

Cafe Society March 1, 2022

Anthony had taken a chance by not bringing his umbrella with him. March was supposed to come in like a wet lion on this day. Which meant perhaps that it would go our like a snowy tiger in another thirty days?

He found one of his usual booths and one of the usual staff was working. Anthony was pleased that he would not have to explain no butter on the fucking pancakes. Yes they were cooked in batter which was sort of a butter but that was all on the inside and never on the outside.

He recognized the voice of Karen Carpenter on the Playlist. The song was *Close to You* which was and is a good song. The Carpenters had done quite nicely for themselves with good songs by the likes of Burt Bacharach and Leon Russell among others.

Three plus decades ago it had become very ironic to like The Carpenters, all in tandem with Todd Haynes' movie *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*. The movie began with a dramatization involving actual actors and then a 'simulation' involving Barbie Dolls. Anthony thought the movie had been utterly brilliant.

He thought the Carpenters' endurance was not at all about so straight that they're not or any other form of irony. He thought their endurance was all due to Karen's singing voice. It was the most comfortable of voices...the most welcoming. Of course she had other voices that were barely suppressed until they weren't.

The Carpenters yielded to some instrumental music...not classical but possibly film soundtrack treacle. Two probably gay college-aged men were sitting at the adjacent table.

More Carpenters. Please.

Yes. My comfort zone, please.

Except for *Superstar*. That one really is melodramatic.

You're thinking of the Sonic Youth cover, dear.

Don't you remember our karaoke night last October?

Oh right. You sang *Superstar* in the approximated voice of David Bowie. Not one of your greatest moments, I'm afraid.

The server brought the pancakes. Anthony as usual requested another glass of water. He tried not to be too excessive with the maple syrup but did not succeed. He signaled to the server for additional napkins.

I remember seeing the *Barbie Doll* movie at TIFF in 1988

So do I. I remember the Q&A after the movie.

Oh Jesus. There were these earnest student types who thought Haynes was making fun of anorexics.

He wasn't doing so at all. I remember the filmmaker telling the audience that the deeper he got into making the movie the more he found himself emphasizing with Karen.

At which point someone yelled out how could anybody possibly emphasize with a Barbie Doll.

Right. Probably some literal-minded theatre dullard.

Now some generic alt-rock took over The Playlist. Somebody trying to be Nirvana but not succeeding. Anthony had once seen a documentary about Kurt Cobain and found himself really liking the man but he had never warmed to the music.

His neighbours also seemed displeased that they could no longer hear each other talking. They finished their coffees and paid up. They settled their bill and then left the cafe, walking past Anthony. Anthony wished that he had known these two men..perhaps they might meet again some sunny or soggy day. In the same place, of course.

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