The Interaction

Deanna Morse*
The Interaction

Deanna Morse

Abstract

"NAME three things that you are afraid of." Needles?" That’s one. let’s see. I can’t think of anything else. “Needles?” ”Yes. Hypodermic needles. That’s all that I am afraid of.”
"Name three things that you are afraid of."
"Needles." That’s one. Let’s see. I can’t think of anything else.
"Needles?"
"Yes. Hypodermic needles. That’s all that I am afraid of."
"You have to name three things."
Softly. "Two more needles?"
He glared at me. I waited for him to smile. He didn’t. Let’s see. Needles. Getting shots? No, just needles. This ringing in my head scare me... but... What are most people frightened of? Bugs and spiders, I guess. I could tell him that I am afraid of getting raped, or losing my virginity or something like that. I bet a fear like that would make his book a little more racy.
"Well?" He raised one eyebrow.
Grey hairs interspersed in the black furry eyebrow mass... and Wow, just one! We stared at each other. God, he certainly has a stereotyped face. Even with only one eyebrow raised. Stereotyped? No “common” would be a better word. I guess that we probably all do, though. What can you do with the fundamentals: two placed eyes, one middle nose, two attached lips. Considering all of the people that we produce
(would that be reproduce?) each and every day, there is
bound to be some sort of a standardization among them, or
we would. . . .

He cleared his throat. I've been staring at his nose.
Jees. Look at the floor quick. Buzzing in my ears. What was
I supposed to be answering? Oh yeah, fright.

"I am afraid of being killed by a train while I am riding
in a car." How's that for pulling a good symbolic fright from
my childhood? I wonder if he will ask me how much I am
afraid. How would he word it? Do you cringe or get goose-
pimples when you cross railroad tracks? What do you feel as
you approach railroad crossings? Is your fear manifested
physically as well as psychologically? Maybe he doesn't have
a graph for recording that sort of thing. No, he must not. I
crossed my legs and sat back, letting my shoulders lean
against the wall.

"That's all that I am afraid of."

"You have only listed two things. I asked for three."

"I am only afraid of two things." Is that not possible?
Are numbers that important?

"What is a third fear?"

Bastard. Why do I have to put up with this? They told
me that this man wouldn't play games—that we could just
talk. I should have known better. I was trusting him, too.

"I am afraid of dying." Why not?

"Why are you afraid of dying?"

"I don't believe in an afterlife." I stared at his shoes.
I could hear his pencil jottings. Then this room must acually
be quiet. That sound is in my head. I thought that I was just
sensitive to secondary sounds. I wish that it would stop. He
is wearing shoes with brown woven material on the top of
them. Functional? It could be for ventilating the foot, so
that he won't have smelly feet. His socks are brown and they
have little "V's" of red and yellow traveling down his leg,
and pointing at his bony ankle. Bony ankle? All ankles are
by nature bony. No, maybe not all. I bet that most all are,
though. If you were to take a survey and all, I bet that you
would find more bony than fat ankles. I wonder how one
would conduct a survey on that. "I have called you all here
today for the explicit purpose of observing your. . .”

“Miss Druver. There is no use continuing this session if you don’t feel like communicating. I can’t help you until you tell me your real problem. Tell me what is really troubling you.”

“I realize that psychologically I am probably not accepting reality and through oversleeping I am building my own reality as a means of escape.”

“Please answer what you really feel. Don’t give me the answer that you think is right. Tell me what is true for you.”

“I didn’t know that there were right and wrong answers in this game. I am trying to be sincere.”

Was that a shrug? He’s looking at the paper on the table in front of him. He hasn’t written anything for a while. Damn my head. I wish that I could do something about this buzzing. Ah. A question.

“If you could have three things in the world, what would you have?”

Not a bad question. At least I can answer it. “First I would have an end to wars, and people would live in peace, tapping each other’s minds rather than the land.”

“No,” he said, smiling, “these must be things that affect you personally.”

“This would affect me personally. There is no way that it couldn’t.”

“I meant for you to name three things that you want—tangible items.”

“Oh.” I thought that we were going somewhere. We’re back at the same place that we began. “If we are referring to material items, then the answer is nothing.”

“Nothing? You want nothing?”

“Nothing. I hoard my money because I do not like to buy things. If there was anything that I wanted, I would get it.”

“Oh, there must certainly be something that you want.”

“No, there is nothing.”

“Please co-operate, Martha. Don’t tell me what you think is correct. Tell me what is really true for you. You don’t have to play a role for me. Let’s be honest.”

So we are on a first name basis now! How did he know
my name? Oh, yeah, on the chart, probably. I looked down
and the area around the nail was starting a bead of red. I put
my thumb to my mouth, hoping that he wouldn't notice.
The skin felt rough on my tongue. I wonder what he would
do if someone jumped out from behind the bed, with a long
sharp and shiny bread knife and stabbed me. What would
he do if it were a night of a full moon, and he looked in my
mirror and didn't see my reflection? I giggled.

"Martha." Very sternly.

"What was your question?" meekly.

"I asked you to be honest with me and quit playing a
role. Tell me what is true for you, not just what you think
is right."

Why do I always stare at the ceiling anyway? There's
nothing of interest. One squashed looking globe hung over
a lightbulb. I wonder if they made the mold for the globe
out of putty, and dropped it along the way... cracked
paint in the corners. I should really be nice to this man. He
might think me crazy, and I wouldn't want... No, why
am I so afraid of being crazy? It could mean that I could free
my mind—totally. I probably couldn't relate with people,
but they don't really try to understand me anyway. Not even
this doctor, and it was even his job. So I'm afraid of being
crazy and having them lock and chain me up, and never be-
ing able to see a sun. Should I have told him that? I'm just
sitting here staring at the ceiling. He's staring straight ahead.
That's kind of weird, too. At least it's no less weird than
staring at the ceiling. What are we doing here? He's waiting
for something. Three somethings. Always the trinity. I
don't feel like talking. Or thinking. Why do I have to talk
when I don't feel like it? We listen to people only because
we know that when they finish speaking it will be our turn.
Who said that? Games. I'm willing to shut up. Toadstools
and owls. If I were normal, I would tell him that I crave
toadstools and owls, anything with a toadstool or an owl.
Those are the "in" things now. Damn this pressure in my
head. I should see how clever he is and tell him about it in
a secret code. He'd never figure it out, though.

He's just sitting there still. I wonder how long he'll stay.
This ringing. Damn. I wish that he had this ringing to con-
tend with. It just gets louder and louder. It's going to drive me crazy. God. It just thuds on my brain. Think of something else. It will go away. Toadstools. Oh, lord. I wish that I could play your games, and I would tell you all of the things that I am afraid of, and what three things that I want to purchase, and I bet that for your next visit you would bring me a little something that I had asked for, and pat me on the head, and we would be friends forever, but sometimes I would bite your hand, and then you would forgive me, and bring me more crayolas, and a novel by Dostoevsky or something like that but for this damn ringing. I just can't think with this ri

Old Greyhounds

*by Roger Katz*

The old Greyhounds
come alive with soul,
humming rhythms on miles and miles
of groovy tune,
carryin' the week-end gypsies,

They'll be there soon,
the kids,
filling empty halls
with their soul rhythm
of calicos sounds.