Allow These Dreams a Vocabulary

by ElenoftheWays

Summary

I have allowed the Institute to swallow me up completely just to forget that image of a moonlit John holding my gun to Jahpeth’s head. It sometimes even breaks my heart like it is some kind of symbology of how many instantaneously and regularly ignorant people see my work. I tell John so often it doesn’t bother me, but between a wildly beating heart rate and “I need to know” pounding away in my mind in that exact second, it is a hard instance to shake.

The large wrecking ball sings through the bright late morning, crashing right into the southern wall. The southern wall where it all ended. Dark brown bricks crumble down like waterfalls into the space where the planted bushes once stood, the lower hanging crane leading this new mode of demolition back to its neutral position.

They come into focus, their faces turning from somewhere off to my left.

“WE’RE MAKING SURE ALL WALLS FALL BEFORE STARTING ANOTHER, BOYS! D’YOU HEAR ME?”
Lucius and Marcus Isaacson look directly at me from behind the linked arms of policeman and the Croton Distributing Reservoir employees on the opposite side of 42nd Street.

“LOUD AND CLEAR, SIR!”

Just seeing the Detective Isaacsons slowly melts all of this ruckus into the background.

Three years could barely change their faces, although Lucius looks a little heavier and his face rounder. Marcus even has an unruly shadow at his top shadow.

The taller brother nods at me tweaking the faintest smile.

A red-cheeked police officer is sneering at me just out of the corner of my left eye.

Lucius takes off his glasses with one hand and wipes his forehead with a white handkerchief with the other. But there is a twinkling in his distant pupils directly at me between his two tasks. His nearsighted brown eyes squint back up to the still crumbling remains of the roof, most of the brick collapsing down inwards. There is no doubt he might be wondering in this moment as to what exactly happened up there. Marcus claps his brother’s shoulder as if that debatable twin telepathy has been enacted right in front of me and looking to what should be a loud avalanche of bricks.

There is another and even kinder gaze on me.

Sara Howard’s handsome face leans forward through a sea of people down four linked reservoir employees right here on 5th Avenue. There is an acknowledging almost-smile all over that fair skin, her rigidly tightened blond hair hiding underneath a sensible gray brimmed hat with large dark purple feathers across the front. Those blue eyes are even lighter in the noon sun from where I stand, looking almost the gray of my own mother’s. I start nodding multiple times, somewhere between the second and third a few tears almost enter my eyes. If it was possible in this little move, a ridiculous policeman be damned if he saw any of this, I can only hope that Sara understands the magnitude of thanks I owe her in so many different ways.

A little more of a smile sparks deep in between those bright irises as she looks back towards the still crumbling wall and leans back into the crowd.

“FIFTH AND 42ND SIDES DONE, BOYS! TAKE IT AROUND TO 40TH AND WE’LL START ON THE NORTHSIDE NEXT!”

“LOUD AND CLEAR, SIR!”

Everything is still white noise even as the pavement of the roof crumbles on top of all of that dull dark brick, the concrete almost glistening with the noon sun. All of these amazed gasps from behind and around me along with the yelling of the demolition crew is still lost to my ears. The wheels of this new-fangled machine creaks down Fifth adding to the noiseless electricity. Breath and blood courses louder in my ears now, gravity continuing to have its way with the exterior wall and becoming nothing more than like a bricked Gaelic cairn for a modern age. At least the Times announced some good would come from this tombstone, a park named after William Cullen Bryant and Astor and Lenox’s public library taking its place.

“HOLD ONTO THAT ROPE DRUM! DON’T HIT ANYONE WITH THAT THING!”

“LOUD AND CLEAR, SIR!”

The large lead ball crashes into the remaining southwest wall, many women spectators screaming at the surprise. Bricks start raining mostly inwards and adding to that modern cairn, concrete slabs
falling straight down into the center presumably making an even louder noise. Some reservoir and demolition employees already begin to crowd the opposite corner. The gentle zooming of a steam shovel powers down 42nd readied to scoop up the remains despite some of those men already attempting to sell off as many as they could. The European sentimentalism somewhere underneath my skin cannot help but be tempted, instinct turning my eyes beyond that angry officer of the law.

The always late, defeatist, usually drunken boisterous and yet absolutely wonderful John Schuyler Moore stands right there between two reservoir employees on the other side of 40th. It’s not too surprising he wouldn’t want to stand anywhere near any officers having just given up on reporting and taking up a newly created job of fact checking at the Post. I am also proud to announce he has also been helping financing a boys’ home upstate. Moore’s eyes look almost as wide as saucers, his dark blue and white pin stripe sleeves automatically going behind his back. He leans forward with a little nod, a tiny smile slowly cracking underneath his moustache. Although I cannot hear it, he is laughing as if my coming here is a complete surprise and yet there’s no way to be offended by this. Even I want to laugh. I want to laugh here, right in front of the building where both of us almost died. Where Jahpeth was as absolved as he could be. Where I felt I lost and yet gained my own absolution at the same time, its ghost now only faintly clinging to my dreams.

His eyes move over the large city block and I would like to hope he discovered the Isaacsons.

I look over in Sara’s direction hoping for her to reemerge.

Marcus is grinning like Cheshire cat right there in his signature black trench over to John.

John raises his eyebrows to Sara who simply rolls her eyes right back to him.

Lucius does look even more relaxed now, his eyes softening in the distance between us.

Sara smiles over to Lucius and his more elaborately nodding forehead barely perspires.

John winks in my direction.

Sara is nodding that mass of feathers in Marcus’s direction with a smaller smile.

Lucius simply nods his now-gray peppered brown hair over to John.

Marcus turns that grin right over to me.

Here is where it ends.

Here it really ends.

*
“I was afraid you wouldn’t answer my telegram.”

John softly grunts as he sits down next to me in our usual box at the Metropolitan. It's not as claustrophobic as it had been the night of Abbey and Grau’s benefit, but then I made sure to reserve second row tickets this time. The air is both arid and sweet between the scents of human bodies and faint tinges of champagne coming from busying mouths at all directions and yet I want to be here. With or without John, I want to be here.

“Well,” he sighs out tilting back in his chair and adjusting the front waist of his coat, his plopping causing a stir to the overly fragrant wind in box 32. There’s a cautious smile in his brown eyes as they turn only partway towards my own, “You did use the name Anna of the Legs on me, again.” An exhale hisses right out of me instead of a chuckle, looking straight ahead between two women with the most elaborate hairdos I have ever seen. “I almost thought you were lying to me until I found the show in the Post.”

I almost have to remind myself this is how we communicate.

If in any other capacity, this would sound almost accusing.

Again I have to silently remind myself.

“It sounds as if you’re done with the Times” almost shakes right out of me, continuing ahead to the filled-up boxes on the left side of the room. Everything is a little more restricting now. The back of my throat even tightens, intestines almost grumbling from a sudden sensation of silly terror. It’s only been a month and yet has been only a month all at the same time.

It has really become so easy to feel like the past three months never happened.

John actually looks nervous as he picks at his cufflinks.

“Well” hollows through his throat in a closer distance with all of the voices surrounding us, looking down towards the red curtains as he adjusts the white tie around his neck. If this is to happen regularly again, we will find ourselves in the first row once more. “If I had my way, let’s just say I would be done with all newspapers in either mode of consumption.”

The house lights begin to slowly fade.
“I made sure it was Italian tonight, my friend” already speeds out of my mouth and slowly morphing into a whisper as I lean in towards him. Enough of the Metropolitan orchestra area and lower boxes go quiet, the upper never without a little helpless chatter of some high society gossip. John is already enraptured towards the stage curtains and it is a sight I didn’t think I would see ever again.

His one available eye to my left narrows with a little spark and softly chuckling off of his sinuses as the orchestra play their final synchronizing chord. John’s smile stays like this even while looking down towards the beginnings of Mascagni’s “Guglielmo Ratcliff.” The second I discovered there would be an opera based on Heine’s play, and one that I had seen in my boyhood, I knew I wanted to see it with or without John. But it being Italian and a tragedy easily tickled a notion it was one to be experienced together despite the short time since Johannisnacht. I have to bring myself to believe there is never going to be a right time to reintroduce our friendship to an unconscious ideal of society once more.

If it is indeed possible, intestines tighten even harder inside of me, a few nerves sparking deep in my stomach. My temple closest to the budding stage lights begins to perspire and somehow, this reaction makes sense to me without any that so-called intellectual pride so many people accuse me of in rash moments. It feels faintly of Oppenheim’s traumatic neurosis or simply known as soldier’s heart but from a more situational type of disruption. Maybe there is and isn’t a way to define what is war and what is situation all at the same time. Jahpeth Drury was after all a kind of war, five minds complimenting shared and easily thrilled dopamine to a point that Roosevelt’s secret intelligence became something of a small army. I expect this to continue off and on for the next two and a half hours.

I cannot be any happier to see John again after a month, the muscles in my brain and discourse flexing in our particular shared way of communicating in order to orbit his own. These polarizing sensations revives something in me and yet dilutes the last three months into the background all at the same time. Maybe it is something in my European DNA I cannot entirely be rid of and for right now, I am content with it as Mascagni’s playful musical score gives away its own Italian heritage.

Our feet hit the pavement outside the Met and it’s finally easier to breathe even among the over-fragrant scents of high society and the stink that is New York City. Still an inhale sinks inward and something quite minute is right there, cold and clear and faintly shivering with something like hope. I continue to stand right here for a few seconds more just out of the foot traffic’s path strangely content. For right now, I give into it. Jahpeth Drury’s case did clean out just a little corruption in Teddy’s force, for now anyways. Guglielmo Ratcliff’s tragedy does bring John and I back together. I do not even condemn a single second of this current and natural contentedness as it almost cools off my neck drenched in this confounded summer heat. Of course, it might be because I am with another person at the moment, it is always easier when someone else is around.

Ida certainly helps.

Some of Cyrus’s extended family in Philadelphia has been acquainted with a German immigrant and single mother with five children. The woman was desperate enough to find work for her 25-year-old daughter even if it meant her oldest moving to a less Godly city like New York City. But the ever-reliable Cyrus had been worried if it had been too soon for me to employ someone else and I myself shared the same sentiment, but someone had to take over the position and soon. Giving a young person work is always just as gratifying as the chances I have given to Cyrus and Mary and even Stevie. It isn’t encouraged, but I feel as if Ida Fox repays it in ways I didn’t think
possible.

I even sense her behind the crevices of the kitchen door and it feels like something glows from behind it, a familiar German tune humming from somewhere in the house. Everything about her feels like a sort of absolution but not necessarily of Mary. I find myself even thinking about my own ancestry without anger and the natural inherited or conditioned judgments that may or may not come from our shared background. I do not even know if she perceives that we descend from the same country. Sometimes she even feels like the little sister I used to imagine having as a boy. But Ida Fox is a quite handsome young woman as well as a marvelous cook. I am almost tempted to take John back to the house for a simple bottle of wine and some cold chicken.

My mouth opens with a little more of my own consent this time, but John’s black coat sleeve already lifts for Stevie to maneuver my carriage closer to the sidewalk.

“I order the caviar if you order the oysters. I’m going light tonight.”

“Of course,” I graciously nod, gesturing towards the carriage door for him to go first.

Of course, habit takes us to Del’s.

John takes to smoothing the wrist buttons of his overcoat this time and I am humbled. Even in the carriage’s shadow, he comes across almost as nervous looking up from his study and out onto the street. Naturally the traffic from the Metropolitan to Delmonico’s is but a few minutes longer and even more of the last three months evaporate further away in these quiet seconds. I wonder if John needed as much time by himself as I have needed. But when he is alone, there is much more drinking and I am concerned with this. Going to Delmonico’s or even a bottle of wine from my home feels almost enabling, shame tightening the back of my throat. I try to swallow it down but his eyes are narrowing right back towards my own.

“Yes?”

“What?”

“You were looking at me.”

“Yes and no” sighs right out of me looking out of the window to my side of the street. There is a little wind in the stifling heat just through the movement of horses although conjuring up the stronger stink of New York City even on Broadway. I breathe it all in for better or worse, another phrase that has been haunting me for the past few weeks.

“Oh, Laszlo” humorously groans right out from beside me.

Between one clopping horse shoe to another on brick, I fight a little grin to myself.

Charles Delmonico awaits us yet again with open arms.

“I was surprised to hear Mr. Moore taking up the reservation this time” and my head near snaps over to John as I hand over my own overcoat to the coat check boy along with a tip. “Mr. Moore” does nothing but pinch his lips together looking the very definition of the cat ate the canary, “but unfortunately, gentlemen, the blue room has been invaded by a force greater than all three of us combined. I hope you do not mind taking a table on the main floor?”

“I suppose not” flows right out with even less consent. I’m not quite sure what’s wrong with me tonight or perhaps this is indicative of living in the exact moment. William James does attest that the emotive change of the body can be felt at its most acutely the second a disruptive thing occurs.
Perhaps it is the same in the broader sense of existing fully inside one’s skin, a disruptive environment amplifying body and presence itself. But my better hand habitually scrambles behind my back relieved of my coat and hat, allowing the ease of the other to hang right there as I lean forward to emphasize “it is good to be among people.”

Charles smiles before turning around to guide us to our table.

John, however, looks like he just swallowed a bug out of the corner of my eye.

“Well, gentlemen, I shall find you a server and some of the best wine from the cellar!”

The ends of Charles’s dark moustache flexes with a genuine smile as we sit down. He disappears almost immediately into the vast wilderness of his family’s establishment and that enabling shame skirts both of my shoulders like a ghostly apparition.

“You surprise me, Moore,” I hear from myself from an even closer distance since falling into Ratcliff’s eventual tragic fate. I always do need a few minutes to mindfully gestate an opera like that as my spine straightens even taller against the chair, the napkin to my lap. “I didn’t know you had it in you to reserve—” but my voice begins to shake in fear of mistranslation.

“There was no clarification other than,” a chuckle lifts John’s broad features as he leans back in his chair before straightening, “Anna of the Legs,” his palm evokes a marquee in the air over the table and I exhale with a little chuckle. “Besides,” John begins to trace a fork, successfully averting what could have been a nervous glance, “I wanted to contribute something once. Just once.”

“So I shall not expect miracles after tonight,” I hear myself punctuate without question.

Finally, those too familiar brown eyes lift and we at last laugh directly to one another.

Everything finally feels like what it was.

“Did you read the notice about Hammerstein’s new operetta opening at the Olympia in September? It could be something a little more refreshing than our usual tragic evenings at the Met.”

“An operetta? Oh, come on now, John—”

“It would be good for you, Laszlo! Branch out, try something new,” John’s fingernail leaps off the utensil’s design, his smiling brown eyes completely lost between daring and provoking me at the same time. The last time someone tried that loook on me, I ended up in a boxing ring of all places! But once more I need to remind myself of our common vocabulary. A waiter finally comes by and appetizers and the appropriate wine pairings are arranged. My shoulders naturally stiffen up worried for Moore’s drinking problems as if they were my own.

“I find myself surprised you’re not eating as much as usual. Should I be worried?”

“Oh,” his large hand lifts far more in a peaceful gesture this time against this stifling heat, “Grandmother tried one more socialite woman on me, so I ate the entire time to keep from talking. Seems to be a suitable route of getting out of it without,” his too-familiar smile cocked to one side, gelled back black hair tilting along with it, “getting out of it.”

“Ah, the indomitable Mrs. Moore and her iron-clad will.”

If I had my wine, I would tilt the goblet or lute in his direction saluting his grandmother. It’s truly extraordinary how we are falling back into all of this and my chest feels even lighter although on the busied main floor on a post-Met Friday night. I can power through this lack of privacy or with
the knowledge that some of my critics may intentionally spill wine on my lap although making it look an accident at any moment. My focus tightens onto John's rolling brown eyes, a little cough heaving off his white dress shirt.

Lutes are partway filled with the white wine appropriate for caviar and I feel my consent slipping all over again as John reaches for his own. My hand darts right out for his wrist, but my words have not even been planned. I hate this. Perhaps time is friendship’s enemy if a person needs to take a break from another however conscious or unconscious, the synchronicity possibly altered to an irreparability.

“Listen, John,” at least my hand immediately draws back to my side of the table. I have to look down towards it just to say whatever ends up toppling out of my throat first, “I don’t know the appropriate rhetoric for this moment, but could I ask if you wouldn’t drink so much with your meal?” I finally feel my face slowly rising back up with a little more confidence towards a very surprised John Moore, “I would like to have a much more private conversation with you, if it is at all convenient.”

He blinks once then twice.

Unfortunately, I know in my bones he listens to me at least in the firmer deductive moments. But the night of Jahpeth Drury’s murder catches up to my intestines all over again and they twist the hardest they have since John sat down next to me almost three hours ago. I can still see John’s outline in his tails, possibly the same suit he has on right in front of me, standing almost dazed over my violently bitten tongue and near crying self while cradling the younger and dying Drury. John was actually holding my colt directly to Jahpeth’s head.

“Shut up! Shut the hell up, you miserable coward! … And leave you with him? Are you insane? Look at him, Kreizler—this is him, this is the man who’s responsible for all the blood we’ve seen! And yet you sit here letting him convince you he’s some kind of—”

I’m grabbing John’s trembling wrist empathizing with his quandaries and internal wars.

But I need to know.

I need to know.

It keeps chanting in my mind even as this dying serial killer lays in my arms like a pliant child so much like the ones he had murdered. I’m furious at Moore despite his instantaneous need for justice and yet I understand it. Even a little part of myself wants to let Jahpeth die with what little dignity he has and perhaps even relieving himself of such a horrible dark life. Another part of me wants to apply pressure to his wound, to save him so he can somehow have a second chance at life. The benefit for myself does not go unnoticed however fleeting. How are future alienists like myself to understand serial killers’ motivations if we do not act on understanding them in the present language in order to treat and/or convict them in the future?! Robert Knox must have had a similar argument in the understanding of anatomy despite knowing or unknowingly using the corpses of murder victims!

This has become the newest mantra in my mind for the last four weeks when I do have a few minutes to myself. I have allowed the Institute to swallow me up completely just to forget that image of a moonlit John holding my gun to Jahpeth’s head. It sometimes even breaks my heart like it is some kind of symbology of how many instantaneously and regularly ignorant people see my work. I tell John so often it doesn’t bother me, but between a wildly beating heart rate and “I need to know” pounding away in my mind in that exact second, it is a hard instance to shake. I have woken up from much more elaborate nightmares consisting of that night on the Croton
promenade, the moon outlining my father’s silhouette looking down at me so many steps behind John’s shoulder. But once I pull out of that unruly realm, my right arm aches as if it was broken only yesterday then the sensation settles in. Those recurring five words if not an impression of them. My mind chants to itself every time to allow these dreams a vocabulary that can be spoken to no one else but John.

“Kreizler...”

My eyes feel wet from the actual instance and all of its contemplative apparitions.

I do not even feel my left hand spreading the caviar spoon onto a cracker.

“Laszlo...”

It sits on the small appetizer plate in front of me as I feel those same fingers cover my top lip. I’m already softly humming to his attention without knowing it. My eyes finally look across the table and John cannot look any more concerned over to me. He leans forward in his chair, eyebrows slightly rising up that tall forehead with a small grin.

“Of course,” he has to say a little louder in between all of the surrounding conversations with their tinkling utensils and the string quartet in one corner, “In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if you didn’t have a grand sweeping retrospectively retrospective speech.”

I have to wonder if John really did see me like a Sherlock Holmes-like character for these past three months, but this is our friendship. Once more I have to remind myself, synapses gently firing underneath my skin. It and a single bite of caviar warms my entire body even in this tepid room on this insufferable summer’s night.

“Splendid, however I hope you do not expect that this is some kind of clear-headed addendum by any means,” my wrists pause at the clothed table’s ledge, “Have you heard after Miss Howard in these past few weeks?”

Frederick’s hooves sound even more comforting to my ears. I find myself closing my eyes to his careful march, Stevie at the helm instead of Cyrus. Since his injury, I make sure his hours are a little more limited and it certainly helps that young Taggert has always been more of a night owl than Cyrus. I wouldn’t be surprised if Stevie has already fully comprehended this would add to his current salary. Behind my closed eyes, I hear the Frederick’s particular rhythm against the beginnings of East Seventeenth. How did John say yes to this crazed idea of a “retrospectively retrospective speech?” It merely hangs right there and I do not have an answer for myself, but things have been like this since the middle of June. This is a sensation between the popular idea of a depressive temperament and the beginnings of its acceptance for acceptance’s sake but not necessarily for the tangible reality of temperament. This feels like something beyond my conscious reach, something inside of the knots between the composition of my ancestry and what tethers my soul together. The even wiser Buddhists might have an idea of what is wrong with me, but I can’t bring myself to acknowledge Anagarika Dharmapala’s writings in what few minutes I have to myself in recent weeks.

Part of my mind feels disappointed as if I have allowed myself into deeper waters I know nothing about and yet a greater part of myself wants to bandage something that may not even need healing. It is the part of me that needs to hear myself out loud, perhaps even the ridiculous need to be validated. Receiving it from John always feels like a high not necessarily out of superiority, but what bodily chemicals that can be received and contracted just from discourse. I remember the
flurry of synapses against Mary’s kiss feeling so much like every time I was elevated out of myself knowing that someone was actively listening to me, the horrible curse of surviving an abusive childhood. But now there is no use for any other part of my body suitable for the exercise of sexuality, it is only the friendship of John and Theodore and perhaps even Miss Howard that can repair my heart as best as it can. Those dreams of Johannisnacht certainly doesn’t help with John’s possible contribution. I do not even undermine the idea of allowing another woman into my life, now leaving that only to chance.

My eyes open on John’s side profile alternating between the night and lit street lamps.

"You know you’re too quiet to be Dr. Laszlo Kreizler right now."

I look ahead inside of my dark carriage chuckling a little more fully present as Frederick slowly comes to a full stop.

Stevie clearly jumps from the box seat, his shoes a heavy clap against pavement before kicking out the folding step. At least his opening the carriage door adds some movement to the even more stifling summer heat. I gesture for John to exit first.

“Stevie,” my lower back cracks as I slowly step down onto the sidewalk with a little groan, “jumping down onto the sidewalk like that will be the devil on your knees in the future.” I can blame this on nothing else but the straightforward rhetoric of my own parents, this reasoning sounding so much like the paranoiac little girl that came to me just this past week crying over her mother's wrongful accusations of talking behind her back. A hand reaches for the mixture of sweat and macassar grease glazing at the top of my neck.

“Well, some people learn by doing” and John is dropping a hand on Stevie’s shoulder.

I pinch my lips together before walking up to the door that Ida is already opening. There is a little smile against her pressed lips before her tall and round figure draped in blue stands off to the side of the door. This time she is more astute to the manners of the ridiculous upper class, bobbing a tiny curtsy right there in the low-lit foyer before reaching for John’s hat.

“Well!” He sounds legitimately surprised all over again, eyebrows even further up on that broad forehead looking over to me while handing her his hat. “Good evening, Miss,” he redirects back to Ida.

“Good evening, sir” she curtsies all over again, Ida’s round mouth closing around her German accent and contorting in what could be interpreted as a halved sarcastic grin. She smiles like she is amused by everything around her and it never fails to be strangely humbling. A little pang of that sister-like sensation runs through me watching one side of her mouth arch higher than the other, the single lamp blazing in my parlor reflecting a golden warmth onto her pretty oval face between the shadows of her thick deep brown eyebrows and tall cheekbones. Every time I enter this door, I am repeatedly struck by how handsome she really is although nowhere near attracted. “Shall you require anything to drink, Herr -o-oh-sir?”

My throat lightly cracks in a chuckle.

John’s smile folds in towards one another just out of the corner of my eye.

“Oh,” I feel myself turn towards my unfortunate audience for this silly retrospective speech, “I think Mr. Moore here is the suitable bartender for this situation. John Moore,” my left palm gestures with ease towards the tall young woman with both hands busied with the misfortune of sweaty top hats, “Miss Ida Fox, she came highly recommended from some of Cyrus’s relatives in
Philadelphia.”

“A pleasure, Miss.”

Ida smiles that tiny lopsided smile that always looks so strangely knowing of something I cannot touch before scrambling for a quick nod to compensate for a curtsy. She often misses the courtesy, but I don’t mind when I’m alone. The simple style on her hair and the faintly white crease down the middle of her scalp lifts back up and there is an even bigger grin in her eyes. I’ll never understand how Ida manages to come across so wise beyond her years as she disappears with our top hats down the corridor, silently hoping that she had kept which one was which in mind. Of course, the Metropolitan would surely combust into fire lest a patron comes unequipped with every article of the appropriate costume!

“Kreizler” is a little hushed still here in the doorway, “does she know that you are Ger—”

“Indeed not.”

“But you also spea—”

“Then she will learn by doing,” I grin up towards John’s ridiculous height, my weaker right hand unfurling in the direction of the lower lit parlor. My left grips his shoulder and allowing him to start into the next room which is remarkably cool for the weather we are having tonight.

“There seems to be an unspoken rule here in the states for children of immigrants like Ida and myself, Moore,” I drop my hand from his person and walking ahead of him to only turn back around, gesturing towards the drink cart by the entrance. A softly billowing sheet against the upper half of a window does not go unnoticed, finding myself completely charmed by Ida’s intelligent utility in battling the heat. My less disgraced arm shivers with a little of that enabling shame as I continue towards my trusted winged back chair, “Here you are expected to speak English the second you open your mouth else you will be mocked by your peers and looked down on by those older than you are. We both have seen instances of this” and I can’t bring myself to finish that sentence. Johannisacht is right there between us in the parlor’s cooler air. I am sure John can feel it as well as the comfort of my chair surrounds me, “so it seems to not be dying out any time soon.”

“I have never mocked you.”

Ice clinks harshly within glass, the bourbon’s vanilla breath flooding the room.

“No, because I have more of an unfortunate economic advantage than she does. Besides,” my thumbnail drops and digs into the solid blue upholstery, “Y-you have always been an unexpected exception.”

Those last two words echo their tremors right there in my ears. I really do feel absolutely silly in the lengths I have gone to bring John Schuyler Moore into the safe confines of my house just so I can feel safe in my convictions. I cannot even tell if this is that same self-persecuted vanity that I had to somewhat roleplay in order to initially leave the Jahpet Drury case, but this involves no harm to anyone unless John’s own dealings with this faultless circumstantial trauma. Within compassionate self assertion, there is little winning when it comes to the perception of communication. My head drops back on the soft cushion between the wings. Perhaps I even find myself a part of the problem in not communicating great masculine tenderness in the open as it should be. I can only imagine to a far closed mind, which John’s really isn’t, such affection would be misconstrued for something the law and psychiatry both find quite reprehensible.
“Hm” booms down my right arm, goosebumps traveling down it in the wake of John’s voice. I open my eyes onto a clear rocks glass of bourbon and ice hovering right in front of me, my left hand gravitating up towards it, “well, cheers to that.”

“And...” John draws right out as he settles down onto the mirroring wingback chair with a little bit of a slump, one hand lifting to loosen his tie and unbuttoning his collar, “thank you for that, Laszlo. I needed to hear something like that for quite a while now.”

“Yes,” my stronger hand is surprisingly trembling the glass’s route up to my lips before landing back down against the chair’s arm. I breathe a little sharp inhale and the current emotive breath is acute in both of my eardrums, “and in that “quite a while...””

“Laszlo” and John’s eyes are closed while he stretches out against the blue chair underneath him, black pump-dressed ankles informally crossing right in front of him. One hand lifts his glass from the arm of the chair up between his bared collarbones, “are you trying to psychoanalyze me?”

My spine startles up against the back cushion even straighter, habit not seeing the humor in his wry tone right away. I suppose my voice has not quite shaken the overwhelmingly sensitive tone one must have to talk to children and yet again I need to remind myself. A soft and lesser acute scoff runs out of my throat attempting to suffice for a chuckle.

“Of course not, John,” a laugh trembles through my words, an even sturdier hand lifting the rich bourbon to my lips all over again. I am also tempted to shake my own collar as I stare into the embellishments around my fireplace, “I was only asking what has come to pass in your life during that “quite a while.” I suppose I have been talking to so many of my patients lately, I haven’t been able to adapt my tone as easily as I have in the past.”

“To tell you the truth, I think I’ve gained some weight against all of that Drury drink.”

“That’s not too unusual, John. Coping mechanisms offer an internal reward sy—”

I stop right there and John Moore is chuckling the loudest he has all night. This feels almost like a coping mechanism for myself as I look over to him, his natural laugh lines around the corners of his closed eyes and cheeks scrunching together tilting towards the ceiling. I take another sip and I cannot tell if it is his laughter or the bourbon that floods a kind of warmth through my veins. It is hard to tell if I am relieved either by that contracted discourse or some further reparation of my heart, but there’s no way to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. In this second, the month spent away from John feels so unnecessary despite needing it at the same time just to fall back into myself.

John finally sighs out a high-pitched relief, a smile of my own disappearing against the glass’s ledge. My right hand thoughtlessly goes for my silver cigarette case in my pocket which of course tumbles into my lap. I often forget when I’m around him as habit brings me to nervously glance towards him. Thankfully his eyes have been closed up until this second.

I lean forward with the offering stretched out in my left hand.

“Thank you for not changing too much, Kreizler” he grunts out leaning forward for a cigarette then drawing back into his chair, “thank you.” But a little shame runs through me that I have not exacted when I would start this ridiculous post post-mortem speech as it were. John would have gone towards the alcohol even if I did not gesture towards it. A little breath shakes out of me, John's hissing match almost echoing through my too-quiet parlor before it leans towards my own cigarette. “I sure have missed this though.”
“The partaking of my liquor cart?” and a little grin rises out of this as I breathe it in, lifting one of these liquors in question back to my lips. It sits back down against the small table with a dull little tap, the acuteness of the littlest of sounds ringing into my head all over again.

John just chuckles without an answer, standing up to lean against the fireplace to flick his own ash directly into it. I am more than thankful he has always had a good aim.

I feel my eyes smile into his in this shorter distance between us.

“I too have missed this, John” and I know for certain my tenderly spoken words sounded a little less doctorly in this moment. I place my own cigarette in the neighboring glass tray.

John smiles wholeheartedly without a single joke in his eyes as they look back onto my own. His rocks glass is lifting off my mantel in my direction and mine follows into his.

A long-held breath sways right out of me, nicotine gently puffing out of my nostrils.

“But what is all of this, Laszlo?” the emphatic smoke gestures an arch about John’s waistcoat marked with gray shadow, “I thought you would have wanted to sink back into the walls of your institute after everything,” the last of his words disappears against the glass’s ledge once more.

“Don’t ask me. I have been as reckless as I know myself to be. Perhaps it is—” and I feel my hips shifting against an already perfectly adaptable cushion. A little sigh breathes out, something aching in the depths of my chest as I look straight ahead into the detailed frame of my fireplace. “John,” sounds so conclusive to whatever has been building in my throat all night, “I will not lie to you, but for many weeks I find myself the victim of the great unconscious, von Hartmann’s Unbewussten. I have had more dreams than I care to admit of that night.”

My will pulls me to look up towards my tall friend. He holds his drink up against the buttons of his white dress shirt now a pale gray against the single lamp, looking down into the bourbon with an indecipherable look on his face.

“I had to believe everything was over for myself the second I dropped you off at Washington Square. We were going to Del’s that night and everything was supposed to be fine. But the second my head hit the pillow, I cr—” a strange guttural sound rolls from the back of my throat. The inability to say that single word still finds myself a detriment to the suppression of masculine tenderness as a tobacco-stained inhale sinks that knowledge into my lungs. My fingers blindly adventure for my cigarette, “I actually cried. I cried myself to sleep, John. Gott!” and I am launching forward towards my knees, elbows meeting with both thighs although my left thumb wipes sweat from my forehead while holding the cigarette, “but not because of or for Mary, mind you. I don’t even know why I feel I must tell you this anyway. I know you to be a great listener which makes you the excellent reporter you are, John. You say you expect this out of me, but I did not expect that I actively need to tell you any of this, but it is those simple words I wake up to in my mind nearly every morning.”

“Allow these dreams a vocabulary,” word by word, my stronger hand gestures not too unlike that marquee gesture John made at Delmonico’s. The cigarette leaves a soft white billowing trail in the half-lit air between us, looking back up towards him. John does nothing but look down to his pump-dressed foot as it goes up onto its ball, teeth sinking into his bottom lip. A little irrational fear bubbles in my chest as I sit my cigarette back down. I thankfully can slide off my bow tie off with one hand than putting it on as better equipped fingers take to their task. An inhale sails inwards even easier with a less restricting collar, only unbuttoning the top button. “M-my mind associates these words to me with the knowing that they must project themselves towards you
because you *are* a dear friend in spite of,” my gaze averts back towards the fireplace’s detail all over again, “the fact you are the subject of this very dream.”

I want to bury my face in my hands, not even wanting to look up towards him.

My back finally falls back onto the back cushion with a little less precision this time.

“It is as if my reliving the Croton promenade is like a recurring post trauma, John. I’ve had plenty of blows t-to my p-person,” a breath shakes out of me, glad to never needing to go into *that* . John thankfully does not know much about my childhood, “i-in the Harvard gymnasiu...course. It is as if the two instances of your holding the Colt to his head and standing over my holding a dying Jahpeth Drury still holding the gun superimposes against one another. The image,” these last two words tremble out of me far too freely and I officially give up on reeling it all back in. John should know, my mind unconvincingly tells myself. “Th-the image, John, is a hard one to shake and i-it,” I feel my eyes close, the action feeling further away from my own body although a deep swallow of my own spit echoes in both ears. Perhaps there is too much probable vulnerability within this self-imposed dark, finally giving into the surge of words making sense of themselves as they fall right out, “against my better conscious judgment, it continues to haunt me only when I sleep.”

An inhale feels even lighter here in these even darker shadows behind my eyelids.

"I would like to believe it’s a mental image of my own fears on how others see my work” and there is already a dry tingling at the inside corners of my eyes, “th-that for all the good I try to do with the disenfranchised, it can all result in w-what may become my death. It can very well may *become* my death, hearing that voice inside of me chant “I need to know” over and over until nothingness. I apologize for that, John, considering,” I do not even finish that sentence as my left elbow sits on the chair’s arm, fingers cradling my left hot temple. The touch brings me even closer to my words or perhaps mutis mutandis. I feel utterly stupid and yet selfishly vindicated all at the same time.

“But do not think for a single second any of this is your fault, John. You are more than justified in your actions that night, keeping to being that kind and just person that you are,” I can feel my cheeks foolishly burning, never really telling John in pure honesty how I perceive him to be. “But that dreamlike image is a hard one to shake and maybe I should not have said anything. I... I do not,” my fingers leave a sticky temple to fan down in the air between us before returning, “I do not say this in insecurity but in a far linear approach. I could have fallen even deeper in my work without contact between us. Granted, I have always needed time by myself and yet I am indeed aware how this could look like that self-imposed vanity I accused myself of the night Mary died,” a deep sigh racks through my lighter chest, the movement almost cooling off my collar bones, “I wouldn’t be completely wrong. The lack of contact came far too easily, John. I *know* you believe me. It was an accident I would hate to prolong.”

“I agree.”

I have never heard John’s voice shake like this unless in a fit of angry passion.

My eyes open back onto him, his thumbnail dragging across his bottom lip.

There are tears at the tops of my cheeks and I take advantage of John not looking at me to immediately apprehend them. He stares into his empty glass of bourbon still sitting on the mantel, the cigarette having taken its final resting place inside of it.

“Even during the case, I dreamed when I *did* sleep,” his voice sounds so wounded, my heart aches
a sensation to pour it in his direction, “I... I never expected to tell anyone this, but I dream of that night at Paresis Hall. It,” hitches loud for how quiet it is in my parlor, “comes and goes, but it’s always right there being tied up and drugged on chloral while almost being taken sexually advantage of by those poor boys with Ellison and Riley watching the whole time.”

“Jesus. Jesus Christ!” and I jump out of my chair immediately feeling lightheaded, my eyelids wide on John. My image of his forearm lifting to the mantel momentarily sways, his gaze looking straight down into the fire box.

“Laszlo, listen,” his other large palm gestures in my direction, that cautiousness now nowhere near a humor. John still cannot look any more sober as his sad brown eyes turn towards my own. I know this look to be one where I must withdraw my career from the equation. “You knew to an extent from what Stevie told you. I don’t know by how much and the John Beecham case was so periodically erratic, I just put it all out of my mind.”

“Young Taggart did say he went at all of those girls and the mobsters to get to you, that you were drugged and they were going for your wallet.”

“And apparently my pants as well.”

I close my eyes to discover my eyelashes pooling in shameless tears.

“To hear all of the details come from your voice, I... I hate myself for how blasé I treated you that morning, but you are not wrong. So much happened all at once, I... I...” I need to punch or kick something, my fists tightening in accordance to their individual strength.

“I know, Laszlo,” comes out of John so gently, it almost doesn’t sound like him. His eyes look back down into the firebox before tightly closing, little wrinkles unfurling from their outward corners, “I know and I relive all of it in my dreams just as periodically erratic and they go into the minutest detail. One dream might amplify Riley’s tying me down, another the touch of young hands ripping at my belt.” John’s face cringes into my fireplace and I can do nothing else but sit back down. I am shaking everywhere and yet nowhere, the reminder a harsh blow more towards my nervous system. It is much different coming out of his mouth than from a hyperactive sixteen-year-old insomniac's. “I understand what you mean and believe me, Laszlo, I share part of the blame of these last few weeks. I needed my time alone as well; you are not alone in your feelings.”

I know better than to remind him it’s easy to forget such a broad perspective in a solitary moment within one’s self, John has heard this more than enough during our time together at Harvard. But there are those who get lost in the ease of others and there are those who topple deeper into a natural ostracization. John has somehow managed to be one of those who can do both depending on the moment, but for right now, deep within myself as myself and not my line of work, he is the kind of empathetic where such broad-minded understanding can easily come across as cavalier. It almost pinches already aroused synapses and I feel utterly stupid all over again.

“It does make sense in a way. I have heard that Sigmund Freud just started on the study of dreams just last summer and with the lengths we all have went to understand and investigate,” I am now leaning forward with a little less disquiet. My elbows meet my knees, taking up my softly simmering cigarette, “with all we have seen and absorbed, the trauma would accumulate and apply harsh disturbances against the parts of all of our brains where dreams may lie. Hm.” I finally inhale the mostly burnt tobacco still between my fingers. I feel a haziness against my eyes, looking off into the short distance to particularly nothing, “God, I would love to get ahold of that book!”

“Laszlo.”
I am brought back to right now as I lay my cigarette back into the ashtray, John leaning a single shoulder blade against my mantle. Both of his arms cross the column of his shirt buttons having taken off his tailcoat somewhere between the comfort of my own closed eyes and his own confession. Damn those mobsters! I wish I could actively do something. But any good alienist knows that a person cannot fight another’s internal battles even if somehow made tangible in the conscious world.

“John.”

Many quiet minutes pass by and I really have missed this this level of quiet with another person. I so often shared these kinds of minutes with Cyrus and Mary, but John Moore was the first to truly and knowingly partake in the honor. A 20-year-old clean shaven version of this man would sit on the opposite side of a library study table with his feet crossed on top of it barely taking in his own course work while I was devouring my own. I suppose I have become addicted to that silence, the steady breathing of another never needing me to commentate on my surroundings or the lines and rows of Kraepelin or Hippocrates or Kahlbaum. Even now John’s steady breathing in the deep silence of my parlor calms my person even further, his eyes looking as if warring with his own mind.

“John, I m-may not presume to know everything” and the tremor in my voice betrays such impending words that have been slowly gluing themselves together since 8 o’clock. My eyes do not settle on his own but instead grins towards his whole face, another poor side effect of being abused as a child. But warm tears betray me and I am victim to closing my eyes all over again, “but I do know you are a dear friend to me. I really do not allow myself the honor of telling you so as often as I should.”

I hear nothing but a soft scuffling from a distance in this darkness, a light touch to my knee. My eyes snap open feeling much lighter than they had been all night and John is sitting in his appointed wingback now right there in front of me. One of his hands weigh down my leg like the natural anchor that he is. But John’s sad brown eyes are now a hybrid of green and gray in this proximity as they look into my own like they are insisting something I know nothing of, his squared off jaw clenching and releasing a few tendons in his neck.

“Laszlo, I... I know.”

My eyebrows knit together, the few tears on my face drying in this absurd heat.

John’s palm leaves my knee cap and the touch happily fizzes almost straight down into its bone. Once more I am reminded I am a physical body. I feel as if I am just underneath my own flesh, not entirely an absolute cerebral Sherlock Holmes. We sit as if mirror images, elbows leaning on legs and yet not entirely looking at one another. John deeply exhales and shakes his head down towards to his lap, the scent of macassar oil breathing across my face.

“Sara knows, Laszlo, and I know as well.”

My eyebrows continue to lower in curiosity.

“Sara will absolutely kill me for this, but, after what you just said about the two of us,” macassar oil exhales towards me all over again with a quick nod, “this is what she gets for digging,” another sigh breathes even heavier still studying either his right pump or my left one, “around in the,” clips out almost as if John doesn’t want to say this. I already feel sick although not knowing what exactly will come out of his mouth, John’s eyes slowly lifting back up towards mine, “Fifteenth Street Records—”
My spine is already falling back against the chair cushion, eyelids giving into one another. I hear nothing but my own hissing breath, knowing exactly where this is going.

“—around September 1862.”

“Yes” comes out a little more succinct than what I was expecting even as my synapses ring right out almost terrified. I believe my hands are also shaking without ever looking down towards either of them. But considering the great investigative case of Dr. Laszlo Kreizler by one ambitious future officer of the law that is Sara Howard, it’s hardly surprising. I am hardly disconcerted within my mind although my synapses and nerves continue to call out like tonight’s soprano. But something else calls out even deep inside of myself, unable to point to where it exactly exists in the interior of one’s body within one’s mind.

But John knows.

I steadily breathe out, the acuteness sharp with the lack of vision against it.

John really knows now but I refuse to fall into that night all over again. I have already fallen in so often within the confines of my mind for over 25 years, the knowledge of human behavior accumulating in my mind presumably compensating for a level of survivor forgiveness none should offer. That deep something begins to crumble as it exists alongside the love and belief I have for my friend.

“Yes, well,” my eyes open to no pool of tears this time.

John, however, holds his tall forehead up with one hand as its elbow keeps to a single knee cap. No man could never look so guilty and yet I can’t help but think this is what he looks like while at Luchow’s drinking to the point of severe bodily harm.

“John,” my left hand reaches for a lesser populated knee, fingers gently gripping around its cap. Those almost shaking green yet brown yet gray eyes cautiously look up into my own, “do not trouble yourself so much, old friend,” I feel my pupils smile a little of that alienist empathy, never feeling a greater extent of the deep friendship I feel for this incredibly culpable-looking John Schuyler Moore. His eyes flash relief before slowly closing, a small accepting grin at the ends of his mouth, “One should almost expect so much from a potential police officer, but I am glad that out of anyone to find this out, it would be you. I trust you with this, John.”

My stronger hand keeps to that immobile knee.

John sniffs a deep guttural breath, a single hand wiping down rather dry-looking cheeks.

“We, ah, we burned the record” grumbles out from somewhere deep in his chest, that startling quilt pattern that is the color of his eyes back on mine.

“Quite right,” my palm slaps down against his leg, mine smiling directly back into his.

“While I’m not exactly ecstatic you tampered with police records, John, I understand your heart was in the right place. I cannot,” an even more relieved breath flies out with my words, their volume a little higher than expected. My stronger hand returns to my cigarette case next to a half-touched bourbon and I stretch the offer back out towards John. His fingers almost immediately accept, “I cannot blame Sara’s curiosity. This, John,” the metal clasp practically echoes as I shut the capsule, my own fresh cigarette emphatically bouncing along with my words, “this is the sin of disenfranchising women, what the Buddhists call karma, what the Bible calls “sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.”
John’s chuckle is the most welcoming sound in this dead silence as he strikes one of his matches from Luchow’s. I lean into the offer, far more relieved as I breathe in the soothing tobacco before dropping back into the cushion. A little exhale through my nose attempts something like a chuckle.

Many minutes pass by silently except for the scuffle of the side table between us so John can partake in the ash tray. He begins to stretch and cross his legs out all over again although towards the right leg of my chair, the comforting smell of his even closer heated human skin intermingling with the scent of his macassar oil comprised of the more expensive coconut oil blend.

“I refuse to fail you, Laszlo,” John begins to dash the last of his cigarette out in the glass tray, soft white-gray smoke slowly blowing out of his nostrils. His smiling eyes slowly morph back into that solid brown, “You can trust me with this information and if there is any thing I can do having acquired the details, Laszlo, allow to me to indulge you in any way I can.”

“I know I can trust you, John,” I finally feel the ends of my mouth wholeheartedly smile, a luxury I really do not allow myself unless among the few people I do confide in, “thank you and yet human limitation can only go so far in the longer run. I do not doubt you for a moment, but I do indeed accept your frailties as they are. I think those dreams despite their images are granting me this awareness. It will be a long and arduous road to accepting people for who they are without a standard and I might not always do so well—”

“Laszlo,” a hand shoots out for my knee, “You and I will never have that problem.”

_Bryant Park (Reservoir Square), 1899_
I continue standing here on Fifth.

Miss Howard and the Isaacsons have left some time ago through the crowd and I have managed to lose track of John completely since then. There is little doubt he might have moved with the last of the spectators to the 6th side, but what is there to really see now? A good portion of the brick on this side of the block has been scooped and sent away and yet I still continue to stare at its gaping wound right here on 42nd and Fifth. There is still an outline in the dirt where The Croton Distributing Reservoir once stood, where I stood and sat on its promenade assaulted and furious and yet grieving while actually holding a dying serial killer. Where I have ascribed how I very well may die to the depths of my soul. The knowledge never completely leaves my consciousness although I have been able to transpose those two dreamlike images apart from one another. I have not been back to exactly this spot in Midtown, but the block still calls out to me whenever I do pass by it.

Even now, Jahpeth Drury’s low voice still softly croaks out from the ground itself.

“I... I’m going to die...”

*I need to know.*

“Listen to me, Jahpeth. You must listen to me—what did you see, Jahpeth? What did you see when you looked at the children? What made you kill them? Jahpeth! *What did you see?*”

*I need to know.*

“I—have never known—I have never—known! I didn’t—they—”

The naked foundations almost yell into the skies or even the heavens to be noticed, to be vindicated and yet condemned of its transgressions all at once. God may hear and see both of these cries, but the blue above and all of the traveling sound underneath ignores that dual call over time. These remaining lines in this dirt is the ghost that follows me as I battle that “I need to know” in my body and soul, but especially in the latter.

It is time to be within this day.

It is time to be within this day as my eyes look up from the halved naked block, the sounds of the machinery on the other side still a white noise.

John Schuyler Moore and all of his signature dark blue pin stripe suit is just out of the corner of my eye, standing a little closer to the intersection between 40th and 5th. A little smile ticks up underneath one side of his dark moustache. I feel my arms go behind my back, my left hand habitually covering the right as my walking stick lifts off the ground. There is no laughing this time although my lips do purse together and my eyes feel as if they shine through their melancholy towards my once upon a time Watson yet forever friend.

John’s most recent grooming excursion swallows up the ends of his grin completely as he slowly shakes his head. I can only remind myself of Miss Howard’s threat of breaking into John’s room to shave it right off of him while he’s sleeping. That secondhand acquired threat almost shakes me from this melancholy, but I know it will always be there without misfortune but as a reminder of my own limitations as a physical body. I am not ashamed of owning such darkness believing Jahpeth Drury the final catalyst to acquiring this kind of a lexicon.

My walking stick taps down on the pavement behind me, my legs finally tingling the motivation of
mobility up into my brain and I, Laszlo Kreizler, proudly walk away from my forever haunting.

I pick up tickets to a relatively new Italian opera to torture John with this coming Friday.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!