

SEDATIVES

By Elizabeth Kilani

WHY WE LIKE IT: *See 'Naked' above, in the TOC. I mean, we're just at a loss for words. This is a writer who designed her own mould, broke it when she climbed out and emerged a rocket-fuelled original. There's nothing else like her in this entire issue. The story is a post-structuralist guerrilla prose (with a strong dose of outsiderism) monument to something we're not sure of, but crazy-yum-sane, sane-crazy and like, red hot, burn your fingers hot. If this story was ice cream they'd have to invent a whole new flavour. Five stars.*

It's so strange how that word became unusual and extraordinary even in an experimental and introduction phase.....'You say it like this, Melony, SE-day-tive, not SEE -date- ive, like sea- weed or something.' 'But she talked about sedating him and she specifically said, sedate.' 'That's because it is a pronouncing of sedate not sedatives- and even that is technically wrong. I mention no mistakes but your own, because if you're going to be my fiancée, you're going to have to learn to speak and pronounce properly.' I sing to him the advert song, 'You say neither. And I say neither. You say potato and I say potato. You like tomatoes and I like tomatoes. Let's call the whole thing off! I will consider being your wife on one condition- let me hear how you pronounce jalapenos.' 'Jalapenos,' he says hoarsely before kissing me. After the long winding kiss I rewind, 'damn, I knew we were wrong for each other. That's not the way I expect people to say jalapenos.' He kisses me again, long and hard then slow and even, almost secularly methodical. 'So what is your answer.' 'Mmmhm, let me think. I need some convincing. Something to help me revise a bit.'

I think about it now- how such a long chain and series of perfect events had to end in non-perfect ones. We didn't argue about everything. But we were always making the decision whether to argue or not to argue- which is almost equally just as problematic. After we got the news our marriage was completely defeated. 'But they are priests,' I bargain asking the policeman desperately. My husband looks at me scolding. We argued the whole night, 'you lose the twins at shops. I forgive that. Then you plump them to sex traffickers.' 'No. I didn't. I

know people. I know them. I trust them.’ ‘Do you have some kind cognitive deficiency. I can’t figure out if you are half brain dead or terminally insane.’ His looks said, he could never forgive me.

The first three weeks were the hardest. At first I tried to fill in blanks with what I knew these two faithful men of God to be. And reconcile myself to it. But I had this gnawing aching feeling, why this second guessing and impairments at drawing loaded blanks. My two twins were missing. I got a little hysterical. With emphasis on a little constituting the occasion. As I lay and tossed in my bed, thoughts flooded and circled my brain. Bodies mutilated. Children sex slaves. Bodies, corpses, wretched and degraded and dismembered after brutal acts manifested on them. A haze of Satanic rituals for innocent fresh blood. Every night Nathan would argue with me, and I could feel the assault of hatred and loathing resentment. I was the mother who took his daughter and son away from him. ‘Ironic that we never agreed on anything. But this would be the one thing that we agreed with.’

My paintings became alarmingly nuclear. It was like a was a demonic spiritist through a medium volunteering my possession and madness. I woke up one night from reduced sedatives to find myself sleepwalking and painting the whole room in black. I was taxed and laboured and forced into a psychiatrist with prescriptive interim drugs. He tried small talk. Our first counselling- first with a marriage counsellor, then a clinical psychologist then a psychiatric therapist. I was a ghost cell, host feeding on depressive demons harbouring the solace in living with me as a harbour. I told this to my psychiatrist. He said he didn’t think I was the classic pathological case. And he ordered me a script, the prescription a week’s worth of tranquilizers for our introductory sessions.

‘Your hands are a little dry.’ ‘Yes.’ He looks kindly eyes twinkling, ‘my wife gets that- she likes to use this abrasive bleach and do all of the cleaning alone every Saturday. Most cleaning agents have some kind of (linoleum?)moisturizing supplicants. But she always wants to use those, so I purchase her those heavy water ingredients that don’t tire the natural lubrication process. Sorry, blank in my scientific minefield with physiology.....it is not deuterium oxide, and certainly not hydrogen isotope deuterium, but I like to flex useless muscles.’

He continues, satisfied in diverting. ‘This is what does the trick in sustainable moisturizers like pine gel cleaners- a little bit of aqua in chemical. Dermatologists use and recommend these products daily. They do not completely replace natural skin oils they maintain hydration by allowing the skin to partner in hydrating not an emolliating lubricant exclusively. It helps

when there is a evaporation of skin moisture for the skin to learn to regenerate and rejuvenate a little itself. Like hair steroids- a bounce when it is harmed or unprotected. There is a natural science and organic elasticity of healing and repair, even to enhance sheen and strength in each member of the body. The bad can ensure resilience; and nourish what it protects by speaking its own language and correcting natural flaws in environment combined with genetics. Such material allegories the nature of science.'

'Are you a connoiseur of science?' I try and small talk. 'No. I just like studying and making matchmaking with nature and therapy,' he looks at me carefully, the continues again. 'Just a little bit of heavy saturated concentrated water in the moisturizer or lubricant. A dose of harsh weathering and abrasives it adjust the bodily system into a new regulation for supple skin. You will not materially damage the cells but promote a cellular message for the skin to supply some moisture from its own natural oils and resources. The tiny fissures in the skin will be more self -regulated.' 'Oh. I guess this is Life science class then,' Nathan blurts after glancing on the clock. 'Or self- help prep,' I try.

And for our first counselling hour, I have to gravitate and not postpone the 'dynamics' of me and Nathan's relationship. Our therapist starts out maintaining facilitator and adjourns to being a bridge. 'Perhaps it would be good to let Jenny exercise some rights on how she feels herself and take some share time on her labour and distress. She is also a parent.' He snorts- the innuendo, what kind of parent, hardly veiled implicitly. So maybe I am slow, really very slow. After about three months I pack his things to the extra room. And after another three months, he is out of our home, and our matrimonial bed.

He starts dating a co-worker three weeks before our divorce is made official. This doesn't bother me- as I feel I have no rights. All the breaks me and bewilders me is that for three long angry years I have been living with the man who is supposed to love me the most and he loathes and abhors me what feels more than Lucifer hates Michael the arch- angel. I have gotten so used to his contempt, I don't take it personally or consequentially anymore. I haven't being with a husband but an embodiment of hate.

And when I am supposed to be getting rid of the scars, I transition to the wounds. The nightmares don't escape me, and after increasing my sleeping pills for three years. I have also increased their frequency. I keep my regular appointment with our therapist. He is looking at me seriously. 'Still sleeping and taking naps often.' 'It helps deaden and numb the pain and the

nightmares. And as a result I am not an insomniac.' He looks very grave and aged. 'I remember filling your last prescription about 2 and a half years ago.' 'And I remember that I have a GP who gives me a script when I need it.' 'I do not think it solicitous or permissible. Jean, was it? I wrote in correspondence deeming in unduly improper.'

'Do you have kids.' 'Yes, two.' 'Have they ever being kidnapped?' he looks at me. 'Do you know the panic and apprehension that takes over. The overwhelming sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that afflicts you every day? Do you know the magnitude and scope of your imagination and recesses. The torment every night when you should be asleep. The hope that dwindles every second and the hole of gnawing haunting dread? It doesn't take a miracle to sleep. It takes tranquilizers. You don't know my situation or my pain.' 'It's been 4 and a half years. It may seem like a short term solution but it is creating a long term physiological malfunction.' 'Don't your patients use pills that dynamically affect their sleeping patterns radically.' 'it is what is best for them.' 'I am not addicted. It is not a schedule 3 or 5 or 4 or whatever.' 'It may not be benzodiazepines but it is making you physiologically dependent on them.' 'So I need food and water. I am physiologically dependent.' He looks at me sadly, not bothering to answer, 'You are not coping, Jennifer. And it pains me to see it.'

He arrests me with some more question about the increase in frequency and dosage and my hours in schedule as a regime of consuming them. I don't feel like lying to him. He brings in Nathan at the next appointment as some sort of confrontation therapy. 'I can get an MRI scan. You won't see anything unusual about the pattern of my brain.' 'That is debatable,' he says quietly. 'Yes, Jenny. But you also don't see anything unusual about an atypical mental illness in an MRI scan in face value. They adopt different equipment and gear to detect neuronal cell patterns and neuronal flow in brain imaging.' 'Thank you. I suppose that was the lay man version.' I walk out as dignified as I can be.

He rushes out of the therapist's seat to follow me. And in that pathologically indifferent way guys prattle on when they are jovial and concerned about you but not too concerned corners. 'Goodness Jenny, you can't become an Auntie Pat. The people who had to come and exterminate her house didn't even want to take her leftover furniture. It was 3 inches deep in dust. They wanted to call the house developers to demolish the whole plot, for exceptional health circumstances. And I mean, we all have symptoms in odd ways, each to his own. But then we find a stack of unused prescriptions in a pile of her un-usurped medication. You can't imagine what happens when you can't sleep for days. Or sleep for a few hours in weeks. Poor soul. They wrote in her graveyard

'rest in peace.' 'What else would they say?' He looks at me blinking. 'I'm just saying, you don't want to be those nutters who needs a pill to function or sleep or talk half creditably.' I look at him seriously. 'You do realize we are not just seeing a psychotherapist but a psychiatrist, right?'

He recollects himself. 'Look.....all similar MD's aside. This could make you permanently dependent and unable to sleep altering your levels and states of consciousness permanently. You could need greater and greater doses of tranquilizers for life. Or you could be an insomniac.' 'All the drug does is slow down messages to your central nervous system. Like alcohol, you never used to mind when I drank a little bit to relieve myself.' 'This is different, you know this is different. You gotta know it is, Jennie.' 'I won't stay here and argue. Go and enjoy dinner with your companion and let me take my leave.' With the little bit of dignity I can muster.

He walks off, a little too excitedly as if anticipating a wonder in bed or something or hot kindling romance. For the next two weeks I try to negotiate taking less of the measurement, thinking I can wean myself slowly. But the days are more challenging and the substance is less amount to alleviate my stressors. And then one day I come home from a challenging day of my last bookkeeping contract with the units of hospice, only to hunt for the next short succession of quick bookkeeping audits I come in to hear a muffled sound at the attic. 'If I'm going to be murdered by "an axe murderer" let's just get it over with.' I think to myself. And then I hear Nathan's muffled breath.

'What are you f___ doing here. You scared the fright out of me. I was starting to think the stray cat had broken through the window.' 'The boys keep kicking their cricket balls through?' 'Yeah. Every 2 weeks, or a month, punctually on duty like a roster.' 'Yeah, cause you neve make them pay for it.' I stop short of saying, you used to re-fix it, only every time it had gotten too cracked, you would get the window panel to fit and seal in with something like plaster of Paris and it looked almost as well as before. Even after the situation. But I remember a pretty redhead and keep my words in check.

We look at the pictures and items for a while before we know it looks like dusk outside. He hints that he is kind of peckish and interrogates about the fridge. So I let him share my leftovers in non- casserole packaged dishes. We eat companionably in silence. 'You don't have to worry about me, you know.' 'I know,' he says quickly, too quickly. At night I get a blanket to sit by the sofa same ritual every night before I down my medication. 'You know. I could help stay over. Maybe get you into a new ritual or routine for sleeping. I hope you

and I will always be friends.' I smile, 'I've gotten used to being alone.' 'Well. I'd lie to help.' I'm not a toddler or an adolescent who needs someone to tuck me in and read a story before I sleep, I can't help thinking, but I look at him seriously, considering carefully how I'm going to say this.

'Nathan. This is something that happened and began when I was alone. And will have to conclude with me alone. Nobody can save anybody else. We can only really save ourselves, or plead to a higher power, relax, I won't say the man upstairs.' He looks at me seriously, so seriously it almost hurts. Then he walks out and calls back. 'You'll call me if you need anything!' 'Okay,' I try magnanimously, trying to escape the desolate feeling that there is something to conclude tonight. And every other night. for every night since it happened I have gone to sleep with the help of sedatives zoning me out and now I have to take on a different approach to healing.

I settle to the dark shut in my eyes and eyelids and remember my kids and watching them and thinking of myself as a kid. It was just before the jolt of wakefulness or caffeine like moment. I feel dizzy remembering the quiet, safe, content feeling of knowing there was no pressing or traffic or mood jamming, or busy angry people, or frustrated teachers, just a quiet, meditating restful silence. Just a soft peace. Those 10 minutes of calm used to get me through all the hours in the day of bullying or wild gossip or any other locking betrayal life's injustice railroads you by as a kid, well, some kids, even the 'rough manner of childhood, or the school system,' as Rogers would harp.

'God. Or any higher powers. I know it is almost statistically improbable that I will not have a sleepless night without the use of my cocktail.....but.....you listened to Hagar. Please listen to me. I want to remember my children, beautiful and happy as they were. and when I remember how I lost them I also want to remember how I had them. All is lost to me now.....but you can do all things. Please. God! I need you. I want to love you. Please help me live and love. There's no ice around my veins or pulse, or nauseating feeling, just a calm still. And a breath like a voice in the wind. And somehow I wake up knowing that I have slept.

Nathan has gotten mail in a large express couriered to me from his holiday with his red hottie. It is like an insulin injection, sharp to my diabetes. But if I take this one I will need another shot again in another few hours. I don't want to be a right emotional insulin injector. I look awed at the reports, amazed. The priests remains found in the woods, scavenged in a foam of preservatives, with corpses beyond identification- only the teeth identifying them. The news

articles about the children, all the children including my two babies. They were all victims. I read and re-read. And look and re-witness the visuals. I make myself remember that my children are gone. The priest's fidelity or lack were not even the symptoms or the brief recesses. They were just distractors to muddle and re-muddle my brain and help divert the black fog. If I go back to tangentials I will unravel.

So the next night, I get the same enclosed feeling. And find someone out there repeat the whole process again, to my fatigued, weathered, damaged brain. There is no enhancers just a black stillness clouds the black fog. A sort of evaporating of wakefulness, till I sink into slumber and softly arouse into being awake again. A state of succession and patterns so repetitive, only now I am part of the human stewardship navigating this physiology in the host of a material body.

FOR AUTHOR'S NOTE AND BIO SEE 'NAKED' IN TOC.