

Checking Out

by Mark Porter

A funny thing happened on the way to my mortality. I had an *idea* I would be checking out. It's not as if it came as this huge surprise that suddenly overwhelmed me and had me awake at nights. Too late in the day for anything so melodramatic. If you abuse your body the way I have abused my body, then let me tell you- it's around the corner. It's never too far away.

You hear things about people newly afflicted with the terminal predicament. They go off and climb Everest or else they run marathons. They find reserves at the depths of their reserves and they *get things done*. Usually they do these things for charity, sometimes not. Sometimes they do these things as the final act – a statement perhaps, or because they are too shit scared to not do them. Not doing them may mean acceptance. Sometimes they do these things, I would imagine, just for the sheer living hell of it all.

I have reached a couple of conclusions in the face of my own conclusion. The first involved time over again. It's impossible not to play the second chance game. I did it *before* my first chance had staggered onto its last legs. Now *there* is due respect for due process.

Anyway, you will have to stop me if I ramble. I'm prone to it. I was waxing on about conclusions. That's right. Well, here we go- I would have stayed single. That's the first conclusion. Stayed solo my entire life. I'm not saying it would be easy, just that I would be prepared to avoid the shit storm of expense incurred through the coupled-up route. Financial and otherwise.

The other conclusion I came to was this: I would avoid people altogether (or all together). I mean to say – it's people that get in the way and ruin things.

Every catastrophe, source of sleeplessness and generally spoiled opportunities in my life can all be traced back to people. Every last jack one of them. People lying to one another, people hurting each other, robbing each other. Had it not been for people, I may still be in reasonable shape here.

Do the litmus test. Check your charts. Every time you had a major boomerang event that ripped and stopped your heart, people were in the middle of it. *Every* time. Don't look at me like that. Take your thumb from your ass and hold it in the air. Ask the right questions and that stump will glow or grow cold.

You'll see, people. You'll see people for what they are. It's always been their reaction to me or mine to them. It's been my refusal to pay them or theirs to pay me. That's why money is the other thing I would try to avoid.

Money does weird things to people. It makes them even more spiteful than they are naturally inclined to be. Money and sex. Sex causes people to lose all sight of who they are. Especially us, the phallus weighted male of the species.

So avoid money and sex would be my advice. Or as stated at the outset, stay single and avoid people. If you stay single and avoid people, you may have no real need of money anyway.

That's what I know, so far.

That's the other thing with people. They can't just accept a thing. I can't just say, 'This is the reality, as I have found it to be' and have them leave it there. They have to doubt and ask questions. 'How do you qualify that?' 'What do you *mean* by this?' and 'Could you give an example?' I tell you really – and this is from the heart – if I had any time left, I would have to say that I would have no time for people.

I am not an idiot. I've had good times and laughter and love (I think) and even great sex, I thought so, anyway. But let's break it down. However you hold it up to the light, love just doesn't stand up. It can't. It is not designed to. Fundamentally, it has a hole through its whole. Everyone's running around going, '*It's based on trust, it's based on trust.*'

It's based on bullshit.

It's built on deception.

Most of the people out there are loving the one they live with because they can't live with the one they love or want to love. Either because it failed already or because they wouldn't stand a chance. Then there are the morons who fantasise about Hollywood stars or rock stars. You don't *know* them baby, and if you did, they would not waste their time with you.

So they settle. In the time honoured tradition they compromise on looks, on compatibility (whatever that means), on philosophy – not the big stuff you understand, small things like: 'Do we pay cash here, or put it on credit?' They lie in the darkness with a sad boner that cannot be satisfied, even when they imagine someone else. Or they lie there and take it, wishing it was him, or him... just not *you*.

Then people say – I’ve heard them – “I can be really honest with you, be myself.” Just do this one thing for me would you? Ask yourself, if your partner had unfiltered access to your mind on a daily basis and you had no function to edit, no compunction to re-word, how many days would it take for them to hate you? Be honest. If you are still there (I’m hanging on) would it even take a full day?

Now, if the answer is no it’s because you have already taken a trigger and blown your deceit skywards, or at least backwards onto that wallpaper you compromised with.

People are too secretive. It’s not a criticism, just an observation and I include myself. We all want what we haven’t got and we all want extra money, sex and time. Some want extra money, sex and time to spend on anyone other than who they are bouncing the springs with at the moment. Even those who genuinely love their partner – and I’m not so cynical, so withered to say they don’t exist – can never be blameless. No-one caught up in an entanglement of phone messages, shopping lists and utilities can help but wonder on other possibilities. Even in strong marriages, one partner is often just a sentence or two away from throwing it all to another person.

Those with the courage to follow through go somewhere new and find, in time, that it is just somewhere old in disguise. Those with real courage stay behind and persevere; they endure. Who wants to endure? What kind of life is that? Endure and die a bit every day. Tell just enough lies, to yourself if you have to, to get by.

Back to the laughter thing – I can feel a belly laugh coming, can’t you? I’ve enjoyed it – laughter, I mean. Despite the impression I may be giving you that I have never stepped foot onto the chuckle field, never thrown my head back in cruelty at someone else’s expense. I won’t say as much as the next man, I hesitate to say that because who is the next man? Whilst we are on that, why doesn’t the ‘next man,’ ‘average man’ and ‘man in the street’ go out and get drunk with the ‘best man’ and the ‘man of the moment’ and stop letting people trample them into mediocrity. Anyway, laughter is supposedly the best medicine but I’m beyond medicine so don’t waste too much of your time on that, either.

I could go on but time and money are an issue. If I had insurance they would probably let me live longer but with no real beneficiaries to speak of (I don’t like people much) I have no insurance. And time... well, you know how that turned out.

I'll leave you to it now. Remember what I said. Sex, people, and money- they will all fuck you over. Trust me; if you can trust anyone, those items are not needed in your basket.

Who should you tell when I'm gone? No-one. Have you not been listening?

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