7-1992

Movie about the Dead Cellist

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THE MOVIE ABOUT THE DEAD HUSBAND

Is perfectly straightforward, the cellist and a bunch of his dead pals are waving to us from behind the darkening window of his wife's flat -- she's still alive, it's England so there's fog but also tea and little cakes -- they're pressed right up to the glass, peering out over each other's shoulders, and fluttering their white handkerchiefs, yearning over the young couple -- his wife and his live rival! -- smooching in the courtyard in front of them but somehow they seem to be applauding the audience also, in the last scene but one.

Smiling, dabbing at our eyes with kleenex, what a good show we put on! And they appreciate it, with mild vaguely familiar sheep faces, sleepy and calm as bats over their shirts and blouses they're not wistful, they're too full of themselves for that, like us, sometimes all they wish is that people would pay just a little more attention to them, why doesn't anyone notice all those holes opening up, inexplicable gaps in the middle of sentences --

Still, even if it's only a movie at least they're starring in it, looking out at the rest of us so tenderly I can't believe it, probably it's nobody in particular they care about but just life, warm blankets, garlic, hot chocolate and hot bodies, their gaunt faces are sad but not that sad, hanging around like slightly damp tea towels in the home movies of our heads, it's nice to want and be wanted, whatever the reason; they know many of us miss them more out of fear than anything, afraid to be left here alone or out there in the cold, past the Red Exit sign shivering in the empty streets, but here in the theater at least some of us feel better

For awhile, anyway, the cranberry bread of relief rises in warm kitchens, thank goodness they didn't separate us forever, one says to the other, obviously this is a smart script but with feeling also, ridiculous as the plot is, at least so far we no one's been left behind entirely, at the end of a storyline nobody knows yet, see how we make it up!

Instead of the worst, why not, we imagine the best, it's the dead won't let us go we tell ourselves, they keep caressing us, we're sitting in their laps! Well, not exactly, but every theater's full of them, sometimes a soft hand creeps into a pocket because where would they go, so many of them, aren't they cold?

(stanza break)
Though the dead cellist returns to his live wife only for a few weeks, the focus is always on romance because what else is there to save us, the living and the dead both mooning over the couple cuddling on the stoop between us but it never quite works out the way we want it to, the husband must give up his wife to his rival, though we try to resign ourselves, the live and the dead audiences keep sneaking looks at each other over the heads of the lovers because it's kisses keep us alive, isn't it, isn't it? —

So we dress our dead in all their arms and legs, in Wellingtons and Lambswool sweaters, occasionally a crinoline or a peruke, anything to keep the plot going, never to close the book, not draw the line between us so fine we can't just keep crossing back and forth whenever we want to, but up there on the screen those shady blokes are fading fast.

As the credits scroll by we try to hold onto them but the last images abstract themselves into a chill vapor, the midnight migrations of birds over everyone's heads, hundreds of thousands of them, the Milky Way crowded with stars, cars zipping by on the freeway so fast how can anyone recognize anyone, because they left ahead of us they're way out there by now, how could they let their hands fall from the sides of the ship like that,

As the ocean liner pulls out from the gray dock, who's separating from whom depends on where you're standing, dead people of the world unite! Do we really love each other or are we just terrified of the future, with no bodies but pieces of cloth waving around our heads in flimsy clouds circling, halos of seagulls wheeling that never come to rest, out there dressed only in strips of tattered celluloid swirling.

Stop! nobody cries out, we're too busy applauding, warming ourselves with the live feel of our own hands, even as we fly up, all of us, in our quilted parkas, over the departing heads of the audience with hats and scarves muffled like damp wings, hearts pounding like coarse feathery balls of yarn forever unraveling, forever trying to rewind what is unwound, with fingerless wool gloves reaching for each other thin shouldered, huge crowds clinging together against the black ceiling like bats invisible, making no audible sound.
Waving from behind the window, it's England so there's fog but also tea and little cakes, they're peering over each other's shoulders in the flat they're visiting, pressed up to the glass and holding out their handkerchiefs, yearning after the young couple smooching in the courtyard but somehow they seem to be applauding us also, in the last scene but one, smiling, dabbing our eyes with kleenex, what a good show we put on! And they appreciate it, with mild vaguely familiar sheep faces over their shirts and blouses they're not wistful, they're too full of themselves for that, like us, sometimes all they wish is that people would pay just a little more attention to them, why doesn't anyone notice all those holes opening up, inexplicable gaps in the middle of sentences —

As the credits scroll by we try to hold onto them but finally it's the dead won't let us go, they keep caressing us, we're sitting in their laps! Well, not exactly, but the theater's full of them, sometimes a soft hand creeps into a pocket because where else would they go, so many of them, aren't they cold?

Still, even if it's only a movie at least they're starring in it, looking out at the rest of us so tenderly I can't believe it, probably it's nobody in particular they care about but just life, warm blankets, garlic, hot chocolate and hot bodies, in this bunch there's a cellist, a teacher, an insurance salesman, a waitress who could be one of our mothers but isn't, but then where is she, Where's our Mum? as the Brits put it, but also where's my brother

(stanza break)
who died but is not dead, neither to me nor the house with the gold star
on its forehead: now that's gratifying, at least some of them remember us,
the dead tell each other, no wonder their gaunt faces are sad
but not that sad, hanging around like slightly damp tea towels
in the home movies of our heads, it's nice to want and be wanted,
whatever the reason; they know many of us miss them
more out of fear than anything, afraid to be left here alone
or out there -- where, where do they go -- but here in the theater at least some of us feel better

for awhile, anyway, the cranberry bread of relief rises
Like mist from the valleys, thank goodness they didn't separate us
forever, one says to the other, obviously this is a smart script
but with feeling also, ridiculous as the plot is,
at least so far we haven't left or been left behind entirely,
slipped out the Red Exit sign into the wintry street
with cars skidding on glare ice, each to its own accident
at the end of a storyline nobody knows yet, but see how the living make it up!

Instead of the worst, why not,
they imagine the best, though the dead cellist
returns to his live wife only for a few weeks, the focus
is always on romance because what else is there to save us,
the living and the dead both mooning over the couple
cuddling on the stoop between us but it never quite works out
the way we want it to, the musician must give up his wife
to another, though we try to resign ourselves we can't help it,
the dead and the live audiences keep sneaking looks at each other
over the hungry heads of the couple, it's kisses keep us alive, isn't it,

So we comfort ourselves, each imagining our dead
with all their arms and legs, in Wellingtons and Lambswool sweaters,
occasionally a crinoline or a peruke, even a Lands End
unisex T shirt, anything to keep the plot going,
ever to close the book, not draw the line between us
so fine we can't just keep crossing it
at our leisure, but up there on memory's screen
those shady blokes are fading fast.

in the darkness at the end of the reel
in the twilit theater the last images abstract themselves
into a chill vapor, the midnight migrations of birds
over everyone's heads, hundreds of thousands of them, the Milky Way
crowded with stars, cars zipping by on the freeway
so fast how can anyone recognize even her mother, because they left us first
they're far ahead of us by now, how could they let their hands fall
from the sides of the ship like that,
as the huge semi from the parking lot, as the ocean liner pulls out from the gray dock, who's separating from whom depends on where you're standing, dead people of the world unite! Do we really love each other or are we just terrified of the future, with no bodies but white handkerchiefs waving in flimsy clouds circling, halos of seagulls wheeling that never come to rest, out there dressed only in strips of tattered celluloid swirling.

Stop! nobody dares to cry out, we're too busy applauding, warming ourselves with the live feel of our own hands, even as we fly up, all of us, in our quilted parkas, over the departing heads of the audience with hats and scarves muffled like damp wings, hearts pounding like coarse feathery balls of yarn forever unraveling, forever trying to rewind what is unwound, with fingerless wool gloves reaching for each other thin shouldered, huge crowds clinging together against the black ceiling like bats invisible, making no audible sound.

Can cuts race, piled images dilute — unwanted breath —