

JAKE

One night at the Zoo I met this artist guy who lived down the road from me. Since then he has graced me with his presence almost daily.

It's probably partly because "as an artist he can't possibly work a normal job." He has shaggy dark hair, that makes me want to pull a firm hard brush through it, and playful green eyes that yell mischief!

I usually leap to my feet when I glimpse his silth-like form ascending the hill toward my unassuming house with seemingly no effort like he's on a conveyor belt. Sometimes he brings his drums over, but I have to tell him to leave because I have study to do.

Wearily arriving home one afternoon, plonking my keys down and going into the kitchen to get a glass of water, I looked out into our backyard to see Jake crashed out on our formidable old, brown armchairs. Our grass was overgrown and his body was moulded to the contours of the lounge. He had obviously come over for a chat and decided to wait. Sleep is Jake's hobby and if he can do it at other people's houses, it's a bonus.

His mouth was open, letting deep floods of air in and out and his arms sat like lead across his chest. I had to smile; it was one of those brief moments when his mouth was engaged in something other than talking or eating. Not verbose, expounding theories, or explaining one of his pieces to me, just lost in slumber.

It was kind of peaceful and I sat in the chair next to him. I took his rollies and matches from his lap and rolled white around the moist, mulchy tobacco. As I inhaled the rollie, elation fell over and through me, being there with him and yet not. It was like I was looking in awe at a profound statue. Profound because of his silence.

There were moments like this, but not that many. Mostly, he irritated the crap out of me.

His art consisted of clay sculptures, (unrecognisable shapes signifying "chaos" in a particularly uninteresting and haphazard way) muddy coloured canvasses offering no resolution, always reflecting his many faceted personality and the ever tiresome, "melancholic mood".

Occasionally he dragged me over to his one bedroom apartment, grey and dreary with a kitchen, bathroom and laundry all in one. He was never so animated than when he was painting me. I never posed nude for him; I felt he had trampled over enough boundaries between us as it was.

We did have fun sometimes, ciggers and coffee down at West End, the Botanical Gardens, muddy brown branches, lime leaves; lying cradled on soft blankets of grass.

Despite his slouched torso, Jake had alluring eyes that exuded a depth, like the dazzling refraction of a diamond.

Nothing deterred him. It was his artistic arrogance that allowed him to be completely unaware of those around him and their feelings. To ignore my constant hints that I wanted to go to bed, study, do anything but sit on the veranda and chew hours of time up with him.

I even had a guy over for dinner once and Jake turned up and expected to join us. Michael was a bit bugged, but ended up talking to him all night.

After a year of his behaviour, suddenly he hit me with an "inspired idea" why don't we get together and "yer know evolve?" That was it! Did he have any clue how far that was from happening?

"I don't think so, Jake." I told him.

Jake
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Silence descended upon us like dew on a crisp front lawn. I noticed he was wringing his favourite beanie in his hands, as if to coerce some dialogue out of it to fill the void between us. He stared down at it.

Quietly he said, "I think I love you."

My face burned. I couldn't speak and finally mumbled "Thanks ... but I don't love you like that."

Finally in his translucent eyes I saw an acknowledgment of my part in this dysfunctional, one-sided relationship. Then he got up, picked up his Dr Pat's and said:
"See ya later."

And his slim, wiry body walked slowly down the stairs and then the street. He never embraced me with his presence again. We sometimes bump into one another at the local shops and nod hello. I kind of miss him you know, like a pet that was once irritating and then became addictive.