

THE L O N E L Y M A N



ELIOT MOEN

THE LONELY MAN

A Novel

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By

ELIOT MOEN

MOEN'S OPEN-SOURCED WORKS

Distributed by JM Distributions

1930

I AM THE LONELY MAN

I am the lonely man, I am the man of loneliness, a loneliness that made me disgusted by myself, disappointed in my thoughts, and horrified by my appearance. It has been a long time since I was in touch with anyone my age, or truthfully, anyone with age, where I recall it was five years ago, in front of the church of St. Petersburg—not to be confused with the city of St. Petersburg—where I met a woman, a beautiful soul, that I accidentally went through and dropped all of the cardboard boxes she was carrying, pink and white boxes labeled "Adam's Bakery," there were a dozen of them on the ground, some ruined, two others on the puddle, i was too shy to try and help her from the ground, but when I looked at her face, she wasn't upset, she gave me a faint smile, apologized as if it were her fault, and began gathering the untouched boxes, out of sheer anxiety and regret i began helping her as well. Finally when we gathered all the boxes we wanted, I set the rest of it on top of the ones she was carrying, and i was avoiding eye contact at all cost, but looking at her from the side of my eye, she looked at me smiling again, but this time a genuine expression, she thanked me a lot and went on her way, it was the first time i ever met someone who treated me that way, someone who smiled when seeing me, someone who wasn't disgusted by my touch, I believed to be infected by germs everyone seemed to notice except for me, but this time either she didn't seem to care about it, didn't know about it, or I'm wrong about it. She was walking with the same unhurried composure the opposite side where I was going earlier, I didn't want to miss this chance, I wanted to run to her, stop her and express my gratitude and happiness that couldn't get any higher to her, and ask her to be my friend, but I was too shy, too flushed to be brave enough to do it, in a split second I decide to give up, but then thoughts streamed down me ruthlessly, "this is your only opportunity," "this is your final chance," "you cannot undo this," when I finally snapped and walked towards her, every step i take becoming faster and faster until I was practically running and closing the distance between us, she didn't seem to notice, she was too busy carrying the caramel scented croissants inside those boxes probably, and seemingly daydreaming, when I caught her by the shoulder. She screamt before dropping all of the boxes again, she twitched violently before turning back in a split second, i was frightened, scared like a stray kitten facing a human

approaching me, I backed off, when she saw me, her expressions softened, but not too much, it was a really awkward moment and my shyness grew deeper this time, i entirely avoided eye contact again and crossed my hands behind my back, before that she called me weird in a playful tone, but then she snapped out of whatever was going inside of her, and turned neutral while looking at the mess on the floor, i apologized continuously, she said it was okay, but this time it wasn't really okay, most of the croissants—i guessed right—were thrown away from their boxes onto the street from the sheer amount of force she threw them by, one by one, they made a trail, and each one of them was deemed unsafe to eat, dirty, and covered in road debris. Before that she looked right back at me again, crossed her arms, and began talking: – "I know the mess was my fault, but we should also admit that it was because of you that I threw those boxes away out of a sudden, you should be more careful next time. I am not going to discipline you, for that I am not your mother, but neither will I stand here, smile at you again and comfort you that it is fine, nothing about it is fine, but this time, i will choose to forgive you, not because of your awkwardness, or the possibility that you might be mentally unstable—as you seem to be, just by your attitude, the way you move, and how you talk—but because I am a woman who forgives two times and not a third, do not come by me again, you costed me a lot, and it would have been nicer if you paid for the damages, but again, you cannot pay for something that is not your fault, it would only be a settlement to change my look towards you, the way you bribe a paperwork officer in his office over a travel certificate forgery, so I say it one final time: do not come by me again." – "I... I... am utterly..." i stuttered, but she didn't seem to pay attention, she turned her back om me and walked away. I managed to gather the dirty caramel smelling croissants that day, but I left the boxes in their place, I do not care about the sanitary of streets or public places. When I returned back home, past the apartment's entrance, I came upon the concierge Hamilton, who was the only person, in that time, who talked to me a little, out of everyone surrounding me everywhere in go, he noticed the six croissants i was carrying, and expressed concern over my safety from eating them, anyone looking at them even from a far distance would realize they're unsuitable to be eaten, so I made up a lie and told him that i would heat them up and give them to the orphans in the street, before that he nodded and continued on his way, while i walked upstairs towards my dorm. I entered my apartment house, it was small as always, familiar everytime, it only consisted of two large cells, one that has a kitchen and the other has a moderately big, dusty couch wrapped in old and eaten leather, and an office table and chair facing it, but it was the most comfortable place to sleep in, and that office, the table facing my couch, was my inner world where I escaped, by writing. I was a writer, I deemed myself, but not anymore, my worries and what

I'm going to narrate to you made my unable to chase such a dream or continue that hobby anymore, I used to write over a hundred pages each night where I spent hours inside my inner world imagining news characters, new events and everything that I have control in, a successful poet who is facing backlash due to a controversial epic, a Russian prince falling in love with his maid, and a painter on the verge of collapsing from painting the most beautiful and marvelous view in art's history, those were my roles in my world, a world where I had control in, with a swipe of my pencil I could rewrite anything to my will, and I admit, the most important aspect of my inner world were the characters, I made sure to write each character well, with complex moral and emotional weights, so they could be realistic, like the ones in our cruel world. The difference between the characters i wrote in my novels that I was a part in and the people that exist today among us in society is little, their view about you. If you could have the ability to change one's views and perception about you, while everything else stood out, you would be dealing with one of my characters, I make sure to write them as realistic as possible while only fictionalizing their perceptions about me, where I am either the main character or the side one of the story, I enjoy every flavor of it, it isn't everytime where I should stand out as the main character, let other characters judge me this time without bias.

Writing, is by far, the most enjoyable experience in my life. I went to put those croissants on the kitchen counter before starting the iron kettle and boiling water, I said earlier that the only difference between my fictional people and my neighbor or the woman I just met earlier was a matter of perception about me, and I affirm that again, shouldn't I be able to do so? When I hear a truth—or construct it by myself, as in this case—I affirm it over and over again, that is one trait of my personality, I love affirming things that I count as the truth, even if it is not, and I live by it, even if it is not the truth, again, and I love it. The steam drew a heavy and thick scent across the scullery, before that i started preparing some peppermint tea, after that I went with the cup in my hand to my desk, settled it down and began writing.

I woke up the next day at a late hour, it was too tired to get up even at that late hour, but I had to, but to what? I thought to myself: "I don't have anything to do today, maybe I should go back to sleeping," but other thoughts told me otherwise, something like: "you may have businesses to do, maybe today is your opportunity to find a person in your life, this may be your only opportunity and you're going to miss it," these opposite thoughts were way more powerful and convincing, so i slowly rose from my desk, yes, I slept on my desk that night, and went straight to the kitchen to wash my face. After feeling a little bit better, I went back to the other room, to my desk, and gathered the papers I was frantically

writing at yesterday, I won't reveal what I wrote that day, and I will let you guess, but I will not tell you what it is, i organized the papers into a thick stack, put it aside and pulled out a file wrap from my desk drawer and wrapped it around the stack, then labeled it "draft number 24," and went to changes my clothes, then on my way outside home. It was late in the morning, where the sun was roughly above my head, and it was a sunny and hot weather at the same time, something unusual in Scotland, but it made me somewhat... happy. The sensation of the sun bright and yellow on my skin and feeling such heat drew a faint smile on my face, I was walking in the same street I met the woman that day, but this time there was no sight of her, as i was walking and walking, I came across a french bakery named "Boulangerie-Pâtisserie D'Adam," it was a colored with bright colors, and the sun's rays made it more noticeable, it stood facing the street built between the apartments of [city], when I realized that it had the same name as the ones the women that day was carrying. It was closed, dark from the inside, I took a look across the glass of its windows, but i couldn't figure out anything, I wanted to enter, buy somethings and apologize once more to her, maybe she could forgive me this time, i beseech forgiveness from her. I grabbed the doorknob, tried pulling it, didn't work, then I began pushing, but it didn't work either, only the noise of an old door bending. I thought about giving up and continuing on my way, but I believed someone was inside, I went to the windows again and tried calling for anyone from the inside, then waving, then calling again, but there was nothing else other than the gloomy darkness and the eerie feeling I get from the inside, this time i didn't decide to give up, I went around the place, looking for the back of the place, I'm surprised, truly, surprised and for no reason that I'm aware of, why do I pay attention to this matter this much? It's definitely not because I beseech forgiveness this pathetic amount, but because of, again, no apparent reason at all, as i was moved on my way, my body telling me what to do instead of me telling my body what to do, but when if I was moved by my body, my mind still acted the same way, and I was careful, I was really interested. When I arrived on the back, I found a small wooden door, the backdoor, I went there, opened it, then entered, i called for anyone, but I was met with silence, I glanced over the place, only a counter, a cook-room from my left side where I was standing, and another, hidden door in the corner, but it wasn't any ordinary door, i can't describe it, but it was on the floor, yes, it wasn't a door of walls but a door of floors, whatever anyone else called them, I am not good in lexicons, I don't even know the name of my own city, I couldn't bother to ask anyone, out of shyness and anxiety. I approached it, it smelled of cinnamon, and other heavy scents, but I couldn't know what they were, if decided to open it, i grabbed the knob and pulled it, only for it to actually open, beneath it was a stair leading to the basement—it must be a basement—so I decided to go downstairs,

and it was a grave mistake I chose to do so. After a while of climbing down the stairs, the heavy scents grew more noticeable and heavier, they weren't pleasant, as if there was an unholy amount of trash down there, when finally arrived on the floor, i looked above, the door above was casting the only light in the basement, and it was far away, as if it was in the bottom of a well looking upwards. I glanced over the place as well, but couldn't notice anything, I climbed upstairs, then I started looking for a candle everywhere in the scullery, until I found it! It was lying there in a corner, I grabbed it, returned back to the basement, and after a couple of seconds of trying to light it up, and it did, everything was finally clear, the walls were orange looking, the farther i went deep into the basement, the heavier that orange atmosphere looked. There wasn't anything notable, just some mechanical parts, cardboard boxes and whatever trash a bakery leaves in its basement for later use, then I stumbled upon a large stack of pink boxes shaped as a cube, I went around them to continue on my way, this basement was so large it probably went down through the stree- it was that moment were my thoughts were interrupted, where I found a dead end, but it wasn't completely a dead end, it had a small hole, fit for a human, when I looked through it, i couldn't notice anything because of the dark, my flame couldn't reach there, I stood there thinking what to do, should I enter deeper inside? It was definitive that nobody else was in the bakery, I was looking for a ghost and nobody else.

"Go inside, there must be something valuable," i couldn't even believe myself, why would I risk my life to enter a hole where there is possibly nothing notable inside? Those thoughts that occur within me are sometimes so unbelievable, so strange and beyond understanding, but at the same time they're intriguing. Part of them is a part of me, and therefore they're not so strange after all, or perhaps I'm dealing with another variation of myself that spilled over the edge to my comprehension. Perhaps not. I don't believe I have another variation of myself, but if that's so, why are things about me so strange and unfamiliar to me? That could be explained by anything else, and the hypothesis of the other man, i call him the other man, is arguably a false one! I was daydreaming again, when I finally snapped and found myself standing in front of that hole, I eventually decided not to go deeper inside the rabbit hole.

I arrived at my house and found everything the way it was before I left, it was eleven in the morning and I had spent a lot of time in that place. I sat down and leaned on my desk, trying to figure out what to do for the rest of my day, then suddenly I heard knocks on my front door. I went to see who it is, when I opened, it was the concierge Hamilton, he didn't seem pleasant, his expressions were somewhat neutral as if he's going to deliver some news he wouldn't have wanted to, he told me in a clear and concise manner that I was on the verge of

losing my home, I asked why out of shock as if i was about to yell, before that his informative tone shifted to something personal and unnecessary. – “May i ask you a question?” – “You may.” – “Do you receive any salary or pension?” That question struck me in a way I couldn’t have predicted, I thought for a moment, a fleeting moment, and realized that i haven’t received any pension since three months ago, since I completely cut off from him... it’s a long story. – “Currently, no.” – “Ah, then i don’t expect such news to strike you all of a sudden. Mrs. Davidson is a firm and strict woman, and you’re inability to pay for rent, at least for the agreed upon amount of shillings, is in no way to grant you free accommodation, I have delivered you the eviction letter in your mailbox, and personally informed you, i hope you have a pleasant day.” He said before heading out, leaving me in a state of nowhereity—a word i invented when I was at least five or six years old, to describe a state where one doesn’t know how to act after a surprising event, a state of nowhereity—before that i went back inside a couple of seconds have passed. I slowly went back to my desk, and this time I leaned completely on my desk, a strange feeling began to grow inside of me, and I had the sensation that if I let it out I would be satisfied, I would feel a beautiful sensation, but i soon realized that it was the urge to cry, and I tried to hold it as much as possible, before that i unintentionally fell asleep.

It was fourth in afternoon where the sunshine was filtering through the window, casting elongated and radiant rays of light, and i was preparing something to eat, something decent to keep my stomach from growling. I won’t lie and say that I wasn’t bothered by the news, the feeling of hunger and my helplessness of the situation, I was utterly bothered by it, and the feelings that came along with it weren’t so pleasant, they felt horrible, and i felt horrible, and everything around me did, the many-colored view through the window that I was meditating at in the morning felt weirder this time, the only thing I could see and feel was an uncomfortable heat and scratching all over my skin, and then I recalled that I haven’t bathed in days, and the feeling of shame and disgust grew bigger within me.

After eating a decent amount of porridge that I made by mixing boiling water with coarse oatmeal, I settled on the old couch and slept hoping to sleep, but it was not useful, I have already slept too much today. I could feel myself sweating inside my clothes, and every sound outside made my mind flinch as if it were a scared creature, I was feeling dizzy, a painful dizziness that I despised so much that I wanted to die rather than feel it, sometimes a feeling that is not painful but painful at the same time is worse than a painful and painful feeling, weird description, isn’t it? I am not someone with an expertise in lexicon... let us see... how about we name this feeling: panned. I was thinking to myself, but luckily

I could endure this mix of shame of my body and the disappointment of my situation. Then I heard it, it was another knock on the door, and this time i was thinking: should i open or not? I didn't want to hear any worse news, or face Mrs. Davidson if she was at the door, all I wanted to do was be alone with my thoughts and overcome this feeling of shame. After a couple of seconds have passed and I am nervously waiting for them to retreat, another knock came and this time my heart began beating rapidly, not too rapidly but noticeable enough that I could feel it. I finally decided to go and see who it is, i opened and it was Mrs. Davidson.

I wouldn't narrate much of the event, particularly because I'm still uncomfortable about it, and it gives me a really painful feeling, for that it was a painful experience. But the summary is that we fought and it didn't end well, much of the apartments residents began gathering, and some men began whispering to each other on the stairs while Mrs. Davidson and I were yelling at each other, she was angry and it was visible on her face, i tried to retreat and close the door but she stopped it with her feet, pushed it wide open in a way that left me on the verge of falling backwards, and entered the place, she called for someone and two men followed her, i was helpless, looking at them wandering the place while she was yelling and complaining, I tried to regain my composure but they the eyes of the people looking over my door and the fast pacing of the three people in my apartment made me freeze and unable to do anything, "you think you can escape your responsibilities just like that, don't you?" Before that she began kicking the wooden kitchen counter, breaking one of its legs and leaving it to fall down in a tremor-like sound, then she ordered one of the men, who was visibly tall and strong with a thick beard, when I recognized that it was her husband, he glanced over me for a split second and went to my desk before that he started opening the drawers, emptying them out and destroying the papers on it, the papers, they were the only thing that made me happy in this world, my composure broke and I ran towards him screaming at him to stop before that the other man grabbed me by my arm and stroke me on the jaw, it was so painful that I couldn't see anything temporarily, I fell on the dusty old rug while trying to get back on my feet before that i was kicked on the back and fell down again, while on the floor I could see them destroying everything, they didn't seem to care about the papers as much as they did about the furniture, the couch was ripped apart, the kitchen was a mess and the desk was broken that it could no longer count as a desk. Everything was blurry at that moment and I was cut off from the real world, but at the same time I was conscious enough to think, thinking was the only active action I could perform at that moment. I tried to get back on my feet again, but my inability to move and the fear of being hit again made me unable to do so, from the side of

my eyes I could see the people looking at me, then at the apartment, then at me, and it wasn't any good. I could hear the three people's yelling and exchange of words a little, before that a long beep echoed through my head, and then i wasn't able to hear anything after that. What crime did I commit? No, it wasn't time for a philosophical question, I was no longer conscious, when everything went dark and i couldn't sense anything anymore.