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## Pandora and Pavlov

by Olivia Sprinkel

“How are you doing?” Pandora couldn’t get any clue from Pavlov’s face. He was sitting too far back from the screen. Maybe that was in itself a clue. Zoom body language. Some socially distanced student somewhere was no doubt putting together a dissertation proposal on it to her supervisor, via Zoom. And trying to analyse her supervisor’s body language as he reacted to her proposal. Life was getting so meta.

“The days pass quickly, and yet one is so bored here. To quote Chekhov.”

“Have you started reading Chekhov? Or was that nugget just lodged in your brain?”

“Oh, it was there. From those times of boredom before. Summers on the farm. You know.”

“Well, if you can quote Chekhov, then I’ll quote you my mother. “If you’re bored, it’s because you’re boring.” That’s all the sympathy that I got when I complained of being bored as a child. It certainly taught me to entertain myself.”

“In my boredom, I did start to read about boredom, and it turns out it is good for creativity. We need down times in order to provide space for noticing. Can’t say it’s done for wonders for my creative output though.”

“Perhaps you need to reframe your boredom?” said Pandora.

This was the side of Pandora that Pavlov couldn’t work out if he liked or not. He was glad that they hadn’t moved in together before lockdown. She always seemed to have some self-improvement advice waiting to be doled out, and he was beginning to find it a bit grating.

He wondered whether she had always been like this or if it had been brought on by some mid-life crisis. Maybe this particular crisis was just bringing out more of that side of her. Couldn't fault her for wanting to put a positive spin on things. Although the Czech-half of his ancestry did find a certain comfort in melancholy.

He was aware of too long a pause.

"Just trying out being comfortable with silence, be comfortable with the pause", he tried to joke.

"How Pinteresque of you."

"We are having a literary conversation today. So, how should I reframe my boredom?"

He said it and then wasn't sure if this was a good conversational move. Maybe he was going to end up with his ear chewed about the benefits of boredom, which is still what it would be by any other reframed name.

"Take my mother's advice. Don't be boring."

Checkmate. He'd asked for that one.