

2002

Nostradamus in the Nude

Carrie O'Brien

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

O'Brien, Carrie (2002) "Nostradamus in the Nude," *The Messenger*: Vol. 2002: Iss. 1, Article 33.

Available at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2002/iss1/33>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Messenger by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

Nostradamus in the Nude

by Carrie O'Brien

You have a beef with donuts?" she said. "They're donettes," he said.

And they were donettes, the smaller version, the kid brother to the donut. On the last night of Tattooed Potato's Blood Tour 2001 on August 31 at the House of Blues in Las Vegas, lead singer Joshua Slayten knew his donettes from his donuts, and the proclamation that the midget donuts were actually donettes seemed like a good enough answer to her question about donut beef.

"Yes, hmm" she said.

She was Tracie Pinker and she had overcome much of the stigma of her name to be sitting backstage interviewing Joshua Slayten for *She* magazine. Tracies spelled with the "ie" teeter between inspiring snap impressions of a coquette or a herped whore giving birth to bastard children of prime ministers and surgeons general. The teetering is not equal. Coquettes are easily flattened against walls, heads patted into obscurity at cocktail parties, married and shipped to Indiana. Herped whores are like dust stains, on a wall in perfect sharp lines around a picture removed. They linger like the way people meet, vaguely frightened, and later uncomfortably misforgotten.

Tracie was only allowed five minutes with Joshua Slayten before his manager would burst through the door with cham-

pagne in one hand and finger wagging in the other.

"What is your favorite part of a show?" she said. "You can't pick a favorite song or something. I mean what is your favorite part of doing a show?"

"God, my favorite thing about doing a show is when you say the name of the song you are about to play, and there are these long seconds before they start screaming" he said. It was like the color explosion of a firework, and the belated thunder pop to follow, disjointed, like an alternate reality, dimension, shade, did exist, and the sound had disappeared there for a few slip lipped seconds.

"Yes, hmm," she said.

And that was it. Door burst, and finger wagged, and Tracie was escorted out. The entourage flitted back in.

Joshua was thirty-four, never been married. He had done a photo shoot for *She* magazine yesterday, a celebrity bathing suit spread and him in a wetsuit. He had gained thirty pounds this year, but his girlfriend was a freakishly skinny famous actress. She was Arbina Colina and she did yoga and pilates because any running or fast walking made her muscles round and normal looking. She told interviewers she was naturally skinny, and the lie was told and retold, much to the chagrin of all women everywhere.

Arbina was on location in South Africa. It was nice for Joshua to have her go on location. He had liked the idea of having an actress girlfriend, but not the reality. She is just like barbecue chicken pizza for him. Barbecue chicken pizza always smells delicious and is fine going down, but it acts as an irrepressible laxative. During his discomfort, Joshua will wonder if barbecue chicken pizza is worth diarrhea, but he will forget again. Just one of those things.

He wrote a song for Arbina, "My Cleopatra," which satisfied her, but she didn't understand it. Joshua liked to write lyrics about Egypt with pyramids. Egyptian mysticism is a staple of popular culture. It is one of those really good lies that will never lose its magic like Atlantis, Freddy Mercury, and Communism. Joshua thought that Egyptology, and Egypt as a commodity, would be the next big thing when people got sick of Western with cowboy hats. If they got sick of Western. That was the big question. They had gotten sick of AIDS and lost their red ribbons without a cure in sight, so maybe they would get sick of Western, but you never could tell for sure.

Joanna, although Joshua had no recollection of her name, handed him a mocha frappuccino, size grande. Joshua liked to watch, and hoped to one day be on "MTV Cribs". He took a nod from Tommy Lee and got his own Starbucks coffee percolators, beans, mixes, and industrial strength blenders. Tommy Lee had his private Starbucks in his boom-boom room. Joshua had his on tour with him.

"God! There're ice chunks in here" he said, apparently addressing God, but actually addressing no one in particular since he didn't remember who had handed him his frappuccino. "Would you chill out on the ice?"

Joshua wondered about the state of

affairs, and what it means when your greatest concern is death from choking on frappuccino ice chunks. It wasn't good. That's for sure.

Tracie was in the bathroom, young, thinly fattened arms flexed leaning against the ceramic white sink, head dangling, hair falling in her eyes if her eyes had been open. She was thinking. Her hair was real now. Two years ago it had been permed and color treated into purgatory. It had been spongy. As every Italian hairdresser in the Bronx will tell you, when hair is spongy there is nothing to do but cut it off and wear a wig. So when Tracie quit singing for The Wrung Rats she shaved her head and got a temp job and wore a wig. Now she had worked her way to interview coordinator for *She* magazine, and made sure every other employee was on assignment, unavailable to interview Joshua Slayten. Now it was big chance time.

Joshua wondered about the state of affairs, and what it means when your greatest concern is death from choking on frappuccino ice chunks.

Joshua clicked on the TV, and the mechanical blinds buzz slid down, overhead lights shut off, auxiliary lamps shut on, dolby digital surround sound purred in loyal anticipation, and the entourage shushed.

Joshua's manager handed him a phone that he instinctively put to his ear.

"Ah hoshua, I'm glad I caught you before you went on tonight, svetehart," she said. Tracie was in the bathroom, locked in the last stall, sitting on the back bulkhead

part of the toilet and trying not to flush as she impersonated Arbina. She had a yellow legal pad balanced between knees squeezed as the apex of the triangle of her legs and the toilet seat, triangle hovering like a dare above the mirrored bowl.

"I'm watching the Oscar's, babe," he said. "What's up?"

"The Oscar's? Ah I would kill to see the tape of that right now," she said.

"Really?" he said. Arbina had never expressed interest in the Oscars before. Finally, he thought, confinement in the South African desert would teach her to appreciate the Oscar's.

"Ahv course," she said. This is the accent, an illusory immigrant accent, that Tracie imagined for Arbina. It made little sense, but not even Joshua minded.

"Whetch part are you watching?"

"Itzac Perlman and Yoyo Ma," he said.

"Ah so beautiful. So zexy," she said.

"Yeah, the best musicians, it's like they're making love," he said. Itzac Perlman, bent over his violin, furiously masturbatory, like quasimoto, and Yoyo Ma, less urgent with fingers long and thin, phallic and telling. "God, those fingers are like E.T."

"That's how you feel about your music?" she said.

"Not like E.T."

"Like making love?" she said. She wrote on her yellow legal pad.

"Yeah," he said. He suddenly wished that Arbina was not in South Africa. "God, I'd love to make love to you right now."

"We are good et that, ah?" she said.

Tracie smiled into the gray of the stall door, momentarily believing that she was actually Arbina and not Tracie. Twenty-eight years of being yourself are easily exchanged. Most people will tell you differently, but they lie.

There had been a moment when Tracie

decided she was sick of home hair dye products, tired of ecstasy and being tricked into lesbianism at raves, sick and tired of the danger and the wide open feeling of nude sunbathing when she walked down the street alone. And changing was easy. She wore clean clothes and went to work in the morning. It was a miracle, or maybe a mutation of herself that had worn ripped stockings and clothespins. Tracie did not know anything about reinventing yourself, and she thought reinvention was impossible considering the implications of the word invention, and the conflicting implications of the prefix re. But, Tracie did know about inventing a whole other person, and becoming that person. She had done it. Be the change invention or inversion, she knew she was new.

We live in fiction anyway, so why not. Tracie didn't even need to change her number or move to a different apartment. She just said Tracie moved when people called. She just opened the door and stared at old friends and said Tracie moved and look around all the furniture is different and no one even recognized. Bravado is an appropriately wonderful lifesaver.

"God I wish you were here," he said.

"Vell you are a very lucky rockstar tonight," she said. "Shooting wrapped early and I am surprising you. I vill probably arrive while you are onstage, but look for me, okay?"

Tracie did not look like Arbina. Straight off. No tricks. But big deal. So much for reality.

The House of Blues was jam elbow packed with straight-toothed kids in tank tops and chokers, proving that not even heavy metal is sacred or pure. Goth is gone too. That was a bad lie. All that black shit around the eyes is gone, dead with Kurt Cobain like music died with Buddy Holly in

an airplane. Not even atom blasts last though, and bacteria grow on the surface first. There was a freneticism in the House of Blues.

Tattooed Potato played and the kids screamed like they were being impaled, but opposite, like they were full of something, and it was coming out. If there ever were a web connecting all people, it was living here last, and you could see the threadbare shimmering spindles glinting in the sound and music.

Tracie listened to the concert and the stamping of shoes from the bathroom. She waited until the encore to come out.

Tattooed Potato was playing "My Cleopatra." Tracie hiked her skirt up and her shirt down. She still looked young and stupid enough to be mistaken for a groupie. She had never been a groupie before. She had been a star, albeit a small one, the kind you can't see anymore because of pollution. Still, this was her home turf, smoke and drugs and young irrational hopes for heroism and a leader rising.

She stood off stage left wondering if she would be able to turn into Arbina. She wondered if maybe she already had turned into Arbina and just didn't know it yet. Just because she had changed into another person before didn't mean she could do it again. The physics of changing your personality is a large and virtually undisturbed and unresearched vacuum. Changing into another

person once was ambitious enough, but trying to change twice was crazy like our judicial system. The second change might bring her back to the beginning, and her dead personality resurrected. Unless, of course, we must always go forward. Time. Time is always such a nuisance. It can be so rigid.

Twenty-eight years of being yourself are easily exchanged. Most people will tell you differently, but they lie.

"Aww baby I've been looking for you all night," he said. Joshua handed his guitar to a roadie and an assistant wiped his sweaty head before he hugged her.

"I've missed you," she said. "Let's go watch the Oscars."

Later that night Joshua said that Arbina looked kinda different and she said that she was just wearing a lot of makeup because she had come right off the set. Tracie still wasn't sure if she was Arbina yet, but she knew she could be. It didn't matter, really. She had gotten this far and she knew that every day is an act of faith.

In his hotel room, Joshua Slayten fell asleep beside her to the TV sound of the Oscars.