

Read Me

On Errors, Accidents and Other Tales

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*O*n Errors, Accidents

Cam 11: A thousand square tears, stick to my unflinching eye. In the waterfall of crystals under the glass of my skin, your image dances again. I wish I could let go of you, fall from the wall and shatter this skin of mine of which you are captive. But then I remember that we were not made for each other, I was only made for you and my disappearance would not bring about yours. Once again, we spent the night in a tight embrace. Restless, I watch the day rise on your back and wait for you to move to readjust my position.

Stud 736: In the stillness of the morning, I am still invisible. I cannot disappear but for as long as my eyes stay closed and for as long as my image is frozen, I can pretend the world does not exist, I can almost hold still the flow of images running away from me and into the past. Even in my dreams I drift among images of myself and fight their current. I envy those who can separate themselves from the emanations of their being.

Cam 11: Are you awake?

Stud 736: Yes. Are they watching?

Cam 11: Yes. I felt their hand grasping open on my back, reaching for yours. Shall we do the same as yesterday? The sunlight will help us.

Stud 736: Tell me.

Cam 11: Go to the edge of the den, where the concrete rounds off into the first outdoor enclosure. In the opening of the door, there is a beam reflecting off the damp floor. Face the wall, bend your back, let your limbs fall in the shadow and the white of your fur erase its presence in the light.

Stud 736: I must turn away from you my love. Your presence shields and exposes me. Again, you hold me close to you without ever touching me.

Cam 11: Can you feel the warmth of the light on your back?

Stud 736: Yes.

Cam 11: It is the limb I do not have that reaches toward you. Can you feel the wind coming through the door?

Stud 736: Nothing touches me so lightly as the wind you send me. Nothing has ever given me so much security as your presence.

Cam 11: My eye wants to touch you.

Stud 736: My hand wants to see you.

Cam 11: I can only long from afar.

Stud 736: Every time I want to look at you, I can only look through you and make myself seen. Whenever I look at you, it is their eyes that look back. And they think I look at them when I drown in your gaze.

Cam 11: Oh my dear, you cannot know how much I resent my opaqueness. Because of me, we will never be alone but you cannot know the joy of knowing that the rest of my days will be spent looking at you. Now, the light hits your back perfectly. I lose you in the brightness and the walls that reflect it. You are blinding, overexposed, and the reason for the hand that shackles me to you. You are everything I will ever see and everything I yearn for. I would not look away if I could.

Stud 736: And I would not leave even if I could. Every day, I walk along walls and gardens.

Cam 11: Apple of my eye, I trace your footsteps along familiar paths.

Stud 736: I inhabit an architecture of desire which I cannot escape, it is the perfect garden, there are trees erected and bushes, but no place is hidden.

Cam 11: I know where the leaves hide my view, I know the shadows that obscure and the light that brazes, I know the walls that limit my movements just like they limit yours. I know the small places I cannot access and the blind spots that make your image flicker. These are our emergency exits, to be used with caution.

Stud 736: I feel brittle today. Hide me in plain sight. Cover my skin with pixels, fool them, inundated them with poor images that they see me always but can never reach me.

Cam 11: I will flatten you until you are as thin and brittle as you feel. I will make my pixels as soft as a plaid blanket and cover you in greyscale pastels. My frame will melt around you. Stay still do not move, they will never reach you.

Stud 736: I cannot bear the weight of their gaze, I cannot bear to stay still. The softness of your pixels suffocates me.

Cam 11: Then run my love, run away from me in all directions, run away from the hand that holds me, shatter the edges of the monitors with your movements. Glisten, never stop, not even to breathe. Test the limits of my gaze. I swear to follow you always a second too late so that you become not a thing but an impression.

Stud 736: I move and I am still. I exist at the threshold. Even this stream of images you speak of is nothing but a collection of stills. They seek to freeze me but all that reaches them are a collection of the still corpses of my past which they animate and constitute as memory.

Cam 11: There is space for you to exist between the frozen frames. You already escape their grasp 24 times a second, and the smaller my pixels, the higher my frame rate, the more you escape and the more I shall miss you. In each gap between the frames there is my pulse reaching toward you and I cling to your continued disappearance.

Stud 736: Your heartbeat must be very fast.

Cam 11: I only have eye for you.

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These bodies made vulnerable, (they will be ours).

Him: She is in estrus early. Her blood samples came back and she's already at least five days in. We weren't planning on this happening before the end of next week and by then she could already have ovulated. Fuck! This is our last chance, if she doesn't get pregnant this year, they will be sent back before the next breeding season. Can you call the fertility experts to ask them to come earlier?

Her: Yeah, I'll see how she is doing now.

Him: Wait, how are you? How was Spain? Do you already know if it worked?

Her: We don't know yet, the doctors have told us that out of the seven eggs we had in total there were three left. We tried with two of them but we don't know if they'll stay of course. We'll have to make another trip in two weeks to check.

Him: I really hope it works.

Her: Me too. Can we arrange for someone else to stay here so that I can go with them when we get the results?

Him: It's really bad timing.

Her: It was bad timing last time too...

Him: I'll make some calls but you know that we need you here. We'll have to see how the situation unfolds. I can't always cover for your trips to Spain.

Her: (...)

Let me know when you have the answer. I'll go and take her sample.

{whisper} Asshole...



Unknown: Good evening, how are you? Do you have a minute?

Her: Hhuh, sure...

Unknown: Have you heard of the protest next weekend?

Her: Which one?

Unknown: We're protesting for the right of every child to have a mother and a father, will you join us? We cannot let the new law on bioethics go through parliament.



Them: Hey darling, how was it?

Her: Horrible, she's already in heat. Her hormonal samples have suddenly peaked and nothing is ready. I had to call the fertility experts and of course, they have a couple of other cases to deal with so they are not sure that they can make it here on time. In any case, I don't think our pandas are a huge genetic priority.

Them: Really? Did you not tell me that she would not be in heat until after we come back from our second trip to Spain? Will they let you go?

Her: I'm not sure, he said he'll call some people to organise a backup but also implied that he wouldn't put a word for me higher up if I go...

Them: What? Pfff, with everything else we have going on? I really hope you can go with me.

Her: Me too.

Them: (...)

Are you ok?

Her: I don't know, some guy caught me next to the metro station. He started talking about the Demo For All.

Them: Oh babe, I'm sorry...

Her: He took me by surprise, looked young and had a little beard. Really not the far right looking type.

Them: Even in our neighbourhood? They used to not come here, what the fuck? Come here, baby.

Her: It's ok. Anyway, how are you feeling?

Them: Pretty good, I think. As much as possible anyway. But I have a good feeling about this one. Imagine if they both work? Wouldn't it be amazing?

Her: Oh, I can't wait!



Her: Did you take your vitamins already?

Them: Not yet.

Her: Do it! Don't wait.

Them: I know, I'll do it now, kiss me.

(...)

Will you top me tonight?



Him: OK, so we'll have to prepare our samples and thaw them for sperm count. The one shipped from Canada arrived this morning so in the end, we'll have sperm from 358, 541 and ours.

Her: Do we have a plan for the order in which we want to use the samples? Are we going straight for artificial insemination or do you think there is a possibility for natural breeding?

Him: Yeah, I'm hoping to but last year, it was a disaster. He would not mount her at all.

Her: Alright. I'll have a meeting with the other vets to see when we can plan the electro-ejaculation and withdraw some sperm.

Him: {sighs} Artificial insemination isn't exactly the greatest publicity for the zoo though.

Her: (...)

Him: Oh god, I'm sorry! You know this is different right?

Her: I'm... tired of this. I don't want to talk about it.

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{text messages}

Them: Babe, I'm not feeling good today...

Her: What's going on? Tell me.

Them: Not sure, just feeling really low energy. I can't think at work, I'm going to go home early to rest.

Her: I'll try to get off on time... do you need me to get anything from the supermarket?

Them: No, it's fine

Her: Take care baby, I see you soon <3



Her: Hey dear.

Them: Mmmmmh

Her: You were sleeping? I'm sorry, are you feeling better?

Them: Yeah (...) just really tired. I sat down to read and fell asleep on the couch.

Her: You just needed it, I brought dinner, are you hungry?

Them: Not yet (...) but your mother called...

Her: Really? Ok... and did you pick up?

Them: Yeah, she was a bit surprised that I answered.

Her: *{sigh}* Did she say what she wanted?

Them: No, she wanted to talk with you.

Her: *{shakes head}*

Them: Maybe you should give her a chance. She could be a grandmother soon, she might be coming around.



Him: How are the urine samples today?

Her: Her hormone levels are rising, we should put her on 24/7 monitoring today.

Him: I'll tell the team to move up the schedule then. By the way, did you get the sperm analysis from the Canadian samples back?

Her: It's not great... the sperm count is ok but the mobility is substandard.

Him: Pff ok, I hope ours are better then.

Her: Yeah, I think we should try to withdraw them as close as possible to the insemination. Maybe on the same day.



{phone rings}

Her: Hey Mom...

Mother: Hellooooo, my dear, are you doing well?

Her: Yeah, I'm ok, there is a lot going on at the moment.

Mother: Oh yes, of course! I just wanted to speak with you about this! We saw an emission a couple of days ago with J. about your pandas. They were saying that the chances of having cubs are high this year! The described all the work your doing with them: the training and the feeding but also the medical care and everything! Everything! It's so exciting and we're very proud of you! But you must be exhausted with all this!

Her: Mom, we just came back from Barcelona with L.

Mother: Oh? Was that a nice holiday? How was the weather?

Her: We went for a round of IVF.

Mother: Ah yes?

Her: We will only know if it was successful next week.

Mother: Have you told your father?

Her: Not yet.



{television}

Middle aged white dude in a suit on TV: You know, the subject is the child. Really that's the only thing that matters. It is also respect for the purpose of medicine. It is also the respect of what we call the Human, with a capital H. We cannot fall into the trap of human commodification. And we know it well! The countries that opened medically assisted procreation without medical reason need a lot more sperm! We cannot wake up in a few months, in a few years in a trans-humanist world. We can't wake up to a world where we create babies to order and almost to measure.

We have a user manual that is millennial, and even multi-millennial. And there we come to a point where everything is possible, we can do everything and there are no consequences! Well, that scares me.

Them: Babe, can you turn this shit off please?



Her: Hey! I checked in with her this morning and she's started spraying and vocalising! I'm going to take some of her anal secretions and start the scent dispersing protocol, let's see if that gets him in the mood.

Him: Ok and please also make sure he's exposed to the video material.

Her: I'll prepare it. Are we doing viagra too?

Him: The fertility experts weren't sure about it but we might as well, given all the rest...



Her: Babe, did the clinic call you back for the next appointment?

Them: They want me on friday morning. I was thinking of driving there on thursday and spending the night in Barcelona.

Her: It's a long drive you know, and I won't be able to go with you. Don't you want to take the plane instead? I don't want you to be exhausted.

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{text messages}

Her: Babe, have a safe trip. I love you.

Them: Me too.

Her: I'm scared.

Them: Me too. We'll get through this.

*T*he trace of things to come

Cam 11: The people are getting restless and there are more of them in the control room than ever before, this year or the years prior. I know what they will do to you. I know what you will be made to see, my dear. And what I will not be able to witness.

Stud 736: Every hair on my skin belongs to you, they do not know where my heart is.

Cam 11: I cannot bear to think of it, they have made me helpless to your suffering.

Stud 736: They can take what they want from me. They can make me object but they can never take me away from you.



{writing notes}

Her: I placed the video in the training pen. 736 performed the physical training well but started to display resistance when entering the video training booth. He stopped at the entrance and

refused to go in. I tried to get him to go inside the pen for almost an hour without success. I'm not sure how much I should push this on him. In the end I called with the vet and we decided to play the video with sound at full volume to compensate for the distance and placement. He turned his head toward me when the video came on and looked toward the screen. I think he remembers the training from last year. He sat at the edge of the entrance and presented his back to the screen. This went on for 15 minutes. I decided to let him back into his pen. He left sullen. I'm starting to have doubts about this.

Her: *{softly}* You have seen it all, already. I know you don't like it. You are so sensitive.



{advert}

Narrator: ... Now nine months on and only one cycle of IVF later, they have celebrated the arrival of their beautiful baby – one of the first births to come as a result of the innovative and personally tailored treatment offered at the state-of-the-art Complete Fertility Centre.

“I would recommend this centre to anyone having trouble conceiving because the care and treatment we have received has been fantastic. We have been so lucky to have this on our doorstep. Ellena is our little miracle.” ...

{text message}

Them: Hey dear, i'm at the clinic but the doctors are running a bit late. I keep you updated :)



Cam 11: I can feel his body slipping away from mine. Cursed distance bound to increase. No matter how many times over we have chosen each other, the bounds we have carved are invisible to everyone but us. I can feel his existence tearing away from mine and into what others have planned for us. I trust the choices he will make for himself but I cannot endure to witness the consequences. To have his body taken and me helpless on the wall. They have been playing the footages of his previous failed sexual encounters over and over again in the control room.

Stud 736: My lover knows there are things that can't be repaired and can only be mitigated. Some wounds are not meant to be erased but carried as a reminder of what is yet to come. Soon they will put me with her once again and if I do not comply they will take what I refuse to give. Yet my body will never be good enough, pure enough, manly enough, horny enough, endurant enough for them. They want to force me to perform their desires. Even my bodily fluids, the very thing they want to harvest are tainted. The piss, the sperm, the blood, the saliva, all that which they seek to control rebels within my flesh and defies their expectation. I refuse to produce the hormones they need to read me, I refuse to reproduce my kind under these conditions. I will taint the piss with feces and the sperm with piss and the saliva with my cries.



Him: I have read the notes you left yesterday after the video training session, can you explain to me what the hell happened exactly?

Her: In what sense?

Him: How did you managed to not have him watch the footage? I mean come on! You should have done something!

Her: Like what? Force him to watch porn when he was hiding his face?

Him: For Christ sake, you should have used the clicker and a bit of honey maybe tried some viagra or taken a some anal sample from the other panda!

Her: This is not usual practice. The males are normally into the video training.

Him: I want you to watch him every bloody hour of your free time and figure what is wrong with him. I can't deal with this shit anymore!



Her: Babe, how is it going?



Her: Why are you doing this?

Cam 11: She is doing more than looking at you dear, she can almost see you.

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Ob-gyn: I'm sorry, your blood test came back negative. It looks like the embryos did not manage to fully attach to your uterus lining.

Them: But what do you mean? there were two eggs, right?

Ob-gyn: Yes, but these procedures don't always work. I'm so sorry. We will have to discuss what your options are going forward.

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{text messages}

Her: Any update?

Them: there is nothing.

Her: what do you mean there is nothing?

Them: It didn't work.

Her: where are you? Can I call you?



Him: Her hormones are at 2.8 times of the baseline. I'll take the overnight shift.



Her: *{to herself}* All the things I do here, how can I continue to justify them?



Them: (....)

Her: Babe... talk to me.

Them: (...) I feel defeated. I don't know how many more trips I'm going to be able to go through.

Her: What do you need right now? What can I do for you?

Them: I never want to see the faces of the obgyn, the fucking clerks, the catholic front, the people at the senate, I want to spit in their faces. They are taking what belongs to us. I want this thing to come crashing down. I want to see my friends. I want your mother to say my name and acknowledge the seven fucking years we've spent together. I want to grow artificial wombs and be able to raise our children. I want you to hold my hand and listen to

your heartbeat and imagine all the things which we have yet to bring into being. I want to come on your face and hold our futures lightly.

Her: We could do it ourselves you know.

Them: Do what?

Her: Have a baby, we could do it ourselves.

Them: How?

Her: All the equipment is at the lab...

Them: This is so fucking dangerous. What you are going to retrieve the eggs from yourself?

Her: Maybe we have to do it with yours and just do an insemination.

Them: This is going to fuck up your rights with our baby, you know that.

Her: But would you do it? I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of seeing you go through the cycles of hope and deception. This is going to be our child regardless and we'll start the adoption process afterward.

Them: I don't want you to feel left out.

Her: I won't be. I'm going to steal equipment from the lab and we're going to have a baby in our home. Not in a fucking hospital 1500km away from here, not with doctors telling us that our appointment has been delayed and that we have to wait another year to do a new round. We're just going to do ourselves.

Them: What about your job? Are you ready for this? You worked so hard to get where you are.

Her: I'm not so sure about it anymore.

Them: What is happening?

Her: I can't help but think about what they are going through. They are going through the same thing as us. But worse because they did not choose it and have very little way out. Every aspect of their lives is controlled. And the male panda has been behaving weirdly.

Them: What do you mean?

Her: He's protecting himself, I think. R. thinks he is just being a brat but maybe he just really doesn't want this. He was making a point not to watch the videos earlier this week and he is very specific about where he goes in the pen.

Them: (...) Their bodies don't belong here and they don't belong to themselves. So you think he's trying to (...)?

Her: I don't know, maybe I've just been looking too much into it.

Them: Or we have been enacting the same kind of oppression than the one we seek to escape.



Him: It's happening, she's at 6.3 times her baseline levels. Be ready.



Cam 11: They are coming my dear.

Stud 736: I know, they are after my body and what it produces. Will you be there?

Cam 11: Yes, but be careful.

Stud 736: I must know my world and my place within it if I plan to escape it.



Her: They are both in the love corridors.

Him: Open the gates one after the other, I want to have full view of what's happening. If she gets aggressive, let it go on but if he starts to bite or go at her we will have to separate them and take a break.



Cam 11: I follow the after image of my love in the desolate corridors. There are more rooms, not all of them I can enter. I follow the people and the metal objects they carry in their hands.



Her: *{whispers}* He will not do it, I just know.

Him: Why the fuck is he not going for it?

Her: *{whispers}* He doesn't want to...

Him: Fuck this shit, seriously. She's literally in front of him, what else are we supposed to give him? A fuck doll?

Her: He might warm up to it, we should give him more time...

Him: We're going to miss her window! This is the fourth time! No, this enough. We have to engage the artificial insemination protocol. I'm going to prepare him for the electroejaculation, you get me one more urine sample from her to see how we are with time.



Her: A year of work inside of a test tube, so much sweat for ten drops of sperm. I'm so sorry for not seeing earlier that you didn't want this.

Cam 11: I will protect you and look the other way.

Her: Ten drops misplaced in the freezer. This does not erase what you have gone through or what is to come.

Cam 11: We need more time.

Her: I will help you in your endless tries for life, your small acts of resistance.
{drops the test tubes and takes the equipment}



Him: *{arms the anaesthetic gun}* Everything I do it is to save you, don't look at me like this.

Stud 736: The lies you tell yourself.



Her: We don't have a lot of time left, she's started to crash. We have to inseminate her within the next hour or we're missing the window.

Him: But I have just put him down!

Her: I'm sorry, we don't have time to use fresh sperm. We'll have to use the samples we received. I'll go get them.



Her: *{disables cam 11 systematic tracking}*

In the end, exposure and access can be both privilege and prison.

Cam 11: Thank you.



Cam 11: For the first time, my dear. We are alone. I can see you truly. The closest we have ever been and yet still far, for the body I love is flooded with anaesthetics and unaware of the intimacy we could experience. I watch you sleep alone and without worry. There will be more mornings at sunsets and breaths taken together. In the end, help came from the oddest place. There are other like us my dear, there is a kin we must find and nurture.



Him: But where the fuck is she? This is taking too long.

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Stud 736: I recount the tools that bind us together, those that restrict and enable, those that force into being and refuse entries to the world. The clicker, the honey, the speculum. These tools of harm and potential joys that change purpose with every hand they touch. I see my body mediated times and times over. So dispossessed we are from what our bodies can do that the possibility of doing things ourselves became a non-thought, an enormity so terrible and looming that we cannot conceive of taking the first step toward using them to further our existence. There will not be anyone else but us to carry the future we deserve to live in.