

a can of emotional worms

by Lance Manion

Sometimes the mistakes you make are the only thing keeping you from making bigger mistakes. Let me illustrate in a way that the typical Lance Manion reader has come to expect. By that I mean, if you are a reader of Stieg Larsson for instance you expect every damn thing to be explained in great detail but if, on the other hand, you are a reader of mine you expect to have to fill in most of the details of every damn thing mentioned and not mentioned.

Mostly not mentioned.

And mostly with run-on sentences.

I'm not trying to say one is superior than the other, only that if you expect me to explain exactly what I mean by saying that the mistake I made was the only thing that kept me from making a bigger mistake I suggest you give ol' Stieg a call and ask for his input because all you're getting here is enough information to draw your own conclusions. By that I mean I was almost done with a long rambling, weepy-ass, introspective story that had me questioning the nature of relationships and love and lust and was only a few lines away from finishing it up and forever labeling myself as an enormous pussy when the aforementioned occurred. This story was a shining example of what happens when you hand over the keys of an otherwise brilliant wit to a sap riddled with momentary weakness.

But then it happened. A wonderful, story-saving mistake.

What I meant to type was "an emotional can of worms", which gives you an indication of just how deep I was in the pussy zone, but instead I ended up typing "a can of emotional worms." It broke the spell. I laughed out loud at myself and the giant pile of literary crap I had been writing down in the name of sorting out my feelings.

A can of emotional worms. My imagination soared. What exactly would an emotional worm look like? I guess it would depend on the emotion. All I could picture was a worm with a big smile, which led

to about a dozen separate story ideas. Each of them better than the shit I was spewing.

I copied "a can of emotional can of worms" and quickly deleted the rest. Had anyone had the misfortune of reading even a few lines of it I would have been forced to cut off their head to save face.

Mine, not theirs. I would have probably buried their face along with the rest of their head.

This is where the savvy Lance Manion reader insists on knowing why I had started writing this shit to begin with. I bet Mr. Larsson never has to deal with inquisitive readers like this ... but there you are. I'm happy to have any readers at all so I can't whine too much.

I also know that my readers don't really care about the actual details of my life, only what drove me to be such a mega-pussy in the first place so they can avoid going down that very same road in the future.

A girl.

I know. So painfully cliché that Stieg Larsson would no doubt roll his eyes and feel the colossal difference between our books sales was completely justified. Maybe so Stieg ... but at least I don't need a thousand words to describe her. Simply by letting my readers know that she turned Lance Manion into a giant pussy, for however brief a moment, they know all they need to about her.

And I don't want to rub it in or slander your sizable audience Stieg but I'm now going to describe the dream I had about her and I have no doubt that your readers would have no clue what I am talking about.

I was driving across a long bridge and on one side was a large, scenic stream flowing along and on the other was a dried up river bed. I drove on and kept looking back and forth wondering how I could be seeing what I was seeing. Trying to figure out where the water from the one side went.

Now I have to admit that my readers probably have no clue what I am talking about either but the difference is they like it that way. I also know that Larsson readers never get a pop culture reference thrown in to make sure that they are forced to re-examine their

hastily-concocted conclusions about the dream.

Mine comes from the movie I was just watching before sitting down and typing this. I got almost all the way through it without thinking about her. Which for a weekend is a pretty significant accomplishment. In *The Da Vinci Code* the female leads turns to a very earnest-looking Tom Hanks and says "We are who we protect."

That made me think of her and the bridge and my can of emotional worms.

And the last thing we fought about. I was trying to convince her that the idea of waiting half an hour before swimming was just an old wives tale. Life is short, I implored, never miss a chance to get wet. She gave me a "So much for the noble friend huh?" look.

I take a great deal of pride in the fact that my readers will process all of that and come up with a way to connect with me. Stieg Larsson readers would probably pelt his house with rocks and demand their money back and Dan Brown readers would assume that the emotional worm is just another way of saying penis and the can is really her vagina and then Ron Howard would make a movie where he illustrates it with shiny phallic worms and colorful cans and chalices floating above my head.

Speaking of directors, I know which side John Hughes would have been on in my ongoing girl drama. How many girls would really prefer Blaine over Duckie after the initial burst of romance had worn off? Mr. Hughes made it perfectly clear that Blaine was the sort of guy who would end up vaping and riding those motorcycles with two front wheels, i.e. a total douche bag. There was no way Blaine was going to be able to fuck Molly like Duckie would have. Remember the scene where he kisses her friend in frustration? That girl ran right home and named her favorite vibrator after him. At first I was afraid of becoming her 'Duckie' but now I think about it I'm proud to wear the moniker and if she doesn't come crawling back to me then it's her loss when she ends up stuck with Blaine.

The problem is that there are still girls who didn't learn a damn thing from *Revenge of the Nerds*. One plowing in the moon bounce with the nerd and the cheerleader was his love slave.

I'm starting to see why Steig stays away from pop culture references ... once you start you can't stop. One leads to another. I end up all over the place and regretting I opened up that particular can of emotional worms.

What this story really need is another wonderful mistake.
Just like her story.
And mine.

(Movies have the innate advantage of having soundtracks playing in the background so if you don't mind I'll throw out the lyrics to a Chris Trapper song for you to read before you leave ... and maybe you will figure out if any person is worthy of the kind of ache that has you wincing as you sing.)

I've been fading for so long I'm lost completely
I long to just get washed out in the waves
And feel the ocean floor fall out beneath me
Feelings without weight

