

Casey Baron

### Loving You Is Not Easy

“A wise man once said, ‘we all dead, fuck it,’” oh how mom would be proud of me saying that. I mean I wish she could see me now; sitting on a leather couch that hurts every time I shift my back, trying to write this tiresome, gutting representation of some facet of my life. The thing is, she always told me, “don’t make anyone make you do what you don’t want to do, you hear me? You know right from wrong.” Well this counts as following her wishes, right? I mean, I certainly wish I could take those words, and stitch them together like how mom used to stitch up my ripped shorts after soccer. Or maybe I could take the phrase and chop it up; and add it to the goat stew she used to make for lunch. But even sitting here in this never-ending hole of brain-matter traversing; sipping Bailey’s on the rocks like some old cat from a nightclub and watching Sunday Night Football mind you, I remember the first time I walked past my parents and told them one thing; when in fact I was about to do something completely different.

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On that night, I had a little bit of an uneasy stomach. I sat at the edge of my makeshift queen sized bed, in actuality it was simply the two full’s that my sister and I used in this shared space, but fused together. I had nothing on but my Fruit of the Loom’s, and I could not help but twirl my thumbs around each other. At that point all of the possible things to say rolled through my head. Ever been caught by a train going somewhere at eleven at night with no cargo? That’s what this was like. My sister walked into the entrance of the room.

“Hey, you good? You just sitting there like the devil take your soul, or something,” she said.

“Yeah, I’m alright, about to head in the shower,” I said. There was a pink buffer between her fingers as she filed her nails down to what she deemed a perfect representation. “Don’t you have a class to prepare for or something,” I said.

“Boy leave me in peace eh, and go get ready to see your friends,” she said.

The Dominican twang slips out a bit, well, most of the time. She continued to murmur things as she walked through kitchen onto the dining table where all the nail products were assembled. I propped off the bed and made my way into the bathroom and took a shower. With every scrub I remembered conversations he and I went through online about what he likes to do. Does he like to kiss? What about foreplay; did he mention being into that a lot? For the life of me, I struggled with exactly what turned Joseph on and if he would even like me. I wonder if my father had similar experiences in his heyday of fucking around. I mean, he was supposed to be in a relationship with my mom, but according to legend he usually found himself in bed with some woman or another. “Is your side-piece’s turn-ons something that all partners list in their head?” At what point did it become so critical for us to indulge in fucking for the sake of it, or has that always been the case? Is everything just fucking?

I was still tripping about how amazing I thought *A Bug’s Life* was. I walked around the house that day reciting lines from the movie; it was almost as if my black skin transformed into green and purple feathers and my lips became a beak. My mother called me into the living room because she was talking to my dad. Tears strolled down her eyes as she handed it to me. My father was on the phone now. I could feel heat coming from the phone. Not like the energy type. But instead, it felt like a boiling pot of water was hanging above my head. And then slowly, it began to spill over onto my skull.

“Well what the fuck you expect me to do, Katherine? The fucking woman lying and go and things out of my control. I do see her in years I tell you,” he said.

She sat next to me the entire time I was on the phone.

“Dad,” I said. “It’s me.”

He mumbled and lost his breath until he began asking where my mother was. But I will never forget that. The rage in his voice that afternoon. But right after I got off the phone I handed it back to my mom. She never moved. I never saw her cry because of something my father said again.

I remember struggling to tie the laces of my Sebago’s because my hands couldn’t hold anything. I loaded my shorts with my wallet, phone, and put on some cologne as well. The lights in my room were off now. I began walking to the front door and I passed my mom mixing together some beets and onions in a sauté pan.

“But, where you going at that time of night,” she said. It was only nine.

My chest pumped up a little bit, but not out of pride. I was fighting off the tightening sensation, and as she steered me down with those eyes that have grilled me time and time again, I attempted to speak.

“I’m going out with...”

“With who,” she said.

“With Juanky and Vicky,” I said. My hands started to feel a little clammy, so I put them in my pockets. I balled them up into a fist. She turned and around, picked up the spatula, and returned to stirring the beets. She said ok and told me to be safe outside. I wanted to punch the wall repeatedly.

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Thoughts of my father's actions flooded my mind and sex and drugs and disappointment, and missed birthdays, and my sad mother, and everything felt just a little bit, overwhelming. I wanted to be nothing like my dad. I wanted to be better than him, to usurp him as a person. But in that moment I did the same thing he did on the phone with my mother years ago. I lied to someone to fulfill my desires, because I am terrified to tell my parents that I'm in love with a person outside of what could be deemed the social norm. I'm still here sipping my Bailey's, hoping I did this route. Hoping I did that right.