

Missing Link

By Nealmonté

[Hear page turn, like in a notebook or a legal pad]

THERAPIST

This is our 12th meeting. And I've noticed something that really stands out to me about you. You have this void in you. What is it that you feel like you're missing in life?

STUDENT

Well read me, chile. Read me the whole house.

[Therapist and student share a laugh]

THERAPIST

I like that. A read. What does that mean?

STUDENT

A read is when you tell someone the truth about themselves, and it's usually something they may not be aware of.

THERAPIST

And why do you feel like what I asked was a read?

STUDENT

Because it's true and touched my soul... (after brief thought) Connection. Human connection. I just want to belong. I don't belong anywhere and that hurts.

THERAPIST

And when you say you don't belong anywhere what does that mean?

[A sink turns on and water starts to run]

STUDENT

Hey, I need you to get out please. You guys know I have therapy at the same time every week. This room is supposed to be mine for the next hour. (brief silence) Sorry, my roommate came in.

THERAPIST

Isn't that the life of meeting virtually during this pandemic? (Therapist laughs alone. Very brief silence) What are you thinking about?

STUDENT

I have been turned away from even the communities that should have me. I recently found out that I'm part Latino. I want so much to be in touch with that part of me. So I tried to do that, hanging around Latino people and explaining how I found out I was Mexican.

THERAPIST

How did they receive you?

STUDENT

They didn't. And then of course I'm black, but... somehow my difference in preference of music and how I speak and how I dress, my very manner of life to black people my age says that I'm not black enough. Even my own sisters tell me, "You're a white person in a black person's body," as if my level of vocabulary is the deciding factor.

THERAPIST

Alright, just take a moment and breathe. [Student exhales] Do you feel like you're not enough?

STUDENT

I feel that's a huge problem for me. I've always been made to feel like I'm not enough. I'm not Mexican enough for Mexicans. I'm not black enough for black people. Who am I supposed to be

with? The cats? Because I already have two, and if I get anymore, I'm going to be the cat lady and that's not cute.

[Cat meows]

STUDENT (Cont.)

Speak of the cat devil.

THERAPIST

How is your romantic life?

STUDENT

What romantic life? I've had as much romance Joan of Arc. And she was a saint. Romance is beautiful. I'd love to be in love, I mean I have been in love. but I've never really had anyone in love with me. It seems for most gay men I'm not masculine enough, and those that do get close don't see anything beyond a hook-up and a good friend. I'm tired of being that friend.

THERAPIST

You mentioned being in love and someone being in love with you. What would you say love is?

STUDENT

You asked before what I felt like I was missing, what seems to be that void in me. Love.... I would say is the purest form of connection. Love is direct and intimate connection between two or more people. I don't have connection. And it makes it hard. What's wrong with me?

THERAPIST

Nothing is wrong with you. You're human. Connection is a natural desire for all living organisms.

STUDENT

But I don't seem to have that with people. It's natural and should naturally happen right?

THERAPIST

We've approached our time, BUT you keep saying you don't have connection with others. For your homework I want to challenge you on something.

STUDENT

Oh lord, more homework.

THERAPIST

Yes, more homework. I want you to look at and consider not what connects you to others, but what connects people to you. You have so many people in your life that seems to have gravitated to you for one reason or the other. What is their connection to you? The fact that you're in their life means you hold some sort of value to them. They value their connection to you. What connects them to you?

STUDENT

Whew Chile, you and your assignments. This homework is about to read me for filth AGAIN.

[They share one last laugh]