

## THE KISSING TREATISE

by Pamilerin Jacob

Perhaps to you, a kiss is a shapeless thing; wet coalition for the exorcism of loneliness. Say, in the thought-vision, a tongue leaps out of a mouth & begs to be grazed by another. You would be half-right. A kiss is a function of hunger. And this much I know: the opposite of hunger is a full mouth.

Fullness in this regard refers to the disposition of absence. Certain hungers multiply absence. Cancer is one such malignancy—the cell conflates desire with dissolution, reaches for boundlessness & is rendered void. This is, on a cellular level, the depiction of the macrocosm. As *within so without*, is the saying of the mystics. The body too, reaches for absence the way a child reaches for its shadow; to hold. But this strain of hunger, the progenitor of the impulse to lock lips, is chief resident of bodies. So turbulent is the need that in some quarters, it has been considered a vile distraction from the primary goal of the soul (which is to expand among principalities, until they beg to be called by its name). In droves, folks flock into synagogues, shrines, to deaden the need. Prayers are concocted, ingested. Desire is rendered a grave offence.

In the exposition of mysteries, the first turning is often to water. I consider this a primal movement. The way a chick turns to its mother for a meal, so the body turns to water for consolation. *All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was*, Morrison has told us. Water turns to water for guidance. Oft, the turning to water is tumultuous. All water also has a perfect hunger. The lesser hunger is subsumed by the greater. This is how I interpret drownings, kisses too.

Many a kiss bears the similitude of rivers; afflicted with the loss of straightness. A kiss is a private proverb, and a myriad interpretation is its woe. Whilst a party in the aftermath of it is flung into gaiety, plans a future with the Other; this Other is as estranged as a nail in a room of balloons. So why do we bother when the chances are slim? What is the use of a protean proverb? *We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses*, says the Zeitgeist. The Moon and Sun are faithful to their movements in hopes of an ecliptic meeting.

It is no esoteric knowledge that a kiss is an exchange of secrets. Water says to water, *here are my microbes, eat*. Or as Jide Badmus puts it in his poem *Dynamite*:

*Put me between your lips*

...

*And feel the flames*

*Burn inside both of us*

Emerson knew well his intention when he proposed that *poets made all the words*. I opine that whereas poets made all words, a kiss is the undoing of those very words; a perfect conduit of intimate communication. A kiss is as efficient as the dolphin's sonar, maybe even more. It is toward this idea that Sexton reached for in her journals, speaking of the human impulse for declaration as the primary locus of intimacy, she wrote, *Kiss me, and you will see how important I am*.

Although the poet seems originator of perfect syntax, they are nowhere as adept as the lover. There is no poem more congruent than bodily communion; no epithalamium more melodic than touch. The word is poor imitation of life. The sound is alien to the object. Language, a vineyard of symbols, merely points, mediates between speaker & object. Whereas words heal, kisses seal. Words simulate feelings; kisses animate them. What is verse in the face of heat, but a stumbling block?

Of particular interest to me is the first kiss; that nerve-wracking, mindboggling, heart-pounding eventuality. I had mine in a church, behind the altar. Perhaps I was coerced, the details are hazy. But one thing is clear; afterwards my lips had earned a new functionality. I find it an evolutionary glitch that though historically, kissing predates speaking—the mother fed her child this way; even before the first syllable was uttered, the offspring knew already the tenets of intimacy—we have been cast into befuddlement in our time, the order upturned.

On the animating power of kisses, one need only look into our stories for relevance. Princess Aurora quickened, from sleep, with a kiss; the Shunammite's son erstwhile dead, cold as a nail, rejuvenated when Elisha laid his holy mouth upon the corpse's, warming it. Remarkable in the Elisha story is that, the prophet had sent forth a servant to awaken the boy with a staff, to no avail. The staff despite its effectuality in all matters was rendered inept for the kindling of the child. A kiss will enlighten the darkest rooms, will unweave impossible knots. The prophet could have lain upon the dead without mouths touching, but he did. He did. Water to quicksand said, *here, my vital force, eat.*

The perception of a kiss solely as a means to orgasmic ends; the idea that it exists primarily as a slippery slope into sexual eroticism is tantamount to seeing running as the end point of all walking. It is as though saying every time one walks, the intention is to end up running. Fallacious. This thinking is the Great Beguiler of our epoch. For we know—as previously espoused—that a kiss, though often erotic in leaning, isn't singular in its dispensation. The kiss, protean, can be vehicle and destination. Morning, I kiss to say, *have a nice day, I hope death eludes you.* Evening, the kiss is a quiet knock on clenched limbs--a map to the clitoris. I awaken hunger.

Not all cultures are fascinated by a kiss, however. There are those who consider it a grody occupation, and they would be half-wrong in their eschewal. The Nazarene was ensnared with a peck. A kiss can be a grenade, proprietor of entropy. A mouth, full of absence, can pass on its contagion. Say, a tongue begging to be grazed by another is touched by a prickle. At this point, my turning is to poets, for respite. And here, in *Thorax* by Logan February, the declaration is potent:

*Verily, there is a kiss  
Somewhere in all this scent  
...  
Peel back skin & name  
Body, bone & shame  
  
Yes, there are thorns  
& a kiss yet to come.*