

Beiwelt

EARNSHAW, Steven <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1048-8022>>

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Beiwelt

‘You shouldn’t take at face value the things I’ve said this month, not much of it. The truth is ... and this is the truth ... I sense he’s turning on me’.

‘So it’s true you and Amiel are nearing the end!’

‘I said it, didn’t I? Maybe nothing’s changing here’.

‘Sorry’.

‘I said we were together didn’t I?’

‘So? What’s happening?’

‘Nothing much to tell. Besottment. Look, I’ll show you how much’ and she pulls down the v of her top to show ‘Amiel’ arched over the nipple. ‘See. I won’t – can’t – leave him alone. He’s got right under my skin. I’ll do anything for him sometimes’.

‘That’s no good’.

‘He does undermine everybody’s confidence. It’s not evil now I’m dependent on him. I can’t say it’s his fault can I when I went after him? He has an aura which I “love”. I was incredibly drawn to him from the start because everything he wants he gets by changing all this’.

‘Spill-shoot’.

‘I won’t give up on him, he has to be mine. He gave Kayal up for me. Now that didn’t make me popular, did it? Everything was lovely, only I didn’t buy presents. He expects strong plastics every now and then – how’s a girl to know?, to squeeze myself dry for him? I

didn't buy him enough – any – of those plastics and so I sense he's turning. They're not cheap these new weaves'.

‘And now look at you – a car crash!’

‘I know, I know. It's not his fault. It's mine. Anyway, you can talk. Rimah, eh? He's hardly an angel'.

‘At least he's trying to do something about it'.

‘Like what?’

‘He sees someone who puts things back together. Rimah does try very hard to hang on to these fragments, you have to believe me. They're sets of fragments, I suppose, each set like the other one, only moved on a day or a week, or from a previous day or week'.

‘That sounds heavy'.

‘Mebbes. I think it's working for him though, I really do. And to be fair I recognise Rimah each time we're together, which is something. Shall we go over to the park, feed the ducks?’

‘If you like'.

‘I'll get my coat and boots. How do you say “love” correctly? It's Amiel's. I'll get my coat and boots. Are you going to be all right in those shoes? It's muddy in the park'.

‘It's not that muddy. Shall we sit on that bench?’

‘Rimah says “love” as well'.

‘It's not a crime'.

‘Guess not'.

‘Is that the problem?’

‘There’s a problem?’

‘Guess not’.

‘They’re both saying “love”. I don’t know. Perhaps it is a problem. I saw Amiel, and he was talking about it like it was some great new invention and when Rimah came back from work he was singing it’.

‘It’s still not a crime!’

‘Guess not. Annoying more than anything. Couldn’t they say it correctly?’

‘What difference would it make?’

‘I just feel things would be better, it’s like they don’t care. Maybe we don’t care either. We forgot the bread’.

‘You forgot the bread Lee. It’s your house we were at’.

‘There’s no need to be mean, Jayde’.

‘Just saying’.

‘Just say something nice instead’.

‘What kind of ducks are those?’

‘How on earth would I know?’

‘The day I hid in the filing cabinet the sin lifted. Undeterred by minatory eyebrows,
I...’

‘Go on’.

‘That’s it, like, that’s as far as I get, and now I’m here with you asking for help ... yet
again’.

‘You blanked out? How did you get out of the cabinet? That’s quite surreal’.

‘It’s not very important’.

‘What kind of cabinet?’

‘Filing’.

‘Did it have a key? Were you locked in? Hardly. What had you done wrong that the
cabinet removed? That would help’.

‘It doesn’t feel like it would help’.

‘I think sometimes you’re not honest with me Rimah’.

‘Where are we now?’

‘In this place again. You don’t act like you want to answer the questions. I do wonder
sometimes Rimah if you make up the splinters of reality that blindsides me’.

‘They are accurate, whatever you insinuate. I don’t like being like this. Who wants to
be like this?’

‘Are you grieving? Too many suicides?’

‘Grieving for what? Suicides to ease out the world’s pain? That’s way off, way off. I’ve got a great job, I love Jayde, great social life. This is life at its best, isn’t it, do you see? I’m peaking, everything’s perfect, in place. I’m twenty-six, in my prime. You’ve had your go at life, it’s gone, well, you have had your life, it’s gone, no good wincing or bleating, you must be in your fifties by now’.

‘I’ll get another drink’.

‘Thanks. It’s so slow in here is that why you come grieve for slowness why not? This is my life, it’s as ripe as can be, here, now, I feel it, really really feel it, I feel as tall as scrapers’.

‘What about Amiel?’

‘Oh, Amiel. There’s always a fly in the ointment. You still think he’s the evil double, do you, or everybody’s double?’

‘You’re the one who brought up the possibility of doubles, not me. I don’t deal in doubles, Rimah. To the point: you are not grieving, some great weight has been lifted from you, some burden of accuracy, yet you won’t accept there’s any problem. One minute you’re there, the next you’re here, “minatory eyebrows” or not. They – DeNrt – don’t like flippancy at important junctures, nobody does, it stops the grieving or the seriousness, or the flow of the argument, or all of these separate and together. Didn’t Lee tell your Jayde about slaughter, just to use it as an example? It’s not that Amiel is wrong, but the level of evil he embodies is unconscionable. “I like Amiel, but ...” – isn’t that what you lot usually say? That’s youth for you. The problem is not so much – but what is the problem? Lee, along with the others (some at least) can countenance flippancy as a form of assimilation. Can you? I’m not sure I can these days. So is it a question of minatory degree, of time, or distance? I know you say that

Amiel insists we are all involved, knotted, and no-one should try to put themselves centre stage. But while he chunters on about being mates the rest of us try to sever all those bothersome adventitious roots attached to him just to make life bearable’.

‘This is going nowhere. You don’t even know him, do you? You’re not making anything whole. I need whole’.

‘What is “love”? You could start there couldn’t you? You all seem to have a problem with that’.

‘It’s something Amiel said once or twice. I say it now I guess. Lee says it. Even you’re saying it’.

‘I’m simply repeating what you’ve said. Is it random?’

‘You tell me’.

‘You tell me’.

‘It wasn’t there before, and now here it is, like everything else’.

‘Do you have to dramatise everything Rimah? It’s wearing’.

‘Well, it’s here, just like Amiel is in all our lives. Lee has a thing with Amiel that she needs to shake off’.

‘I know’.

‘Have you had a thing with Amiel as well? He’s half your age. Do you know him? Why won’t you answer that? I have to go to Edinburgh’.

‘Rimah: what flippancy does, they say, is unpick the way doubling people propagates. It could be horrific, full of conflict’.

‘What if Amiel takes his chance in my absence with Jayde?’

‘That’s exactly it. Think though – doesn’t Jayde worry you’ll go back to Kayal or you’ll go off the rails in Edinburgh? Same difference isn’t it? Funny you and Amiel both went out with Kayal and both left her for no good reason’.

‘What really worries me is what happens through the intervals. Maybe I’m somebody else, maybe I just switch to being another person and then I switch back and there’s a gap’.

‘Listen to yourself Rimah, doesn’t that sound silly when you say it out loud? They’re blackouts or short-term memory loss. Not pleasant I imagine. I’m going to have to go in a minute. You can come back with me if you like. Funny thing is I do occasionally see another young man not too dissimilar from you who wants the certificate as well’.

‘Could it be me?’

‘Don’t be silly. I said he’s not dissimilar. That doesn’t make you the same, does it? “Hale,” that’s his name. Isn’t that a simply marvellous name, “Hale”? Sounds like courage itself with a mane, it makes him sound courageous. “Hale!”’

‘If you say so. Well, does he have the same hair?’

‘He has a mane. Aren’t you attentive? It’s no good Rimah, just because you’re not in the same room at the same time doesn’t mean you’re the same person. I don’t see him here in this place anyway, it’s the bar round the corner. What’s it called? I think I’d know, don’t you, if you were the same person? He’s a chemical engineer, works on the material they use in bullet-proof vests and tyres’.

‘“Kevlar”?’

‘Is that still around? It’s something like that material, yes. They’ve got their own version, obviously’.

‘Well, what would you say if I told you that’s what I’m going to Edinburgh for? “Day of the Aramids”. That’s got to be more than a coincidence’.

‘Considering this place? We’re surrounded by engineering. Of course it’s just a coincidence. Everybody round here’s an engineer, and you all look pretty much the same to me’.

‘There’s no convincing you, is there?’

‘Convincing me what? Your brain short-circuits so you miss stuff out. Whose doesn’t? Think you’ve got bits of plastic blocking the circuits? The only thing going for your theory? – you’re never in the same room together at the same time? Anyway, he’s got plastic on his elbow where he cut himself yesterday, and you haven’t. Do I call that proof? I do’.

‘All right then, if I’m just the same as everybody else, isn’t it about time you got me that certificate, unless everybody else is nuts as well? Work’s asking for it again and I can’t keep fobbing them off. It’s not enough for me just to be good at the job these days, I have to prove I can see these things straight. You keep fobbing me off though, don’t you? Maybe you belong to the company as well. Just give me the certificate. You know me well enough to say I see things straight’.

Watery Northern Lights on the spa’s ceiling are the equivalent of Rimah’s guilt. There are circular motifs beneath their magnification: lights, the ceiling rose shadow, three embedded

fans, and the abiding influence of cogs behind the scenes. But nothing adds to anything, the foam bubbles that spring up in the jacuzzi fizzing outwards before disappearance, these free passes to where they first met, how she meets Hale, asks him about the elbow, 'I slipped in the kitchen yesterday' and Kayal sees how similar Hale and Rimah are. They could be brothers, singular genetic pasts, spinning round, converging in her, stars, galaxies, singular explanations closing in on Rimah's guilt, the Hale balance. She smiles in the gym cafe and Hale is all smiles. He lets her touch the elbow making its way through plastic, makes that bond between the two which is "love" and extraordinary.

'They want you back at work sweetheart. The project's floundering without you babe. Nobody has a clue. You're onto a winner with this idea, but nobody's got a clue how to execute it and plus as well nobody's got your knack of seeing a project through'.

'The rules have changed, Amiel. I can't just waltz back in – they're saying I have to show I'm the same person. You're not helping me do that, and I've told Jayde so'.

'Who cares about Jayde and Rimah? They're nothings. No. All you have to do is show the company you're sane, you don't have to show them you're the same person as well. Nobody expects that and nobody wants it or cares about it. As long as the work gets done, you know'.

'How do I do that? They didn't believe me when I said how intelligent compressive aramids can be. Why would they believe me about anything else?'

'Just get one of those certificates. I know somebody who can get one'.

‘Who? Some bloke down the pub again?’

‘It’s a she ... yes, she can get me one. She is getting me one’.

‘Oh, is she? You mean the “bits and pieces” slag?’

‘You’re paranoid. Neve’s in her fifties and you and me are in our primes. Official channels take ages, and DeNrt are bastards, we know that, messing with us. But you, they want to keep you, babe’.

‘Do you know they’re on to me all the time every which way and they even sent somebody round last week to check up on me? I didn’t tell you. Sometimes I even think Jayde is on their payroll. I’m ill Amiel. I have to have that baby – it’s the only thing’.

Amiel pulls the sheet up to his chin. Lee looks tired, and before he knows it he’s thinking of Kayal, missing her casual trochalism. Lee is high maintenance. She will never be sane enough for him and he feels the pressure of being an employee who has to keep everything exactly in its place.

‘A baby? Maybe, but we can’t at this minute, can we? We’re not well enough, either of us, are we? We’re both ill’.

‘A baby makes sense, Amiel, one called Beiwelt, and that will make us better, I promise’. Now she’s wholly eager, forcing him to see how the baby would make the two of them one flesh, finally bring them into alignment. ‘We can’t go on like this, working, being diseased, with nothing in the world to look forward to’. She rolls toward him, to the dip in the middle of the mattress. ‘Let’s do it. Stop with the demand for gifts and let’s make sweet Beiwelt!’

‘Why not pretend we’ve already made Beweilt and live like that. It would be so close to the real thing we wouldn’t know the difference. I can make things that real, that’s what I’m good at, you know that, so nobody will know the difference. “Real Amiel” I should be called. Come on babe’.

‘And what about when the real Beiwelt comes along? Have you thought about that?’

She rolls away from him, gives him the present of the back he fears. He does conceive how substantial Beweilt could be for the pair of them and puts a hand on her shoulder to communicate his insight.

‘The guys have a new doll-aramid. I could bring it back for a couple of weeks – give you the plastics for a change? Even put the “love” back’ chortling.

The clock made her get up and comfort the child. It was sick and three o’clock and had snapped her sleep in two, three, millions of fragments, kept her together with adrenaline, for fear of baby death. She would have to contact the emergency number, didn’t want to worry Amiel. He mustn’t see her like this, like the mother she was. Sometimes, yes, sometimes, she would be better off without Amiel, who couldn’t understand what Beiwelt meant, couldn’t make sense of the three of them now, could only think of pairings. Something about the way he was in league with Jayde to get her back to work on compressive aramids now that buildings were this close to being made of plastic. Bring the baby in, show us the baby, we’ll set up the crèche for you and the other mothers, pool the babies even, mix them up, see which ones meld together. Just say “yes” Lee.

Rimah loses most of his penis at a demonstration of fibre-creation in an Edinburgh lab. The penis is truncated under the action of pressurised sulphuric acid streaming onto his groin, not yet part of his memory, he's not been apprised by the next generation of aramid nuts or medical staff. Nobody can look him in the eye. Jayde is on her plane way, something serious, she knows, something life-changing. Lee by her side. Amiel has told Kayal. DeNrt has a private hospital and in the centre of the room a hood covers the central part of Rimah's body, beneath which a fine spray of water mists belatedly over the burns. Rimah is scarcely conscious of what is real, is enjoying cutting-edged barbs, subterranean utopias. He and Rimah are in some of the worlds, and then he's with Kayal in the others. And in some of the others he and Amiel are on friendly terms, or he's as old as fifty and with the woman in the pub making him whole. The skin of the plane encloses the bodies of the next generation, and each tiny imperfection closes over, stops the plane ever being sick or aged. They all dream of this plane, self-guiding to the city which sees their lives change, at the centre of which is Rimah's body without powers of regeneration. It is all burnt body and Rimah yet to come to the world he was always already in. Nobody sees the circular alignment of droplets around the genitals marking some mystical achievement, the circumstantial blisters. As the bodies flood out of the plane the symmetry fades the closer they come towards him. The plane is blemish free, no beauty spots, and will leave the city again and again.

Jayde and Lee are allowed to stand round the hood over the centre of Rimah, but Lee can't concentrate, thinks of Beiwelt under the inconsistent care of Amiel, and the dangers Amiel might pose to their child. 'Am I still under his spell, even here, as a man's career hangs in the balance?' The pull of Beiwelt is strong, impresses images of its newness even in this place. Why didn't she bring Beiwelt with her? Rimah's fate is senseless, a pointless contingency, and it will pull Jayde along in its wake, perhaps they will not survive together.

For Lee hyper plastics do make sense, can protect, and even Amiel's Beweilt makes sense. Beiwelt is vulnerable, yet is a field pulling them in to be the same.

In Rimah's utopic spell Jayde and Lee tender eyes and Amiel is felt only as a presence that cannot harm. Kayal's balm has melted the DeNrt plant and the untouched multicoloured centrifuge gently thrashes forward the filaments reconstructing his groin. Jayde nods and he's eased back into the barbs. Between Jayde and Lee's tender eyes swings the seesaw that echoes Rimah's imaginative motion, in, out, in, out, finding no rest in the centre of that population explosion, in the filaments that fail to take. A long time after the visits have stopped the new cave barbs send Rimah back to the spa and him and Kayal, naked, holding hands, waiting for their genitals to cool before heading through the tiny plug to the caves beneath, without effort through the tiny plug both the same normal size. I am a different Rimah under water swimming in the cave barbs with Kayal, and the new Rimah beds in after the thousandth dive, severs all bonds with another Rimah. 'We are protected here. Nothing can touch us'. Neve appears in the secure cave round the corner, benign. 'What did I tell you?' Rimah asks. 'Nature makes anything Lee dares to synthesise. Natural-occurring aramids moulded to the shape of bullet-proof vests' renders Neve speechless, the dull thud of mad dogs bounding off the cave walls on the outside. The presence around it all the new Rimah encounters is Amielian Ether and it cannot get into the cave. 'Yet' vivid 'Amielian Ether is the threat all around'. The time is synthesised in their favour and now Jayde cannot forge a presence either, it's only Kayal with her raggedy pudenda attached to his raggedy filamental centre, heating up, easing down, heating up, chilled down, rising. Neve is unable to speak, now older than it is possible to live, some unnatural mouthing of synthesis and starts to shrink, lines up along the edge of the cave on the floor hundreds of discrete Neves, each different, each wise.

Rimah remembers the certificate, pushes all the Neves together until they soften into the one Neve, senses the Amielian Ether put an arm across just rigid enough to stop Rimah taking the certificate. When he screams out for the certificate it causes the smallest measurable agitation the nurse could be aware of – the only sign in years and years. The nurse contacts the names on the sheet – Lee, Jayde, Amiel, Kayal – but all the numbers have atrophied. The small agitation continues, Rimah no longer in the peak of his life, not this new Rimah, yet the need for the denied certificate surfaces. ‘Amiel has denied all certificates, Rimah’. He must tell Lee to get out of there – Amiel is in charge of the certificates. Why couldn’t they see it? What stopped them? The nurse increases the dose and tries the names and the numbers again that DeNrt have provided him with, but he knows it’s pointless. There’s really no access. Rimah swims back to the spa, leaves the protection of the caves for the joy of meeting Kayal for the first time again. Their genitals heat up.

END