

FOR DOTTY

Ryan Ritchie

I spent three decades building a wall
out of brick and mortar, but unlike every other
wall known to man, mine can move. Mostly

I stare at the masonry from the inside, marveling
at my creation, thinking how this evolving structure
just might be the best thing I'll ever accomplish.

The impregnable blockade follows like a shadow, surrounds
like a six-foot guard trapped in a corner by three
seven-foot centers. It's invisible, but trust me, it's there.

My wall is bulletproof and the select few allowed
entrance into the world behind closed doors
do so with a VIP pass handed to them near the front of

the velvet rope line, from me. My wall is good, protects
me from all those reasons why I built the damn thing
in the first place. But after three decades of living in solitude,

I've learned that sometimes I don't want protecting.
Sometimes I need to escape my Frankenstein, and it's
these moments when I realize my foolish mistake
of not building a back exit that I can sneak out of

from time to time.

Like...

when I'm at the bar
alone

I'm not the sort of guy

who strikes up

conversations with strangers

because I'd prefer

they come to me

and they almost

never do. So I'll just watch

and listen

and wish someone would

show the slightest interest
in everything that is me...



When I wake up early enough,
which isn't often,
I go to coffee shops, sit at sidewalk
tables and fool
myself into believing that
I'm alone
because I want to be.
(I don't want to be).

At night...
I recline in plush couches
at strip clubs
and bait the talent
into approaching me but
one by one
the girls flock to the guys who left
their walls in their cars.

In bed...
I toss and turn, creating a world
inside my head, inside walls
that only I see, one
where I'm the popular king
whose every word is loved, cherished, appreciated.
I roll for hours, happy to be free of my
goddamn walls
because
my world is where
I can be me,
a tease who secretly wants to be
a slut. And no matter how much

I wish it wasn't so, sitting
behind my wall is easier
than having to admit that
at times
I'm not as bulletproof
as I pretend to be.

