

THE FOOL

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Arms outstretched, a white rose in one hand and a knapsack in the other, the Fool gazes heavenward not realizing he is about to step off the cliff and fall deep into the chasm. The horizon beckons and a small sack of knowledge is all he carries. He is pure ideal and potential, the white rose, a symbol of his spiritual quest.

He begins his journey with a carefree attitude. Undoubtedly, this is not his first; his lofty vision gained after a long withdrawal. He is free now and the bundle of his past is light. He's forsaken the solitude that so long nourished him and seeks only to share the beauty he's found.

A dog snaps at his elbow to remind him of the sensual pleasures that await. The Fool pays no heed, he prefers to stumble along, open to adventure, not realizing it is almost over. It began when he withdrew from life degraded and broken, wanting only a corner to hide, never thinking he would find his way back. How he managed this return to innocence is the real adventure.

Before him the sweet path of life unfolds. It is time for new thoughts and understanding. Later, he will be depleted once more. Faithless, he will drag the heavy burden of his past and fall deep in the abyss. Not this time, no harm will come to a Fool whose only device is a rose.

Upright: A new beginning, innocence.

Reversed: Journey delayed, cautiousness.

Put your money down, girl, I want to see some green stuff, is the slut's mantra. I've always liked bad girls with their saucy ways and their penchant for shocking behavior. Maybe, just maybe, they're on to something that eludes most. New York City is the only place I know of where you fall in love with her because you are able to survive her adversities, and what's more, to thrive and succeed in spite of them.
It's the slut's test.

Eight o'clock Sunday morning, the police arrive at my apartment in Greenwich Village, "How long have you been living here?"

My roommate Elizabeth, after having accepted my half of the deposit money and rent for our new apartment, has called the police.

The answer to the officer's trick question is . . . *More than 30 days.* Less than that you are classified a guest and are at the mercy of your host. She has surreptitiously negotiated the lease in her name only.

"That's right lady, get your stuff out," says the officer.

Standing in my nightgown, arms flailing, I make a lot of noise about being a paid tenant to convince the two men who think there are more dignified ways for them to spend their time than being involved in domestic situations. Murders, bank robberies, that's what they're looking for.

One of them is uncomfortable with my appearance "Go put something on," he says.

"I want to speak to your captain!"

I've arrived in the city with an invitation from Sarah Lawrence College to take part in their MFA program in creative writing. I haven't thought too clearly how I'm going to support myself, but I'll find a way. What's important is that I'm here in New York, a city I have always wanted to live in. My writing, the whole of it, is in this room in files and diskettes, my sound system, all of my music, my books, my Seth Thomas

chiming mantel clock, kitchenware, pots and pans, lamps, my desks, the most basic things and the most cherished.

"Look Captain, obviously I'm not just a guest in this woman's home or I would not have brought all of these things here. If she has no compunction about putting me out on the street after I've paid my share of the deposit and rent, why should she care about returning my property?"

He agrees and gives me till evening to clear out my possessions. Out on the street, I find my shoes and boots scattered on 7th Ave. Someone's broken into my car, messed up the locks on both doors so I can never lock them again, stolen a portable radio, some of my clothes, the shoes and boots which the thief obviously was not impressed with. The car is on its downward trajectory and won't hold out much longer. I have arrived in NYC on a wing and a prayer.

Waiting for my roommate at Grand Central Station on my first day, I listen to Eduardo Martinez Guayanes play guitar and sing in the large hall. The music is so beautiful that all of Grand Central seems to sigh in its ambiance. He sets a serene, yearning tempo that pierces my heart. I cannot understand the Spanish words, but I buy one of his tapes nevertheless. Friends tell me it's about the land, and our love of it, its beauty, its secrets. A small town girl from the state of Maine, I watch amazed, as respectable, silvered gentlemen in three piece suits run madly to their trains.

Why have I come? All I know is that I need to be here.

In the center of the maze we call New York City, my two-week apartment is in Greenwich Village, on Barrow Street. Yesterday, I took a bike ride in the neighborhood and as I stopped to tie up my bicycle, an older man came over and chatted. He's new to the city himself, about to sign a lease on an apartment tomorrow. We talk for a while and he

asks me to dinner. The night is cool, and after our meal we walk through the Village exploring our new city. He buys me a dozen roses and we agree to meet for brunch this morning at his hotel. When I arrive with my sad story, he immediately finds a storage space to put my things and makes arrangements to secure it. Afterward, we have champagne and strawberries for brunch. He has come to New York with a play he wants staged, a short bull of a man, a teaser and a flirt. His wife died a year ago. Coming to the city is a big move for him too. I will never see him again, I don't even remember his name, but our meeting is fortuitous.

I leave the hotel intent on returning to Barrow Street to start packing. On the way, I meet up with Emmanuelle, a sculptor I met at The Farm, an artist's colony for women in Poughkeepsie. She's visiting galleries canvassing the competition. I sketch out my situation as we walk to the apartment.

"I'll help you get your stuff to the storage unit," she says.

A very hot day, sweat is pouring from us as we move boxes down five flights of stairs; I am working strictly on adrenaline. We get the car filled up, then over to the storage unit to unload. Trip after trip, there is no plan beyond this task. Once we get the last box out of the apartment, I hear the bolt click into place as the door lock shuts me out forever.

I have a storage unit, my aging red sportscar, Felinas, a bank account with \$300 in it, and I am homeless. One is truly alive at such a moment, and tuned in to psychic energy to an astonishing degree, signs, omens, their significance and indications. A great part of being a seeress is being able to read the moment. There are many explanations for this phenomenon; I lean toward Carl Jung's theory of synchronicity.

Since recorded history and before, the practice of divination has involved the dispersal and reading of diverse material, sticks, bones, tea

leaves, coins, runes, tarot cards. What occurs at such a moment is a co-incidence, a meaningful coincidence. The coins, runes, sticks, or what-have-you, will reflect the circumstances of the person or situation one is exploring at that very moment. Synchronicity bears witness to the myriad of meaningful coincidences that are a part of life. A synchronous event occurs when two incidents happen at the same time and are connected in some manner.

Meeting the man who comes to my rescue on the day before I lose my apartment and then coming upon Emmanuelle on the street who not only helps me pack, but lets me stay with her a few days till I can make other arrangements, are two very good examples of synchronicity. Psychologists refer to a gestalt, an assemblage of events, phenomena, occurring simultaneously that are interrelated. Gestalt is the study of their relationship to one another. The laying down of cards as one sits with a client to give a reading will always reflect the client's situation and give a correct interpretation of it. To be sure, the reader's expertise or lack thereof, her depth of thought and understanding, her character and wisdom will also play a part, enriching or further confusing the situation.

The artist and writer, Kate Millett, a friend and mentor, hears of my troubles and invites me to stay at The Farm in Poughkeepsie. This women's art colony is a working community. Artists are invited to stay for a summer, paying board and room and also work The Farm 4 to 5 hours a day to provide for its continuance, shearing its crop of Christmas trees, keeping the grass and weeds around them mowed, repairing and expanding the existing structures. There's a photography studio, a really decent woodworking shop, a recording studio, a silkscreen room, a pond where women swim. A lot of young artists come to The Farm, mostly they are women at turning points who, when their season is over, will not

go back to their former lives. I came to the Farm when I was still living in Maine. After my experience, I packed my bags and headed for NYC.

Kate had given me the yellow room of the main building during my summer. It's in the original farmhouse, very old, big fireplaces in the front parlor and an upstairs bedroom (which is named the "Simone de Beauvoir" room because she stayed there one summer.) I had driven from Maine with my cat Hermine in a van, camping along the way. When I got there Kate greeted me at the door; she looked like a hippie with long white hair, loose clothing, shit-kicker boots and a leathery outdoors appearance. We were 12 that summer, and I must say, living with women who are on the edge of making major decisions in their lives requires fortitude. Democracy was never so severely tested and found wanting. Nevertheless, we were trying to do something noble, to create a bit of beauty. I was beginning revision of my second novel 53. There were great dinners out on the decks with kerosene lanterns casting their glow late into the night as we ate, drank lots of wine and had endless discussions about art, politics, the immediate crises of the day. I have returned to The Farm many times since my first stay and have become friends with Kate.

"I've been away all summer," she says. "Mother was trapped in a nursing home after she got sick. Getting her out of that terrible place and dealing with lawyers and the court system, I spent the season traveling back and forth to Minnesota."

Artists were not invited because of the Minnesota troubles hence no work was accomplished. The Farm is in bad shape. None of the Christmas trees have been sheared. And her mother has just died.

"I've rented the main house, the cottage and the Lavender House for the fall and winter to some students from the Culinary Institute, and

an Indian couple who teach at Vassar are renting the main house. We'll have the gallery and connecting barn where you can store your things."

On the night that I arrive, feeling shaken and vulnerable from my New York experience, I approach the Lavender House, the only building on the premises with lights on, to find a party in progress. Just a friendly get-together between the tenants and Kate, except that these are culinary students and a feast has been laid out. The Indian couple has also contributed food from their culture. Kate welcomes me and introduces me to the gathering in the warmest of tones as someone special she is honored to know. I take my place at table with the group feeling close to tears, in awe of the magic that protects me.

The very next day Kate and I set to work shearing, getting the trees ready for Christmas. With its many fields and varieties of evergreens, it takes 10 to 15 colonists, working 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, the whole of the summer to get the job done. In no way are the two of us going to be able to do it alone, but we don't talk about the impossibility of our task.

I became acquainted with Kate after I read her book "The Loony Bin Trip." I was living on campus at the University of Maine in Orono as an artist-in-residence at the time and wrote her a note about the book. To my surprise she responded, and after we exchanged several letters, she invited me to The Farm. The book impressed me; she assumed risks coming out as a person with a "mental affliction" at a time when this was not done.

I have worked as a psychiatric social worker/mental health clinician and was part of the Emergency Team in a community mental health center and later in the emergency room setting of a hospital. My job was to counsel people in crisis, evaluating patients with psychiatric or social problems in emergency situations, recommending treatment, be it a

program of counseling, commitment to state hospital or private facilities; I'm adept at dealing with distraught, unstable adults, children, their families, friends and police.

The world Kate wrote of was familiar to me, a world as yet mapped and charted. We know that certain medications have the effect of pacifying those afflicted for short periods, but patients are reluctant to take them. I was fresh out of college with a degree in psychology when I started working in the profession. What an eye opener! In some way it may have been the best job for me after graduating with a head full of idealistic notions ready to make my mark in the world.