect and blanket each little bundle and she wonders if only she can see it.

Her baby was lost in birth. Nevertheless, she insisted she see the newborns.

~

D.P.H. of Arc

Laying in bed next to this girl I am in love with. I exhale a plume of some equivocal ratio of THC and CBD. It isn't smoke drawing itself into salacious little storyboards in the air, but rather a cloud of pale vapor. Thus, the late 80's movie scene of post-coitus relaxation I aim to reenact is instantly distorted by the lack of romance in our technological advancements. (The future may be conscientious but it ain't sexy. *winks and sips Mojito through soggy paper straw.*)

I pass the metal pen and watch her take another drag. Her lips upturned. Always asking a question. Her eyelashes flapping languidly like two sated Venus Fly Traps awaiting digestion.

I try to articulate how when I look at her I see all my wildest boyhood dreams. I say something flat like how she has timeless magic and it threatens me to the core. She's unaffected. She knows. Whether it's always remembered is doubtful, but I suppose on some level, every woman knows.

Then I fumble and flail about. Trying to incise blurry artifacts of her past with my own semantics. Even reaching to find artifice in her kindness toward me. I am John, the Duke of Fucking Bedford in these moments. God dammit.

I say, "Love thrives off some equivocal ratio of faith and logic, right?" Then I tell her that I'm getting fed up with the tedious nature of said logic. I say, "Hey, if men can blame the supernatural for their defeats, can't we also regal it for potential victory?"

She says nothing. I pull the sheet to cover myself a little. God, it's like she doesn't even hear me. Wait... have I said anything? Out loud? Am I even real?

Alive? Did I overdose? Shit, this weed is strong.

Ten minutes later she returns from a quick bathroom trip wearing a cheesy smile. "I definitely just swallowed a gulp of Listerine" she giggles and collapses onto me with a hug.

"These fucking vape pens."

~

L.R.W. of Arc

I watch her like a fan in the audience though I'm just a couple feet beside her on stage. It seems unfair to allude to battle. When in war do those come to drawn lines ready and eager for defeat? But here we are, strewn about with smiles on our faces.

I hear words I wrote come to life for the first time. I know the next verse is mine to sing but holy hellfire and the balmy tears it brings with it, I feel like I got nothing on her. And it makes me so excited.

~

E.H.S. of Arc

My mom told me at breakfast last month that a psychic said she was a reincarnation of Joan of Arc. She giggled and assured me she wasn't insinuating she was THE reincarnation. Rather an iteration.

I laughed too, but not because it was absurd. More because life, in that moment, hit just the right note. And how much better? Something as chimerical as a psychic reading to bequeath this pearl of sacred lineage.

Once in armor, heavy and clanking with each swing of the sword, now in a sundress purchased from Aquarian Dreams, sweeping like a sea breeze with each swing of burning sage. "Invisible energy fields be cleared!"

Her conquest interrupted only to impose upon me the Marie Kondo method of folding t-shirts. "Make space for the new, young warrior. Clutter is death!" (Well, not in those words.)

So as I watched her defeat her adversaries, whether they were the jujitsu of arguments past or the inveterate habits of undomesticated man-children, I would often step back and smile. A Joan of Arc armed with an understanding of mystic dimensions and couples therapy. Leading me bravely into the battle of tidiness of the room and heart. Leaving me prepared for the *best*. And worrying not at the frivolity of my own ego's masculine structure. Even when I'm convinced I could be the only living boy in Los Angeles.

-Cookie