

SPUN

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I had stories that you'd never believe, for they were all embellished with lies that distorted the line between reality and appearances.

I stumbled into your existence nearly five years ago, and now your presence may never leave my reality again. Maybe there was something worth keeping from me after all, some passionate desire that only I could fulfill, but your acceptance depended on the flux of my moods that gyrated on an axis of mania, catalyzed into propulsion by the use of methamphetamine.

I had a hard time accepting the emotions that fumed deep inside of me, and I needed to suffocate them with thousands of crystals. I covered up the truth with my own insecurities, snorting line after solid line to eliminate the pain of our past before I went to see you again. Through all my disappointments I acknowledged that we had once found beauty in each other, and although I couldn't let you smother me, I ran back to you nonetheless.

The sun settled below the horizon and allowed the evening clouds to cloak the backstreets with grey shadows as I roamed in isolation, careful to avoid the accusatory stares of people and their assumptions. Sirens echoed in the alleyways as the rain descended towards the earth to wash away the guilty promises of yesterday.

My lifeless hands fingered the half-full vial buried deep inside the pocket of my jeans. Two more blocks, and I would make the apocalyptic daydream of the outside world disappear; two more blocks, and with your help, god willing, I would rip the transgressions from the core of my soul and permit purity to pour in through the cracks and tears.

Time raced forward, but I failed to notice its movement until I found myself stepping through the glass doors and into your apartment building. As I rode the elevator to the fourth floor, I dipped a hollow pen into the glass vial and sniffed with an unrestrained urgency. I felt the crystals hit the back of my skull with icy relief as I prepared to chant my Siren songs and capture you in the illusion of perfected beauty.

I examined the golden numbers identifying each apartment until I found yours and rapped my knuckles against the oak frame in short staccato rhythms. I questioned my decision to return as I heard you curse the unannounced visitor, but we always felt so alone that one more night together couldn't possibly destroy an already complicated past.

Dizzy and lightheaded, I was flying high with a wounded heart as I listened to the click of the deadbolt, and the door creaked open to expose your world to me – white couches and upright recliners, glass coffee tables and porcelain lamps, a chess set and The New York Times, prints of Monet and Gauguin on the walls, copies of Nietzsche and Whitman on the shelves, all the signs of an intellectual, marred by the clutter of empty beer bottles and the smell of stale cigar smoke.

You stood in the doorway, all cool and composed while I remained numb to the surprise hidden beneath the serenity of your stare as you recognized the decaying creature before you. You had a beer in your hand, surely your fifth but maybe your sixth. There was silence between the instant where you considered whether or not to let me cross the threshold. In another era, before I had chosen to live in an amphetamine psychosis, I knew you'd have let me in without hesitation, but maybe now we could just make a trade off. There must have been something you needed more than that bottle of Rolling Rock.

As I doubted my decision to return, I took you with a glance. You opened the door a little wider, and I interpreted the gesture as an invitation to step inside and reclaim the once-familiar territory. Cold and broken, I anxiously fingered the buttons of my trench coat as my mind attempted to form a logical explanation for my sudden reappearance, but my motives were too selfish to admit, so we remained deathly still in the silence of our recollections.

My vacant eyes fell on the framed photographs of us, wandering forgotten train tracks or sitting in downtown bars, that you had placed on the bookshelves alongside Kafka and Sartre. My heart skipped, for I wanted none of the past, only a future filled with false promises and fairytale dreams, and I felt a halt in eternity as the memories revived my universe of fears. They brought tears to my eyes, but the raindrops prevented you from noticing the salty droplets that trickled down my cheeks.

As the thoughts of our twisted coexistence pierced my fragile heart, I failed to notice your fixation on my cleavage as it bulged beneath a skintight blouse, wet and transparent from roving through the storm. Your unabashed lust for my body reinforced the superficialities of what we had once called true love as I prepared to mate and murder like the dance of the preying mantis ready to seize the vitality of her lover, leaving nothing behind but the smell of licentious desire and the hunger for another kill.

In your presence my wrath always seemed to slip through the barriers of my mind to massacre your notions of love, for your unbridled trust coerced me to molt the thick layers of skin that I used for protection against the judgments of others. In moments of pure desperation, I revealed myself to you, exposing my bruised psyche for your scrupulous examination, and as the chemicals unlocked the Pandora's Box of my mind, I released my sins unto you, the credulous victim, to carry as a burden throughout eternity.

As I testified my love for you in a speed-induced frenzy, the words dropped between us in the thick gravity of nostalgia. Despite our haunted past, stained with verbal threats and mental instabilities, I felt no regrets as I spoke, for I was too strung out to control my emotions. My mind was blown, and as I struggled to translate my confused thoughts into coherent sentences, you knew that I just didn't seem right.

You remembered me as an artist and an intellect but never an addict. Around you I didn't freebase, and I didn't shoot up; I merely sniffed, for the slight burning sensation inside my nose always provided me with an immediate reminder that I was still alive and human. As much as you wanted to destroy my poisoned way of life, I knew that you couldn't make me feel again as long as I allowed the noxious powder to inhabit the core of my being.

You eyed my atrophied body with a salacious hunger, longing to caress my ashen skin as I, unaffected by your debauched intentions, scratched at the maggots burrowing deeply beneath my starved and ravaged flesh, and I knew that I needed more. I ducked into the bathroom and tapped out three solid lines from the near-empty vial. In one continuous sniff the meth disappeared and replaced my discomforts and uncertainties with a euphoric hysteria.

I returned from the bathroom, and you stared with horrified eyes at the pale ghost of the woman you had once loved. My nose felt irritated, so I made a quick, anxious sniff and wiped it with the back of my hand, and then I noticed the blood. You'd been observing the details of my behaviors, and the nosebleed confirmed your suspicions. I knew that my smile would soon surrender to tears of indignation, and my entire body began to shake with fear as I anticipated the moment that you'd rip the vial and its remnants from my possession.

Instinctively, I shoved my hand into the pocket of my jeans and tightly clutched the glass cylinder. You grabbed my wrist with force but couldn't pry the vial free from my fingers. We struggled, but I soon succumbed to your strength, for my body was weak from five days of sleepless nights. I shrieked and swore and beat you with open fists, but you refused to give in to my outburst; you refused to tell me what I wanted to hear.

You turned away as I fell to the ground and pounded my fists against the floorboards, shouting that I needed it bad. I heard the toilet flush, and you reappeared, throwing the empty vial

at my feet. You gave me the sad look of an angel with broken wings before walking into your bedroom and locking the door behind you.

I remained on the floor and listened to a thousand cars crawl by your window as I fought off insanity, feeling the residual effects of the crystals still trapped inside my nose. I bit my nails until blood pooled around the cuticles, and then I picked at the open sores on my chest and arms until they, too, began to bleed. The sound of television static reverberated through my head, but I saw only my withered reflection as I gazed into a blank screen. My jaws cracked from constantly grinding my teeth together, and I felt a dull ache start to develop at the base of each tooth.

As I endured the agonizing insomnia, I temporarily replaced the cravings with a new desire – to be out there on the highway, driving away from my beat existence and towards the freedom of a new era that promised purity and pardon. The hunger to cruise through nowhere towns as an indiscernible stranger developed into an obsessive temptation as I realized that I had burnt through all my family and friends. I had no place left to belong, and if I didn't find somewhere soon, I'd never survive the subsequent dawn of another manic Monday night.

While you slept, I wandered outside to catch some breath in hopes to slow the rapid beating of my heart as it smoldered inside the prison of my wasted body. I checked my pockets for another vial, optimistic in my desperation, but found only eighty-six cents.

I drifted through the drizzle and thunder, knowing that it'd be a long walk away from you. Maybe I should have stayed for awhile, allowed you to indulge in my lips, but it never would've worked because the thin layer of emotional stability that veiled my festering flesh could not protect my heart from the damage of another failed relationship.

I witnessed the darkness unfold for an instant, revealing the constellations as they plummeted from the heavens, and at that moment I realized that I couldn't be pure before god or anyone else. The clouds quickly returned to invade my brief moment of quiet revelation, and as the soft touch of raindrops against my cheeks changed to the bitter sting of snowflakes, I stumbled and fell on the cold concrete.

Lacking the energy to cry out in pain or frustration, I just stayed there on the cement and watched the blood trickle from the palms of my hands until dreams disrupted my conscious thoughts. I always had a fear of dreaming because it meant that I needed to be asleep, and to be asleep meant that I needed to be free from the drugs. Dreams confirmed my worst nightmare – the last line that lingers at the bottom of the vial, gone.

I woke up next to you in the late morning hours. You must have found me last night while I was out there trying to find myself, but I was far too gone to accept your guidance. Cautious not to wake you, I slowly lifted my body from the queen-sized mattress and left behind

the only person who had ever offered me the safety of eternal love. As I buttoned my trench coat, I grabbed your wallet from the kitchen table and stepped outside with no intention to return. I needed to escape, for if I wished to keep my conscious at rest, then I could not continue to steal your time and energy.

I staggered towards the bus station, clutching a Marlboro between limp fingertips. Once there, I pulled the wallet from my back pocket in order to take inventory: a few twenties, a bunch of singles, and a fifty stashed behind your MasterCard.

I studied your expression as it stared at me from the cold plastic of your driver's license. With thin lips turned slightly upward in a sly smile, you cast your eyes downward to conceal the identity revealed within the crystal shimmer of your azure irises. Despite your attempts to remain hidden, a piece of your soul flashed through pitch black pupils, and I knew that despite my betrayal, you would never pass judgment.

I noticed some additional photos tucked behind your license. The first showed your half-brother and his wife, smiling with the innocence of untainted affections in their wedding portrait taken last spring. The next captured your little sister, delivering her speech as valedictorian during high school graduation nearly two years ago.

Worn from age and damaged by creases, the last snapshot portrayed an unfamiliar woman sitting on the swing set of another's childhood. I flipped over the photograph to reveal its date of development nearly five years earlier. As I turned the picture over once again, my paralyzed mind suddenly registered the girl in the image – I was the unrecognizable stranger whose youthful skin glistened with the naiveté of first love.

A raspy voice jarred me back from the sudden influx of memories that the photograph evoked, announcing that it was time to board the Peter Pan headed for South Station. I extracted the cash and credit card from the tattered leather before tossing the remains of your wallet into a nearby garbage can.

I thought that I heard your voice as I boarded the bus, but when I turned to look, I saw only a derelict picking through the trash. He removed his hand from the barrel, clutching the discarded wallet with fingers covered by disease and grime.

As he unfolded it to search inside, I sensed your presence, but despite your ethereal cries for me to fight temptation and return to you in search of forgiveness, I followed my lusts and chose to leave my heart behind on the crumbled asphalt. I didn't need your mercy, and I didn't need your truth; I needed to catch a bus to Boston and refill a couple of empty vials before time stopped completely.