

>Engines

>*from*

>Lines in Code

Characters

Charles, *a man*

Lovelace, *a woman*

Notes

The angle brackets (>) exist to help distinguish a genuine line break from an accident of margins. That's the shortest way to put it.

Snow has sifted down on a huge scattered, cluttered mess. Lovelace stands in the snow talking to a big silver platter, wearing a heavy coat.

LOVELACE

So a mathematician and a maniac walk into a bar. The mathematician looks the menu over carefully and orders the drink with the highest alcohol content per unit of legal tender. The maniac orders, "my usual," although he's never been to the bar before. The bartender brings their drinks, and the maniac squeezes the mathematician's ass. She throws her drink in his face. He points out that she wasted her drink; if she was really mad at him, she should have thrown his, instead. She tells him that hers had more alcohol, so she knew it would sting more. So he throws his drink in his own face.

>That's not a joke; it's a story about my parents.

She tilts the platter so that she can see her reflection. She keeps talking, but no sound comes out; she's just watching her reflection speak. She puts the platter back down and takes a cigarette out of her pocket. As she smokes, she lays out a doll's tea-set (also from her pocket). Charles comes on, in his own coat. He looks at her. Lovelace doesn't turn around, but she knows he's there.

CHARLES

So where did you go?

LOVELACE

The usual places.

CHARLES

I hate the usual places.

LOVELACE

It's lucky you had somewhere else to go, then.

CHARLES

How long was I gone?

LOVELACE

I don't know. I don't have any way of telling time. You can try "one Mississippi, two Mississippi," but the higher the numbers get the less accurate it is. It snowed and I couldn't see the sun. I gave up.

He walks up close to her. She is intent on her arranging. He sprinkles snow on the platter. She jumps up, overturning the platter into the snow, and throws the cigarette down and grinds it into the snow with her heel. She starts crying.

CHARLES

What's the matter?

LOVELACE

It was going to work. I had it right.

CHARLES

I'm sorry.

He hands her a scrap of fabric from the mess.

I can't seem to find a handkerchief anymore.

She sniffles.

Here; let me tell you a joke. So, a man falls asleep and dreams that he's communing with a mystical spirit who tells him the great story of the universe – how life began with a great flood of pure white liquid, how the liquid was disturbed by bits of solid matter, and how the universe began to freeze and compress and shake until everything was entirely trapped in place. The man is horrified by this vision of the end of the world, and he wakes with a jolt. He sees that he's fallen asleep next to a piece of cheese,

and realizes that the "spirit" in his dream must have been a mite in the cheese. See? 'Cause the liquid was the milk, and the solid stuff was the rennet, which is the stuff they put into cheese to make it curdle, and then all the solidifying is the cheese curdling.

*Pause. That's the
punchline? Really?*

LOVELACE

My jokes are funnier than yours and they're not even jokes.

CHARLES

You're just upset.

LOVELACE

I'm not *just* upset.

*She starts to rebuild her
configuration of doll
china.*

CHARLES

No; you're also a grown woman setting up a tea party for her dollies.

LOVELACE

No dolls are involved.
>It will work this time. I need to solve problems,
>and to never be wrong. So I'm making a machine to do it,
because I can't.

*But he's not listening. He
walks away. She keeps
talking to him as he walks
away.*

I know how it'll work. Every decision will be dependent on a decision that came before it, and the very first decision will be the right one.

She calls:

Charles! Bring me a pocket watch and a samovar!

*She begins adding
cigarettes to her
configuration.*

Filter-end out means yes. Filter-end in means no. They stop listening but I don't stop talking. It's a disease. A malady. The maniac caught a malady in the war and I never saw him again.

Charles comes back on. He has a big silver platter with him and he sets it down in the snow. He begins arranging champagne glasses on it.

I make bad decisions. I bet on the wrong horse because it has a wonderful name. I keep on talking even though it's pathetic to talk to people who aren't listening; that's not even talking, it's just disgusting noise-making; it's revolting.

Charles begins adding cigarettes to his champagne glasses. He doesn't look at her.

CHARLES

Mine is better than yours.

LOVELACE

How does yours work?

CHARLES

This is the home. Here are the mother and father. This is where the dog stays. This is the library, and the school is this way. Here is the zoo, and this is the aviary. There's going to be a water pump. There's going to be a road that connects everything.
>Except the son. He stays over here.

LOVELACE

Mine doesn't work like that.

CHARLES

Mine's better.

LOVELACE

What does yours do?

CHARLES

It understands things. You can tell it anything, and it

will always, always understand.

LOVELACE

Mine doesn't do that.

CHARLES

Mine is better.

LOVELACE

What's yours for?

CHARLES

Love.

There is a long silence. A very long silence. Charles goes on working. Lovelace does not.

LOVELACE

You shouldn't just admit that.

CHARLES

Why not?

LOVELACE

No. Fine. You go ahead and admit it. You can

He stops listening.

afford to. You've never had to worry about breaking, I guess.

> Tell me about your wife.

No response.

Charles.

>Tell me about your wife?

Charles stops working.

CHARLES

Dark hair.

>Blue eyes.

>Nose like so.

>Five feet and two-and-two-fifths inches. I measured her.

>One hundred and sixteen pounds and three ounces. I weighed her.

>Little red mouth like raspberry jam. I kissed her.

>She died young. I watched her. Here is the opera house,
and the botanical garden. Spires so sharp they cut the
feet of birds. Glass terraces down by the river.
Surveyor's lines. Beautiful bridges to come, made out of
steel.

LOVELACE

If I told you that I loved you, would you still need to
build that?

CHARLES

Yes.

LOVELACE

Why?

CHARLES

Because --

>My father gave me fish and I turned them into tables. He
gave me a cart and I turned it into wine. He gave me
leather gloves and I turned them into oars. My mother gave
me a name and I turned it into a man. What can you give me
that I could turn into you if you were lost or broken?

*She gets up and goes over
to him. He stays bent over
his work.*

LOVELACE

Charles.

CHARLES

Worry about yourself, Lovelace.

LOVELACE

I do.

>I do. Get up.

*He gets up and looks at
her. She grabs him and
kisses him. She knocks him
down and they go rolling
through the snow. She
leaves him lying there and
crosses to uncover a ladder
in the snow.*

Help me!

She struggles with the ladder. He doesn't help her. She puts it up, and frantically pillages both their devices for their component parts. As she climbs the ladder, she covers the step below her with the things from their platters - tiny cups and champagne glasses, burning cigarettes.

CHARLES

Lovelace, come down.

LOVELACE

No.

CHARLES

Come on.

LOVELACE

No. I can't. Look -

(she gestures at the steps)

-- it's a new machine. It would be broken.

CHARLES

What's this one for?

LOVELACE

It burns up all the places I've been before so that I can never go back to them. And I never have to. What's the difference between a mathematician and a maniac? Oceans and mountains, said the maniac, and the disquiet and gun-roar of the heart. 992, said the mathematician. The difference between them is their daughter. I bet on a horse named The Difference Engine. It lost.

CHARLES

Come down. If you can't climb down, jump. I'll catch you.

LOVELACE

No you won't. You'll forget me between the time when I jump and when I fall. You couldn't listen to me and you couldn't read my face. I'm not coming down. We've reached

our limits. I'm going to finish this machine - my machine, which burns and thinks and understands - and then I'm going somewhere where I can admit whatever I want. Even if I have to build that place myself and live there all alone.

She climbs the ladder and is gone. He goes to her machine and changes something small.

CHARLES

This is the aquarium.

>There is the clock tower, and the bath house where they scrape you clean with pinecone combs. Here is the church; here is the steeple. Here is the house that smells like raspberries and tobacco. Here is my wife. And here is my lover, waiting. They're both waiting.

>I could go there. I could go there any time.

He looks up the ladder after Lovelace. He looks down again and forgets her. He takes a cigarette out of the machine and walks away, smoking.