

THE INTRODUCTION 2

Arlington was a good friend of Janice's. He was going out with a woman named Louise. Arlington was talking to Chris. Chris was sitting next to Laura. I went up to talk to Arlington and Louise.

Arlington said, "This is our friend, Laura."

Laura then introduced me to Chris. Chris didn't seem that friendly. Laura later told me that he resented having to meet me. It hardly made sense. Louise and Arlington stood up. They left me sitting with Laura. She was talking to another friend. She introduced us. I told her that I had come from Atlanta. She seemed interested. She told me that she had visited before. She had family there. I stayed sitting there for a little while. Then I decided to get up and mingle.

Arlington had told me that he was working on a fantasy book called *The Fox*. He said that he'd already written a great deal of the book. The book describe characters of a royal lineage. They fought over succession rights. They used wizards and witches to help maintain their power. Its kind of dark magic seemed to interest Arlington.

It became clear that Laura was the doyenne of the scene. More than anyone, she was carrying on the history of the Phoenix art scene. She had been in them a band. She had a lot of friends who were in music. She even dated a guy name Etienne who was also musician. She thought Etienne is brilliant. Of course, he was.

When I would to see Laura at Reunion, she would sometimes sit and talk with me. At the same time, she was looking for her friends. In a sense, she was piecing all these elements together. Each night, she created a fabric of interaction. Laura emphasized the social code. She had shaded Chris for being cruel to their mutual friends. She would observe young women gossiping, and she would criticize them to their faces. She was protecting a tradition.

If others didn't understand, Laura was not going to be sympathetic. She was going to say what needed to be said. She was constantly protective of her friends. If they needed some kind of help, she would be there. In a sense she understood that commitment more than anyone else. There may have been a time when all her friends have been very ambitious. They were part of an art scene, and they wanted to succeed. Now however their opportunities seemed far in the the past. Even though they would retain some of the same dreams, nothing was going to come of it.

Unfortunately, those were the conditions. It made it even more important to support your friends. Moreover, some people were hurting. They could particularly benefit from a personal intervention. Laura love sitting and drinking with her friends. But there was something angelic about her mission. She was looking out for people. She brought a goodness to a scene that had been ravaged by poverty and addiction. Of course, it hadn't started that way.

All these young people had been spright on their feet in the early days. And they kept trying to bounce back as the conditions became worse. Their lives became more desperate, and their pursuits were more haphazard. They once had a vision. Now they struggled to see in the darkness. On some nights, Laura would reminisce about the past adventures. People would give everything they had while they were on stage.

The artworks became more and more daring. Despite all these efforts, no one really got over that wall. Some could make a living creating. They had their clients. They were lucky that they could still be artists. Others spent their time is waiters. I kept waiting for that door to open.

They did their best. They try to be as super as possible. These veterans were hanging on. It was never clear what would be their story. They had never had enough ambition to go any further.

The alcohol-soaked nights always promised so much more. In their minds they could adore in a giant canvas. They could add to this representation. But there are always gaps in this picture. Try as they may, there was some thing that was still out of reach. They suffered for this holy grail. They were noble. They saw themselves as knights sharing the same code. Each had a story. Each needed a story full of individual triumphs. In some cases, they had all walked among the gods. Even with such a welcome, they had fallen out a favor. The brilliant stars faded. The twinkle seemed more and more remote. They once saw themselves as space explorers, they were now earthbound. And gravity became a curse.

Arlington's fantasy might've resonated with them. After all, he was charting that wonderful territory where they once walked. Who was still in the gallery to hear the tales? Sure, the alcohol induced the nostalgia. It still wasn't enough to bring the ghosts back to life. So these old warriors stared into space. At times, but even screamed at the darkness.

If Laura was there to mute those cries, she wasn't making apologies for friends. In a sense, she was the ultimate audience. Through it all, she was completely faithful. Like a true angel, she was giving them ten or fifteen years back in their lives. She would look in their eyes, and she would reassure them. Everything was how it was supposed to be. That made Chris's resentment a little more poignant. It wasn't as if he had made good. He was constantly around. Just like Laura, he tried to document that former majesty. For the present, that meant reinforcing the code for all the newcomers.

Chris's recent antics only made the prospects more difficult. Clearly, he upset the apple cart. At this point, this is his main claim to fame. He was living in this wonderful memory. And Laura was helping him along. For that reason, he need to show more respect towards the others. He couldn't emphasize their failures. That would only highlight his own inabilities. Laura needed to correct him for not playing the game way it was created. And if there was a tragedy, he needed to rooted in greatness. It was not right to go off derisively on others. It wasn't as if Laura wasn't critical. But she gave everyone great latitude.

Some might think that she was doing the same for herself. She was preserving this eternity in the present. But it was way more than that. I felt honored she had given me a place. She was ready to reveal all the secrets to me. Nevertheless, this revelation came with a deep responsibility. I needed to protect the reputation of all these gods. It was not up to me to question their motives. In a sense, I was being asked to protect their artistic vision.

Arlington understood these experiences. And his fantasy went a long way to giving greater credibility to the lives of his friends. He wasn't writing about them directly. But he was exploring their quest. His characters had purpose. They were also endowed with special powers, so they could realize their goals. In his mind, Arlington was making the impossible possible. He invited others to do the same. They were all partaking in greatness. Even if I felt like mocking this exaggeration, I need to understand its foundation. This was even more difficult for me.

I was trying to be sympathetic. I needed to be just. No sorry I couldn't impose my own beliefs on this situation. If I lack tolerance, I would be betraying your trust Laura had placed in me and it was difficult. I was ambitious in my own way. I know it. I didn't want to go along with this lifestyle. I wasn't here to revere the past, especially a past that I had no connection to. I tried

my best to see the traces in the present. This would've added stature to the depiction.

From my own part, I liked those resources. And I had no expectation that I would find them for myself. I listened. I was patient. I was respectful. But there are moments that I wanted to harvest. Laura could only do so much to put all the pieces together.

Laura referenced a time when music could still be a saving grace. She realized that power had faded, but she was not going to give up on main aspects of the vision. I wanted to carry on that belief. I felt that I could use it to advance my own creativity. I realized that we saw things so differently. She was more attached to that original intent. It did not serve me in quite the same manner. I needed results. I needed to respond more quickly to what was happening around me. Often, I saw nothing. I wanted someone to interpret the story for me. I wondered if this would be enough I needed to be active in the moment. And I could feel my own talents vanish as I observed.

I wanted to stay on the top of my game. But I also needed to chronicle this quest. I couldn't let anything lead me in the wrong direction. I felt that it would be a risk even to lose a night. I needed to push the vision until it attained a greater focus. Even with this commitment, I couldn't make it all happen. I was only capturing one facet of the story. At times, I might have seemed too rigid. I didn't want to abandon my program.

At times, my pursuits had little to do with what was happening around me. I had seen the heavens open up And I was detailing all the sparkle. I realized that I was only enhancing my own reputation. I couldn't stop that progress. The picture became more intricate. And I was learning important techniques. I became so adept at shading. I was bringing to life something unique.

That might have seemed a little selfish. I was relying on my own luck. And I realized the dangers. But I did not want to let up. If I was close to an understanding, I needed to nurture it. I was offering a deeper knowledge. I might have been foolish. But I needed to persevere. I was filling in all the aspects of this epic. My concerns could have been completely trivial. How would that differ from those around me?

I wasn't extolling their exploits. I recognized a different tale. In some ways, these two paths were complementary. For the newcomers, they could thrill in this possibility. They would not have to pledge their fealty to the old caste. But they needed to be more engaged in their efforts. It was hardly enough to go through the motions.

The motions could be so easy. The former knights had met their demise by tempting greatness. The novices could be satisfied with showing up. They would have the hands of an artist. They would be able to capture revelation in their own insights. They were living great theater. They were on the verge of an endless cataclysm. They were depending on their good fortune.

It was only going to last for so long. The ship was not going to stay afloat for that long. The voyage truly needed to be amazing. But the seas were always choppy. At any moment, things could take a turn for a worse. A sudden storm would upset everything, I was not there to be a savior. I didn't even have the sensibility of Laura.

I was more exploitative. I fed off the tales of woe. They only confirmed to me what was needed for a lasting impact. It was all about perspective. Did they have enough? Would they ever?

Many thought that it was only time. They could shuffle the cards a few times. And a few bad deals would eventually result in the perfect return. At that point, a player could gamble

everything on that promise. It wasn't as if anything had changed that much. That was the fate of every gambler. The story wouldn't work if there wasn't an attempt to bet the world on a whim. I was not supposed to take advantage of this situation. But I couldn't help but marvel at what was going on.

I did not like to witness the demise of other people. I needed to be much more sympathetic. But I hated this false confidence. People wanted stupendous results without preparing for their triumph. Nothing worked that automatically. Short-term gains would place people in horrendous situations. They could spend forever regretting a wrong turn.

I could only help so much. I offered consolation, but it could only be temporary. I was not there to gloat. I only wished that I had a Midas touch. I could offer miracles to those in need. At times, I almost felt pathetic. I would observe catastrophes, but I would be like a voyeur. Worse, I seemed to be piling on. I was not there to offer moral advice, but I was committed to my point of view, and I did not leave much leeway to others. There was no *Shadenfreude* on my part. I truly felt sympathy. In a sense, I hoped that I could offer a more lasting comfort. In its own way, that could be edifying. But eloquence would fail me. I would be watching the disaster, and my witness would only attest to the terrible conditions.

I might have been deserting my principles. I was committed to creating a supportive community. But I would realize how things could become worse than hopeless. I did not want to believe that people could relish their own demise. I wish that there was another way to deal with this challenge. Perhaps, I could offer something important. But I was enjoying the spectacle.

I was contradicting my own commitment. Why had I reached this point? I did not want to give up on my initial motivation. These ideas had power. But they seemed to be fading before my eyes. I felt worse than useless,

How had my inspiration faded? My own worst impulses were gratified. I was living apart from the action. I felt immune.

Laura had offered me her vision of this world. She did not see the same loss of hope. She could relate to all the turmoil. In some ways, that was hardly important for her. She was not obsessed with perfection. And she had seen how that kind of concern could only add to the tragic.

The tragic tale emerged when the individual risked so much. Even the meager returns would emphasize that sense of letdown. The tragedy emerged when the individual looked at the betrayal of greatness. Some would dismiss this immense investment in the personal project. Without such an understanding, nothing lasting would ever be created.

The artist couldn't be tolerant of this lapse. Nevertheless, no one could overcome this overwhelming belief. A carpenter could have a simple task. He could fix a porch. We were observing another kind of action. There was no resolution. The completion of the art work could be a distraction. It would suffice in breadth. It would disappoint. It would only confirm the downtrodden state of the artist.

It would be absurd to dismiss that mission. That was the interest of the creativity. The individual was attempting the impossible. That only added to the appeal. Why was this pursuit without a clear end? The successes could be a distortion of the goal. They could provide witness to the individual's demise.

Without sufficient ambition, the self would not be able to deal with the actual return of these efforts. Only extraordinary accomplishments would be enough. Anything else would only be an example of personal failure.

Art should offer clearer inspiration for the self. However, it could also emphasize the melancholic state. It would exaggerate pessimism. The self was becoming too entangled in the creative process. The art would only be a record of personal dissipation. There would be no sense of rescue. Art was not supposed to need in depravity. When the self became lost in the process, there was susceptibility to this terrible outcome.

Tragedy resulted from the loss of personal independence. The work would be too much. Its honesty would threaten the individual. The artist might recognize personal mediocrity. It would be foolish to get so involved in the creativity. The person might hope for more uplifting aims.

The individual would believe that personal integrity could be recovered. There would be a great deal of effort to restore a lost balance. The self would surrender to states of mind. The work would lack its credibility.

I was watching a milieu, where personality seemed so much more important than creative skill. Thus, talent was a performance. It represented the striving of the self. Without an artistic awareness, such a pursuit was pathetic. How could the self escape this sentence?

Laura tried to offer these artists needed solace. They might have been unable to realize their artistic hopes. But they could not surrender their integrity. The art would never offer that hoped for liberation. The individual would only be cursing in the darkness. There would be that desire for so much more.

In some cases, the creator could become obsessed with bull shit. The self would become obsessed with the most intricate details. A person could see form amidst chaos.

I hated to be so critical. But I recognized the crisis. And I was not going to get pulled inside. I did not want to be crawling along the ground as I cheered on this collapse.

The self would assert supremacy over the work of art. But the individual could never retain the same countenance. Instead, the individual would be caught in the creative process. And the person could never achieve independence from the work. Instead the art would suggest kind of weakness. And that feeling would continue. I was observing these people. I recognized that the art never achieve that stature. And the individual I never have that level of commitment. Creativity with only being asked be an excuse to remain the same. What is one thing to learn how to stretch out a canvas and fill it with paint. It was quite another do you have a real artistic understanding.

I was looking at people who are flailing away. Their studios might be full of works of art. But nothing was able to express the actual feeling. Everything was seen from the outside. I only wished her more. Perhaps, I was drawing too much satisfaction from watching all this happened. I love the train wreck. And it kept getting more involved. Or I could've tried to let it all go. That wasn't how I was working. Instead I was giving into my fascination. I had a friend, and she had documented numerous wrecks like this. She had no fascination whatsoever for this experience. In fact, when she recognized that this is going on she would do everything to extricate her self. Nevertheless, she saw her self in the situation again and again. She would admire that glimmer. This might even accentuate some thing daring in our own experience. But the risks would

become immense. And nothing will come of any of this.

She had put her on life back in place. Trying to do this for other people. In her own way, this was her work of art. And she was almost obsessed by this level of commitment. And she would give everything that she had for success with these people. But every time are used to Sassers Warren pretty. There was nothing appealing about this kind of collapse in. In a sense, she was being set up again and again. She was dealing with people who couldn't be responsible for their own decay. So they found someone else I could blame. She knew that she was strong. And these people a week. Laura could attest to the same kinds of experience. She hadn't risked her own sanity. But she realize that there's only so much that she could do for many of her friends early on, I know it has never seen this bad. Why was there so much hopelessness? This was totally the opposite of what I had hoped for.

I value this introduction because it helped frame my own efforts. I was putting together this massive Portrait. And every aspect was significant in a sense, Laura was willing to explore these circumstances in a deeper way. And she would suffer for her friends. She would mourn them. In a sense in her own way, she was bringing them back to life. If I favored resurrection, I wanted it to be more definitive. I would've had trouble handling this ill-fated expectations. I was embracing a science. I offered outcomes. It gave a sense of enlightenment. I was watching experiments that never came to fruition. The more that I observed these calamities, the more I became convinced that it was my location to document all this happened. Where can I find the right vantage point?

If I hung around in the middle of things. I wouldn't have much to say. I had to stay with his experiences just long enough. I needed to skim the surfaces. Then I could pull myself away and create a perceptive outlook. It was a tense experience. I tried to keep just enough distance so that I wasn't stressed out. I could watch this process of disassociation. It confirmed my outlook on society. Unfortunately, these terrible experiences seemed to suggest that there is no authoritative force that could subdue these elements. That couldn't be my final resolution. I need to walk away with better results. Why couldn't these characters pull out before totally collapsing? I was seeing this as a performance. But there was nothing performative about this at all.

These people were debilitated. The suffering ravaged their bodies. This had been the real art. They performed their demise. Their paintings and their music were weak accompaniments to the more profound experiences in which they were involved. Collectively, there was no revelation. If there had been, could've led to a master work.

That was my ambition. I feared that I was only gratifying myself. If that was the case, when was I feeling the satisfaction. There is no enjoyment in watching a person disintegrate before my eyes. Laura would describe moments when these people seemed invincible. She might've been attracted by this personal quality. She was not going to admit that any of it was pathetic. In a sense. life could do this to everyone. But I was chronicling dignity. Since my depiction was so all encompassing, I believed that there could be this moment of true wonder.

Why was it elusive? Was I caught up in the same illusion. I hated to think that my grand plans are simply a surd allusion. I was entering this dangerous place. I was leaving my cell phone or more. I'm sure Laura had experienced similar a dangerous. I need to show more resolve. I couldn't get pull down by any of these threats. And I know why I come. Laura couldn't imagine how bad it was. She was a witness to these worlds and decay. Beyond her view, there were other

experiences that were more frightening. Some of her friends entertained this low level of dissipation.

None of this was entertaining. None of this was pleasant. This was not an art. But all these artistic experiences have come to this end. The creators were part of some thing destructive. There was no melody in this destructive. I tried to accompany the moment. It was too deep. It was too deep for anyone. There is something more magical in all of it. This is why I need the symphony. I was not going to walk out. Unfortunately, the screw couldn't add to the vitality. Could there be free expression without greater level of human vitality? I didn't want to see this fade before my eyes. I wanted to hang on long as I could. If my depiction was more epic, I believed that I was portraying a different kind of human existence.

If I could watch people fall this far, and would I be privileged to seeing them send the heights. Even if they can acquire this depth, could I? There are new souls who seemed more resilient. At this moment, they were surely ready for the greatest challenge. Those who had any training already lost by the wayside. For the others, faith was just as cruel. They might be more resilient. But they didn't have a clue. They had no program. They had a few goals. They were immersed in the moment. I did what I could to escape. I couldn't work with one group for the other. But I love my obsession. Elora seem to give me just enough motivation to keep on. I am rich myself deep inside. I wasn't gonna find the connection at reunion. As I try to piece things together in my long walk home, I still felt equally confused. I didn't achieve an understanding. The picture seemed even more varied. Nevertheless, I clung to my theory. There was a smile, or a sense of grace, that seemed so vivacious. I wanted to make it seem so much more. For me it was. I was on the verge of unleashing this marvelous energy. This was the universe in full form. Why was no one obliging? I was only getting part of the picture. I needed to give a dynamic to heart in this moment. This man understanding time in a different way. I need it all the time in the world. I needed the time to escape. But I was being held down in the moment. That was all that mattered.

Who could grasp what is happening here? If there was a more lasting force, what were its origins? I tried to encompass the whole wide world. I was getting so close. Now I was tired. I just wanted to stop the process. I wanted to give it everything that I could. How long would it take to put all the pieces in place? I saw things very differently I could work with these fragments. I could expand my view. I could search for a unifying idea. This was all that mattered. This was all that mattered. I should've been asking Laura questions.

I didn't even know what I was supposed to say. How long was I supposed to carry-on? I needed someone to open the door. Yes, I needed to take a deep breath.

So much of this experience was about forgetting. People would embrace these characters, who were caught in their own silliness. They could help them escape life. Where was this headed? This seemed like the foundation of self-destructiveness. What happened to the art?

“What does this guy offer?”

“He has been doing this forever.”

“This is not how you create art.”

“Someone trained. And some people do nothing.”

“I want to know better.”

“Is this good?”

“You are fucking my life up.”
“Where did this start?”
“I am not what you think that I am.”
“Where did this come from?”
“Why are you tempting me?”
“Who is behind this?”
“Where is this headed?”
“I could own so much more.”
“I have been here before.”
“I have figured it out.”
“It is all on the skin.”
“What is any of that about?”
“Why do you hang around with this messed-up guy?”
“You are too perfect.”
“Can’t you give a little bit of yourself to me?”
“You are going to have to do more than breathe oxygen.”
“What am I missing?”
“That is not fair.”
“None of you are free.”
“All these great artists are messing up with their lives.”
“How can that be art?”
“Is that all that you have to do with your life?”
“I am not good at any of this.”
“I live here.”
“I am doing what I can to trust you.”
“We are not doing so well together.”
“Don’t say we.”
“It always seems to be the same.”
“We need to stop.”
“How are you trying to destroy me?”
“What is that about?”
“Why are you trying to hurt me?”
“You just want to run the whole world. And that is your art.”
“Laura said it would be okay.”
“How many hearts do you have to break?”
“What is any of that about?”
“Are you going somewhere? Are you trying to escape yourself?”
“What is any of this about?”
“What are we about?”
“Tell me what are doing!”
“This is going to be right for the both of us.”
“I do not want to end up like this.”
“Are we all doing this together?”
“That is amazing.”

"The electric current is running through me."

"It is all going to end quickly."

"I want to be frozen."

"Where is this headed?"

"I want to be preoccupied with something important."

"I do not understand any of this."

"We are here to change the world."

"We are part of a community."

"We are really fucking things up."

"We are not telling anyone."

"That is super fantastic."

"I need to get this done."

"IS THERE SOMETHING THAT YOU NEED TO TELL ME?"

"Go away!"

"That is so ridiculous."

"I want to live here."

"Do not interrupt me."

"How did you mess up?"

"I just showed up?"

"Where is this park?"

"We are creating a community of artists. But this is only about having fun and messing with people's lives."

"I am glad that you decided to grace my life."

"You needed to take a stand."

"I missed a stitch."

"Are you just looking for a way to get away from me?"

"This is all trivial."

"EVERY WORD MATTERS! I AM AN ARTIST!"

"None of this is working."

"You are suppose to be a friend of mine."

"We will send you all the money that you need."

"Is my art that good?"

Laura was supposed to offer me a directory.

"He is a musician, he is a painter, and he is a fraud."

"It is all the same."

Laura seemed to be developing a clear standard for evaluating behavior at Reunion. She assumed that everyone was up on the details of this document. This was the text, which was the key to community standards.

"Where does any of this lead?"

"Get high."

"Go where you want to go."

"How does that happen?"

"You tell me."

"What are you taking for that cold?"

“Something that makes me feel good.”

“Let it ring.”

“Why would you pay more money?”

“For the privilege.”

“I want to stay close to you.”

“What is the problem here?”

“I am looking for some constants.”

“That makes me afraid.”

“Do you want to get into me?”

“There is an inspection.”

“What are you holding?”

“A school for scandal.”

“I need a place to escape.”

“There is no judgement here.”

“We all come here to confess.”

In fact, it was all about judgement. But it was administered in a subtle manner.

“I need to get out of myself.”

“What can I do for you.”

“You can find some tools.”

“How does that work?”

“You move it back and forth.”

“You inhale.”

“That feels so good.”

Everyone worked on the self independently. In the beginning, there was this shared experience. Then everyone did something individually.

“I hate to believe that it ends like that.”

“Everyone here has a termination date.”

“What are you telling me, Laura?”

“I am the only one talking.”

“I like that.”

“Breath in the air.”

“It is shared among us.”

“We are shared among us.”

“One people.”

“One principle.”

“You are going to destroy the energy.”

“NOTHING IS PERSONAL HERE.”

“I got rid of my personal stuff.”

“Do not try to pursue me.”

There were lines to cross.

“Do not think that you know what I like.”

“I cannot give.”

“This is a sacred place.”

“You need to explain things.”

"I need to stop giving."
"This is a sacred place."
"There is a way to describe it."
"I am not full of hate."
"Let us all hold hands."
That never happened.
"Do you want the world?"
"Love takes us into forbidden places."
"I do things to complete them."
"How does that work?"
What did Laura know that no one else know?"
"I am going to be triumphant, but it is not going to last for very long."
"We can do whatever we want to."
"What does that involve?"
"You did it in my bed."
"Who's been sleeping my bed?"
"Laura caught the three bears."
"I only need to catch one bear."
"Care for me."
"Why can't you feel that way for me?"
"I just can't."
"Different zones."
"Show me where the action takes place."
"Why do we have these bodies?"
"This is a description of a body."
"Do not go!"
"This is immortal."
"This is immoral."
"This guy is a loser."
"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!"
"Why am I hiding?"
Laura said that no one was hiding here. She offered her proofs.
"I do not have proofs. Who says that I do?"
"You make me do strange things."
"Where does this get started?"
"Thank you!"