

BID#: 25-06-91 DOB: 4/26/70

Dear Melanija,

I am concerned that I have not met with you since our last appointment on July 7th, 2017. It is important for your continued treatment that you schedule a follow up time with me within the next month. Please contact our front desk at (212) 369-9295 to schedule an appointment as soon as possible, or contact me if there is a problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milton Erickson', written in a cursive style.

Milton Erickson, M.D.
Signed Electronically: 1/20/18 at 3:59 pm

BID#: 25-06-91 DOB: 4/26/70

Dear Melanija,

I am reaching out to express my growing concern at your lack of response. I have left you four voicemails and multiple letters detailing the necessity of your cooperation with our latest treatment plan. Sean has expressed great worry about your condition on your husband's behalf. Given this prolonged silence, I can only assume you are continuing to barricade yourself inside the Gold Suite. Such an outcome will prove deeply inconvenient to your recovery process. You have my contact information; it is paramount that you get in touch with me immediately. Every single staff member here at Mount Sinai cares deeply about your successful convalescence.

I am quite certain you are aware how much negative publicity your institutionalization might attract.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milton Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Milton" being more prominent and the last name "Erickson" written in a more compact, flowing style.

Milton Erickson, M.D.
Signed Electronically: 8/12/47 at 2:32 pm

BID#: 25-06-91 DOB: 4/26/70

Dear Melanija,

Today I received 1460 individually wrapped eggshells in a crate delivered to my office door.

Your note is both entirely illegible and foreign, which leaves me, again, with rather limited options. While it's heartening to see some hard evidence of your vitality, I would have appreciated a phone call far more. As we have previously discussed, your health remains our primary concern.

Please contact me ASAP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milton Erickson". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and is positioned in the lower-left area of the page.

Milton Erickson, M.D.
Signed Electronically: 12/09/08 at 4:06 pm

BID#: 25-06-91 DOB: 4/26/70

Dear Melanija,

This is an official reminder that I will be making a house call to you on May 4th, two weeks from my current time of writing. Sean informed me that you have stopped taking all of your prescriptions apart from the Lorazepam, a behavior I plan to address head-on in our next session. Withdrawal might very well be contributing to the manic episodes. Per your request, (and I use that term loosely), I won't agree to refer to you as "Morana" during the course of our meetings, and it bears emphasizing that your identity remains fixed regardless of my complicity in these delusions, despite your grandiose attempts at slippages to the contrary. Make it a point to brief the police perimeter and Secret Service before my arrival; last month's disaster needn't repeat itself. I expect your hypnosis waiver on my desk by Friday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milton Erickson", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Milton Erickson, M.D.

Signed Electronically: 2/18/80 at 9:16 am

When did the hallucinations start, do you remember?

Hallucinations?

Is that what you are? Thank Goodness.

It's wild to me that I can't control other people's bodies from my couch. Isn't that wild? I'm not talking about hard-ons or giggles, either. Syncopation's easy for women like me. And mind control consists of...what...forgiveness? Activated glass? Yes. And I can do that. Anyone with an AMEX can do that. AMEX cards write librettos all the time. I mean harnessing the corners of telekinesis fit to revise the present at it's happening, you see.

...Who is speaking now?

Oh, shut up.

I mean multi-gaming sight, like scaling the sun without elbows, like not melting tit-to-tit with a star! That's where hangovers factor, right? Are you even listening to me? These pills make communication increasingly stupid.

Is your drinking problematic?

Problematic? It's fiction, Milton. You should know - you're the one so concerned with how your light is spent.

Drinking fiction could be defined as the retroactive naming of a hole, I suppose. Burrowing into wetness, like a human fish.

Wetness is free where I'm from.

...What I'm hearing is...

Look, I dove into the hole while insisting on a fall guy; not a Berliner, but similar. I called the drop organic. But, hey -- no signage, not my fault! I'll write a sign tomorrow morning in stolen paint, parched, mining bruises for anything remotely deontic. This can't just end on my body. There's no such thing as one-to-one, just back-to-back.

Umetnost Dogovor, *am I right?*

I don't speak Serbian.

Uh-huh. I was trying to be funny. My husband always tells me to be grateful I'm not. Ugly women are funny. But I am funny, you see, he just doesn't understand what about.

Are we discussing your husband, now?

Aren't we always? That's why you're here, isn't it?

No, Nija, I'm here to help -

You're here because I don't come to things. You're here to help my body show up.

I'm here to help you.

Well, go ahead and play with your monolith, Doctor. I'm listening. The courts seem to have done me that honor.

Tell me, in your words, why exactly you haven't left the penthouse in six months, Nija.

In order to lose paradise, one must subscribe first, Doctor. Blasphemy's not apostasy, after all. So, I left.. I fashioned a boat out of un-composted leftovers and bobbed over the Atlantic on infant armor, thinner than money, wintery-cold. Zampolli paid for my visa, and a few months later, my tits—far more reliable flotation devices than eggshells, as it happens. Papa hated witches, you see. After my mother cracked the eggs he demanded each morning for breakfast, she'd make me mash their fractured outsides into dust between my palms. "Leave no rafts for the carovnice", she'd scold, "they mustn't be granted chance to travel". Papa raged against her superstitions, red as the devil through his whole neck at the mere mention of unseen order; he'd find each tenderly concealed rosary and crunch the beads under foot on our kitchenette floor. But she never cried, Doctor, because she knew he couldn't find the most secret places she kept God. No man would dare smudge the sanctum of her thoughts.

Solitude is sometimes is best society.

Let me get there.

So, no, I did not intend to drag New Town to New York. I didn't have to. Modernity animates our memories, it programs our affections. Daily, my stilettos crunch a thousand hopes and faiths to blended sediment beneath their soles, not a grain native to the stomping site. Bloody bottoms, indeed. Every big thing has itchy roots in small places. Papa sold cheap cars to bad men and wished Westerners asphyxiation under high piles of Levis. He wished Reds the same fate, and you wonder why his daughter fought for photos in four hundred dollar denim! You wonder why his little girl built engines from stolen proteins, why her fuels still hammer louder than klapocs, or Mama's hexes, even. Or do you wonder? You might not, actually. You're terminally American, aren't you? You might assume instead that big, blended life in land calcified by the sweat of ardent immigrants beams greener than the hills they left, right? As if Tito didn't lease freedom, as if great men will ever abstract their hands from hauntings wrought, sanguine or cadaver-still. Generals, capitalists, radicals—they all reject the inevitable noun-ness of living. It's hubris. If the fuckers can't buy it all, none of us get shit.

Do you know the first time I saw gold in person, I didn't understand that it could bend?

I thought gold was like steel, I thought gold could kill. I hadn't turned 17 yet, I don't think; pretty, but poor, with a broad face and weak teeth. Back then Mama would drive me to warehouses where lidless men snapped pictures and forgot themselves when her back was turned. I was often scared, but they enjoyed that, of course. One of the photographers came with a reporter, just some local guy, and I told him my name so many times that he sang it out loud as he left the session.

He wore a cheesy necklace and I said I liked it to make him remember me. "Real gold", he oozed, "take a bite, darling!" "Of what?" I asked, and together they all laughed one, thick, jagged laugh. So I pressed his pendant between my molars because that might make a good picture, and even consumables grow fangs when close-ups call. And it bent, Milton! The alloy sunk into my cavities and the instant I tasted every last metallic contour of its sour I knew, young as I was, that I could become the knife gold couldn't. I could sink my body into preciousness so secrets might bloom smudge-free from any cracks my shell sustained.

Nija -

*Glance once around this penthouse, Doctor!
This is my element. Every inch is smothered in ductile transition, carats upon carats, pounds upon pounds! Fingerprints everywhere, all mine. They pattern a thin, flick-able coating over the notion of home. And I keep home burrowed deep, where no man can touch it. I know about caves, Doctor.*

Let's redirect.

To what?

To the truth of the thing, Nija. What do you believe is happening, here?

*God, don't you see?
I've cracked enough eggs that my hands look like Christ's. I'm exhausted.*

Michelle has always been so polite to me.

She asked me...something upon our first televised meeting. What was it? Something kind and bland. I told her I was surviving, that I had survived. We would all continue to survive. But at the other end of survival, the wrist-bound fistfight finished with a well-placed swerve, what's left?

Well, choice is, and happiness and the hard right over the easy wrong...

No. He is, sneering, dry palms poised upward towards the heavens he insists are watching.

But your agoraphobia, Nija. We must address the source of your reluctance, my dear.

Mama asked me to tell her the color of the wallpaper in my first apartment in the Fashion District. I joked that it was yellow. "Red", she barked, without so much as a giggle. "Maintain your house, Nija. Don't let it peel from the walls, or else you'll find yourself in a prison of flesh, like an animal".

And your reluctance to communicate with your husband, I think, could be assisted by some trance exercises...

Trance? I'm already in one. You're so transparent, Doctor. Of course, I suppose you're right; beautiful women don't actually know much about love, despite what the gossip rags might tell you. We aren't tasked with inspecting male mediocrity up close. We know about pedestals, we know about anger. Power too; we understand how it smells and how it acts in all its liquid and plasmic forms, and so you'll have to excuse my disinterest in answering any of your questions about my marriage. Love would just further pollute my blood. Love can't break eggs.

Eggs?

Eggs.

Scores of white women in pink hats suggested that he might be abusing me. Abusing me, Milton! He's hit me as many times as he's fucked me – negligible numbers, thank goodness. A tyrant's true proclivities lie in far more exotic pursuits than women. Humiliation, for one. Genocide if he's particularly ambitious. Only immaculate conception could lead to a Barron birth.

I stayed because I thought alchemy would sanctify me. But gold bends. God necessarily bends.

So what is your position, exactly, Nija?

Inside, if I can fuckin' help it.

Aren't you listening? After years of walking runways to nowhere and jumping oceans to anything else, I thought maybe, just maybe, if I stood still, if I closed the doors to my borrowed house and filtered sight, it would all...stop.

Stop?

The mechanism, Milton. Reality. My lack of action might drift around me like parted seas if I just, you know, kept still. And it worked, for a time. I'm gorgeous, Doctor, almost caustic in my physical perfection, as you've noted multiple times. I was, at least. I can pass for blonde. And if, like my husband, all those faces packed with impure sand assumed I was some sort of idiot, they would at least miss the truth of my...cowardice. The weakness I was taught.

I was just following directions; isn't that what they always say?

I never expected the machine of history to cower at my touch. And now, look around us, Milton!

Hasn't paradise revealed itself?

*All straight lines and weaponized math. Missiles howl and brown seas boil. Destruction becomes butter.
The witches are traveling again. If I continue to do nothing, I am nothing, right? Can you promise me that, Milton?*

*I'll ensure no one remembers my name. I'll shift into an unseen thing, tunneling into red-soaked guilt with all the force of his
hatred. But I still hear him, even so. His voice echoes through the red-walled chambers in this golden, melting corpse.
In paralysis our ending sleeps, embalmed like deboned fish in aspic.*

What would you have me do?

How on earth can I repent?

Who will forgive me? Will it stick?

Have you considered medication?