

A String Theory

It would be easier to describe string theory, the little I know of this doubtful turf, than to tell you about the beginning, and the end for that matter, of the string. I barely noticed it one cloudy October weekend afternoon, dangling unbound in the air a bit closer to the ceiling than the floor. Roughly a foot long, it looked bluish and felt British between my fingers. Pubic hair has a peculiar texture, a strange consistency, so it seems, compared to other types of hair and particularly the locks that cover our heads. I have known British pubes, rough and downy at the same time like a dying poet, unlike the ordinariness of the French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish, and the pubes of other nationalities in all probability. I pulled on it the way an ill-fated woman first pulls on a penis to assess its solidity before milking it for that nauseating nectar. What can be described as a space in space suddenly opened up and pulled me in much the same way that a mindful ant is sucked in by a mindless ant eater. I found myself in a dark coldish cave that meandered to a cool darkish cavern.

“Another luckless soul pulled on a string,” a voice said.

“We’re lucky there isn’t such a soul born every minute,” a different voice said.

“There aren’t enough strings to go around for all the souls,” the first voice said.

“We’re lucky there aren’t more strings for all the souls,” the second voice said.

“Luck has nothing to do with it.”

“Says who?”

“You’re right. Luck can be all there’s to it.”

“I hope not.”

“What’s your name?” the first voice asked.

“Louise Sarfati,” I replied.

“I’m Julie One and he’s Larry Two. The numbers stand for the order in which we got here. You’ll be Louise Seven.”

“How long have you been here and where are we?” I asked as soon as I was able to see their faces.

“I’ve been here for over 12 years, Larry Two for over 10, and Ari Six has recently cursed and celebrated his second year. We don’t know much about where we are.”

“Who wouldn’t pull the string and especially one that hung in midair?” I said.

“Only one who had pulled it before. But no one had gone back to pull it again,” Julie One said.

“What do we know about our whereabouts?”

“There’s the narrow cave that led you to this large cave, and a narrow cave leading

outside.”

“And what an outside,” Larry Two said. “It’ll blow your mind away.”

“Can I gather that it’s alien?”

“Yes you can. No one will try to eat you or use you as an incubator, but the weather is wild.”

“It must be nice out if the others are not here.”

“Audrey Three, Peter Four, Angela Five and Ari Six are enjoying the weather alright. You’ll probably have to wait for two long years before you get a mate of your own.”

“I like women.”

“The women will love you, and the guys will respect you, or is it the other way around, but you’ll have to cope with the rest,” Julie One said.

“I see that I’m strung.”

“In and out,” Larry Two said.

“Up and down.”

“You’ll be alright,” Julie One said. “A string just strung you six new friends.”

“And you can never have enough friends.”

“Or dresses,” Julie One said.

“Or strings,” I said.

“None here if that’s what you’re alluding to,” Larry Two said.

“I gathered as much given that you’re still here after so many years. But if a string only appears for a brief moment, one has to be there to see it.”

“We’ve looked everywhere possible for as long as possible, but given that its appearance is brief, it’s surely easy to miss,” Larry Two said.

“Perhaps we’ll be luckier with a seventh pair of eyes,” Julie One said.

“Let’s show you the outside.”

The sky revealed two moons, but I was told that two more made their appearance at night. No wonder that the weather was wild with a quartet of satellites pulling the strings. The entire landscape, earth, flora and firmament, looked turquoise; the three separated by tinges of thistle.

“It’ll be difficult to discern a string if it’s as turquoise as the surroundings,” I said.

“That’s why another pair of eyes can be handy,” Larry Two said.

“The others are gathering food. They should be back soon enough,” Julie One said.

“We can show you some of the safe sights,” Larry Two said jokingly.

“Anything turquoise must be safe,” I said.

“Most of the fruit is bitterly safe,” Julie One said.

“And the water stings your skin in a safe way,” Larry Two added.

“How’s the meat?”

“Lacking I’m afraid. Completely so! There is no meat to be had,” Julie One said.

“So you’ve been surviving all these years on plant life and water?”

“Except of course for the occasional tidbit of the human kind,” Larry Two said smiling.

“That doesn’t count,” I said. “Does it?”

“It counts a lot,” Julie One said laughing.

“Have you discovered any signs, remains or artifacts of a civilization?”

“No!” Larry Two replied.

“Except for the DVD,” Julie One said.

“Which comes from our civilization being a regular DVD of a movie called The Hours,” Larry Two said.

“The Hours?” I asked astonished.

“Yes! The Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore and Nicole Kidman film,” Julie One replied.

“Very interesting,” I said. “Where did you find it?”

“I found it in the narrow cave upon my arrival. Having been produced in 2002 according to the box, I had reasoned that it had arrived from the future. Someone must have lost it when she or he had pulled the string, luckily staying behind while the DVD went through. I also surmised that someone could be pulled here from any time, past or future, assuming that I represent the present,” Julie One said.

“Do you, represent the present, I mean?”

“It seems so given that Larry Two, Audrey Three, Peter Four, Angela Five, and Ari Six, have all been pulled here after my time, and each after their predecessor’s time. As a result, none, except for Angela Five and Ari Six, could have seen the film, and they hadn’t seen it but had heard of it. My slight suspicion that it might have been sent here on purpose as an apropos storyline or whatever else could not be put to the test.”

“I have seen it more than once. It’s my favorite movie ever. Virginia Woolf’s novel, Mrs. Dalloway, ties the lives of three women, including Virginia Woolf, from three different times, one can say with a symbolic string. The viewer is taken beautifully from life to life to life repeatedly until one of the lives, the original, ends and the string is severed.”

“It’s finally settled,” Larry Two said.

“Is it?” Julie One asked.

More sundry than any scenery was the sky, stirring specks of sapphire and spots of cerulean in a soup of turquoise, surveying a setting of vegetation and soil that could not hold a candle to it even if they seemed more significant for the survival of life. It is always greener on the other side.

I wallowed in this new reality for many seconds, the equivalent of a few minutes if strung together, before realizing that Julie One and Larry Two were sizing me up. They were perhaps estimating how much meat they could get out of me, I mused to myself.

“Where are the others?” I asked.

“Hunting for fruit,” Larry Two replied.

“Hunting?” I asked.

“They are hard to distinguish having the same fucking color as everything else,” Larry Two replied.

“How’s the water?”

“The same fucking color.”

“It’s a peculiar place. Isn’t it also strange in a not-by-chance sort of way that we’ve been pulled here methodically in terms of gender? Female, male, female, male, female, male, female,” I asked.

“Seven, our total number, is too low not to be in the domain of chance. At the rate of one new soul every two years or so, we’ll have a better idea in 46 years or so. I mean those that come after us will,” Larry Two said.

“The trend is still suspect,” I said.

“While it looks that way, looks can be deceiving, and they often are,” Larry Two said.

I had just arrived and I already felt trapped. After years, many years in most cases, they must have felt imprisoned. What else could be expected from a turquoise actuality? Stones to spare?

“Did you find any gems?”

“By the truckload! Turquoise heaven! We use the big ones to hit fruit that we can spot at treetops,” Larry Two said.

“It’s mostly a game because the fruit, or the tree, rarely lets go,” Julie One said.

“Did you figure out why there aren’t any animals?”

“Possibly. There is no competition for food if everything has the same color,” Larry Two said.

“Maybe they are simply hard to see.”

“We would have seen them after so many years, but it remains a possibility,” Julie One said.

“You mentioned that the fruit was bitter and the water stinging. Perhaps they are microscopic and live in the fruit and water.”

“An interesting idea,” Larry Two said.

“So we may be getting our animal protein after all,” Julie One said.

“A far cry from meat; more like yogurt.”

“I always hated yogurt,” Larry Two said.

“Most men do,” Julie One said.

“Am I ever going to meet the others?”

“They may be closer than you think. After so many years here, we sometimes look turquoise as well, especially after drinking the water,” Larry Two said without blinking.

“He’s kidding of course,” Julie One said.

“Am I?” Larry Two said quite seriously and then laughed.

He was not joking. Less than an hour in it and even I felt turquoise in this thistly reality. Why turquoise and all its tints? Why not? Could it stand for something? Everything begs a question, everything is a question, above all, in this blue heaven. Where are the others?

“I think I can see the others.”

“Where?” Larry Two asked.

“It’s just a turquoise trick.”

“Trying to be funny, are you?” Julie One said.

“I couldn’t resist.”

“Seven is a good number,” Larry Two said.

“Don’t you mean that Louise looks good?” Julie One asked.

“That too. Are you jealous?”

“Should I be?”

“Come on, I only have eyes for you, and glances are allowed.”

“They are. They are.”

“And I prefer women,” I said.

“Should I be jealous?” Larry Two asked looking at Julie One.

“I only have eyes for you too, and glances are allowed.”

“They are. They are,” Larry Two said laughing.

For some obscure reason, a Sinatra song began to play in my mind, and I found myself adapting the words to the situation at hand.

Fly me to a place,
Let me swing among those moons.
Let me see what spring is like
On Indigo and Blue.
In other words, hold my breath.
In other words, baby, touch me.

“Are you dancing?” Larry Two asked.

“I may be.”

“Without music?”

“I’m using my inner orchestra.”

“I can barely fit a band.”

“It depends on the music.”

“You may be right.”

“Is it turquoise?” Julie One asked.

“The music or the orchestra?”

“Both.”

“They seem to be blue.”

“Louise Seven.”

“Julie One.”

“Louise Seven.”

“Larry Two.”

Where were Three, Four, Five and Six?

“Where’s the rest of the crew?”

“They must be blue,” Two said.

“Let’s look for them,” One said.

How do I label thee? Let me list the ways: azure horizon, beryl backdrop, blue land, cerulean stream, cobalt brushwood, indigo impression, navy vista, sapphire sky, teal east, turquoise twilight.

“A new face,” Three said with a smile.

“Another girl,” Four said with a bigger smile.

“Lucky Seven,” Five said clapping her hands.

“Not so lucky,” Six said crushingly.

“Another string,” I said.