



Club 27

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(March 2018)

A plummeting plastic flower dress is all most people in the Belle concert audience could see, although most were aware that the pop icon was inside the dress. (The petite colorful flowers and stems sewn onto fishnet and lace, incidentally, were culled from glass tubes sold for a dollar behind the counters of gas stations; those tubes, capped with brillo, are used to smoke crack.) Front row seating had the best view of the accident. Allegedly the decelerator attached to her harness malfunctioned, causing the singer to freefall 45 feet to the stage below. Belle, whose last name was Morrison, met her death yesterday in front thousands of her fans. She was 27.

The first Belle memorial made Jesus Morrison feel obligated, rather than sad anymore. At least he would not have to speak at it, as he had at the funeral; he'd blundered through a short eulogy, being that he and his sister were orphaned last decade and he was next in line to speak at the funeral as closest living relative. As an only child now, etc., comprised the eulogy theme. Being 30 and single, and losing his entire immediate family, made Jesus depressed enough to feel only depression and obligation while entering the church he'd grown up attending once a week until he turned 18 and decided, as an adult, to seek God elsewhere. Aside from his name being Jesus (Hey-Zeus, rather than Geez-Us) the reclusive man had lost faith in all but the material world. He now spent much spare time on menial, tactical, meditative tasks like combing his long hair, vacuuming flooring, building ships in bottles, hand-grooming hedgerows. Frequently he brought home-grown flowers to his sister's gravestone.

The eulogist was an old friend of the Morrison family, a neighbor who Belle had initially babysat before they became friends. Chuck was deformed, freaky. Jesus had always been nice to him yet they'd never been close; the age gap maybe kept them distant. Belle on the other hand had befriended him, at the exclusion of her own sibling. Jesus resented that for awhile until he realized that fame would take her away from him anyway. With a sentimental smirk, he took a seat in the reserved pew just as the eulogy began.

"I'd like to open with a quote from William Blake: 'The roads of excess lead to the paths of wisdom.' 'The roads of excess lead to the paths of wisdom.' I think Belle was incredibly wise for her age... Compared to superstar Pink!, Annie Clark from "St.

Vincent,” indie artist King Krule, N.E.R.D. with Rihanna, and country singer Margo Price, beautiful Belle climbed to the literal and figurative top of the charts...”

To Jesus, Chuck looked interspeciel. Being so near to the pulpit, Jesus Morrison could clearly see the scales and webbing on his ineffective fish-hands. As a child, he hadn't thought much about Chuck's condition; he'd just beern Chuck, with the kinda cool fingers. Raised with family money he went to fancy prep schools and always had a brilliant demeanor, in retrospect.

“My name is Chuck—just Chuck, as in: just Belle. I have a deformity, a condition I was born with, a condition I elected to live with, rather than getting corrective surgery at age 18. See, my parents forced me to wait until I became an adult to opt in or out of surgery on my hands.” Chuck raised his arms and wiggled his webbed fingers. “I decided to keep them, you see, in part because of Belle. Also in part because I have faith, in humanity; the movie ‘Penelope,’ starring Christina Ricci as reclusive debutant with a sow's nose, exemplifies what I've gone through in my 23 years on Earth. Belle was my neighbor growing up and she and I became close, as her talent became known, and each of us were going away to secondary school, coming home summers and holidays without knowing any local teens...”

Jesus and Belle Morrison had spent about as much time together as had Belle and Chuck, as far as he could guess. He'd detached somewhat from his sibling after that Sunday Morning—his ninth birthday—when she, at age 6, slammed the door on his pinky toe. Sure, they'd made a joke of it afterward, with her gifting him every year with a pair of shoes, and he gifting her with matchbox cars or model sedan kits with openable doors. Nothing like the toe-crush ever happened again, yet it put up an unspoken invisible blockade.

“By now you've all heard about the tragedy: the decelerator malfunction. What you may have missed are the rumors that the malfunction was murder. Let me speak just a minute on this. On tour with Erasure Huddle, Belle was nervous. During the last call I received from her, she voiced a concern: ‘There may be a conspiracy to hurt me... I suspect a saboteur.’ She told me that right before a costume change, somebody lengthened the laces in her tennies. Did somebody want her to trip and fall during that performance? At the time of the call, I figured she'd maybe been smoking too much crack. I thought maybe her dabbling in various substances had finally gotten one hook in her. She assured me that her occasional use was under control. I did advise her to speak to her manager and even the police if anything else happened. Two days later, I hear the news of the harness clasp breaking, then the following day I hear about the accelerator malfunction. My inclination is to consider foul play, but count on it being an accident. It's my way of dealing with her death...”

Jesus habitually grabbed for his fancy comb, part of an initial flurry of gifts from Belle when she started to make the big money. It stood in his blazer pocket today, for the occasion. Subconsciously, he combed a full three minutes before realizing what he was doing and put the gift from Belle back in its pocket. She'd included verse about each item in the grand gifting, but he recalled only one description verbatim: “Oh, brother. Brother, would you could you should you wear your long, excited, hair on the inside? Happy relation, relative.”

“In fact, her death may put her into the music canon alongside icons of rock Amy Winehouse, Kurt Cobain, Shannon Hoon, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, and the others comprising The 27 Club. Each member of that exclusive group made a huge mark on the rock industry, changed the world, then died at age 27. Belle is now immortalized among them. If her pop tunes hold up in the decades ahead, she will be remembered and adored by countless generations to come. And if the murderer of Belle is in the audience, I sure hope he or she thought about consequences. Belle may become bigger than anticipated.”

Jesus Morrison noticed a sudden frequent rustling of programs among the memorial attendees. It seemed that most of the audience wanted to wrap it up. Even the sound of sniffing and tissues sounded exaggerated or theatrical. The eulogist wore an expression of comprehension, too.

“I’d like to close with another quote from William Blake: ‘If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thru narrow chinks of his cavern.’ Amen! As listed in your program, please sit quietly through this medley of some of the songs we’ve chosen for the Essential Belle album, being produced at this moment. My study-buddy Laurel Grant is in the sound booth—hi, Laurel! She has meticulously set the controls to audibly enhance the medley for your listening pleasure. And now, by Belle, for Belle, her gift to us: Music... Maestro!”

Track 1

*Check yourself before you wreck yourself
(repeated verse)*

Track 2

*Why do I hate less than I love
When I’m around you?
Why do you look at me directly
With eyes that go whoa-woo?
Why am I so stupid
Loving the stupid when I’m with you?*

Track 4

*And maybe this is derivative
But now I become the music
Now I catch the sun
Now I experience the visceral
Now I know the body (bass)
Now I get the connection
Yeah, the goddess and I are one*

Track 5

*Just when did we meet?
I like the arch in your back, the shape of your feet!
Just when did we, where did we meet?
Don't gimme that look of defeat!
Doubting I like the shape of your feet.
Just when did we meet?
I'm serious! When did we, where did we meet?
Can we zoom all the way back?
Can we assume the classic pose?
Just when did I first remove your clothes?
When were we first indecently exposed?
I'm serious, yo!
Just when upon when did I first see your feet?
Again with that look of defeat!
(spoken*)
What, like I'm supposed to remember every fuck I meet on the beach?
Like whatever, get seriously out of my face.
with rapper 1000-fold

Track 8

"No Rain" (cover)
lyrics by Blind Melon