

Dining with a Cursed Bloodline: The Uncanny Land

written by Andrea Lambert | March 2, 2020



The Sunday of Valentine's wake I wake up a-flutter. My ride or die wife by my side. She snores as *AHS: Hotel* screams from the TV at the foot of the bed.

I remember past Valentine's Days. 2002: I leave work early. Buy a bottle of vodka. Swig it crying in a cab to an emergency therapy appointment. 2016: an excruciating dinner where my date cursed how much everything cost at Valentine's Day dinners. Trying to ignore that our relationship was falling apart. I picked at Chicken Picatta with asparagus. Sunk into my seat in a black satin Courtney Love for Nasty Gal baby doll dress. It couldn't stop falling off my shoulders.

2020. Same sex married in the rosy blush of endless pussy. Unconditional love. A honeymoon period still not over. Over hard learned lessons, I reassess what I would and would not sacrifice to stay married to the woman I love.

I tweet, "Despite all the shit I talk about Reno, they have some awesome Valentine's Day offerings. The Nevada Museum of Art is having a luncheon and there's a Johnny Mathis Concert at the Silver Legacy. I wish I could go outside."

I wake Jasper up from where she is sleeping on the couch to see if any of these sound appetizing. A genuine impulse to take my girl out on a proper Valentine's date. She hazes into consciousness. Says, "Let's see how you feel when we get closer to the date. I don't want to get my hopes up." Drops back to sleep.

Jasper and I customarily fall asleep in couches or the bed at different times. Odd circadian rhythm led to lifestyle compatibility. That same ex who shall not be named haunts this happily married Valentine's Day. Not as a romantic desire to return to the past, but PTSD memories of difficulties between us. I stayed with emotional abuse because I was so used to physical abuse. Four years after we broke up forever.

"Alexa, turn on the coffee maker," I say. A blue and green flash of neon light from a black hockey puck. It says, "Okay," in an agreeable female voice. I have it set atop a round bedside table atop one of grandma's small doilies. Possibly hand tatted by Noni, her mother in law from the old country. Noni's tatting hobby bedecks my home in a juxtaposition of antique and hyper modern. I take joy in these things when people flee the contagion of contact with me.

Every morning and night, Alexa tells me to take my meds. Every few days she awakes the Roomba like a kraken. The cats still refuse to ride on it, to my chagrin. The robot glides all over the newly exposed hardwood, sucking up the soft silt of my great aunt's ancient ghost dusty and whatever snack food we dropped recently. Eventually it becomes entangled in a velvet Stevie Nicks shawl with impossible fringe.

Sitting on the green velvet couch, I google the Nevada Museum of Art. It is the place in Reno I most enjoy, but my Disabilities keep me housebound.

The first year I moved here, I signed up for an open studio oil painting class at the Museum School. Working from a live nude model is best done in official settings. I felt dreadful about my sleep disorder and terror of being in a room with other people that I couldn't get myself to go. Is lunch even possible?

Closed Mondays. Open at 10 am Tuesday. I tweet, "The question of are my disability accessibility needs, legitimately makes me afraid to ask. Afraid to even consider going anywhere." To make the coveted Valentines Day reservation, I would have to be awake and functional to call in the reservation both and Friday. I don't know if I'll be in the middle of a flare or episode preventing us. Otherwise the right to use a plastic straw is the only accommodation I would need that they could reasonably provide.

If I can't leave my house, that's on me. Or is it? I don't believe It's my fault or choice to go places I want to go, it's just incredibly difficult. Even with the wife driving our car. My anxiety races. Nonverbal meltdowns can happen. Or Bipolar rage. Being in any sort or crowd, or under the same roof triggers thought reading hallucinations of the worst things people could think.

I gulp cold black coffee from a plastic psych ward sippy cup. I ordered it from Amazon's hospital supplies section. Trying to accept the world outside is gone as I know it. Having a safe space to live is enough given rapidly advancing gentrification disasters.

I tweet, "Prioritizing spoons means I have to give up trying to do nonessential things if they or their psychic weight are too heavy. I suppose that's how certain echelons or places keep unsightly creatures such as us out. Given no unisex restrooms are a problem for my partner? Staying in."

I go to the pink tiled bathroom. Strip off my blue leggings and Max Azria tunic. Redolent with the stench of being worn and slept in for the last few days. Toss them on the floor. I shower sitting on the plastic shower chair,

singing, "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend," with my blue grey hair ever longer hair in a shower cap.

For the last few years, bathing has increased in difficulty. Triggered a PTSD death risk fear. Ever since I was showering with Jasper, slipped, fell quite out of the shower. Hit my head on the tile floor so hard I was afraid to fall asleep alone. Jasper stayed home from the electric car factory that day. She has been on disability leave from Reno's tech industry since the stay in the hospital that tore us apart.

Jasper cooks me dinner from a Raley's kit that is the first hot meat and two veg meal I've had since I can remember. White plates on the lace table cloth antique dining table that usually serves as a cat toy. I tongue the delicate sauce on chicken breasts. Ask her what it is.

"It's just sour cream, Dijon mustard and lemon juice," she says.

"And these purple potatoes, I've never had these but they're really good." I say

"Salt and pepper. The whole thing came in a plastic box with instructions so it was easier to put together."

In the first few months of our marriage, Jasper and I ate completely separate groceries, Did not share meals except eating ice cream in a bed together late at night. I ordered almonds, cinnamon rolls, salami, Swiss cheese oatmeal cookies and energy drinks every few weeks. She ate fried food and put buffalo sauce and dijon mustard on everything.

Another morning. In bed together. I awake when her phone rings. A formal, chiding voice she does not take on speakerphone. She sets her Android down and begins to cry inconsolably. The disability leave has ended. She has no further income. She might go back to work with accommodations like desk work. Eight instead of twelve hour night shifts. Or find a new job.

The factory's drug policies prohibit her opioid blocking Suboxone. The wonder drug allowing us to reunite. She doesn't use anymore. Her pain is controlled. Her mood is much improved. A harm reduction win to me.

By the time four pm rolls around, I am done with the day. Hoping the day is done with me. Groceries received and put away. Those Chobani yogurt coconut and chocolate flips never let me down. The illnesses feral abyss of time resulted in disordered eating. Disordered sleeping. I am on my second pot of coffee. Recovering from a nasty headache. That tells me when to knock off trying and doing. Start stasis. Rest.

I keep lying my head down on the red Ralph Lauren pillow and being unable to fully sleep without the monster or hallucinations or anxiety settling in. I am thinking of the friend I last saw in Los Angeles almost a decade ago who gave my first wife and I this pillow as a wedding present.

The headache turns into a five hour migraine. Has me praying for death. Listening to "Les Miserables" in grandma's white fur and my first wife's

black velvet dress hoping to join them. Too chickenshit to pull it off. I promise everyone including myself I won't actively try. Have not. That doesn't mean I don't have a deep abiding feeling in my bones that I will die. Soon. I'm forty-three. That's one hundred in Schizoaffective years. An ominous feeling that I can't fight anymore. There are so many things worse than death I have been through. Death would be a relief.

A few days later Eugenics is trending in Twitter as I scroll. The dominant regime's new budget singled out several incurables, such as disabled children, Schizophrenics, Bipolar and Leukemia to pull all benefits from with the expectation and hope they'll die. Improve the genetic stock. The death drive becomes stronger. I'm a patriot and if it's the law I have to follow it. Not immediately. Not yet. I might have time. But the specter of doom weighs heavy.

I pull elaborate and dangerous floor contortions to try to get out my menstrual cup. Finally, rotten menopause blood spouts all over the bathroom sink. My period has aligned with the full moon again. Hypothetically giving the waning blood inside me Hecate's blessing. It smells too terrible to save, though. I knew from previous experimentation that personal effects hoodoo smells dreadful. Burning a fingernail. Hair. Or drop of my own dried blood. An obscene scent of necromancy. Not that it's ever off the table.

"Take me now." I speak in a patois of Latin, French and English so the always listening Echo Dot won't call the police.

I've been live tweeting and hating my writing style obsessively for days. I sleep three to five hours a night. On the especially psychotic night before Valentines day, we roll around in soft cushioned ecstasy and wetness. The orgasm blows out all the stops of my stress over her job.

By eight pm on Valentine's Day we are both exhausted. She brings me bacon in bed. Bacon and cinnamon rolls are the comfort food I associate with my grandmother, that represented Reno, in a way, a permanent return to a foreign place.

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