

LURCHER

by The Wednesday Club



Cath'n'Dad Records

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Stately, plump Horace came from the stairhead, assessing the area with a sharp (male) gaze. He intended to refashion the world – not into his own image, just something more in line with what was in his mind. A playground for his head.

He took out his gorgeous green scissors and, utilising his exquisitely polished eye, took stock of the living room: ordered and boxed, everything an organ for the body as a whole - dead now and waiting to be reanimated.

A leg from this chair; a piece from that part; a record trimmed into a star; a book hollowed out to indicate the shining bright thing that lives inside of us all; a fruit bowl pulped and remade... He beamed, he smiled, he grinned at what he created. He glued and sellotaped, with the occasional lick to keep things in place.

His mouth watered in appreciation at his thoughtful preparation.

2

Horace finally had everything in place, just so. A very particular man, everything in order was the order of the day, every day. “If it’s not a right angle, it’s a wrong angle,” he would say, quoting his muse, Monica Geller.

Horace was contemplating his creation, thinking what finishing touches he might make, when a paper clip he had been absentmindedly twiddling fell through his fingers.

As he bent down to pick it up his black cat, Yeezy, dropped down from the bookshelf above his desk, and landed paw-first on his prized construction. In anger Horace took a swing at Yeezy, but the cat recoiled in time to evade his ill-tempered swipe. With tears lining his eye Horace stared for many moments at the crumpled mess left behind on his desk. He leaned forward slowly, his salty gaze boring into the impudent imperfections.

3

Life is largely a matter of expectation, and, Horace supposed, an expectation of matter. Had his creation been locomotively imbued, or even cognitively encumbered, then the inevitable entanglement with Yeezy's easy paw may not have resulted in the disorder he now saw (at a squint) before him.

With a lengthy sigh, he laid his eye upon its cushion on the desk and prodded at the bits and pieces scattered about him. Yeezy yawned and sauntered over to a corner. Just as the rest of the day seemed about to settle into the soporific, Horace noticed the paperclip's form reflected across the globe of his polished eye: the potential of a new chimera. Sticking out his tongue, he gathered the discarded elements, each piece adopting new forms as he cradled them in his hands.

Once more he stuck, stitched and sewed, threading holes and dovetailing joints. With an unfamiliar delicacy, Horace coiled the unwound paperclip through the connecting ports and up onto a hoist and pulley.

4

Peering.. peering... ever closer; Horace realised he had somehow fashioned a Peephole. The previous detritus deserted him as he looked through into this pocket world.

Inside two men were shuffling in a grey expanse. A one-two-kick and then a turn; biding their time in front of an endless wall.

"Jim, we shouldn't be here."

"I know Jonesy, but here we are, none the less."

"It wuzza..." began the first man but trailed off.

"It's all we've got and it'll do," said the second.

5

The two men were dancing a merry jig, oblivious to their curious observer – like no one was watching, if you will – their elbows bouncing off one another unselfconsciously. Their frivolous romp was sharply curtailed when they looked up and saw the all-seeing eye peering down upon them.

"That's no moon," thought lil Davey.

Like opening the box on Schrödinger's cat the sight of the eye brought them sharply into focus and dragged their true realities into being. Jim the half-dead cat now made fully realised.

Horace stepped back and took his eye away from the peephole. He couldn't help but feel somewhat guilty at sullyng their solitude by poking his eye into other people's business.



Unperturbed, but doubtless a pinch perplexed, Horace rehousing his amaurotic orb and flexed his fingers. Somewhat used to time passing in a state of inertia, today had been one event after another, and it was not yet even lunch time!

Resisting the urge to peek once more through the peephole (not being one for dancing himself), he turned his attention instead to the far wall of the living room. It was here he had begun to paste tabulas of genealogy, graphs of postulate correlates (in place of the charts of crustacean pustules) and the shaving mirror in which he now caught a glimpse (with one eye) of what should have been his own reflection.

"Good morning," said Horace, politely. Horace nodded in acquiescence and in so doing, with eye downcast, noticed his tie pin was missing.

"My father's tie pin, you rogue!" Accused Horace. "Curses!" He cursed, lips pursed and most definitely now perturbed.

7

The doppelgänger's voice reverberated and repeated, becoming first louder then quieter, in some kind of gang Doppler Effect.

"Ah, don't be like that, Husty!" said Horace's counterpart, using Horace's own secret childhood nickname, known to none but himself. The twin then proceeded to explain that he, DoppelHorace, was what he, UrHusty, could have been if he had taken a different path down the Trousers of Time. If Horace had but shimmied left instead of right; if Horace hadn't opened the box with the dead cat inside; if Horace hadn't swallowed that butterfly and felt its effects...

DoppelHorace then began to wax nostalgic about their shared past. The time spent on N64s, gobbling crisp sandwiches lit by lightning to the sound of Morrissey's crooning thunder. UrHusty glowered as DoppelHorace boasted of his time as Captain of John Ferneley's Football Team. He had found the day of the split.

8

It was the best of time, it was indeed the very worst of times. Ah, but what times. Days with absolutely no grey areas, where life happened to you, rather than you having to make it happen. Young, hormonal Horace would wriggle his winkle-pickers to Ronan Keating's wise words: "Life is a rollercoaster, just gotta ride it."

Horace snapped out of his reverie and checked himself, feeling the warm, disapproving breath of his father on his neck. His misty-eyed monocle had steamed up again. He gave it a wipe on his waistcoat. "Ah, that's better." He could see clearly now. The past is a different country, a war-torn pre-industrial age ridden with disease and famine. Horace ironed out the creases in the trousers of time. Best to never go back.

9

Time's arrow is indeed only reluctantly drawn back into the bow-string of *nostalgia*. How the present warps our memories, fragments congealing into psychos-ease, writing the future in blood. Horace's stomach turned.

His Father whispered waspish admonitions: *There is only one way to go... and that's ahead.* Whistling: *That money could save the NHS!* Husty as Horace: *But, my Father's dead?!* The reverence as reverse: *I am making it happen AND it is happening to me.* Stranded, not even double tracked: *I was in the Kitchen & I.....*

The mirror shattered and the shards spiralled in slow motion, gravity's ghost like spectral smoke curling fantastical figures and phantasms. The peephole grew to a gaping mouth with teeth of marble tombstone... a slow, moist tongue took on the form of the squirming throngs, licking its way through the room... It's tenor a cacophonous, sonorous boom, "WHY NOT? WE'RE MORE THAN HALF WAY THROOOOOUUUUUUUGH.....!"

10

An off-kilter thump thump thump, a 1-2-3-4 thing, but he wasn't too sure... The TONGUE stood erect and began to boast:

"I CAN... I CAN..."

it began and quickly became an example of that least distinguished of tropes, Tell Not Show.

Horace (or Husty, even he wasn't sure now), figured that the TONGUE was the type that believed that if it didn't tell the world how great it was how on earth would the world ever know? And thusly: whilst the TONGUE continued its self-aggrandising monologue, Hustace lost the awe they felt on its first appearance.

Never examine anything, he thought.

Never meet your heroes, he added.



A knock at the door. Or was it a creak in an overhead floorboard, or a gargle of a drain? Horace - or Husteldinho as he was called by his Brazilian friends who did not value brevity - felt woozy and light-headed. For support he leaned on the bronze bust of himself that he had commissioned upon his early retirement. All this thinking was draining the blood from his thighs and taking his eyes off the prize.

He needed to focus on the task at hand, visualise his goal for it to be realized. To overthink would be suicide. He had to divest himself of all learning, to filter out all the distracting thoughts and trust in what had always come naturally to him.

There was that knock again. This time he was certain it was the door. There is always a door.

12

With an unnatural disregard for what might occur (plot), Horace approached the door (device). Thresholds are there to be crossed, after all. Tiptoeing over Yeezy (who was still there (of course)), he made the sign of the cross, the pledge, eye upturned, reaching for the handle. He turned it, tentatively, holding his breath, and, then... *The Prestige!*

"Life is not always dramatic," sighed the empty doorway, "and I have just as much right to be a character as you, Husty ol' Pal, both of us being equally illustrious creations." Horace, shuffling, eye downcast, absentmindedly scratched at the wooden doorframe with an unusually long fingernail. "Maybe I am doomed to this room for the duration?" He enquired. "But it will soon be lunch time, and the living room, whilst eminently entertaining, is devoid of all sustenance!"

"Well then, whatever shall we do about it?" Suggested the doorway, knowing full well that the decision lay entirely out of its hands.

13

Peephole gone, Creation gone, TONGUE gone... even Door gone.

Horace realised that he had slept through the first nice day of the year whilst sunlight a-poured onto his bed and birds a-tweeted outside his window. Had someone else been with him? Or was their head in his head? And anyways Rhetorical Questions seemed besides the point.

Later, Later again. He finally awoke in the pitch darkness; at last he was fully aware of his surroundings and his own passivity thus far. What was his arc? Every character must want something, even if it's just a glass of water.

Horace didn't even want to sleep anymore.

14

A darkness is just a darkness, and they are all alike. Uncomfortably conscious of his own breathing, Horace kept entirely still for a moment to confirm what he already knew: that he was alone. Even his trusty companion Yeezy had deserted him, passing through Schrödinger's catflap and out into an alternate reality of his own choosing where the dogs run free and the birds sing bass.

Horace wondered to himself, how long could he hold his breath? And if he then kept absolutely, perfectly still and emptied his mind of any thoughts or stimuli whatsoever, could he reach a place where he was unable to sense the passage of time? How long *had* he been lying here anyway? Would sensory deprivation bring true enlightenment?

15

Horace tried to shake himself down but, having deprived himself of all sensation, felt nothing. Instead, Husteldinho hallucinated a memory of Husty's DT-Shakes. "We've completely lost it, now," sighed Hustace as he morphed from discrete entity to Universal Man. From humanity to protagonist to the hero with a thousand faces. From reader to writer to rote.

Ripples in the darkness, silver linings? Waves struck by particles. A boat, buoyant, eddying. An ark? An allegory? Afloat? "No need to go overboard," TONGUE sighed.

The ocean became the river and the river rained and TONGUE salivated: "So it was about me, all along?"

The plan became the map and the map became the territory and the territory became the dream.

And the dream woke up, just in time for lunch.