

Select Letters

Christopher Cappel Santoro

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

VI.

VII.

Dear G----,

If you're presently listening to my voice that means the courier I sent overseas with this piece of paper has finally arrived in the Arabian Peninsula: at long last...

G----, you are a powerful performer. **Ash** was a performance sublime in its simplicity. There's probably no simpler formula for soothing the nerves of a wordsmith than a silhouette, seated with perfect posture, her thin limbs motionless, fully stripped, in a powdery beam of light, submitting to the penance of ash: no, none that I know of...

I could confine myself to commenting on the simple effect-of-light or the simple pleasure of the womanly form but I consider your personal nudity a call to exercise my pen in a more rigorous strain of composing; another time, when the Caribbean wind's less fragrant with wild perfume and the horizon, there, is less electric with summer lightning, I'll comment on the importance of having a frivolous side to one's portfolio, but tonight I feel grand-eloquent...

G----, you once said: *the studio's my savoir*; to me, that meant the soul's power to work off the weight-of-unhappiness, the endless hours of idleness, the imperfection of everyday life and commonplace things; I feel the same way; perhaps that makes us brother n' sister in the church of work, thought and art...

So, G----, here is my conclusion:

Consider that offer of doing a residency in NYC. NYC's the best place to widen the breadth of such an expressive body-of-work. Yes, here we welcome diverse voices; here we reward innovators in the plastic and performance arts; here someone like yourself, possessing such an elegant blend of Arabic manners and English education, is sure to succeed...

Plus, for me, it would be a great joy to have in the same country a performer who so complements the scenarist, essayist, pure spirit that I am...

II.

To my comrade in cesarian revolt, to my sweet c-section,

Best birthday wishes! Against our wills were we brought into the world!
To the studio! To the study!

Oh sister-in-arms, sister-in-the-cause, on birthdays, instead of celebrating, cesarian babies should be plotting revenge on the cruel people who imposed so much suffering upon us!

For the good of future generations, we c-sections must come together to ensure merciless man multiplies no more; yes, we must come together in chaste celibacy!

Sadly, sweet sister, image of my painful world-weariness, I can't be there with you tonight; but, in my absence, I hope the good people of the Fellowship are throwing a super-nice surprise party for their resident in honor...

Hopelessly,

Comandante Christopher Cappel Santoro

P.S.

Here's a little something that caused my haggard heart to skip a beat
[**a palm-tree pendant**]...

From a model employee combing the streets of MIMO Miami,

Chris

III.

Enclosed is a copy of ***Spring in Sicily***, a poetic present to Ms. G---
D-...

Spring in Sicily was my maiden performance, a nine-month labor of love, a childhood promise to myself, long-in-coming-to-fruitition, of leading a life of the spirit...

Essays like the following should be used for kindling fires; but if it survives it is only because it serves as a token of my longtime search for a subject-matter which would bring together Men-of-Letters, Mediterranean travel and Faith...

Faith because I believe like TE Lawrence's formula for separating Oriental and Occidental peoples: doubt is a weakness, not a strength; and Faith because like Ronaldo entering the arena or McGregor the ring, I often fear lest, without first making supplication, the silent strenuous exertion of High Culture could one day kill and damn me...

G---, I would be honored if you opened it; because a book's the only way I know to communicate the fullness of our inner-life to sister souls; yes, thanks to the written word it's possible for friends [*permit me*] separated by a terrible distance to speak *heart-to-heart*. So, G---, please use these fifteen or so pages as a reminder that someone, somewhere faraway, is quite preoccupied with pleasing you; [*otherwise, in my opinion, they are nothing more than a failure of very colossal proportions...*]

But G---, I must confess something: till now, I have veiled with apostrophes of sister, comrade and companion, the simple fact that I adore you...

Why so? Because a boy of the unageing race of Cherub is obliged to use the pretense-of-friendship in the presence of such a luscious, mature woman. But why? Because he worries that such a woman is liable to be branded with the stigma of cradle-robber on his arm; no, G---, I

couldn't bear to see you mocked and brow-beaten by your peers because of my rose-blooming cheeks...

But I thought, behind the adornments and attainments of Art, I could hope that, like **Venus and Adonis**, a mature luscious woman, seeing her first form mellow, her curves increase, could perhaps be smitten with a lil' cherub such as myself, smooth-skinned, curly-headed, while he lounges in a bower, a model of cold poetical indifference, scorning womanhood with his vanity, until she's made a willing handmaid to his least caprice [*that is, until him and his arrogance are torn-to-pieces by a brute beast*]...

Yes, that's my only motive in sending you such a long-winded essay; I hoped that you would be impressed by its virtuosity n' forethought, my bright Arabic beauty...

So, with that said, and without further ado, please accept my humble gift...

IV.

A variation on the venerable genre of the Thank-You Note

On the part of my own pathetic self-publishing house, please accept my first-ever play, ***This Side of Paradise***, and a line of thanks in lieu of a formal signature...

Like a performer who exposes him or herself to the view of unfeeling, indifferent audiences, inviting on themselves scorn, derision and oftentimes persecution [*hélas the most indisputable mark of originality!*] the following is my second poetical production to date; coming on the heels of ***Spring in Sicily*** and setting the scene for a still-unfinished sequel, tentatively entitled, ***After the Flood..***

G---, it's coming time for me to shed the comfortable shadows of authorship and commence shooting on location! So, coming soon, lookout for one of my childish nom-de-plumes in the marquee lights of Dubai's theaters!

V.

To G----, who's so good as to encourage authors to spill the contents of their heart...

G----, come away, for a weekend, or forever, to the sunny paradise of MIA! Yes, leave the pressures of NYC where the pace-of-life threatens to erase summer's color and wither the bloom-of-health; there, the daily fare of work, stress and dissipation threatens to b-b-blast my dear Desert Lily with the rude winds of grief; instead, spend the weekend lying in the sun of MIA, restoring your skin n' hair and simply looking beautiful of a troubadour's admiring eyes; here, your troubadour has everything ready for the cultivation of health and happiness...

G----, accept my *invitation au voyage*; it's a venerable genre that's been immortalized by poets as well-known as Marlow and Baudelaire who would pretend for the time of their chanson to be ideal potential husbands before a lady of your temper, when, in reality, they were completely incapable of contentment and suffered from the chronic restlessness of all genius; nonetheless, accept my invitation and, in turn, I swear to use the lineaments of your person to create a new vision of the Beloved, the Beatrice, the Leading-Lady in a pièce still-to-be written; yes, accept my invitation and you'll be the original of my upcoming Boriqua, my sweet Sharifa!

Despite my best intentions, I confess that a weekend with me is bound to be a lot of long days and longer nights of high lyrical drama; but only a fellow artist, of high bohemian principles, such as yourself, would be capable of supporting this kind of life-style; that's why, despite my desperate quest for Truth and Art, maddening the quiet of morning, I'm inviting you to leave the confines of NYC for the sea, sand, sun of Miami!

G----, only a beauty strayed from the noble kingdom of Saud bears the lineaments, the bodacious body, the lively sense of repartee, the knowledge of stars, to be the counterpart of this poet; so spend a

weekend, or forever, by my sorrowful, struggling side; in the words of Mr. Marlow, *come away and be my wife...*

And I'll promise you a memorable collection of letters like *Swift's Stella* or *Sterne's Eliza*; yes, those immortal epistles where a fertile Pen, once having stored up a treasure of experience, vicarious and personal, burdens n' burdens its Memory until it spills the juice of genius upon a virgin page...

VI.

Presenting a revised version of ***This Side of Paradise***, rewritten with the express purpose of enrapturing the most precious of audiences, my chamber inmate and closest confidant, Ms. G---- D-. [*Hélas it was necessary to rewrite some of the less felicitous passages if it was to be worthy of brilliant Arabic beauties...*]

Like one of Botticelli's seraphic poets, indeed I have exhausted my reserve-of-vision to present a specimen of my genius in front of the only important audience: that heavenly handmaid raised high upon a pedestal where he supplicates, tear-stained and humiliated, her indulgence...

Like the fairest of handmaids, be pleased to pass sentence on these sheets of my inmost chamber-music; sheets comprised of many melodious notes that I have enunciated through the medium of common-speech in the hopes of being granted a personal hearing in her courts and welcomed into the secret folds of her favor...

In a private auditory overlooking a vista of curving river like the apartment where we lived for three happy months, Chelsea, NYC, 2017 please listen for the celestial music of these scenes; lend an ear innocent enough to perceive the importance of comedic relief yet sophisticated enough to experience some pleasure from the heavier sentiments of High Literature; and perhaps do so with a thought to soon passing sentence on my personal fitness to be the one that whispers sweet spirit into your ear of your imagination's matrix for a lifetime. Eke! Yes, I said it!

Unlike the ***Don Juan*** of Molière who used the vile lubric of speech to propose to every Elvira, these seventy-or-so pages should rather serve as an earnest of my personal intention to proffer the first-fruits of my spirit to a single meaningful companion, to you, my beautiful bold Bedouin...

Dearest, please consider these heart-rending pages a pledge of my commitment to the bond of matrimony; yes, on my all-important honor, please consider these solemn statements the forerunner of a surprise proposal...

G----, please use these feather-light papers as a scruple of my personal merit in the scale of other men's strength and riches when choosing a special someone for the role of spouse; weigh and see if my concentration-of-spirit is any measure of future greatness or if I'm simply prolix Petruchio; or perhaps use them as a placeholder until I have further proof of my harvest...

Then, come to a decision if it would be possible to shed the childish title of Missus for the grander name of Madame; yes, a madame married to the trembling seraphim whose long-stemmed writing-instrument is tipped by the purest of lilies and who is presenting on bended knee the ring of his creativity!

VII.

The Presentation of Gifts

Here's a little **clutch** especially suited to Miss G---- D-, who will sooner or later be inscribed, by the indelible ink of my soul's blood, beside Petrarch's Laura and Dante's Beatrice in the immortal litany of sympathetic readers...

+

Here's a pair of **Wayfarers** to shield the profound observer behind her big brown eyes; my Miss G---- D-, the champion of men with courage sufficient to preserve Classicism, in fashion as in literature, when a multitude of ironists unequal to the isolation of Greatness seek to reduce all the higher pursuits to a subject of trite laughter...

[Ironists! Ironize the shield of Burton, Thomas and every eminent name that once threaded the city-streets in a pair of Wayfarers; but be prepared to incur the correction of a woman like G---- D-, hereby protected from your incessant little darts when she comes to the defense of all Purists!]

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Here's a little light reading for the plane-ride to MIA [***an issue of Paris Elle***] because oftentimes the glamorous images of celebrities go farther to creating artists than the painful real-life images of other artists alone and at work...

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Presenting Ms. G---- D-, Bedouin born to be showered with wreathes of pure poetical thought, a **pearl** for bearing in the shell of a beautiful body, the rarer pearl of goodness and grace...

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Dearest DJ D-, in an industry where even retirement and divorce are theater, please wear these great golden **headphones** [*outfit permitting*] to shut out the constant overtures of other suitors until the sweet-weeks of Miami-sun or New York-streets when we'll be reunited again; yes, because even after Bad-Biche Riri and her golden-lipped Lyrist split paths in the video to ***Loyalty***, they get together again and break into playful, fun-loving laughter in the outtakes: happily ever after...