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A few days later I felt like going to the Lucky Star again—it seems to be the only decent place to eat in this town. The friendly owner greeted me with a handshake and sat me at the same table I got last time. As I was waiting for my wonton soup to arrive, I noticed that the couple I was eavesdropping on when I had last been here was once again sitting at the next table. A wonton soup is best eaten after it has had some time to chill, so I decided to listen in on their conversation.

“Richard, I’ve been thinking.”

“Funny, I’ve been thinking, too. Caught myself thinking bang in the middle of the day. I think it was last Tuesday, after I had the crab pasta at that new Italian place.”

“Was it any good?”

“The crab was somewhat undercooked, tried making a run for it. So all in all it was tasty, but then also a bit of a struggle. Tell me though, Emily, I really want to hear—what were you thinking about?”

The man looked into her eyes as he spoke. The woman seemed somewhat self-conscious. She stared down and ran her fingers over one of the slender-bodied dragons that were embroidered in gold on the red tablecloth.

“Well, I was thinking about our relationship, and well, I got to the conclusion that we have a very special connection. You really understand me, I think. No one understands me like you do.”

“Oh yes, our connection is very special. Much more than other connections.”

“So you think so, too?”

“Naturally I do! If only to prove the strength of our special connection.”

“It *is* special, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Imagine that: Some people have to settle for regular connections. Just your run-of-the-mill, everyday normal connections, with nothing special, no added value. I feel sad for them.”

“Me too, me too! I feel sad for them, too. Can you imagine, having no special connection like the one we have?”

“I can’t imagine it. No, I can’t. I refuse to! It would be too sad to consider it for so much as a split second.”

“Sometimes people come up to me just to say that they wished they had a special connection like the one we have.”

“People tell me that, too—all the time. But you can’t buy what we have. No. You have to earn it. It takes a certain type of sensitivity.”

“Yes. Sensitivity!”

“Yes, it’s all about sensitivity. You have to be born sensitive, and sense.”

“Sensing things with our sense of sensitivity.”

“Sensitivity. Starts with an S, ends with a Y. Sen-si-ti-vi-ty!”

“It’s like we think alike.”

“Yes, exactly. It’s like we sink a lake.”

“I said ‘think alike,’ not ‘sink a lake.’”

“Yes, I know. I was saying it with a Chinese accent, to make the waiter laugh. But also, I was thinking about a lake, imagining it, daydreaming. We were swimming in it, au naturel. Your skin was so soft and beautiful, sprayed with sweet lake water and illuminated by the sun. Day-old leaves cast silky shadows on your forehead in a vain attempt to transcend the beauty of the tender strands of golden hair that the lake water had so haphazardly rearranged.”

“That’s beautiful! Did we have a rowboat?”

“Yes, we rented it.”

“Great! Why buy if you can rent.”
“Why rent if you can buy.”
“We think alike!”
“I think alike. You think alike. We both think alike.”
“Whether at home or in a lake. We think alike.”
“We sink a lake.”
“Ching sing a leng.”
“Ming duck Peking.”
“Kung fu!”
“It’s like we are connected.”
“Yes, it’s as if we’re connected.”
“Something was always missing for me in life.”
“Yes, for me it was the same. Something was missing. Then you came, and you completed me.”
“You completed me, too.”
“You complete me. I complete you. We’re the same.”
“We are one. Bound together.”
“Bound with a special connection.”
“Yes, special. Rare. Hard to find. Unique.”
“Unusual. Singular. Limited edition.”
“We are two pieces becoming one.”
“One and one is two.”
“Two becoming one.”
“*Tout va bien.*”
“Is that French?”
“*Oui*, it’s the language of love.”
“Then we must speak it all the time.”
“We’ll take lessons!”
“I’ll pick up a brochure at the French embassy.”
“Brochure— isn’t that French, too?”
“We’re already learning!”
“Because love comes naturally to us.”

“Au naturel.”

“Au naturel!”

“Our connection is special.”

“Our connection *is* special.”

“One of a kind.”

“Once in a lifetime.”

“We think alike.”

“We sink a lake.”

“Samurai!”

“I don’t know where I end and where you begin!”

“I don’t know where you begin and where I end!”

“It’s like we’re two parts of the same thing.”

“Two parts. One thing.”

“One thing. Two parts.”

“We have become one.”

“We have become one.”

“I don’t know what I’m saying and what you’re saying anymore.”

“I don’t know what you’re saying and what I’m saying anymore.”

“Am I Emily or am I Richard?”

“Am I Richard or am I Emily?”

“We take turns to speak our sentences.”

“One speaks, then the other.”

“So if we knew who spoke first, we could count and know who speaks now.”

“If we knew who spoke first, we could count and know who speaks now.”

“We could have kept count, but we didn’t. We don’t need to know who is speaking now. We are one and the same!”

“We could have kept count, but we didn’t. We don’t need to know who is speaking now. We are one and the same!”

“Other people keep count.”

“Because other people have regular connections.”

“We have a special connection.”

“Special. Rare. Hard to find. Unique.”

“Unusual. Singular. Limited edition. Avant-garde.”

“It’s strange, but when I spoke now, your lips moved, too!”

“Very strange, when I spoke now, your lips moved as well!”

“I don’t know who I am and who you are.”

“I don’t know who you are and who I am.”

“I wonder what would happen if I raised my hand. Would your hand rise, too?”

“I wonder what would happen if I combed my hair. Would your hairs rearrange as well?”

“If I put lipstick on, would your lips turn red?”

“If the waiter stumbled and spilled hot soup on me, would you be in pain?”

“Of course! Any other outcome would be egoistic, not to mention downright illogical.”

“Who said that?”

“Me. Or was it you?”

“I can’t tell. I am one.”

“True, I am one.”

“I am Richard and I am Emily. I am the sum of what previously was two individuals. But I am now of one mind. A better person. For I have a special connection that connects my separate parts into a more perfect whole; a more wholesome, non-self-serving whole. I have two heads and eight limbs. I am a two-headed octopus, one might say (if octopuses could study French and rent a rowboat). I am of one opinion. One desire. One set of wants. One set of answers.”

I could swear the last sentences were uttered by both of them together. They said them in a monotonic fashion, their

voices an octave apart, rhythmically matched syllable by syllable, as if some invisible puppet master was speaking through their bodies. Their eyes were shut throughout, and they were holding hands across the table. However, they held them a bit too close to the candle food-warmer, which had the unfortunate effect of lighting their sleeves on fire. Oddly enough, though, instead of screaming in agony, they appeared to be reveling in the warmth of the flames, and in fact a relaxed expression spread across their faces—they were both smiling.

Then again, the room got so smoky that after a while I couldn't really determine if what I was seeing was a relaxed expression or if perhaps they were just forcibly molding their lips into that angle while internally clenching their teeth.

The waiter arrived with a pot of jasmine tea and used it to extinguish the flames. He seemed completely nonchalant as he did so and not at all in a hurry, as if a couple catching fire was not some freak accident but a common occurrence in the restaurant. Then, still shrouded in a cloud of smoke, he scribbled something on his order pad (probably charged them for the jasmine tea), tore out the page, and handed it to the man. The man stared at the piece of paper, looked slightly confused for a moment, then straightened himself and spoke: "Would you be so kind as to get that, Emily dear, I seem to have forgotten my wallet at home."

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