

My cheeks are burning. How much time did I spend smiling today ? This week ? From midnight to six and also the rest. No one asked me to smile but I was given every tool for happiness – which happiness? Whose happiness? – and I'll be the most ungrateful person if I did not have the decency to smile. Even though I sometimes have the feeling of doing it unwillingly.

I have my wife by my side, whose beauty, far from being wild, wins unanimous support. She has this insipidness which allows every one to find her beautiful without having to choose a party – at the same time, without that I HAVE to choose a party: no one would have to ask what I found attractive in her. We are a beautiful couple. Beautiful people go together, no questions asked, that's in our genes. Her teeth are as beautiful as mine. She will be the one for the rest of my life, I am the happiest man on Earth (LOOK at my SMILE), and about the ones that preceded her, I forgot them while smoking my last spiders. I don't smoke anymore (look at these WHITE teeth). A blond girl with straight hair whose eyes do not shine enough when she smiles – the last three sips of a beer that was once fresh and pleasurable but has gone flat and is now only laying there. My arm is wrapped around her shoulders.

Number1 was the name I reserved to the boy that I will never have, and no one must know that it saddens me. But it did not bother me. Settling down here or there, keeping my smile. I sometimes cast furtive glances around me.

It's always this lying kitchen. Latest furniture trend, four induction plates, because gas and fire have been judged too rustic: they evoke the kitchen in too brutal a way, while this whole room carries a well defined message: "Tonight I'm not in the mood for cooking and I will rather order sushi, what do you think?". We always end up eating in silence, neatly, under the light of this lamp that barely lights up its own wall, one of the only spots in the kitchen that does not have a chrome finish, so everything ceases to shine, because the show is over. Truth is that we don't know each other's food preferences, maybe Madam is vegetarian – I wouldn't be surprised at all. The electric plates, utensils stay clean, understood by the blazing, without even having to make use of the washing machine. I have no job, neither does my wife. We are financially secured and that's all. BUT this does not mean we're rich, which means that you CAN give yourself the means to resemble us. Mi casa es su casa, what belongs to me belongs to you. When guests visit us, they come with their notepads and questions are generally superfluous. We don't talk about our favorite recipes but about the caterer that just opened next door. When we talk about our home-cinema, we explain that it doesn't replace any of the sensations of a real projection room (that's an absurdity which they all systematically seem to approve). They are as less inclined to ask questions as we are to answer them.

I keep this unshakeable smile tight to my lips, like some sort of beast locked down in a hotel room, that the curious would come to observe.

- Darling, did you see the Meunot's faces when they saw the air pressure corkscrew wine bottle opener?
- It was fantastic! She even asked to try it.
- What? And you let her do it?
- Of course not, you silly! Can you imagine their reaction if they would have tried our wines?

We laughed heartily, at least this is what I thought for a few moments until we simultaneously stopped – in a way as abrupt as if someone had shouted "Cut!". I was dumbstruck, and I spent a moment without saying a word, staring vacantly into the void that separated me from her. I dropped my guard for an instant and it was enough for the harsh reality of my feelings to take over. I had been happy to laugh like that, even if briefly. Equally happy as I had been mortified right after, when we froze. I realized that I still had this stupid smile stuck in my jaws while staring into nothing. She didn't say a word either. I rose my eyes onto hers hoping to find at least a distant echo of what I was feeling.

I could not help myself from sighing in front of that loving and welcoming look, which lacked the slightest trace of a feeling that wouldn't be as frozen as a corpse. But I sighed while smiling, as do the ones that have just laughed a lot (you know – aaaaaaaah !)

My two daughters were playing at taking different objects and to mutually offer them to each other while distributing large kisses in the air. Busy winning Oscars.

- Come on girls, it's time to go to bed!
- Oh no, not yet! Just one more minute please!
- No my sweeties. When dad says it's time to go to bed, then it's time to go to bed.

I was looking at Number3 while she was going up the stairs. I was worried she would ask questions one day.

- There you go darling, our two little angels are in bed.
- How adorable they are, and so obedient.

She was staring at the fruits on the living room's table, wrapped in a navy blue angora plaid and drinking a tea that she occasionally put in a notch specially designed for that. I had no idea what these fruits were, neither how they happened to be there. Anyway, I had something else in mind...

- Honey... What would you think about us going to the bedroom?
- I would agree, sleeping early is essential to the maintenance of...
- No.. no. Who said we were going to sleep? I only said: to the bedroom...

I was staring right at her eyes. Something had exploded in a thousand pieces, only nowhere. An atomic blow in a back hole. Absolutely nothing happened. She didn't move an inch. She smiled with the same manner, and then slowly turned her face toward the fruits as if I hadn't said anything. I gave her a little while to answer, after all I don't remember the last time I have spoken to her like that. Maybe she needed to develop her thoughts before bouncing back. I gave her five minutes. Five minutes in which I stared at Madam while she was staring at these parodies of fruits which, like us, would never rot. Do you realize how long this is?

- Honey?
- Yes my love?

I stayed breathless. Was she playing with me? Humor truly was a quality that she lacked in its entirety.

- Would you like to go to the bedroom; that I flatten your belly onto my desk while pressing my hand between your legs?

I was staring at her again, even more intensely. And again she turned her head toward the fruits, but more rapidly this time. Without the slightest trace of an emotion. Even disgust or fear would have been more reassuring than this absolute zero. I was in front of a computer that did not recognize the control I was trying to enter, and that did not have any other option than to reboot. And yet I tried at least half a hour, being more and more straightforward.

- Yes my love?
- I want you, let's make love.

Fruits. I wanted to grab them and throw them away through the living room so they would break up into plaster chips but something was keeping me nailed down onto the sofa (AND I WAS STILL SMILING WITH ALL MY TEETH). I did not even want her anymore, I was just curious to see how long this shamble would last. She wouldn't even answer anymore.

- Honey, I'm going to catch you, tear off your clothes, and then I'll turn you over and sodomize you on this sofa

Nothing, obviously. The same thing that kept me locked down onto this sofa also retained me from pouncing on her. Actually I was free of my movements, to a few exceptions. I could cross my

legs, grab the newspapers, I could even stroke her hair... But nothing more. My arm would stop responding as soon as it would feel the electricity of the descent towards her shoulders.

- Honey?

No answer

- It was a beautiful day today, wasn't it?

She immediately turned to me and rewarded me with her usual smile.

- Absolutely beautiful. I think the Maurins truly loved the bathroom.
- Yes I saw that too. And what do you think they thought about us?

She felt the trap and I thought I was once again going to lose her, so I preferred to cut it short.

- Honey, let us go to bed, I am a little tired.
- Yes my love, me too.

I let her climb first and I went to the kitchen toward the fridge, without really knowing what I wanted to find. It was empty, and although it was plugged in, it wasn't cold. It was only lighting up. I do not smoke, I do not drink. I do not fuck. How can these great fools be envious of my life?

I think that it is at this very moment that I understood. Everything. My daughter. This damn smile turned into a rictus and I laid my head down onto the refrigerator's egg rack.

I climbed up to the bedroom.

I watched my wife as she was dressing up. She was wearing her satin and lace nightgown. Alluring enough so as not to look like a pajama but sober enough to not be mistaken as flirtatious. She turned to me, and for once, there was a bit of sincerity in the smile I gave her back. I burst out laughing, this time, and had a hard time stopping. When I managed to calm down and become serious again she was looking at me with the same look she had given me on the sofa a bit earlier: smile-silence. I had my eyes full of tears.

- Ok then, good night darling, see you tomorrow.

Hector Latrille, 2016