

Mending Fences

Dear Carey, and James Flint,

As I am writing both of you I shall make them parallel letters and between the two you will both be caught up.

I have thought of you every day since we exchanged emails between Christmas and New Years last year. And yes, I had not opened your two emails since then until you sent the one I received a day or two ago, regarding the Starlight, and titled The Fourth of May. I think a great deal of you Carey. You are an extraordinarily talented artist but also a fine person. I don't make friends easily and have trouble keeping them. It is my own problem that I am just not good with people. The only thing I do well is sculpture – the only thing I have ever wanted to do.

I wish to stay your friend and colleague far into the future. So I am going to use some of my limited library computer time over the next few days to see if I can mend this, or at least end your confusion. So let me paint you a word picture of the time and the circumstances.

You know I have been on the float since my Hanford studio burned. "Couch Surfing" a friend of mine calls it. Rarely more than a few nights under the same roof. Working on proposals to BNFL, RAL, and others for a commission to create the Fourth Reliquary. My computer skill level is low, I type five words a minute, and everywhere I stayed it was a different system. I wasn't getting much done or feeling very good about the ATOMICA show or anything else.

Over Christmas I had a seven-day housesit at a friends with computer access so I tried to really knuckle down and get caught up. That is when I sent you the **poisoned** email. We had talked about a collaborative project when I was in London and I have never collaborated with anyone before ever, on anything. So I sent you a draft of a letter to Ombretta and Paul and Mara came home and I was back on the streets and it is late December and raining steady.

I am rich in friends and there a dozens of homes I am welcome in, no questions asked. Like, everybody is kinda worried about me. But I am a stubborn son-of-a-bitch and don't take well to charity. Serious underlying mental health issues.

So picture this Carey. I have been on the streets three days and am soaked. My bags are soaked and I am coming down with a cold. I pull into the library to check my mail. Pools of water are leaking out of my bags. Small puddles under my chair from my wet cloths. I looked pretty disheveled and the librarians are watching me with some concern. And I have an email from you.

And you just fucking ripped into me about getting in the way of your relationship with Ombretta and that I had no business approaching her about a collaboration with you and I

was way out of line... and you REALLY, REALLY hurt my feelings and PISSED ME OFF.

So I guess I wasn't clear that what I sent you was a draft. That what I was trying to do with that letter was initiate a correspondence with you on a possible collaboration that you had suggested and we had talked about in July.

And I answered you to that effect – that I had NOT sent the letter but rather was approaching you and that YOU were out of line and I don't remember the letter exactly but I probably was not very polite. And I now apologize. My demeanor was clouded with anger now and my time almost up so I left the library before I had to talk to security.

I walked down to my friend Toms video editing studio where I receive snail mail and a check for \$200 had come it from a lecture I had given at the U of W Nuclear Physics Lab early in December. I bussed out the ship canal to where an old friend of mine from Alaska lives on his sailboat. Randy took me in for a few days to get out of the rain and over the cold. While on the boat I telephoned all the cheap motels and flops on or near a bus line and rented the cheapest one for one week. \$186.26 with tax and key deposit. I moved in 30 December.

Unpacked everything and dried stuff out over the radiator. Decided to blow off the ATOMICA show as it wasn't worth losing any friends over, pretty much stopped opening email at the library and just drew for a week.

The Starlight Hotel has 8 rooms on ground level and 8 rooms on the second floor, which is where I was then and am again now. One toilet and one shower on each floor although each room has a sink. It is populated by crazy people, drug-dealers, prostitutes and everyone is on the run from something: interior demons, ex-spouses, parole violations, drug deals gone bad, hookers escaping abusive pimps... you get the picture. On New Years Eve four cops in flack vests broke down the door next to mine and arrested two guys. No shots were fired.

And Carey and Jim, I thrived in this strange setting. No phone, no interruptions, no visitors – just time to draw. When my week was up I knew I needed more time so I telephoned a friend and said, Look, I can't show you anything now but I am on a runner and I need \$200 for another week and when I am done I'll give you a drawing. And it worked. It worked four times with four friends. I produced slightly better than a drawing a day for five weeks. Solved a lot of nagging compositional problems. My hand and eye grew steady and better and better. It was heaven. Everybody was happy with the drawings they received (I gave them all away) and I went back on the streets.

So a couple of months pass of couch surfing and I keep working on proposals for The Fourth Reliquary, re-checking the physics, pricing 316 low-swell stainless, boosting smoke detectors for an Am Be source in case I make the work here in the States. I decide the ATOMICA exhibit is a strong card to play to win a commission with BNFL so continue to cooperate with Ombretta.

The sewing circle that keeps track of me, collects my art, are my friends and supporters, were pretty damn impressed with that five-week run of drawings. They were even trading them amongst each other like baseball cards.

So three weeks ago I get an email from the guy who purchased Monstrance for a Grey Horse back in 2000. Jim Flint has a newspaper article on it I think. So Joey said: James, you have three months pre-paid rent in the Starlight and an envelope with \$200 cash in the room. You don't owe me anything. Do good work.

And I am back in the Starlight. Drawing mostly, but using my library time to work on proposals. However getting straight with you, and caught up with Jim Flint became the priority this week. This is the fourth day I have used my hour here to work on these two letters. When you two have both letters along with the Fourth of May you have my present standing testament. I hope it fills in the blanks and ends your confusion. I am not good with people, or most of the normal things on this miserable planet, but I would like to stay friends with you, and I know that is not easy.

So my every best wish to you Carey. I am in the Starlight two and a half more months. And Jim, I have about two more days to finish my letter to you.

James L. Acord, sculptor-in-resident, the Starlight