

Her Name (1992)

Brogan Bunt

He started with these words and then quickly forgot them. No matter how insistently phrased, they were gone.

Alice looked askance at him. Why "Alice", he wondered? She provided no answer. Her name annoyed him - though not so much the name itself as the act of naming. Another grimly indeterminate presence clearly stood close by, yet she - so dark and languorous - was unaware of the imposition of her name.

She removed every piece of her clothing. He watched her closely. He had no wish to touch her. He wished to touch her very much. "Contradictory emotions," he thought to himself. In the meantime, she - far the more decisive of the two - turned her body inward and awaited his unlikely approach.

There are only so many things to say. There are days, weeks, months, and years left. He continued regardless. He knew five good ways into the city. He loved the voices of strangers. He'd buy something occasionally.

He plunged it in. She moaned with delight. He reflected upon this possibility. He stood back from this reflection. He stepped back into an immense space. He tried to motion to her, but she was someplace else. He struggled to remember the shape of her shoulders.

The moon cast a pale shadow across the windswept night. He had never seen anything like this before. It made little sense. He likened reality to a phantom, though he had never seen a phantom either. The moon passed behind its shadow. The night turned as black as the written word.

She came back again - wild and unkempt. He embraced her. True love knows no boundaries. True boundaries are an extreme manifestation of love. She drifted here and there in his arms. He wondered what to do next. She winked at him. He walked to the refrigerator.

The rain outside made him depressed. He smiled and laughed when she told him. He had some understanding of these things. Altogether, he was a fair judge of conversation. So many attributes. So many qualities. He claimed his bags from lost property.

He had been there before. But now the place was different. It had become unrecognizable. Nonetheless he felt quite at home. Various people glided past him. He felt easy in their presence. They whispered to one another, while he wondered what had become of their legs.

He no longer referred to her by name. She had become an intimate companion. They often made love beside the river bank. Long oars dipped into the swirling flow, partially muffling their passionate sighs. The austere boat passengers watched and waited but nothing ever happened.

He spoke to her. She kissed him lovingly. He spoke to her again. She went out of her

way. He spoke to himself. The walls seemed to lean inward. Then they collapsed. He spoke to the rubble. The rubble kissed him lovingly.

There seemed nothing else. He was absolutely content. It was as though the world - his world - had gone away. The lights above the hedge flickered. Christmas was just around the corner. The sound of birds obscured the grinding of the clouds passing low overhead.

She persevered and lay down on the carpet of leaves. They no longer spoke to one another. They were constantly naked. Nakedness had become impossible. They appeared in each other's dreams. Sleeping, they were introduced to each other for the first time.

These things had to be put aside. Otherwise they would gain a certain inevitability. He realized this only too well. He had forsaken schools and factories. He had risen up on his knees. He wanted nothing more than to discover words that would preclude thought.

They kissed each other again. Yet again, like lovers. It had come to this. Completely passionate -she scarcely existed - and he fell wanton to the floor. To live together forever. To part amicably. They abandoned themselves to the series of alternatives.

Obscene riddles and the death of stars. Over the hills and far away on a horse with a matted tail. No longer to stop and speak to strangers. He traveled now lightly, neatly, deliberately. Even the weather ignored him. There were as many ways to turn as distances to welcome.

They wandered along. She felt for him - but only to establish a framework for deliberation. He slipped into the background. Her autonomy reassured him - even as she cut away at the foreground, leaving him blind and alone. Never so separate, never so close.

He had been specific enough. He had no wish to know anything more. He set himself a limit that only he could surpass. He could go on and on. Or else. "What is this unimaginable space?" He could stop.