

I do not know where to begin; but then, this is something that does not know when to begin either. I am hardly alone.

(error... error... error...)

This is not my problem, and yet, of course it is my problem. I am the titular hypocrite (as you are, now, sorry about that).

A lot is left to be desired.

If you wish me to follow the meandering ideas of a choose-your-own story, at least follow it through; this does not. I feel lost, from start to finish, following and catching up and of the distinct impression this is done more for aesthetic than for true purpose.

It makes me a tad hostile. Sorry.

*I think I might be dying
Perhaps this is what it feels like to be the other one; the one
who doesn't come back.*

It is brutal, gory, disgusting.

I don't do disgusting. I don't do gore. I do not do the visceral foulness of blood and body, not like so many can navigate, that is not my style; I veer away, even when it is *brutally clear* that I am not in the right, not in the wrong, maybe I am missing the point. Perhaps the vividly electric imagery of pain is relevant but I cannot find out why.

*It's selfish, what it's doing,
but I think I know how it feels*

(This is all that I have; of course it is all that I feel,
All that I know is how I feel)

*We had come to
what was the only sane conclusion: that neither of us could live.*

Okay, so now we get to the point of what makes us readers, of what resonates in the strange, odd creatures who have enough history to make the present seem uncomfortable *well*

Well.

I live.

I die.

I

(am I important enough?)

When I take the knife

it looks up.

It promises the things
I missed

It looks broken-up

broken by the sight of me

And suddenly this is more personal, more real, more unpleasant and more immediate, even when I scream for it to be anything, anything else, well, I cannot quite escape. I am the reason for all of the pain. I make it. I form it. (I'm a hypocrite).

And I know how it feels. I know just how it feels.

This is all that I have, my darling.

I know how it feels.

I know how it feels.

I remember how it feels, and it exposes me to my core with surgical precision; a strength here. The hoards of hypocrites are abruptly bleeding out, without having been warned: all self-indulgence is briefly abandoned, and if the entirety was honed to this degree, it would be exquisite (and exquisitely unkind).

But that is another story. The true story is here, is in my perfect invitation:

*Once upon a time there was a reader. Yes, the reader is you.
Notwithstanding fact, the resourceful reader is invited to create
a consciousness—a medium to percolate their interpretations
Through*

Alrighty then, so I'm going to take this precisely as written, and I am going to make my reader, my me, my sense of self, whatever resourcefulness I've earned and the consciousness I've gained, they will trickle in

And in

And in

And they will make sense

When my sense is all but gone

And when I dream of something more precise

More human

I, faithful reader

(but faithless writer)

Will be proved

Redundant

I am a great fan, truly, of anything that permits me a personality while I write, while I read: *If you want to tell everyone that delusions of exceptionality are unavoidable go to p.60*

It's in
the fine print

(do you see yet?
It is such a valiant attempt
It tries so hard, it fights to the last dying breath
But it just isn't, isn't *enough*)

Thomas is a hall of mirrors. Thomas is a writer of transparently autobiographical fiction. Christopher is a reader of a reader of a reader. Thomas is in love with Christopher.

Tells you all you need to know, really.
(Wait. We're almost there)

I am here, even when I should not be, when I cannot be.
I am here.
You cannot deny me; I will always be here.

Mercifully, I am not expected to take all of this as simple gospel; there is enough eccentricity in writing to permit eccentricity in reception.

Are you, ... are you...?

He puzzles at the length of long.

Who are you?
What are you?
Why do you matter?
Can I make you matter?

(you don't matter to me)

(never mind)

This is not performance art.

(I call bullshit)

Everything about this piece is aggressively, wearily performative. There is not a syllable mentioned, or to be mentioned, that is not carefully constructed and directed into a perfect, responsive and beautiful place, where whatever words I utter will glance off without a moment of hesitation (although I'm trying my best).

Of course it is performance art. To say otherwise is simply misleading.

*That Thomas is a hell of a piece of work. I
wouldn't take that standing up. Ashen faced,
Christopher lay down. Christopher got up.*

~~Oh such a strike through. Does this matter? You can read it all the same and so, I cannot help but wonder, why do we bother when it is so obvious, when every cue has been orientated so deliberately it feels duplicitous to even try.~~

I feel oddly betrayed.

—*Nothing in The Times. Shut Up! Shut Up! Shut Up!*

I told you I love you. I told you I love you. I told you I love you. I could go on.

Please stop it. I know what you're doing. I know you're trying to coax me closer and fool me into forgetting the lapses, the lacks, the deficits, the gaping holes where a story or words should pad in my desperate attempts to fill with passing cotton wool.

In case you missed my point:
This is not working.
The disparate ideas, concepts
The variable places
Loves
Ideals
They are too separate
They do not marry together
'Choose Your Own Adventure' is wrong; it is not an adventure
Rather
It is an exhibition of ideas
And not one I plan to attend

And I do not need to turn to page whatever
To know that the outcome
Will be more or less the same
(I'm sorry)
(I once had mercy)
I told you I love you. I told you I love you. I told you I love you.

I wish it was enough.

I feel like the worst sort of traitor to say that something so tantalisingly odd, so new, so different, so obviously my sort of thing could fall so short, but damn it, it did.

I was ready to enter a whole world of possibility, and instead, I was met with nothing but the thud of *my crescendoing heart* but I wake up feeling somewhat less than merciful, but give me a break, I am trying. I am trying.

The worth is superimposed; I add my life to the suggestions I am given, and make that enough. I topple into ice-cold water, come so close to death but that is me, that is my life. It is me. I superimpose over the fragments that are missing.

I should be careful, but I am not; I am like the cat, the cat *comes and goes*, I come and go and read and revisit and find what I can, while I can, whatever is there to find, the uncomfortable realisation that this has insinuated itself into my life without my consent, leaving me faintly frightened but without a reason to utter.

*They're not shining the stars as bright. They've stolen the joy
from the night.*

Outside my window, the stars glint obnoxiously, reminding me that they are still there, despite all attempts to the contrary, they are there and will always be there, they laugh at me and mock, giggling softly as they remind me of what this world, this moment means. How imperfect it all is, at the end of it all.

*Did this happen? 54;
Didn't this happen? 31;
This didn't happen. 44;
What does 'happen' mean? 83.*

My call. My decision.

*Did it happen? (I don't know, I hope it did, I want it to have)
Didn't this happen? (Well, you're not wrong, but you're not right either)
This didn't happen (I have to believe you, I have no choice)
What does 'happen' mean? (It must mean something, so I take it as meaning progress)*

And the thing is, this isn't my only attempt to make sense of the unfathomable:

A
A
*Once
Reader
There
Time
Upon
Was*

You make it up

God knows I'm making it up; they're making it up too. Words make sense when they first flit into your mind, when they advertise themselves as the answer to a newfound problem, when they invite you to the ideas you wish would stay hidden because no, no, I didn't make it up. This is real.

(I'm a hypocritical writer, too. Who would have guessed?)

This has to be real.

I don't have anything else that could pass as 'real'.

The oneirocritic is the critic of your dreams. She dissects and catalogues your hypnogogic visions, your stupors, revisions, your prophecies and loss. Her paradigms frame and canonise choice nightmares, trances, desires, scratching the broken record of failed romances, linking fever to a genealogy of succubi.

Am I supposed to understand?

I really, truly do not understand.

Once, I was promised understanding.

After a while, I refused any understanding

I knew they lied, when giving me understanding

So I had nothing but attempts at understanding
But I never stopped trying, attempting understanding

Was that enough?

(it wasn't enough for my oneirocritic, who could answer little more than ideas)
(she tried, bless her)
(I forgave her failings, but not her limitations)

The problem with a work like this is where to comment, where to think; I believe, I know, that *reader expectations bleed between the lines* and of course I'm aware of it, but I hope I do not superimpose too much more than I ought to. I just watch, I acknowledge, and I resent those all too common instances when the clever and the underestimated result in a lack of knowledge, when I deserve the truth, when the writer (reader?) is being difficult simply for the sake of it.

Ultimately, this feels like a work of ideas, not a work of honed detail.
Give it time, give it space to percolate, and perhaps there is something
worthy of time
But for now
It is what it is
And what it is
Feels lacking.

I know I see only fragments.
But I read it again and again and again
And the fragments fail to cohere.

And abruptly, the house of cards collapses; it isn't enough, it just does not stand alone.

Poor Tom's a-cold. Edgar

But you have not told me why I should care.
It is such a pity.
A collection of almost-hits, a collection of lost opportunities.

Truly:

I am a-cold.

(But I have nothing more to give)