

A Room With a View of a Bed and a Cat and a Window

He lay on Mia's bed, a simple one, covered by a white doona with red patterns, ever so light in hue, dotted around its inviting expanse. He lay there, naked in the yellow light seeping from her lamp, and explained to her that several months earlier he had taken an hour to get out of his own bed.

'I don't mean I was lying there, tired, or not wanting to get out of bed or anything. I really, *really* wanted to get out of bed, but I couldn't raise myself up. Not because there was anything physically wrong with me, just that the mental effort was beyond me and I gripped the sheets and pulled at them and couldn't get out. When I finally did, I raised my fist in triumph and said, "Yes, I did it!"'

It was difficult to tell, but he thought she smiled at him. Naked too, she turned onto her side and he saw again her 'ripe' breasts. Why couldn't he find another word for them? Why weren't there more words? he thought, as he put a hand on one of those breasts. Then he remembered there *were* more words. They were called Languages Other Than English.

He must learn one. Maybe more than one. He must, in fact, learn every word for beautiful breasts in the world's languages and say them to her. With the correct pronunciation.

Mia started talking about the Deborah Eisenberg book of short stories she'd been reading. He took his hand from her breast as she explained that Eisenberg had written about the same terrifying ennui he'd experienced, her character having endured it after quitting smoking.

'But I think it was something much bigger,' she said.

They were silent. Outside, the cat, just visible in the streetlight, crawled to the window, meowed, then disappeared. This time Mia definitely smiled.

'He's a crazy cat.'

She got up and he watched her back and bottom, supple in the half-light, blending with the dark cupboards and moving to the window. She knelt at the opening and the cat returned.

'Hello you,' she said. 'Come in.'

'What's its name?'

'Murakami,' she replied, raising the window.

‘After the author?’

She feigned a scowl.

‘I take it, yes?’ he said, but she ignored him. The cat hauled itself inside with a jerky movement that ended in a sprawl at the foot of her bed. It arched its back and sat down, padded in front of itself, then rested its pointy head on its paws.

Mia lay down again, kissed his cheek then nibbled his ear. His cock announced its enjoyment of his ear’s saliva bath and he reached down to feel it hardening. He allowed this development, grabbed at her bottom and curled his arm around her side. He kissed her lips, brownish in the light, but red, he knew, full and red. Their heads pulled apart, they looked at the ceiling and he hoped that all this touching signalled the start of sex.

‘Did you really *try* to get out of bed?’

He heard his quick breaths and steadied them.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘I *really* tried. But I couldn’t do it.’

‘But you must have done it eventually?’

She was right. He was here wasn’t he?

‘I don’t know how,’ he answered, scratching at his thigh. ‘I suppose I just wore myself down.’

She gave a quick laugh which he mimicked but didn’t mean to. Then, also involuntarily, his head shot up. He stared at her.

‘Do you think I’ve got an unbalanced personality?’

She was quiet for a second, her eyebrows fixed.

‘How am I supposed to answer that?’

He lay back down, but kept his eyes on her.

‘Yeah, I know . . . Sorry.’

‘I mean, okay, I go out on this second date with a guy and he asks me, ‘Do you think I have an unbalanced personality?’”

She was right. What could she say? To say ‘yes’ would offend him, unless she managed to perfectly construct a tone of irony or humour. To say ‘no’ – well, why would she *need* to say no if there wasn’t some element of imbalance?

He raised himself from her bed.

‘I’m going to go.’

‘Why?’ she asked, straining the word. ‘Stay . . .?’

He lay back down. He got back up. He lay down.

Murakami ran for the window.