

But, finally, I did pluck up the courage and I asked him: "Is there anything that you really *are* frightened of, David?" All of a sudden, he became completely serious and for a second I thought I had made a mistake, and regretted asking the question.

PERSONAL

But then he was looking deep into my eyes, and I knew he was just preparing himself to answer what was, after all, an intensely personal and private question:

"Yes," he replied simply and quietly, "there are things I am frightened of."

I waited in silence — grateful for the immense trust David was showing in me by talking of such things.

"My fears are mostly set in the future," he went on. "I'm always okay if I can see what I'm up against and fight it on my own terms. It's the things that I fear

might happen that really bug me, because I'm completely helpless against those.

"I guess most people would call my fears irrational, but that doesn't stop them being just as terrible for me . . . Like I have this terrifying, groundless fear that I might wake up one morning and find that my music has gone from me.

"The awful thing about it is that it's a hazy kind of a fear . . . It's nothing specific that you could pin down. But I have nightmares about it sometimes.

ROBOT

"I can still play my guitar and the piano. But it's all gotten to be mechanical and my soul isn't in it any more. It's as though the real me isn't there . . . I'm just a robot at an instrument."

It made me shudder simply to listen to David talking of it.

"What's funny about it,"

he continued, "is that it's sort of different from the usual musician's nightmare. Normally, his fear is that he won't be able to play because he loses his hand or something . . . Something physical.

But, with me, that doesn't have the same edge of fear. My big terror is that something will go wrong *inside* of me and the whole thing will snap."

SILENCE

For a moment he sat in silence — a silence I could not have broken for the world. It was so obvious that speaking of this inner fear had affected him deeply.

But, in a moment, he was back out of that mood and smiling again:

"You know," he said, looking across at me — almost in surprise . . . "You are the very first person I've ever told about that. Thank you for not laughing." And he smiled.

Mickie

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