

# **Kerens-*h*-tein**

Anthony DeMarco

*for*

*Pietro Gambino and Daisy Macaluso*

*my grandparents*

Sharon Kerenstein must have stood for forty minutes or more contemplating some flagrant misdeed perpetuated by one misspoken office clerk. In someone else's dream they had become entwined unwillingly. Mistaken for another and uttered forth unknowingly ultimately harked back to her own modest undertaking, some carried insignificance to all but she who might take the time to stop and consider. Stop and ponder some ruder awakening, blinder omission of one faded character brought over so hopefully and with no rancor held toward those who had forced upon, involuntary untruth resounding well into the better part of this once unfulfilled sea of burgeoning promise alluring. Still blinder flirtations would have always entranced this slighter furtherest generation – Kerens-*h*-tein – and still further removed toward anything else she might have hoped to become. Some widening silk pulled higher until Sharon could withhold no more. One's own mind heading back and around to that point which brought her on to this ever increasing oceanic embrace would still this mighty point of reason from which some new world undertaking had departed. Unnecessary trappings of a time gone so soothingly, time obscured through the advancement of one not-so-foolish undertaking and out of some sea of translucent blue wet and wetter still until emerging in sleeker desire and object lesson to all that one's own tired mind could produce inevitably. Back to that one faded character would continue to beckon Sharon Kerenstein to all but that most indelible of scholarship remaining. Hours and hours of poring over one sharpened page after another, modernized reprinting of older versions, documents drawn up and out of some archive long revered might have provided some island sitting in deference to the grand lady reaping out a shadow of hope over the tired many, and still lost amidst piles of yellowed records defining the stench over which beckoned some brightest new endeavor. Kerens-*h*-tein forgotten. Kerens-*h*-tein begotten and sub-rendered. And so Sharon would continue with her noble undertaking, ne'er hesitating until one well thought-out time displacement might soon have its way with her. Pushing back against some finer notion of what it should have promised to be at the heart of one's own all encompassing civilization, and brought back to a time and place so distant that one could only gasp in harrowed anticipation of what it might promise to lay down before some figure awaitingly. Longing pathetically and all too willing to tempt the very hand which had first brought her over into this everlasting feast, time and time again inconsolably.

Sharon Kerenstein had never pretended to be some genealogical scholar. Quite the contrary, she had always held on firmly to her own academic inclinations, steadfast in her refusal to be waylaid by any such inconsequential foreplay. Her great-grandparents had emigrated at a relatively advanced age, and notwithstanding such stories of so-and-so who had departed with little more than the merest childish recollection of gathering pebbles beneath one dusty edifice, peering discerningly down some stone path did little to comfort Sharon in the knowledge that hers was a forbearance far more prepared for the slings which were to be borne. Minsk had by that time become a place enshrouded in some unmistakable misaccountability, what with everyone for no-one and then looking about for some uncertain satisfaction disheartedly. Some pig's knuckles repast might send one off to bed beneath some last glimmer of exhausted expectation renewed. True, the sun would always rise on the morrow, ridden with soot and sorrowed past this present loss of initiative resignedly, some greater stride over to that engine of industry would tempt, and oh so seductively drawing Sharon to gaze back toward some finer circumstance, bolder initiative which

was to sow its seed upon her very own. Warmed in slighted puddles upon one's own budding sense of time and place could leave no room for any such tide of wont and regret. Had there been some reason preordained for such a swift change? Meager correction or finer betterment still? Had it meant anything at all? Or did it simply play upon the moistened remains of one's own passing fancy?

Distant and not far off sounds of carnival in full fare now became encompassing to Sharon. It was not by chance that she had chosen such a venue within which to practice her profession, with teaching alongside some whitened rockaway beach given way to those more treasured reminiscences of her youth. Upon one particular temptation, some sanded beach 116<sup>th</sup> Street approach would always make for those finer afternoon preludes, salt-filled endeavors complicating her once insipid girlish void all too often and none at once challenging. Sharon began to acquire the best that she could possibly conjure, benign enchantment foretelling as other tasks had placed some more noble commitment upon her. Whirling noises colliding with one out-of-tune calliope and calling out to some little boy in mid-delight, lazy sun struggling through this leftover morning island haze in gentler promise of one's fuller day length infantile joy and innocence would still impinge on those who had left their hearts and minds adrift. Innocence framed within that last ill-fated character – *Kerens-h-tein* – would echo that which Sharon had nurtured within for all those years, only now struggling to emerge and standing stoically in kinder embrace. Some gentlest consolation would lead affectionately toward one's own affliction brought forth, teasing time along the way and unbending toward that very life circumstance which had so appeared so unforgivingly. Some prolonged rightward tilt would once again point Sharon's gaze aloft, one rising wheel come round, then back down as the carnival continued its hackneyed call and consent. One, two, three ...one, two, three ...until Sharon could truly withstand this melancholic menagerie no more.

The list she had uncovered on that one graying saturday afternoon was much lengthier than she could have imagined. Alphabetical and remindingly of just one above, some straight-edged monotony peering downward in fiercer inspection and drawing nearer to that margin beneath made for some still furthest moistened recline in her thinking. Some later lunch hour surrender to one's innermost necessities would lead on to the next smallest imprint – *Alexei, Albert, Andros, Androky* – surname unchanged throughout moments of time passing but not. Some ne'er changing portrait upon which might bear the fruit of one's own more casual scholarship, devoid of even some meagerest remuneration set squarely upon this one graying saturday afternoon and would have belittled even that smallest of better intention. How very kind she had thought that the chief archivist should bow to her hastened request! This and more so upon some blither reflection of just how important was one's regeneration amidst some busier work week celebration, still sitting for the next three hours in determined effort of one more singular fixation upon names brought over but altered insensibly. Some hastier passing on and masses awaiting one's own briefest inoculation crying out to the loved ones who had managed to slip on ahead in mid-rejoice, only to be turned back upon some sullener realization. Medical records in simplest fabrication until time would yield no more took on some even more urgent significance when Sharon's forbearer could no longer proceed and detained insurmountably while undergoing one's worst underided nightmare. Just those characters which one calls one's own, individual identities prizedly and would take on no slightest importance for the day clerk hitherto disregarded. Personal histories set aback upon one faded omission – *Kerens-h-tein* – and for which some poor soul might have begotten Sharon from within one's own virgin birth unattendedly. Never having found precisely what it was she had been seeking on

that day, Sharon set upon with some more determined effort. Softer images shimmering beneath some more veiled offering had nevertheless been her truest calling, and the blander appearance which she so often rendered was none to match some milkier determination with which she occasionally gave forth. For Sharon had, indeed, become resolute in her decision to re-visit the old continent. Carnival sounds now reappeared, and she arched back even further to perceive some missing thread snapping high above, some graying wisp manufactured by one's own generational tradesmen fascinating and would become ever more appreciated within this newer regime. Thrown into some more lilting rhythm remindingly...one, two, three...one, two... and just for the fun of it. Cotton candy reminders and staring aloft at some tastier attraction would make for those pleasanter sensations and with calling out for one more go of it – first prize, second prize – caught unawares at just how quickly one's time had transpired. Sharon glanced down at her watch in total disregard, festive air yet reminding of some more positive task still to pursue. The fifth period bell would be sounding shortly. Presiding over one final language lesson would bring in some much awaited summertime sojourn, some foreign syntax and having endured beyond that point of threatening to become Sharon's least beloved resource. Alas, she was never to reclaim her rightful character on that graying Saturday afternoon, and alone on some island sitting in deference to the grand lady would present Sharon her one last waking aspiration.

By the time Sharon returned, her classroom was in disarray. Some ninth-grade class grown impatient and decidedly upon taking things into their own hands could never be too little cause for concern. The noise level was beginning to surpass anything the vice-principal would tolerate and Sharon might be hard pressed to explain such an interval, absentminded spendings along the course of this final day's schedule. The rest had appointed McNerney to initiate some regular routine homework review – *pedí, pediste, pidió, pidieron, pedimos* – and with little success. Some alabastered insignificance playing off the better part of one's suddenly come across later day relax, and fairer skinned adolescent girls in partial retreat from their overly ambitious mate would typify this Saint Mary's School for Catholic Girls. Sharon had spent the better part of ten years here teaching *fr*-ench and *s*-panish, with ne'er escaping the irony in one such indelible Jewish tradition having been contracted and retained for so long. Other faiths were never to be slighted. Quite to the contrary, some inexhaustible opening up should have been and always will, righteous diversification in the eyes of a just lord would cry out to all those poorer souls to whom we speak beneath some slighter, more patronizing gesture. Sharon thrived within her well-found niche, and only some stone throw from where she had herself grown up, relishing in the notion that she had ne'er once departed and making it a point to develop herself continually. Painting over with deeper shades of meaning, attempting to define one's own place within this near century-old retreat across some vaster ocean would still give added depth to her somewhat stationary demeanor, while imbibing on those more saliferous sensations which could have never ceased providing her with some most rapturous life blood. Harping upon some inability to exist much further than one dampened ether could extend would become her mantra, some moistened blanket within which to re-negotiate one's own personal writhe and temptation.

- Let's all quiet down, please.
- These immature ducklings won't listen to me.
- Thank you, Miss McNerney. I'll take it from here.

Sharon would persist in drawing upon some good nature ne'er looked down upon. Circumstance irregardless had always extolled her in some finer fashion, untold elegance towering out and over even in the most difficult of situations. Some professional grace more finely written with each passing day, Sharon Kerenstein certainly did pertain to that highest of callings and higher still.

- And where have *you* been, Ms. Kerenstein?

Peggy Dooley would have surely been the first to confront Sharon regarding some better-natured misdeed, unintended concessions unpardoned, some purely accidental misuse of time. As it were precisely she whose general manner most went lacking, drawn out and up over some working regale within which her blessed parents had long been struggling. Then, the Saint Mary's School had long held some certain permanence within this working class section in the borough of Queens, New York. Some fainter redistricting, postal code and decidedly irish upbringing would have characterized this once unimposing piece of shoreline. From some vaster lot they had appeared, years after that of Sharon's own but still much sooner than the Dooleys could have intended and all at once rising daily under some starker realization that this new world had presented its own variety of loftier endeavor. Ne'er quite being able to make ends meet had exhausted until one's own expectant loins might have given in to some pleasanter distraction. Peggy Dooley had thus appeared within some midst unset upon, unsought and completely without any means for some sounder fruition. Hardly knowing and never being made aware of some purest chance which had somewhat cruelly obliged her to look forwards, ne'er unquestioning and would provoke all who taught her to retreat beneath some finer familiar rapport and tolerantly. Poor Peggy this and poor Peggy that would have hardly sufficed but underlie even some tiniest bit of unbridled concern.

- I was just on the boardwalk. I guess I kinda' lost track of the time.
- Jill's been tryin' to tell us that there're only *tildes* on the first 'n' third persons for this verb.
- This one? *Pedir*?
- Yes.
- She's absolutely correct... Come on, group. You should all know that!

Jill McInerney returned to her seat feeling well-vindicated and wondering if there might have been some other matter for which Peggy had been secretly harboring ill will towards her on that day. After all, clutching at grammatical straws would never suit Peggy Dooley, even if *tilde* had always seemed such a pleasant word to say, reluctant scholar and all she would be able to do in graduating with enough merit to take over in running the family store.

- We spoke at length about why and where they're placed. As long as you can understand them, there isn't any reason to memorize when you do and when you don't.

Sharon would not often drift from her lesson plan for the day. But upon some other course so sympathetically chosen and nearing final examinations, she saw no reason not to bend to the practicality which had, after all, come to define just what it was we were all to be about.

- Let's review that rule so that if you get stuck next week you can just figure it out. Can anyone explain it to the class?
- It had something to do with natural accents.
- Yes, it did. Where is the natural accent when a word ends in a vowel?
- On the next-to-last syllable.
- Right! Can anyone name other cases like that?
- When words end in *n* or *s*.
- Okay... Now, would this be correctly or incorrectly written?

Sharon turned toward the blackboard. She carefully wrote a word and placing a mark cheekily over the next-to-last syllable. Unnecessary, and then in some attempt to make it all simpler somehow, keener distraction to whom it might have all been. Pronunciation set back to some more complicated verse and thinking all the while in those softer moments, tenderer satisfactions clouding over one's ability to choose well. Turn-of-the-century mutterings would have made for some easier lack of sounder concentration with one inconsequential character presumed missing or misassigned, and presumably for the better! Could Sharon's own exercise have been more telling of some long-achieved historical misappropriation? Might she not have been just as guilty in forsaking some long-held belief, one's own tendency toward some simplest form of self-expression?

- It's incorrect, Ms. Kerenstein.
- Why, Sheila?
- Because the word ends in a vowel ...
- ... and so it's unnecessary!

On the final verdict, the class chimed in chorus. *Unnecessary*. Whether mockingly or in some wholehearted belief that Sheila could not really do adequate justice to Sharon's sincerest intentions, classroom protocol had once again become moot. And Ms. Kerenstein would convince herself, rest assuredly that hers had and would always have been to that more properly constructed, pedagogical mind defeat never to be so employed out of some more well thought-out sense of verbal abuse. Kerens-*h*-tein had certainly been unduly sacrificed, and for what purpose? Some living about, fairer-minded but harsher sense of reality. Coveted yet spurned, seekingly and

more so until they would become just memories, yellowed blotches of ancient script falling like raindrops upon the gills of one more graying Saturday afternoon. Without necessity to they who had perhaps been denied the valor of some such hurried redirection, oceanic embrace overjoyed and held so dear or spurned by some such superfluosness. Some unidentified inclination toward certain death frightened but then encouragingly and onto this holiest of exercises. Generational nurturing of some seed sown within and for no good reason, other than that of one wholesale salvation of this ne'er flourishing race. Some sanded beach 116<sup>th</sup> Street fantasy sought after and further still, years passing with ne'er a whisper's breath holding one back from achieving all to which some long ago abandonment had once given promise. Still, the thought that it *was* unnecessary had begun to lend some realer consideration to Sharon. Some finer leaning forth and better perfumed illumination of that perseverance, common sense living along and toward one healthier renunciation of some overly wrought insignificance. Kerens-*h*-tein ... but then the evening bell had signalled the end of someone else's turn, phrases shifted beneath the burden of some more hurried task. This is just as it might have occurred, thought Sharon, some quicker re-positioning of one torn first encounter held strife to one's even more overwhelming sense of daily routine. Without even the least bit of malice intended, and unknowing wholly of some more precarious history which it were to usher in.

- Very good, girls. I'm sure you'll all do very well on next week's exam.
- With such a good teacher, why shouldn't we?
- Well, you're very good students and I'm sure I'll miss you all next year.
- Just next year?
- And the rest, of course.

Sharon had never had any doubt about what it was she would do with her life. Having graduated in the top third of her class, Sharon's studies had always provided some reasonable means for a more prolonged, easier achievement and having shunned those more lucrative imaginings that her family had tried to instil. Never once forsaking urgently, some higher devotion would continue to tease Sharon until well into the better portion of her middle-age and hopefully beyond. Looking backward and revelling in the vaster quantity of needier spirits tended to, some future bedecked with one's own shining sense of compassion and generosity might ne'er once have led on repentantly. Some moaning misambition would beset others, yet upon them she might yearn soothingly within her own gentler academic aspiration, unpityingly understood and always given forth in some kinder way. Upon catching the lexington avenue northbound might lead her astray for just a moment, catching herself in time and beginning diligently through some aging professorship squandered – though lexington had always been theirs – and would eventually school her in those pedagogical tools which were to become hers alone. Some gilded wand held out to the jaded class in strictest remuneration for all the joy which they had bestowed upon her unintendedly. With one eye on her heritage and the other on some birthright as yet unfulfilled, Sharon's promise would fall into step with those who might have ever had an occasion to become one with her. Now having found herself squarely at a crossroads, she would be about to fold

this Saint Mary's School fondly into the coveted linen which sheltered her most untimely embark. Makingly of some dreamier record, still youthful considerations had let her onto the notion that some continental undertaking might quiet her heaving anticipation. Intellectual yearnings going over amongst ties emotionally could not quite certain her desire to engage in one most important reconciliation and had led Sharon to consider embarking soon upon what had always been some long-cherished journey. Arriving back to that place and time in some attempt to speculate about who we are and where we should be going. Haphazard events would depress Sharon – Kerens-*h*-tein – as much as anyone, and so she decided that leaving that which had long become her most beloved, to seek out some more ethereal explanation of why some lingering differential might present itself in the way it had, would be the proper thing to do. She had considered that even those tenets of human behavior so crucial to some pre-ordained coexistence unfettered, unconditional and might turn out to be quite similar should it necessarily become called upon to defer. Two separate continental spheres, old and new within some perfect step and this she had surely considered. People and places, characters and temperaments marching on would prove to be some purely parallel homogeny. Still, it would have all been worthwhile, and when her own progeny and more so were to one day ask as to the betterment of this once elusively divided race, religion against religion and falling easily upon Sharon, she might close her eyes in one final dream sleep awakening of all she had left and tried to do.

- Why're you leaving St. Mary's, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I'm going to Europe.
- To Europe?
- That's right.
- When?
- I'm hoping to go in a couple of weeks.
- For good?
- Well, it's always hard to say. But I'd like to stay for at least a year.

An odd silence fell over the class just as Sharon was beginning to warm to the idea of being more forthcoming.

- Any more questions?
- Where're you going?
- I know, interrupted Sheila, Spain or France.
- Now, why would you say that?
- 'Cause you speak Spanish and French.

Sharon laughed.

- You're a good detective. Actually, I'm going to Madrid.
- What're you goin' to do over there?
- Good question! But I'll be sure and send postcards whenever I can to keep all of you informed.
- Maybe you'll be back here someday, said McInerney.
- Well, after Madrid I hopefully won't be coming back to Queens just yet.
- Are you going on some kinda' tour?
- Something like that.
- So where are you goin' after that, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I'll try and go to Russia. Has anyone ever been to Russia?

The class was starting to appear quite dumbfounded by now. Sharon would not be able to go on baiting them forever, and she would have felt decidedly disappointed upon not being able to calm some still lingering need for furtherest *cotilleo*.

- Isn't it *freezing* in Russia, Ms. Kerenstein?
- That's what they say, Peggy, but I've never been there. It'd certainly be quite a change coming from Spain though, wouldn't it?

Sharon was beginning to lead her class onto some slower motion adolescent reflection, upon some more calculated vision and one-after-the-other opening up to some newer and more constant sense of self-awareness. What it was exactly that they might ever wish to achieve would hold her imagination at bay throughout the ages, and never would they be further away than some merest whisper given forth affectionately, one faintest recollection settled sweetly upon some ever more increasingly distasteful daily state of haste.

- Why do ya' wanna visit Russia?
- Well, my great grandparents were from there, and I'd like to see where they came from.
- My great grandparents were from....
- ...Ireland, blurted out Sheila.
- That's right, said Sharon turning back toward the class. We're all children or grandchildren of immigrants, aren't we?

- Didn't you say you were Jewish, Ms. Kerenstein?
- Yes, I am, but Jewish descendants could have been from a lot of different places.
- I didn't know you were Jewish, exclaimed Peggy.
- She told us at the beginning of the year. Can't you remember anything? scolded Sheila.

Her impatience with Peggy Dooley would resurface amidst some oft recurring inability to think in a forward way, one's own whining insistence on some ill-focused disregard for that which is or had already been spoken or discussed. There would thus always be certain students forever marginalized by their peers, within their own circles and slighted upon. Befriended out of some sheerer necessity and with ne'er some slightest bent to one's own more heartfelt show of affection, Peggy Dooley would never represent the least of such.

- Besides, continued Sheila, her name is Keren-*STEIN*... Get it?
- Oh, stop the teasing! Actually, the name probably wasn't Kerenstein when my great grandparents arrived at the turn of the century...
- ...that's *last* century, Peggy!

It was no use. The class laughed, but Sharon had now been more inclined to throw some sterner glance toward Sheila, and making it implicitly clear that some more middle-aged rising above and putting things into order should be called for. When the class had again settled down, she resumed.

- I found out that the name might've actually been Kerens-*h*-tein.
- How do you know that?
- Well, I checked some old birth records from the city they came from...
- ...in Russia?
- That's right. You can do that sort of thing pretty easily.
- Why is *your* name different, Ms. Kerenstein?
- Very often, when immigrants arrived to Ellis Island – do you all know where that is...?

All at once, the class broke into some frenzied attempt to reassure Sharon. Alas, poor Ms. Kerenstein could nay find a place to get a word in.

- Isn't that the Statue of Liberty?

- It *can't* be the ...
- It's just in front of New Jersey and ...
- ...you can see it from the Staten Island Ferry.
- How do *you* know about the Staten Island Ferry? inquired McInerney.
- Her cousin lives there ...
- ...on Ellis Island?
- No, smarty. On *Staten* Island. Her parents moved there when her little brother was born.
- Why?
- The house was too small, or...
- I'll bet they don't have a great beach like ...
- ...Okay, okay. Please, girls!

Sharon would be quick to return the class to some order.

- Ellis Island sits just off to one side of Liberty Island. You can imagine the quantity of people passing through there everyday. Personal information was always recorded by hand, and mistakes were often made. Most times, the officers spoke other languages poorly or not at all, and this would've often led to some confusion. Or maybe they were simply too tired and overworked to write clearly...
- ...like Peggy on an exam.
- That's cruel, Sharon scolded.
- Why don't ya' go there to check for yourself, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I did. I went there in person and was given permission to have a look in the archives.
- Did ya' find the name?
- No. As a matter of fact, I couldn't find any record of my great grandparents at all! I found many Kerensteins and Kerens-*h*-teins, but none with my great grandparents' first name.
- Maybe they never *came* at all! exclaimed Sheila.

– Then how on earth did *I* get here to be able to teach all of you wonderful students?

This the class pondered for a couple of seconds, but more so anxious to finish off for the day and would have made for just one more period marking of the end of regular classes. Some summertime went beckoning evermore assuredly in this seaside village in the borough of Queens, and there would be none-too-many arrangements to be made before any of it could come down cleanly into one's own more well prepared, better feeling. Picking up after herself would be pleasant enough for Sharon, although saying goodbye had cost her more than she could have imagined. The class, too, had sensed that time might allow for so little within the course of one's own life discourse. Words spoken too few would always be paramount for the likes of McInerney, and trying to find that time and space into which more might endure would never cease providing some gnawing sense of futility to which we all inevitably become some closest lifelong companion. In due time, Sharon stepped back out onto the boardwalk and into the sunshine for which she had been hoping earlier, some warnened reminder of just how fortunate she had been for so many years. She could scarcely recall that day when she had inquired into some readily acquired situation at Saint Mary's. No-one could have ever pondered some such school so leadingly onto the rustle of this ephemerally chastened beachfront. Stepping directly from some eastward corridor and directly onto the boardwalk would have surely granted pleasure to those willing enough to lie back into the background of this eternally moistened landscape, veritable banquet of sea and sand. Upon the sounding of the final bell, some disinterested bystanders from afar would be bemused to have the opportunity of tracing the path of one prettier young girl gliding chaotically through the throng. Some seething youth migrating outward toward one's final day rejoice would now have Sharon negotiating her most privied path. Some two hundred feet remaining and in approximate parallel to that which had met with her most ardent lifelong embrace. Then turning the corner and led her back onto some sanded beach 116th Street, more determined than ever to sift through the trappings of those who had endowed her with all to which she could have ever hoped to aspire.

- II -

*...hacia belén  
va a una burra  
rin, rin  
yo me remendaba  
yo me remendé  
yo me eché un remiendo  
yo me lo quité  
cargada de chocolate*

Sharon passed quickly by the church which might have become some more righteous passage into one, some more drawn out life endeavor and presenting itself inappropriately as this latest in century-old common sense. Continuing to put forth unashamedly within some newer, more modern time and place had survived even that lengthiest of journeys. One's own transcendent aberration upon those ancient superstitions ill-shed, and would promise to soothe over this aching inquietude naturally occurring, some sullener realization that one's own life expanse had indeed been given some new added breadth. Some religious service placating the voices of those lingering behind, and one well-tuned chorus resonantly might have provoked her to stop and listen. Beneath some steeple ne'er supine, and above some quieter children's strains could scarcely be heard this fiercer tone penetration more piercingly through one dampened street. Sharon had arrived in Madrid at the beginning of July, and struggling to sustain some previously conceived notion that language classes could be sufficiently given at that time. She was well disappointed to learn that hardly anyone would take an interest in language study during such heated hours, and she languished on patiently through the waning days with drawing upon resources brought over from home and would await patiently some more proper *s*-panish appetite for language study unbelated. Now some cooler winter determination had set in, and with sounds all too reminiscent of any such kind, sudden incidental slumber. Setting carols about and gently treading upon one thinnest cap of crystalline frost would continue to be amongst her most prized possessions, precarious and placed unpromisingly upon one whitely sanded still. Sharon cannot have achieved much more than some early adolescence when she took up singing at the synagogue during Hanukkah festivities. At one time, she had even considered making music some well-deserved career and with going on further into those melodies, counterpoints ill-conceived and still hoping to perish upon one last tone intonation. Now hearing some *s*-panish *villancico* just in passing and would produce this loneliest reminiscence, some dormant beach imagination hintingly of the regret she might be made to endure forever. Some fairest throughout and awaiting that continuing circle which would mark clearly the stations away from those staid planifications from which we all tend to shy.

*... yo me remendaba  
yo me remendé  
yo me eché un remiendo  
yo me lo quité  
cargada de chocolate*

One more verse went fading on as she neared the precipice of not knowing what to do next, where to be and within this wholly consuming life incorporation. Some unbearable piece of chance having had once taken hold, as in some other symbol dispossessed – Kerens-*h*-tein – and would tend to lose all but that most steadfast of chaos. Holding one captive amidst this never ending mosaic configuration, and seeing suddenly some alter-ego characterization put forth at precisely that time and place would succeed in spotting vainer recognitions, tempting sufficiently (or so one would hope). Sending one back along to that reckoning of their own proper birth, too long set adrift and trying hard not to regret the fortitude which one had had to muster in seeking one's way back. Lacking in some genealogical erudition all the more would go on enticingly – Kerens-*h*-tein – and still bent on achieving that most sacred of challenges outright. Now Sharon was approaching the hostel to which she had been directed and was just up the street. It had been serving as some more-than-welcome

retreat, some more-than-welcome conjugation to that which she could no longer caress, no longer feel and not wishing to hold on any longer to the inane presumption that all would be well. Some generational drift had made for this ever-increasing mind complication, some simplicity confounded and would confront non-specifically one's own sense of purpose uncluttered, disappearing slowly upon decades and decades of some inconsequential year-upon-year. Soul unsettling in its trajectory and more-than-slight undertakings cooling over each preceding generational harvest would have borne out McInerney's explanation as having had been frightfully candid, some peer inspired unwillingness and would have contributed to their own very sense of unlearning. Deconstruction had been all that Sharon could perceive, and for this she might have been inclined to return to some more initial sense, guilt-free reduction pointing back to the place where one's own seed had been sown, one's own spiritual journey begun. Some correction might perhaps be afforded in some other universe, but ne'er in this. One should always look backward for the proper sense, she reasoned, for this might provide some more correct manner of proceeding in the present. Not doing so would be only to admit to some more transparent veil of non-existence, arbitrary self-consuming mind goings-over for which some unforgiving roll of the dice were to mark and relegate.

Sharon had quickly become accustomed to this wholly inconsequential fleetingness, history unrequited and never revealed. Swimming out into some open sea, searching out they who had tossed her onto this earth-worn beaten-down existence in the first place. Shedding all but some sheerest of feigning still, shadowings throughout some bodily existence would move her through some warmer fluidity, wettest and gliding freely upon one's own more prurient understanding. Finally arriving to that furthest point of sea swept isolation, and revelling in the notion that it were she who would pass on easily into one's own most coveted dream sleep, always unawakening and peaceably. Kerens-h-tein would have been avenged at last, what with costing little to those whose upcoming sojourns were to better present themselves. Sharon reached her building and paused to consider that in the basement was a bath house to which she had ne'er hitherto lent any concern. It's not that she had been resentful of its presence, instead pausing to reconsider that it, too, had probably been done over with regard to some pastest inclination. Historical atmospheres changing but then not had always played teasingly, what with coming on again in some more welcoming fashion and daring upon one's own timidity outright. How practical it must have all been! Some fifteenth-century Arabian portal passing on, some sunlit filtering and favoring those within one moistened cauldron could have exercised gently upon such tenderest of musings. Peering through some layered midst, one form barely looked up to and unwilling to recognize the fact that they, too, might have at times sat longingly. Lying within some aching bath warming and gazing upwards through some illumined fog, downward rectangular prism of misted enchant ne'er forgone would have rendered unnecessary any present need for self-gratification. And all the while with some silkened form moving more gently still, this time within some slower motion turning more softly and revealing of some gentler supplicant lowly and unashamed. Sharon could remember as a little girl accompanying her mother to the baths on Brighton Beach Avenue and then all flustered at not being able to enter. Waiting outside until some uncertain urge pressed upon and might tempt towards one's own softest inhibition. Trying harder to escape some nagging indecisiveness on her part, lingering guilt as some constant reminder of this fast upcoming mortality inescapable, some quicker rush to judgement calling still. *Come in, Sharon! Just come in!* But Sharon could not move. Standing still, moving first to then fro within some littler known pre-adolescent

misunderstanding and budding fear would prevent any such premature emancipation. Some blander looking into and lurching cautiously upon those more insipid misconceptions were to bar Sharon from performing even those milder tasks so cherished ordinarily. She might have considered following on in hope of encountering some slighter intimidation, gentler impedance toward her once purest imagination still. But she might not have brought herself to enter the bath house on that day. *Come in! Just come in!* If not for one such supplication and could have become, resting temporarily upon some numbness, inner inclination and liklier musings which could have caused her to move on more slowly toward this kinder appreciation. In fact, she entered the bathhouse. Some more reluctant going back and then not wishing to annoy, commonplace maternal instinct knowing better would have always given way to Sharon's own. Hers was a still developing sense, and would later be inclined to some more lasting reliance on deception as a legitimate means. Half-naked women readying themselves for some more vaporous satisfaction would leave its own lingering impression as captioned figures stooped in one's own soapier deliberation had, and gathered around some opened shower stalls. Wanton displays and unabashed sightings might have encouraged Sharon onto some more lifelong project, sinuous coming downs and ne'er vestal throughout. Some finer milk, willed determination in sensing a more rounded, curved response to those sightlier grievances which would soon begin to take their toll. Sharon had never been able to forget those more pungent aromas leaving behind as her mother had guided along some less insipid path, within some sleeker determination and might brush gently against one of those of the younger set. Not all that much older than Sharon, they would go on seeming unimaginally beautiful, and impressing upon her waywardest sensibilities right up to and throughout her time at the girl's high school. Then slipping into her bathing costume would have only let onto some more regularly encouraged vulnerability, regularly possessed penchant foretold for missed opportunity one after another. One more fleeting whisk of fetidity could have only encouraged this more proper disposition and wilfully, with now setting in place one final sheathe, some tenderest envelopment calling out to Sharon's lone solitary possibility. She had not regretted making any concession to her mother on that occasion, and being ever so more intent on hurrying at her mother's behest she did move within some quicker tide. Neither Kerenstein nor Kerens-h-tein could have dissuaded her from answering the call, for falling back might have presented her with one more seductive sensation, this gentler multitude now having begun to take its toll. Still perfumed hair length tide of forward motion and leaving Sharon's mother in some state of complete anticipation for the girl. Kerenstein staring downward dutifully and carefully measuring steps across some rectangular grid, some warmest ceramic turning up in comelier regard, comelier boutique of massed motion towards one's inner pool of feminine effete. Opaque figures poorly understood might have caused Sharon to momentarily forget where it was she had been becoming. The baths at brighton beach had long been done over in some distinctly eastern style, and this became quickly evident upon entering the main enclosure. Some less serious interpretation could have more easily been called for, and this might be ill-considered when taking into account some tide of fertility to which it acquiesced on this or any other day. Some rising swell longed after, and content to frame the quarterless spirit soaking through this forever changing panorama would embellish Sharon's initial experience and upon lowering herself slowly into the lukewarm bath. It more resembled one of those swimming pools in which she had passed considerable hours when she was a toddler. Barely recognizing the inconsequential, premature play wrought and left indelibly upon one's own girlish innocence would certainly tend to titillate. Hours upon hours of oceans swelling in

gentler play, this way then that until her mother could tolerate some youthful enthusiasm no more. Leaving the little one behind and going off in search of one finer attraction, behind some more corpulent figure glancing back at mister so-and-so in arduous want until Sharon's youthful gleam might cease to punish. Prelude to some quieter moments would all but seal this fearfully maternal bond into which both had been so cruelly tossed. Now her mother would have been content to guard some less combative demeanor, for Sharon had been quite adamant at the main entrance. Some larger rectangular pool in accommodation of one's own more tepid aqueous repose and could only entice her to enjoy this and what was to become her most quintessential vaporous moment. Calling down to her innermost wishes and would feel some slowly rising, effusive understanding unsatisfied and demanding more ever still. Warmed and warmer seeking of some pleasanter response to that most age-old of dilemmas, self-gratification disguised beneath this temperate baptism ne'er blessed and most tellingly of one, as if having been refined upon some more spontaneous nocturnal escape. But the time for such well-timed perfumed fancy had not yet arrived for Sharon, and little did she know that the murkier volume into which she presently occupied would eventually give way to her own yearning submissions. Some determination for uncovering that first organic saturation, generational harvest reaping her own self from within this none-too-ancient world. Older ideas and values caught up into and poisoning her more modern pretension of how things ought to be would eventually have their way with her. Then placing down upon this wettest bottom unyielding and could have only encouraged some more fantastic thinking about the way things should become.

When Sharon at last set upon the hostel's principal entrance, she became surer than ever, one and more staid throughout regarding her current project. Feeling those balmy sensations could have only flowed more freely from within some much earlier history well-intentioned, some more cosmic warmth transcendent and across some greater span of years would continue to tease Sharon in her warding off of time inescapable. Some better well-placed symbol whose meaning might depend upon one ill-shed character – Kerens-h-stein – and sitting in loneliest contemplation, enjoyment reeking from within every fiber in her slender frame. That her mother had spent a lifetime in complete ignorance of this or any other truth was irrelevant, although she had always detected some more of the inquisitive in her father. Some more gazing inwardly, seasoned debaucheries ne'er routine and would have forever let Sharon to blush unashamedly. Now entering and failing to notice the day porter leaning heavily, too dazed to know much about whether any of the occupants' post were pending to be recovered, letters received unknowingly and would firmly establish this city as some latest bastion of time sequestered. Sharon would have been in the habit of ignoring him in any case, strangely brought about to this particular establishment and would have inclined her to simply step up to the floor at which she would be residing. There was no lift, and Sharon had counted on this in some important way. Some not-so-peculiar device for retaining the little means which had accompanied her to Madrid, and for as long as she possibly could. Language classes aside, and rising swiftly above some stink which would continue to enshroud the day porter lifted Sharon as an angel none-too-lightly, some third floor lodging which would better serve. A bed, sink and toilet were all that adorned her present *touristique* and she would have liked to think that something worse might have easily materialized but could not find it in her heart to do so. Seeking the lowest of lowly circumstances had by now transformed into some wildest provocation, some purest pleasure consumption and would have greedily handed her all those more visceral benefits which had long been denied. Desperately trying not to let it discourage, and would even give rise to some more extraordinary thought regarding

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