

Echos of 'Fidelio'

by **Vesperae**

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This is a brief excerpt from the September–October 2010 issue of *Smoke Signals* magazine, and one of my first columns for the free/public version,

["My First Decade at The Orgy"](#)

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"A few months after going online at home [in July of 2000] I finally got around to renting a video of Stanley Kubrick's brilliant final film from 1999, [Eyes Wide Shut](#) (which I had skipped in theatrical release due to my intense Tom Cruise aversion), and in the mansion scenes found the perfect representation of what the experience of joining the online SFC felt like for me – a grand underground gnostic orgy populated by masked revelers. I completely identified with any one of the countless women whose mask gave her the freedom to indulge her most extreme carnal urges in the dimly lit chambers beyond the boundary of 'Fidelio' [the password admitting an attendee to the mansion].

My mask was Betty

[the name I gave to my first iMac]

...my mansion was the world wide web...and an endless parade of partners came to life for me via their words and images whenever I desired their touch and their smoke in my mind. The relative anonymity, the immediacy of the connection, and my imagination, were a profoundly intoxicating and erotic combination for me."

HBO currently has the extended director's cut of [Eyes Wide Shut](#) playing in rotation and available on HBO GO, and I watched it again for the first time in fifteen years a few weeks ago. Fifty one year old me was instantly transported back to late long summer nights in Seattle spent by thirty six year old me discovering the mind-blowing selection of online erotic treasures tailor-made for my Unusual Desires.

Now that it's become my first fifteen years at The Orgy, I look back over the long, strange, wonderful trip of it all with gratitude and joy, and especially, a certain contentment in the fact that I got to experience the online SFC from the early days of what can perhaps best be described as "mutual discovery."

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What I'm referring to is the magical transition from living for many years with an essentially wordless and largely subconscious desire for women who smoke, to then suddenly being able to actually read the thoughts of others who share in the experience. For me, it was not unlike having a paralyzed limb my entire life that suddenly began to function. "Transformative" doesn't even begin to describe how profoundly liberating and intoxicating the experience of embracing, exploring, understanding, and expressing my SF was for me. And the delight of it all was just amplified over, and over, and over again the more I read about the experiences of others going through the same wonderfully exciting process that I was.

What's changed in the years since that time is that anyone growing up now is online from childhood and can easily find SF content and discussion, whereas I had to wait until I was a middle-aged adult. Which means that the urge to share and express and celebrate our relative uniqueness has, in all likelihood, been dramatically diminished. Many of those, like me, from the age of the first Surgeon General's Report and before that time seem to be "talked out" at this point, since their process of mutual discovery has long been integrated into their sense of Identity. And those who grew up in the decades after the first Surgeon General's Report never experienced the dramatic, sudden process of mutual discovery, since their Unusual Desires had a name and an endless parade of online content and archived and active discussions to reassure them that they were by no means alone, and from a *dramatically* earlier age.

The sense I get is that younger members of the SFC tend to be more passive when it comes to thinking about and entertaining their SFs, because it's simply not a "big deal" like it was for the original participants and contributors to the online SFC. Content that entertains will almost certainly always be of interest, but *process* discussion content of any serious nature, like message boards, forums, and this magazine, would seem to be of relatively little interest for the majority anymore. I'd like to think that for many younger members of the SFC, maybe they've been able to open up to their partners about their little kink and get to indulge and enjoy it frequently and regularly, and thus don't feel the need to talk about it with anyone else. I hope so.

While he's not arrived at a final decision, the Publisher of *Smoke Signals*, my very dear friend Mike, seems to have all but decided that the time for the magazine has passed. And short of a barrage of emails persuading him to reconsider (SmokeSigs@aol.com), this will probably be the last issue of the magazine, and my last column here.

I'm both humbled and gratified by the number of views of my contributions to the magazine, and especially of the lovely appreciative emails that I receive from readers from time to time. Please

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know that if *Smoke Signals* magazine is discontinued, I will still be around, I will still continue to be an online presence, and you're still always welcome to email me. This isn't "goodbye" by any stretch of the imagination.

As for "Kayla's Lungs" – I still have quite a bit of story left to tell. And if not here, then to be continued and concluded sometime in the near future at a venue to be determined.

As a long-time reader and fan from the print days in the late 90s before going online at home in 2000, and as a subsequent proud contributor to *Smoke Signals* magazine since 2003, it goes without saying that I would be sad to see it go. But one of the nicest things about getting older is the perspective that the years offer you. When something is lost, something is inevitably gained, even if it isn't obvious at the time. And that which goes away in its present form lives on in the way that we experience everything that comes after.

Smoke Signals magazine will always remain one of the happiest and best memories of my life, whether this is the last issue or not, and I will always feel a deep sense of gratitude and friendship and love towards Mike for his pioneering spirit and incredible generosity of money and time and energy in making the mutual discovery process of the early days of the SFC possible for so many of us.

As always, I continue to believe in the power of optimism, because I've always found the alternative to be a pointless dead-end.

So...until next time...wherever and whenever we meet again...

[Email Vesperae](#)