

Honeymoons on Guadeloupe (excerpt / in progress)

Late

we

Late for check out, they step into the blaze of golden rays in front of their rental. C lets a hand slap at the top of the door frame while shuffling outside, clutching a coffee machine with their other arm. It's been added to their temporary cache of belongings. They loved the design of it. C and AAA share a rare moment of intimacy stemming from their mutual affection for a kitchen appliance. Later, AAA will crest that moment in their public review: "... outstanding hospitality mortgaged by thoughtful touches. you'll even get your money back if you complain about it." They had received a discount earlier for a supposedly missing coffee machine.

AAA: "We'll go grab a bite."

C: "Heeelllllohh! Why don't you invite me to come along?"

AAA: "Is there anything else we'd rather do? Now?"

Why did AAA insist on a "we", that, in fact, is just the other we? The one that wells up in C, that all too familiar feeling of being extraneous. An argument instigated and fought. It's tragic how their interpersonal gears hardly ever mesh. Intimacy with a steep half-life is reached, mostly through fierce quarrels teetering on the brink of outright violence. An intimacy that, at other times, is abysmally lacking and desired at best. They go for lunch.

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Passing by drivers

are mostly locals, as it is off-season. So barely any consumers of ideals around, some of which would have had the form of a McDonald's franchise for instance, just like walking and talking. The outdoor seating of the restaurant is nestled in between coastal road lanes. The waitress is wearing a coral shirt that exposes her shoulders. She had to cross the street to arrive at their table. She reels off the items on the menu with nonchalant rapidity, but gets interrupted by AAA: "Je suis désolée. Our french is like a thin woman." This particular dimensional feature is not embodied by the waitress, and earns C a vexed sheen of fake politeness, paired with a suppressed facial expression of pure malice. C and AAA swell to the size of unruly teenagers, as if they had been to this restaurant before with their stupid parents a long time ago. The waitress doesn't offer the relief of a shared language, which coincides with the sudden occlusion of the sun by a moody brood of tattered clouds. The dimmed environment quells all the rustle and bustle in the bushes. For a moment, the radiating heat ceases. They are so attentive to this natural shift that they can't suppress a cloying smile, devoid of legible sincerity, in the direction of the waitress. When she clears her throat and tilts her head in an effort to signal that she's still there and awaiting their order, they notice that the quotidian has not ceased to exist, like a lost penny slipped through a hole in a trouser's pocket. Eventually, they order "deux poissons avec biere". It comes after a while and they eat it.

Dog

Food

Now they are full. It was by far the worst meal they had had during their trip. In their post-lunch dissatisfaction, they let their eyes meander, passively observing the scenery. A stray dog under a wind-battered tree closeby raises its head before falling back into its former petrification-like slumber. It must have taken notice of another dog, limping towards the very same tree, which now stopped at a distance. The newcomer has a choice to make: whether to find a spot under the same shadow-casting branches, perhaps snuggling up to the other dog — or whether to hobble off elsewhere. No follow-up on the dog matter, as their attention is now redirected towards the waitress with the check. They pay. They leave for their next accommodation.

At the day's close, C flicks through TV channels while slumped on the couch. The strong scent of freshly brewed coffee wafts over from the kitchen area. The evening is still long enough. They wait well into the night for something to happen, because why not, and when nothing does, AAA goes to bed and C keeps flicking through channels impatiently, because nothing did.

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How to look for comfort

where the sea salt invites moisture into every nook and crevice? Many houses appear as if mushroomed out of the earth yesterday, yet look as if they've been exposed for centuries to the vibrant grounds, startled seas, and battering trade winds, which inscribe their gesture of eventual downfall. Can it be called good fortune, that subduction forged the Antilles into being as a result of the oceanic crust of the Atlantic Plate being shoved under the Caribbean Plate? The tropical climate on this island is quite something their sweat-soaked bodies have to cope with. Every now and then, they surrender themselves to a fatalistic excitement, when the cargo of clouds is released upon them in the form of torrents. A miraculous thing, that there's air in between the drops to breathe. The clouds drift out of sight impossibly fast, as if a theatrical backdrop is being withdrawn at top speed. After those swift rain showers, the wet remainder is an unaccountable, fleeting witness of the previous spectacle. Any doubts whether it rained a few minutes ago? The scorching sun enables the humid taste of timeless constancy.

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Jeanne Laballe and Dominique Murat were abolitionists, it says so on the billboard outside the parking lot. AAA goes off about how this is at odds with the history's outline provided on the board's text. It was once one of the biggest sugar cane plantations on the Caribbean Antilles, with 207 slaves at its peaks slogging away at the presumably incessant workload. A shadow of a doubt is cast on whether they treated their slaves with dignity and provided them with benefits other masters refused to grant. Lacking any historical awareness, however, they content themselves with the explanation that mostly business is business, same in the early 18th century as it is today.

The Habitation Murat is largely preserved and its ruinous state deferred through preservation, except for the renovated mansion further up the hill. The hilltop architecture's lofty countenance in the distance dwindles with each step they ascend towards it. The building rests on a slim foundation which further prevents reconciliatory efforts to blend it with the ambiance of the site. Swerving to the left, they see it from a side-angle. Only the facade of the old master's residence has been accurately reinstated from its decades of abandonment and neglect. A revelatory face-lift, offered as if created for a period film set and later augmented for actual use. It feels like having a stranger zipping up the fly of your trousers. Regardless, this is where they are in eager agreement: that it should be honoured as an endearing effort to preserve one of the very few historical structures of that time. The island is otherwise devoid of intact residential architecture from this period. Everything else seems built on the premise of its short-lived use value and the cavalcade of demise which throws it into oblivion.

How to look for comfort?