

A Curious Trade of Saliva

Have you ever wondered, you know, when you look at the stars and the moon in the night sky, have you ever wondered how all of this is happening? Have you wanted to know with a burning desire what exactly it is you were born into? Do you believe in magic? If you do, then this story is for you. This is my story. This is what happened to me in the year 1932. Ok. Maybe not 1932. Look, the point here is I don't really care when it happened. The point here is the magic. Real magic. The magician's magic is not really magic after all. A sleight of hand here and the eye that sees, deceived. Real magic is what happens when you believe there are pixies under mushrooms. Ok. I get it. You probably think I'm crazy just about right now. You can close this book and run along to your bookstore to get a refund that in all probability you never will. You will probably spend some more money buying a book about people and relationships and workspaces and cubicles. You will do that because that is who you are. That is who you *think* you are. At least that's what I think. Then you will walk up the stairs to the first floor of the bookstore and spend a little more cash on that cappuccino while you fiddle around with your Blackberry, connect to Facebook and read the latest forwards by your friends who are supposed to be at work but are actually playing around with their gadgets. Well, work is play work is fun. Huh! Also you will click on the *view full size* button to have another glance at your ex girlfriend who looks far hotter than she ever was when she dated you. Then you will wonder, 'Was it really me that wasn't good for her? Is she happier now?' And you will then ask yourself, 'Am I happy now? Should I really be doing this, you

know, when I have a beautiful and loving wife who cares about me back home?’ Okay. Skip the beautiful part. And you will look across the window at the street below, people going to work in their cars, check out that Mickey Mouse tie in that Civic, man I must get one of those, while you are unshaven and sitting in your best pair of shorts and worst pair of slippers. It doesn’t matter really, you will think. Nobody really looks down. Nobody really looks down at the feet. And then with a growing sense of paranoia you will think that the woman seated in front of you at the other table, that drop dead gorgeous redhead, boy how you’d love to give it to her in the ass, has probably got a foot fetish. And you will slip your feet under the table, conscious that you haven’t had a pedicure in over a year.

And you will probably wonder what the meaning of all this is. And then you will pick up the book you have selected over mine, the one that said it had sold over two hundred thousand copies, the one with the sleazy cover, and think that *that* piece of trash is going to give you some perspective. I’m of the strong conviction that the reason people read any book is to give them some sort of outlook. And you will probably finish it a couple of days later at night and feel good and all that, after the exciting conclusion where the lovers reunite and have wild steamy sex (the book would have been worthless if it weren’t for the explicit rendition of the sex scenes), and everything is back to normal again. And you will *think* your world is back to normal again. Except it isn’t. You will wake up the next morning and say, “Fuck! It’s a Monday!” while your six-year-old daughter standing there in her school uniform next to your bed to wish you goodbye gasps in horror because you have just said the F-word. Children are actually punished for saying the F-word in school. Made to run around the schoolyard twenty times. Now if you were training for a marathon that wouldn’t really be a punishment but...

And that will make you feel worse. What I’m trying to get at here, my friend, is sometimes you just *have* to say the F-word. It’s

alright, really. Ok, perhaps not before a six year-old staring at you like you're some lazy fart who can't get out of bed, but it's perfectly normal to feel frustrated. That's where I come in. I'm not really trying to tell you a story here. I'm not sitting in a café and drawing up characters and situations and places in my head, telling a story that's completely fake and one hundred percent believable. Why is it that when we tend to look deeper into our lives, that we shun what we see? Why does the truth scare us? You worship the great Buddha, who is the inspiration for this book in the first place, but balk at the idea of emulating him, going off into the jungle to find inner peace. Why is that? Is the idea of true happiness really scary? Would you rather cavort senselessly in all the material pleasures of the world and pretend to be happy, when you are really not? Well what I'm trying to do here is educate you in the lessons of life. Only if you've ever woken up frustrated on a Monday morning. And if Monday is your day off, well then make it Tuesday. And if you're unemployed well then this book is probably not for you. You're probably the happiest person in the world.

And black was the only color in the end. Which is where we begin. Because if you do not understand the true beauty of the color black you will never really appreciate any color in the world. You all wear your fancy black dresses at night, like that's the only color really there to wear to those parties where people are more interested in your cleavage than what's around it. And now I'm hoping you're a woman reading this, because you will probably relate to it better. Why not just go there naked? But if anyone were to ask you what the color black represents, the first thought in your mind may probably be something synonymous with death. Mourning. Tragedy. In fact some people don't even consider black a color. But to me black is every color rolled into one. Black is beyond color. Let me tell you about the blindness of experience, my friend. May you be so blind, not literally, but metaphorically, so blind that you can really see the true nature of things. No matter what experience you think you have in your life or will ever have, you must learn that the true nature of experience

is blindness. The wet tongue of your girlfriend sitting in her underwear on your lap making its way into the deepest recesses of your mouth, thrashing away while you go into squeals of ecstatic pleasure, is just the stimulus. What happens next, the experience, if you may call it, has nothing to do with that. Experience is completely blind. Without any connection to what is, was or will ever be. The moment you can see that, you can create your own world. Just the way I did. Just the way I'm hoping you will learn to do. And there was only blackness in the end. But there was so much light. So much light after the movie of my life ended. After the projector of my life shut down. So much more than the light when it all began.

Meow.

Ok. Let's begin again. I had to take a full course in English just so I could make you silly humans understand what I'm saying. My name is Kitty, and if you have even the tiniest hairball of commonsense you would have deduced by now that I am, indeed, a cat. Did you think otherwise? Bookstore...cappuccino...footsy with the buxom redhead... Ha! Didn't you read the story of a young man waking up one morning to see to his horror that he had turned into a giant insect? So? Metamorphosis does happen right? You humans have so many words to describe everything you think and feel. We cats have just one. Yes. Meow. And you can't even imitate that to perfection. Just try saying it aloud now. Meow. Sound like an idiot, don't you? Anyways, this is a story about LIFE. Something you humans try so hard to understand every moment of your mundane lives. Hey don't get me wrong. I get hassled too. But it's more because of simple things like being served a bowl of skimmed milk for breakfast. What Farukh... Oh. Let me introduce you to Farukh. Farukh is the pudgy owner of the café whose table legs I so gracefully stroke everyday hoping some gentleman (or woman) will care to notice and toss me a tidbit or two. Anyways, Farukh is on a diet and so I have to suffer the consequences of sharing his *skimmed* milk. Excuse me, Farukh,

I'd rather have my own inbuilt dairy milk, except I don't have children and those *things* haven't become as pronounced as yet to ... ok lactate. Even if I were pregnant, well, I'm pretty flexible being a cat and could easily reach down and sip my produce, but that would be depriving my children... but that's another story isn't it? Deviating from the story I am about to tell you is not such a good idea. So, before we get distracted again, let me begin...

I still remember the first day I saw Tommy. I was taking a walk by the lake and his elegant black whiskers were fluttering in the breeze as he cast his electrifying green eyes upon my... What do you think? Tomcats are not like boys. Tommy cast his eyes upon mine and I felt something inside me like I have never felt in my whole life. It was clear he was a stray, he looked like he hadn't bathed in weeks, but man, was he hot! Now let me tell you something about myself. I'm not your average *pussy*, and I loathe the fact that you men have degraded the word so... And I have been saving myself for the right one. Now Tommy looked straight at me and I noticed he was as soft from the outside as he seemed from the inside. Yes, most males have *rock solid* first impressions of me, if you get what I mean. But this one was different. He seemed like a charmer. I smiled at him. He smiled back. I couldn't tell if he was blushing. He was black as a crow. I waited a few moments to see if he could muster up the courage to say something, and when it was pretty evident he was a shy one, I took it upon me to make introductions. Shaking my petite bum I sauntered up to him and asked, "Are you new in town? I haven't seen you before." He nervously replied, "Yes. I'm Tom. But everybody calls me Tommy."

"Nice to meet you, Tommy," I said. "My name is Kitty, and, erm, nobody calls me Kit. Or Kit Kat. Although I do like the ring to that. Kit Kat. Like the chocolate. Where do you live?"

"The world is my oyster," he chuckled.

"Good, a sense of humor. Me likes," I giggled.

Before we proceed with the remnants of that lakeside conversation let me digress a bit to elaborate on the last statement just dished out by my *dish*. You see, you humans pay a large sum of money to buy a *small* place to live, a few thousand square feet, and the world is ours for free (except your private spaces)... We can run, play, even make love... And the cops pick you up for so much as kissing in public. Now Farukh has made me feel more than welcome in his home, which is just one floor above his workplace, but I need my space too. Take this lake. It's mine. Now who can dispute that? You humans think you own your houses. But what makes it any less the property of the termites in your cupboard? Just because you exchanged some silly slips of paper for it? Truth is, the termites don't call it their home like you do. They are more magnanimous than that. They don't think of it as their home any more than I think of this lake as mine. You selfish humans just want to have your *own* things... this universe was made for all of us... next time take me into your home and feed me some cat food will you? The imported kind. The one they show on TV. With that excuse for a kitten. I hate those model types. And yes, I could have done a better job.

"Would you care for a bowl of milk, Tommy?"

"Sure," he replied, a little bewildered I had asked him that.

You must be thinking I'm a fast little thing, eh? Truth is I just felt sorry for the poor bugger. Was giving him a decent meal. Why does your mind always work in one direction? When two people newly dating have a coffee in Farukh's café it's pretty evident that coffee is the last thing on their minds. Yes I know *coffee* is just the genesis for a *big event*. Well what's the matter with ya? Guy walks girl up to her house, says "I had a lovely time," she echoes his sentiments, they kiss.....!!!!

I know you guys love kissing but just look at it through the eyes of a sexy pussycat. If that girl were to spit on that boy, he would be repulsed and shocked and disgusted all at the same time. Yet

it's perfectly normal to trade copious amounts of saliva with your tongues... it's the same saliva for crying out loud!!! That's why we cats don't kiss. You humans say love is blind. No wonder it is. Especially when most of you close your eyes while kissing. What you don't see can be whatever you imagine it to be, right? This surely is a very curious trade indeed. A curious trade of saliva.

Then girl asks boy if he wants to come in. He hides his eagerness but says, yes. They go in and the next thing you know there are millions of sperms in a tiny bag of plastic. One of them could have been their baby. But they flush him down the drain. Now, if you are the baby of your parents, which of course you are, you're pretty darn lucky it was a NO CONDOM policy that day.

So we strolled past the quaint bylanes of this sprawling metropolis called Bombay and finally ended up at my place. Home. Café Chahat. For everything from chai to cheese omelet to *maska pav* to... a bothersome little cat called Kitty.

"Hey, there you are," said Farukh gleefully, happy with decent sales on a normally uber slow Monday afternoon. "And who's that you got th..." His voice trailed off and, waving a quick goodbye to the two of us, he retreated upstairs for his regular afternoon siesta, which meant a few thousand unexciting rises and falls of his naked paunch. Sometimes I would sleep curled next to it, which would give me the feeling of being with a male companion, grizzly that he was, but today I had a special guest.

Now you see, Farukh's quick exit had less to do with a sudden desire to catch his forty winks, the craving for copious amounts of the letter z that you normally see in a mini-train sequence alongside the heads of sleeping people in comics, and more to do with the fact that well... I mean you guys prance around at night in your black Guccis and Pradas and what happens when you meet a handsome cat like Tommy whose coat of black fur is designed by Bhagavan Himself?? ... Give him a label... no, not Versace...not Prada ... BLACK CAT!!! How unfair is that? How

hypocritical. You walk into a temple and bow before the statue of an ebony flute player. You clap and nod while singing, *O Kala bansoriwalah*... And when it comes to a lesser mortal – a *billi* with a black coat – bad omen! Ha. Farukh probably thought he'd just been served dollops of bad luck. So he retreated upstairs for the curse or spell or whatever to time out. You see, they say if a black cat crosses your path a bit of bad luck is coming your way. Unless you go home, that is. And venture out again after a while. How silly is that?!

To be fair to Farukh, he's a good man. Except that he farts a lot. But he has to look after his customers and if they happen to see a black cat around... well, there are chances they won't come back. It's a strictly business point of view, eh?

"I know. It's a color thing," sighed Tommy. "Sometimes I feel like jumping into a bucket of white paint. Then I would look as gorgeous as you."

"Oh come on, don't be silly, Tommy. Cheer up."

"No, I think I'd better go."

That said, Tommy dejectedly made his way out of the café, head down. I hurried after him and asked when I could see him again.

For a moment it looked like he was going to say no, we were from different spheres of life, but no, his face shone with earnestness. "I had a wonderful time." He smiled. "How about tomorrow at three? By the lake?"

"Sounds great, Tommy," I said fighting off a blush.

"Well, bye then, Kitty."

"Bye, Tommy."

That night I couldn't sleep. And it wasn't because of the noises floating upwards from Farukh's bistro, noises reeking of cheap alcohol. It was because of the profound experience I had had

with an absolute stud cat. Yes, how badly I wanted to stroke Tommy...

There you go again. In the cat world, stroking is akin to hugging. We stroke our heads together in fond affection when we love each other, be it brotherly love or the *darling, sweetheart* kind of love. No prizes for guessing which one here. You see, I have never dated another cat before. I mean, I'm hot, and I'm not blowing my own trumpet. Elephants have trumpets. But I'm usually the center of attention wherever I go. Why, I have dogs falling for me. (Excuse me bitches.)

Tommy was different because he was innocent. Like he knew nothing about the big bad world we live in. He was a stray and he had made my heart go astray...

When I say stray it's like saying he was poor... in your world. But the poor in our world are the rich in your world. One thing I don't understand is how humans evaluate everything with money. Take a Mercedes waiting at a traffic light. An impoverished man begging outside the window. You are more likely to say "Wow, what a car!!!" than "Wow, what a man!!!" Yet, that man, however unkempt and dirty and foul smelling he may be, is a wonder of God's creation. He is LIVING. A miracle. And the car is a THING. Yet you are lost in the bottomless ego pit of the material world... you cannot take your eyes off the car.

I wonder what Tommy is doing right now. Is he enjoying a breathtaking view of the starry skies and thinking of me now and then? Could he be masturbating? Do cats masturbate? Of course not silly. I have a ceiling on top of me. There are two rooms, a hall and a kitchen in this house. The door is locked. You people build walls around yourselves and dread the thought of ever going to prison. Why is that any different from the cage you already live in? Truth is, you want to feel like you own something. It makes you happy to acquire and sad to lose. The only thing you ever acquire is love. Like my love for Tommy now. That opens up my

veins and makes my blood rush faster. Love is everything because that's who you are. Have you ever watched a sad movie? You ever wonder why you cry when there's a sad scene? Even when you know the characters aren't real? It's because that's your very nature, that's who you are. That will remain forever, not a Mercedes.

My beautiful thoughts of Tommy were rudely interrupted by the front door slamming shut. The man I sleep with every night (hey, at least I'm faithful) had returned from a long night of work. You humans are always working. It's really funny because most of you try so hard to be in control all the time and then spend all your hard earned money on losing that very *control* in a bar, just like the one at Farukh's. Even then, you hang so desperately onto that *control*, saying things like "Of course I'm not high" and being extra careful when you're passing the chips. The rest go to a spa at the end of a day's hard work and just meditate... then you call it *a luxurious experience*. Why, I'm having one right now! Ok, maybe my mind is not all that de-cluttered, what with Tommy's sexy strut playing in an endless loop in the background, but we animals are generally chilled-out dudes, man. Take a cow sitting on the road for example. She lives in a world where grass is of primary importance. *Chewing the CUD* to her is way more important than *Sipping that BUD* to you. It's a matter of survival. Yet the very notion that you might be having fancy thoughts of Obama's policies and how they affect the world have no meaning to her. I mean, if Barack Obama were to stand in front of her and say 'I am the President of the United States of America' he would look like a pretty fool wouldn't he? To the cow he's just another silly man obstructing her view. 'Hey man, you're blocking my view. Get out of here!!!' is probably what she would think. But that doesn't mean the cow is any less important than Obama no...?

So, you may be thinking, what is it that I could possibly learn from a furry little cat that I don't already know. Well, this book is about finding meaning in life...

Why meaning?... You go through this life every day and you don't even try to understand it? Yet you are completely intrigued by the possibilities of other galaxies in the universe where life exists... and you don't want to understand your own self. I took it upon me to write this book because everywhere I go I see sad, unsmiling faces. It's like living has become a burden. Sad faces on buses. On the trains. In cars. On bikes. On the footpath too. Ok. I think you get my point. If at the end of this book I have made you smile, that would be enough for me, I would have arrived.

So what is joy, really? The other day I was outside the café and the revelers inside were enjoying exquisite Parsi dishes like mutton *dhansak* and *patra ni macchi*. Farukh is a Parsi and most people think Parsis are *crack* in a nice sort of way. At the same time an old man was crouched in pain on the pavement just outside. I just thought then, it struck me just then how a single moment can hold such contrasts. So what is this *moment*? This point in time? Is there really A POINT WHERE JOY IS EXPERIENCED? If so, where is it? Inside our brains? In other parts of the body? Are there multiple points like when you're getting a massage? Or is there only one? How big is it? Or small?

You think I'm talking crap and it's probably because you can't digest my thoughts. I can suggest a very good digestive. It's called INTELLIGENCE, but if it's not in your genetic code you might as well shove that useful piece of information up your, you know, *canal*... To be *banal*, I think Farukh is constipated because he releases really powerful missiles at night (Thank God he's in the shower now). That's probably why he's pretty dense headed. Now you may ask, why do I sleep at night? Aren't cats supposed to be out hunting and all? Well most cats are lazy, and if you observe closely, some are slower than the sloth bear. I for one.

You must be acquainted with my friend Garfield... you know, the one in the comic strips. Yes, he's a good friend of mine and he's not imaginary. This is one more thing I can't fathom about

you guys. You think some things are real and some are not. Let me ask you, did you exist in this universe one moment before you were born (fetus not counted)? No. Will you exist one moment after you die then? No. All traces of your physical self will be obliterated. You will only be talked about. Just like Garfield. Where is the proof that you even existed? Apart from gossip and snide remarks about you in your absence, like “Oh what a fool he was”, or “Did you know? He hated using tissue paper?” – where is the physical proof that you even existed? Even if you extend that time frame by millions of years the picture does not change. Only your bones finally decompose, become earth again. I’m not quite sure if you would need a millennium to turn into dust. I haven’t studied Biology you know. Being on paper is as *real* as being *in flesh*... The comic is no imagination. Why should paper be any less real than protoplasm? Or a new prototype of plasma TV? Why should Homer Simpson be any less real than you? And if you think he is, let me ask you, “If I THINK you exist, then you must be IMAGINARY, right?”

And yet, there are so many real people who might as well be imaginary for all the notice you guys take of them. People you ignore, everyday people like the milkman and the guys who paddle the rickshaws, the rickshawallahs. When was the last time you smiled at one of them? At the milkman? The liftman? The guy squashed in the suburban train with you? The ever busy bus conductor? Even the traffic policeman standing there in the sweltering sun? There is just so much more in this world than you notice. And if you don’t notice what is so central to your daily life outside, no wonder that you notice nothing of what is going on inside you!

Farukh is in bed now with me and is petting me heavily. But it’s not the same as being with a cat. What I would do to stroke Tommy now, nestle my head against his chest and curl up into a cute little ball and sleep forever. What *joy* that would be. All

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we would have was each other. I would lick him and he would lick me. Maybe he would grow hard and thrust his cathood into me. I wonder how that would feel. Maybe I would want it in me forever...

