

PEOPLE ARE PLANETS THEN BECOME HEARSAY

The bagel she ordered that morning was sealed with this sticker that was like, “You look good today!” She looked at it and thought, “You’re a bagel, but thanks.” Later, she ran into that friend who greets people with observations and that friend was like, “You look nice today.” And with that, she knew that she, like, really did.

Her friend appeared well-rested and her clothes fit in such a way that was like, “I work soon,” but also, “I haven’t eaten yet,” so she remembered that bagel and was like, “Do you want this bagel?” Her friend thought about it for a second and was like, “You’re a good friend,” before fluttering towards her day shift at a job that she seemed to like a little too much.

Then the crosswalk was like, “It’s time to walk,” so she went across the street where the shop’s windows took up the entire block. The plastic headless people inside of them were difficult to relate to, which she didn’t mind, but then she was like, “The windows have really gone downhill lately,” and the plastic people inside were like, “It’s not our fault he went back to school.” When The Merchandiser quit he was like, “Even if it doesn’t work out, I’ll tell everyone it’s going well,” and every time everyone was like, “We believe you.” So he didn’t need to

say any more, and they all went back to doing whatever they were doing before because they actually didn't ask.

Then her phone was like, "Time to answer," and so she did, as she listened to a voice on the other side hatch a plan to surrender its task to someone else. Then her umbrella was like, "Open," and they both, like, went to help that voice disentangle its headphones at her place, where hello came out as, "Ok, give it here."

By the time she arrived, that voice had lost all feeling in his hands from his earlier efforts at disentanglement. So while she was, like, doing that, he started an exodus of receipts. She was always somewhat confused about how this man who twisted his cables kept his wallet thin and seemed so mindful of what he put in and took out. His wallet was like, "Ahhhh . . .," breathing a sigh of relief for carrying out a job well done before sliding back into his pocket. He moved to the couch and his feet were like, up, and his face was like, resting, his face was like, almost drooping, like, so, so relaxed, that his face would have offended the really, really tired.

Then he was like, "You don't have to have the answers for everything," and then she was like, "Several plants have died since you started coming over," and he was like, "We have the most nuanced conversations," and they were, like, already bored of antagonizing each other, so he started to think about some paintings he saw earlier that week.

They were about labour and process and even from certain angles, a bit fuzzy, and he was like, "Yeah, I'm into them." But he was using his critical faculties to, like, generalize, and seemed content to, which bugged her, so her eyes fell on the shiny paper flyer advertising furniture she can't afford, although she looks at it every time.

She lingered on a chair that was beautiful but rumoured to be quite uncomfortable until a certain patch of dry, irritated skin under her poly-cotton blouse became, like, irritated, and her scratching was, like, audible, which bugged him. Then he was, like, looking at her looking at the flyer wondering, "Why doesn't she smile anymore?" And then he felt love that just didn't have anywhere to go.

Scratching and furniture turned into scratching and thinking about stuff that often made her want to just, like, boil over with opinions, but instead, she went from

furniture to opinions to not scratching and laundry so she started gathering up the dirty ones. Couch guy got up to put the kettle on because he had noticed that she was always boiling water and sometimes, like, didn't even do anything with it.

Then she was in the hall and her thumb was like, pressing, just like pressing the button over and over again, and the elevator was like, "Just, like, wait..." and when she was finally there, the laundry room was like, "Sorry, but you have to wait here too" and then she was like, "I don't even have any loonies." Then the water upstairs came to a boil while she was like, "Why don't I smile anymore?" and she was already in the car driving to the bank within walking distance.

When she got to the bank, the bank teller was like, "Hey, it's you!" and she was like, "Hey," and asked for a roll of quarters and a roll of loonies, and the teller was like, "I've seen this before," and she was like, "Originality is hard," and then he was like, "I know, I'm a bank teller."

Then her eyes rested on his un-ironic jacquard tie that was like, "I am working hard for respect" because it was shiny, like his hair, like her car, and the teller saw her mind drifting from tie to hair to car and was like, "I'm a bank teller," and she was like, "You've always been a bank teller, haven't you," and he was like, "Yeah," and she was like, "Will you always be a bank teller?" and he was like, "Let me know how I did today," and she was like, "That's an important question, but we don't really know each other," and then she was getting into her car again before she realized what he'd meant.

In the car, she put the coins on the dash and started driving, the loonies and quarters rolling back and forth. She watched their revolutions as she turned the corner until the guy stepping off the crosswalk was like, "I don't want to die" and she decided that she was done with watching certain things, but not others.

Then she was like, "You weren't always a loonie were you," and the loonie was like, "Nah, I used to be a twenty," and she was like, "All cash once had a past life as a larger or smaller denomination." But one of the quarters was like, "Not me, I've always been a quarter," and she said, "I believe you."

When she got back with the quarters and the loonies, he was like, "I have never asked for anything more than the same fraction of your attention that you give to draping a napkin over your lap," and she was like, "Here," and his headphones were like, "Fine," and they both saw how untangled his possessions could be, and he was like, "I just felt like a third wheel," and she was like, "Do you think my chairs are uncomfortable?" and he was like, "Laundry?" and she was like, "All the cool shit in the world wouldn't keep you close to me, would it?" and he was like, "I boiled some water," and then she touched the kettle, and the kettle was still warm to the touch. And she was like, "You were never a bank teller, were you?" and he was like "No," and she was like, "I believe you."