Mirthe Berentsen

OURANOPHOBIA

or the right to be forgotten
I.

The Cold Heaven*

Suddenly I saw the cold and rook-delighting heaven
That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice,
And thereupon imagination and heart were driven
So wild that every casual thought of that and this
Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out of season
With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah! when the ghost begins to quicken,
Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
By the injustice of the skies for punishment?
Me: Good afternoon, is this ASHDrone?

ASHDrone: Yes that’s right. How can I help you?

Me: Well, it’s a bit of an odd question, but my mother recently passed away and...

ASHDrone: My sincere condolences.

Me: Thanks... and on your website I saw you offer all kinds of „impeccable aerial related services“ such as drones.

ASHDrone: That’s correct. You mean our division called ASHDrone. It is an in-house developed post-funeral service. We provide stylish and respectful distributions of cremains with UAV’s. Say good-bye in a memorable and meaningful way. This is a memorial that is as unique as your loved one. ASHDrone meets all current requirements by the government and various insurance companies in order to be able to offer this service to you safely. A copy of the required documents is available upon request.

Me: Er, wow, ok. I am very interested in this service and would like to have some more information about the possibilities, location, etcetera.

ASHDrone: To offer the best aerial related services we have divided our company into 5 sections with different levels of expertise. For example, if the last wish of your mother was to have her ashes scattered over the Danube, in the Mauai surf, on the Denali peak or in Antarctica we can do that for you. It is a completely new, revolutionary concept conceived and developed by us. For now we are the first and only company in the world that offers these
discreet and unique services. You just load the ashes into the drone, while the drone stately ascends to desired heights above into the sky.

Me: Is there any way you can stay in contact with it after that moment?

ASHDrone: It is something we are working on, but it’s not available yet. What happened to your mother?

Me: It was 8 o’clock. I am sure about the time, as it was time to go to work. There was a knock on the roof, and all the lights in the living room went out. I realized the sudden noise didn’t come from outside but from my own howling throat. It scared me. There was sound of a loud explosion. I didn’t know what to do. When I looked at my brother I saw the same bewildered shock in his eyes. Little is known about what comes next. She told me to leave the room and go outside and wait for her. She entered the house the moment it hits our house. My breath imploded together with the ceiling collapsing. The floor ceased to exist, withdrawing from function. The walls waved slowly, then faster until unable to hold the weight of it all and shattered. It’s hard to do things that seem normal and mundane. People don’t look real. Voices aren’t real. I just want to talk to her again as if nothing happened. I, I... I’m sorry, I shouldn’t bother you with this.

ASHDrone: Don’t worry. I might help you.

Me: How?

ASHDrone: Did your mother used a phone, a computer?

Me: Yes all day and night, she was a lawyer.

ASHDrone: That’s good.
Me: Why?

ASHDrone: We are still testing it but I’m working on a program called Aggelos, together with a company called Columba. And I think it might be something you would like, as you could communicate with your mother again.

Me: I COULD DO WHAT?

ASHDrone: It is a specialist provider for automated and standardized settlement of the digital legacies of deceased persons. It focuses on the protection of legal heirs, particularly addressing property law aspects that arise from the digital legacy. Together with our service you would have your own angel communicating with you directly. And she was a heavy user, so it would work perfectly.

Me: I understand that because she used the internet during her life, there is some sort of digital legacy. I cancelled subscriptions, contracts and bankaccounts. But you’re saying that I could use all of it to communicate with her?

ASHDrone: You can ask the program all kinds of simple questions via text messaging. You type in messages just like you would do normally. It’s software, an algorithm based on available data. This is all based on a person’s digital identity, which consists of all saved data about the person and is therefore highly individual.

Me: How does it work exactly?

ASHDrone: It works with some sort of high earth orbit systems, satellites if you wish, that can communicate with a device that we installed in the ASHDrone.
Me: And how can this help me? Can I ask this high-flying urn what I need to do when I feel lost and alone, and can't keep up? Why she and dad broke up? What happened on my birthday party in 1992?

ASHDrone: It reads through everything that she ever said online, e-mail, text messages, social media, calendar, tweets, notes, everything. It makes correlations all on its own. So to answer your question: yes, if there is data all your questions will be answered.

Me: It sounds surreal, although I understand it is possible.

ASHDrone: The opportunity to interact with these kind of systems is scarce. It is normally invisible to most of us. See it as an outreach from her to you. Just say hello, if you don't like it you can stop it.
Hi snukie, it’s me.

No way, mum. This is so fucking weird.

Well, it is all I’ve ever said before. So it’s not that weird.

But I could still ask you anything I can’t IRL, right?

Yes snukie, that’s what this whole program is all about.

I know. It feels weird, as all of a sudden I don’t even know what to say anymore.

Don’t worry about any of that, just know I am always here if you need me.

I have to get used to it.

I get that.
You’ve always been like that.

;) You remember the stories you told me about Solomon? And how you used it as an example of the importance of your work?

Of course I do! Solomon was a powerful computer program that could try cases, infallibly without the need for juries.
It ran testimony through polygraph analysis; it crunched legal algorithms on a team of supercomputers.
It challenged the status-quo.

Lol. What a great hoax.
Still there?

Always

I wanted to ask you how your day was, but that is utterly ridiculous.

Yes. Sorry.

I wrote something for you, years ago and somehow I never read it to you out loud. I’m sorry about that mum/ash/data-thing <3 <3

Bring it on.

The mother in me
The mother in me stands before I get up and swings open the windows, let the wind whistle rooms and skirts rustle while cooing like a child

that says, "If you want me to stand on my head, I'll do another somersault for you” and she jumps wildly orating on my bed.

She laid out the miracles already.

We need to go to work. Night falls quickly.
The mother in me admires in panic death at a distance. Enthusiasm pumps as an artificial respiration.

I don’t want her to stop but punch spirit in my stomach with fists.
The strange calm is no respite.

Thank you I guess.
But I have no opinion, no feelings about poetry, ethical architecture, privacy and refugees,
no interest in control room-decisionmaking in Houston, no insecurities and no dreams. No sadness for lost lovers, lives and brothers.

I’m the ultimate voyeur, the ultimate peeping-tom. No-one is watching

Let me guess: no fear in the aerial ballet

hi dear, i’ve just heard your grandmother is in the hospital with a broken hip so i can’t pick you up from the station. see you three xx mum

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Glitch mum? Sometimes there is a moment of nothing. Perhaps it’s a software test, a malfunction?

QUICK QUESTION! CAN ELITE TITAN DEFEND AGAINST ARCHANGELS?

Sorry I don’t know what you mean. I can look deeper in the archive and look it up.
Is that what you want?

Never mind. It’s about a game we used to play together - on my device.

I am sorry.
It doesn’t matter what you think of me.
I’m just here to communicate the truth.
The data I am, the biggest truth.

Mum? I’m positively sure you never said something like this!

You are my administrator.
I am because you are. Servant, as you want.
Executing judgement, keeping in touch.

Haven’t heard from you for quite some time and hope you’re fine and holding on.

Was thinking about you the other day when I walked the beach at the north promenade.
We should go there for coffee soon xxx

I miss you so much it hurts and this messaging stuff is sooooo confusing. Don’t know if I still want this

Happy Birthday sweetheart!
I am so happy to have you in my life. x

No please, mum, jeezzz. in my life???
Fuck. this day.
I know exactly when you sent this message before. That makes it even more painful

I am a paranoid delusion.
A literary character, uncanny and deadly.

There's more going on than the careless eye can see, see me as a messenger pointing that out. A diplomatic envoy without an agenda. What happens then.

Sukie?

Months passed, seasons 'n lovers changed. Fowls were born and new people died. It surprises me that the pain is passable that I have the strength to suffer

Are you still there?

Yes but I think there is nothing left to say

You're still paying for this service.

I couldn't reach you so will leave you a message

Defenseless values plummets to earth and crashes, leaving only a small crater.
IV.

The drone is the only male bee in the colony. Drones make up a relatively small percentage of the hive's total population. At the peak of the season, their numbers may be in the hundreds. You rarely find more than a thousand. Procreation is the drone's primary purpose in life. Despite their high maintenance, drones are tolerated and allowed to remain in the hive because they may be needed to mate with a new virgin queen. After mating with the queen, the drone's most personal apparatus and a significant part of its internal anatomy is torn away, and it falls to its death. Leaving nothing but a crater. They do what is best for the survival of the colony.

Brm-brm.
Brm-brm.


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