



Numbers of Melancholia

MOHUA MOULI

I woke up the minute the alarm went off. It was 5:55 AM.

I have always been the disciplined kind. Unlike his number two, who I've heard, had always been more outgoing and extroverted. Perhaps my sense of punctuality came from having a father in the Navy. But I have seen lazy kids being born in such families.

I woke up feeling irritable and itchy. I was about to scratch my neck when I remembered I had slept with my jewellery on. Clearly not the best idea I've ever had, and most certainly not the first stupid idea my husband had. I have realised how a lot of things make sense during the night that make absolutely no sense whatsoever once you wake up from your romance induced slumber. But regardless of that we tend to keep going over the same routine of romanticising things that ought not to be romanticised. I think it's the serenity of the night that encourages wishful thinking. But over the years I have come to despise it. What good has wishful thinking done for us?

I lazily got out of the bed and glared at the beautiful face sleeping next to me; I wonder if he could tell. I wonder if he could tell even with his eyes open, all the things I think of every time I see him.

I was never the type of person to think

of a relationship being based on just ephemeral emotions that add no value to your way of life. So I had always been selective about even considering falling for anyone. Number one happened so late into youth, that by that time many of my peers had been through three or four break-ups. I was content with one. He was calm, good-natured and ambitious. He was a lot like me in many ways. I found a friend in him that I could rely on. I never really had any complaints. But it still ended. It didn't end because I began to find reasons to feel unsatisfied, but because I met number two. Number two shook my hand when a colleague introduced us. I looked at him and something about his demeanour struck me, as a revelation. I don't know if he had noticed but my hand shook a little as it touched his. I felt something otherworldly that I couldn't describe in words then, nor can I do a great job at it today. I went home knowing I needed to be free, free to admire this person, even if it is from afar. He was with his own number two at the time.

Today is a Sunday, so I would be getting more time to myself. I needed a morning like this after the "fabulous" party we had the other night. The annoying lady number four from last night had brought along some pie. I decided to have some of it for breakfast.

She does make good pie. I wish she would make good conversation too. I dislike all these women; with their diamond rings and the airbrushed make-up; I always feel plain around them. I feel as though I expose myself to them more than I ought to, leaving ample space for crude criticism of how I dress, the necklace I wore that doesn't go with the dress or the lack of a perfume that should have been so strong that it smelt like a tropical air freshener. Number six is nicer, or less annoying; at least she advises me on what to do to look more appealing. But they never get it; I have no reason to look any better than I already do.

I wish it was because of what you must be thinking. It must be because the love of my life, the soul to my body and the air to my lungs is so taken by my existence, he refuses to ponder over externalities or condiments that would make me even more loveable than I already am. But that's a sad joke. I thought so too, I did. I believed in the bond between my number two and me, so much so, that I married him. I believed in the reality of it with every fabric of my being. This belief opened up layers in me that even I never dared explore. What a lovely thing to say. What a lovely privilege to give away to someone. Only as the time went by, I

began to realise what kind of an explorer he was. He was lost. He wasn't heading to a direction he marked in his maps but he was going somewhere he didn't quite care to reach. Such explorers are the runaways who have been sailing away from truths too painful to acknowledge.

I was his number three. Lucky number three they say. He loves me. He loves me because he found his escape in his three. I was a replacement for the one and the two, a memorandum of them both. The day I realised it, I could no longer look at him and feel the burst of ecstasy I had always felt. I grew colder and he noticed. He always noticed. He never said anything because perhaps he felt guilty, perhaps he didn't care. I was sitting on the table reading the paper when two wrapped his arms around my back and kissed me good morning. It didn't even feel real, nothing felt real. All I feel is the skin over the skin, hovering and always only almost touching. He expected more. I shrugged his hands off and got up to get his morning tea.

As I turned around to leave I caught a glimpse of his melancholy stricken gaze. I can't feel him, but something still hurts.

Mohua Mouli loves cats and all things art. She also thinks she is good at some types of art. To confront her about these claims, mail her at mohua210@gmail.com