

“I See You Now, Baby”

Daniel Chervoniuk

You’ll be wanting an explanation, my love, so this is everything that leads to what I did, and I hope this satisfies your worries about me and helps you let me back into your life again.

Before I was a man, which was also before I was a human being, I was watching my father writhe on his bed - a Twin XL that was in the same room my Latvian Grandma had stayed in before she tried for the second time to pass her American Citizenship test, but she failed because she didn’t have a translator and had to go back to Jurmala and now my dad was on that bed and dying. He was sad for a long time because he was a Ukrainian, and all Ukrainians are very sad, but he was the type of Ukrainian who ate when he was sad so he was sad and fat and having a heart attack. And I wasn’t a man then; I just turned 20 about a month and a half ago. I had never really fallen in love, so I wasn’t married. And because I hadn’t fallen in love and I sort of had my wits about me I didn’t have children. So the ambulances were coming, and it was six thirty in the morning, and it was New Year's Day, and I wasn’t a man but my mom was crying and shaking and my baby sister was screaming and everyone was confused. In the hospital I threw up the last bits of food I had in my system before the grief started filling me and I didn’t want to go and see him after they spent twenty six minutes trying to restart his heart because my mom had hypertension and my sister was drawing a blue rose in the waiting room and wanted me to see. The priest came, then the family friend who was also a social worker. I called my best friend and then my roommate back in New York, where I had to go back in three weeks for school. But that’s nothing now, I just wanted you to understand me a little better. And why I left you. That was already four years ago; When I came back to New York, the school gave me an

opportunity to get away from America and my family, so I took a study abroad in Italy where I hoped to wash all the gross life off of me and try to find an addiction that best suited my needs.

That was also all before I met you. I still wasn't a man then, so before I went to Italy I found things I was supposed to mind and in the process I lost all sanity, then I sanctioned fried chicken from my diet and searched for additional energy. I loved hurting my body, and hearing a *ding* on my watch when I ran a mile. Thirty minutes of jogging became January half-marathons and I was milking my madness and maximizing my dopamine. Denial and danger rang at the double digits, and I started flirting with Harlem in the dark. Then I would be far from home, down the path, and lost in space.

Then in the Summer, eight months after he died, I was sixteen miles into my first marathon and it was in my hometown and I was digging my feet into the pavement and walking at some points and running at others. At the twelfth mile, my high school ex whom I was on good terms with was volunteering at one of the water stations because she was a cheerleader at the private university nearby. She was raising money for something I don't remember and she was in a line with the other girls who were handing out water to the runners. So I stopped and took the cup she held out and said hi to her before sprinting down the road so she'd think I was cool but I didn't have the energy to be sprinting like that so I now was sixteen miles in and paying for it with cramps in my shoulder blades and pain in my thighs but I thought that'd make me seem more like a man. It was okay because she couldn't see me crying over my dad, and neither could anyone because I had these big stupid pink running shades on which went along with my blue and yellow outfit. Ten miles and two embarrassingly long hours later I had a medal around my neck and a portrait of my dad in my hand and when I showed that photo to you you

thought you could start a life with me because it showed determination and grit and a boy with family values and that's what a lot of people thought of me but I didn't think that of myself.

But after that photo was taken I threw up in the car because the rumbling shook at all the hydration gels that were in my stomach and they were composed of an assortment of flavors so I got all that out of my system but the grief was still there and then I dressed up and limped to a terminal and called my best friend before I left to Italy.

I became a compulsive day drinker when I could afford it. I acted affluent and had composed adventures across Eastern Europe after a brief Austrian breakaway. I couldn't help how I felt there; I flipped off a tram worker who was being a dick and then fell asleep under a tree at the Burggarten with a beer in my hand. I was writing then, too. I spent six months running graphite across lines in rampages, ruining all who came in the process. I was good for a night of non-kissing don't-look-at-me lovemaking and not much else, and if they made me anxious or snored I'd wait til they were asleep and take a walk back to my dorm. I couldn't hold them if they cried about it later because I couldn't hold my dad because his fingers were cold to the touch in the funeral home and his face was puffy and that was the first time I ever seen him have makeup on in my life so I wasn't going to hold anybody. After I got to the dorm from the walk still smelling like condoms and perfume I started my morning with a Peroni and a Juan Gabriel music video in the shower. I was admittedly assholeish. Ashamedly alcoholic. Who could help me? Aperol spritzes were four euros and my dad was dead.

I touchdown'd back into New York and into therapy, assigning blame for faults entirely my own onto ostentatious operatives who were totally out to ruin my life like my university's faculty and my friends and roommates and family who were all in reality very nice to me. My body was decomposing and my head was deconstructing and my heart was dead - replaying mile