

A Writer's Lament
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Thoughts whirl around my head like annoying flies. The window is open. It should be shut. The lampshade is crooked. The dog needs a bath. The table should be dusted.

I don't want to dine out with friends tonight. They are in from out of town and ready to socialize, to wear their new clothes, to eat in new restaurants. "They are nice enough friends, pleasant companions - it could be fun." I had said to my husband earlier in the day when plans were still in the making and evening was far away.

That was then and this is now and now I do not want to dress and drive and talk and listen and eat and smile and laugh and then finally kiss goodnight and then return home to this very bed where I want to remain and read a book. I want to be alone with words in a book, a good novel by a dead writer who no longer cares if I like his story or admire her incandescent prose. There are worlds beyond this one there are rooms beyond this one or the one in the restaurant where we will have to take what comes our way, where the food will be a source of delight or dismay. Everyone will make an effort to be interesting, to say something witty. We will test each other's interests, bob for topics of common concern, keep things light and lively and then we will return to our homes relived or disappointed depending on circumstances. We will remind ourselves not to expect too much. That happiness occurs by grace rather than design. All of this is true enough and we all know it by now. We are no longer children. We take the good with the bad and make the most of what we have. Life is good on our side of the fence. We all know this but we never talk about it, as that would ruin it. We all pretend to not notice how long it takes for the food to arrive or how quickly the lovely wife gets tipsy and slurs her words. We make excuses for her sake, or his or for ourselves as we all have foibles, secrets, bad habits weaknesses we are ashamed of. We are only human, we say in the silence that falls between us like a thick fog.

Say nothing and it will be all right. We will munch on chips and swallow gulps of water, wine, beer or soda. My husband always orders soda. It is his prerogative but I don't like it. It belittles one to drink like a child when one is an adult. But, I say nothing about the matter. There is no point. It will only cause distress or provoke a quarrel. Of course there is no way to win in such a silly argument. It is obvious that everyone should eat or drink what ever suits them. But let's face it; dining with a vegetarian is unsatisfying. Food should not be a political issue but it is. Vegetarians never get what they really want. Some restaurants do not offer vegetarian dishes. "The inevitable question, "Do you use animal fat in your cooking?" will be asked by the wife who will smile wanly and accept the meager offerings that are available. "It is Ok," she will say, "I'll have the salad and the baked potato."

Of course it is not OK. But vegetarians like to do the right thing. They don't eat meat. And neither should you. They are right and they know it and everyone says nothing but everyone thinks it and wishes the vegetarian wasn't there, to ruin their carnivore infested meal. But we all admire the morality implied by the baked potato and the arugala leaves

coated with oil and vinegar. We will smile and adjust the conversation to movies and politics and make an effort to agree on some likes and most dislikes. We will toast and clink glasses and masticate out meals and reprimand the retched republicans and then it will be time to go or order desert. "Oh I never have coffee in the evening. I have given it up. I feel much better." Then some one will announce that they are watching their waistline. Everyone will murmur sounds of approval and then we will get in our sensible cars and head home to our own beds where silence and the sweet darkness of night fill the bedroom. And it will all be over until the next time.

I will not have time to be alone with words on a page as I will be tired and my husband hates lights on past midnight. He thinks it is immoral to stay up to late and sleep to late and not help out.

All of this is part of marriage. One accepts the inconvenience of little things, small differences for the greater good of marital harmony and social goodwill. I know all this. I do not expect to be pitied for my complaints. That would be foolish.

"Aren't you dressed yet? We have to be there in 30 minutes."

My husband is a tall gangly man with long legs. He is climbing into his trousers, balancing on one foot like a gawky flamingo. The fabric makes a swishy crushy sound as it passes over his skin. I am surprised to notice the unusual sound. I struggle to describe it in my mind. But I cannot and that annoys me as much as his next question.

"Do you know where my blue shirt is?"

I will tell him it is still in the laundry and tell him to wear the green one. He will be irritated by this sudden change in attire options. But he will not complain. He will pee loudly in the toilet. Before he reminds me that we only have 25 minutes left to get ready to go out to diner.

"I could eat a horse," announces my husband as he closes the bathroom door.

"Why aren't you dressed?" he asks me, annoyance edging the sound of his voice.

"Because I am writing my life into existence."