

He & She

He wanted to invent new ideas. She wanted to market them. They made the perfect pairing. He thought of himself as peanut butter. She fancied herself strawberry jam. They thought of the world as their two slices of bread.

Sitting down for breakfast three times per day was their finest routine. He said breakfast was the most important meal of the day. She said they should only do important things. Sometimes there was toast with smoked salmon. Other times there were poached duck eggs with dollops of smoky ketchup. Most times there was granola with no milk. The most important thing to He and She was that they were sitting together and eating important meals and improving the problems of the world.

One afternoon, during a particularly effective plate of thinly slice melon topped with frozen Greek yogurt tears, He thought of something that had burrowed under his skin the year prior and resulted in a steady, dull itch. He dropped his fork to the plate in dramatic fashion and allowed the fork's singing to ring out for exactly twenty seconds.

"There is a serious problem," He said.

"Let's fix it," She said.

"It has nothing to do with this delicious breakfast," He said.

"No of course not. I prepared it," She said. "As I have every other third meal for the past six-and-a-half weeks."

"Yes. Yes. Yes. The food is always a delight. There's nothing more I enjoy in this world than these breakfasts. Except maybe the warm glow of a vanilla lavender scented candle. Never ever again mistake my pronouncing of serious problems as criticisms of you. Please," He said.

“Every waking moment of my life I have had the confidence of a mountain range, but there have been times during my slumber when doubt settles in. My subconscious is not a pleasant place. This has rarely impacted my waking life and yet on the most unpredictable of occasions, these moments where I question what I do creep into my speech. I knew that the melon was perfectly sliced, window thin as I was trained at Le Cordon Bleu, but my concern was solely the Greek yogurt tears because there was a batch I prepared exactly four months ago that I had to dispose of when they reached negative four degrees and the coldest they can possibly be is one degree. Was this my fault exactly? Yes and no. The look was impeccable as always and yet I failed to test the freezer, which is the most common mistake a rookie makes. I did not tell you because I was worried you would have that thought in your mouth when you tasted the second batch, knowing that they were not the original tears I froze,” She said.

“That should be your concern and yet there isn’t time to worry ourselves now about it. Now is the time to break through with our first major accomplishment in human progress. If we may,” He said and hurried through the last slice of melon.

“I am ready to take your idea and present it to the world in an easily digestible form,” She said.

He looked at She for a brief moment and saw an exquisite fireworks display atop her head, which began with a heart-shaped arrow landing in a tree that had a heart carved into its trunk with the phrase “He + She” carved within it; the display went on for what seemed like hours though only stretched across the dimensions for three seconds and concluded with two fireworks shot simultaneously and erupting into the shapes of budding bunnies that conjoined in a rapid humping session. He blinked and the image was gone.

“Good. I’m glad you are ready and I knew that you would be. This is why we work together,” He said.

“Certainly true any way you slice it,” She said.

“What an apt metaphor for what I’m about to say,” He said.

“It was the melon!” She said.

“Exactly not. The melon, as it should, looks like skin grafts. I’m talking about fast food,” He said.

“Is fast food sliced?” She said.

“Doubtful. I’m not an expert, but it seems more pre-prepared than sliced, although somewhere along the line it is sliced but not sliced in the ways in which you were trained,” He said.

“That makes me feel better about a lot of things,” She said.

“It really, really should. And why I thought you mentioning slicing as such an important event is because I was about to talk about food and the things you most typically slice are food related. I was drawing parallels and I apologize if my lines were crooked,” He said.

“Please continue,” She said.

“There are things in this world in which we cannot control. Are you in agreement?” He said.

She thought for a moment that her shoelace was untied and, even though it bothered her to the core that She broke the intense eye contact with He, She had to look down. It struck her as quite odd that she wasn’t wearing shoes at all. This feeling of having an untied shoe must be what it is like for someone who has had his or her leg bitten off by a tiger shark and months later believes that they have an itch on their ankle when the truth is they do not have an ankle

anymore. The mind is capable of some wondrous and mysterious things, She thought loudly to herself.

“A few,” She said.

He laughed with rapturous joy because he could.

“It might be more than a few but I will take your challenge,” He said.

“Explain to me in as few words as possible what it is we cannot control,” She said.

“Easy. Even though we have no say on what other people eat and it seems that other people eat a lot of fast food, there is one thing about this that we can control. Before you can ask what that is let me explain. Fast food, I’m afraid, isn’t that fast anymore. You have to travel to a fast food restaurant by foot, car, bus, or train, go inside, look at all of the menus, decide what you want, wait in line, place your order, pay for your order, and wait for you order to be finished. That is downright glacial in pace. We can’t get rid of fast food and I’m not going to make such a bold attempt at something so perverse and grand. Instead, I want to put the fast back in fast food. There’s no reason it can’t be sped up. What I’m thinking is this: we devise a device that can be place directly onto the frontal lobe that determines what you want to eat and when you want to eat it. This thought is transmitted directly to the fast food restaurant of your desire and your food is prepared immediately after you thought of it. This food is packaged and sent either via teleportation or carrier pigeon to wherever you are at the time of your thought. I don’t see any flaw with this thought,” He said.

“I’ll contact the FDA and the Copyright Office right away as soon as I finish with the details of the proposal and blueprint designs,” She said.

“Please do that,” He said.

The word please caught She off guard. He'd never used it before. This was signaling one of two things: that the Greek yogurt tears were as satisfying to him as they were to her palate or He was leading her into a black cave of misremembered notions and bullied ideas. Either way, the word made She feel as if the world's greatest promises were hanging on the end of a branch and She was waiting underneath waiting to catch them. She wished She'd been born an octopus, to have more arms to catch all the promises that were about to rain down upon her.

"Yes I will," She said. "But what'll we do about breakfast?"

"Oh. I suppose that is more important. If we don't figure that one out, what good will we be with any of this?" He said.

"And the breakfast after that," She said.

"Even more important than the next," He said.

He looked at She and moved to reach out and touch her cheek, but retracted his hand and walked to the pantry. She didn't follow He this time, deciding to interlock her hands behind her back.