Sleep

Kat Jensen

I stare into the mirror and watch the long black bags of insomnia that lurk below my eyes like leeches; writhing and wiggling sucking the life from my skin and reminding me of what I can never have and who I can never be. The single light bulb above my small cracked mirror glares into my eyes. It almost blinds me into another dimension but I stay fixated on my sleep deprivation and realize that the black plagues that sleep on my face are growing. Growing rapidly before my eyes. Black pools of blood spilling down my cheekbones like morbid tears.

I twitched awake to the bright daylight of after-my-class-had-started-thirty. *Shit.* I shed the blanket cocoon from my half naked body and ravaged the sheets for my phone. I found it lodged between the head of my bed and the lonely wall of my single apartment. It was held halfway above the ground by my crumpled up Spider-Man sheets. Dead again. *Shit balls.* Maybe if I had roommates this wouldn’t happen as often. Then again someone would have to be blind to want to live in the pigsty that constructs my world.

I danced around the unpacked boxes and piles of dirty clothes, both of which had been there for the past eight months, and sidestepped the general trash that had yet to find the wastebasket. I reached my desk as if by some miracle. I guess by now I must have some sort of spidey sense about where my junk is and how to avoid it. I plugged my phone in and went to the bathroom while I waited for the familiar buzz.

When I came back I noticed I had a text message from someone I hadn’t talked to in quite some time.

*Saw you driving this morning*

I thought this odd. I had definitely not gone anywhere this morning, especially not the class I had already missed twice. Maybe he saw someone else that looked like me. I did sort of have a very common looking face. Nice generic German face with round brown eyes, high cheekbones, a nose of normal nosely proportions. Brown hair and generic body shape. Really nothing stood out about my appearance so it was understandable how I could be easily mistaken. He would know my car since we used to be neighbors but I had also seen cousins of Diablo running around town. I guess I could see how it would be plausible that he would mistake me for someone else if he were far enough away. Still, I couldn’t shake the feeling that this was very odd. I decided to avoid the subject altogether and talk to him about his life.

*Patches! How are you? I haven’t talked to you in so long!*

Generic response from a generic girl. Fuck, when did I become such a personality devoid cliché? I figured I might as well make an attempt to go to the second class or at least return the Redbox I rented a month ago. Plus I had therapy later and if I didn’t get up now I never would.

I wake up on my futon. I am fully dressed and it is pitch black outside. There is a long red scratch on my right arm. I’m not even sure what day it is. What did I miss? Where is my phone?

*Hi this is Sandy calling from Angie’s office for Vera. You missed another appointment today and we were wondering if you wanted to reschedule. Go ahead and give us a call back when you’re ready.*

When I’m ready? What the fuck does that mean? I have 56 unread emails. Eight of them are about something I was supposed to go to. I wish I could sleep. I feel so tired. Like I haven’t slept in days.

“I’d like to give you a quiz. Do you feel up to that?” I couldn’t stop staring at her left hand. Ever since I discovered my therapist was missing her middle finger I wanted nothing more than to spend our sessions staring at it for inappropriately long periods of time.

“Yeah that sounds fine”

Angie got up from the overstuffed purple armchair across from me and floated to the closet behind the door. I only ever saw her open that door at the beginning of our sessions when she took out the black notebook she kept on me. I don’t think Angie ever read what she wrote in there though, because she never remembered anything I told her. This time she pulled out two long paperback manuals. She began flipping through them.

“I know it’s in the back of one of these. By the way how’s your sleeping? Ah here it is!” She set the other book on the ground and repositioned herself so that her feet were tucked under her and the notebook and manual could rest on her knees simultaneously.

“I’m still really tired all the time. I sleep through everything. I feel like I’m losing patches of time every day.”

“Okay. We’ll talk about that later then. So on a scale from one to ten how often would you say that someone comes up to you that you don’t know at all?”

“I don’t know. Like an eight?”

“Do you ever walk in to a familiar place and have no recollection of being there?”

“Sometimes”

“A number please”

“Um maybe a five?” I began to feel very uncomfortable with these questions and I pulled at the edges of my gray wool sweater with the old man elbow patches.

“Do people ever tell you stories of times when you didn’t know someone that you were supposed to know?”

“Why would someone tell me a story like that? It wouldn’t really be that interesting I would think.”

“Well if it was pronounced enough they would. What’s your answer?”

“I don’t know. I guess they do.”

“What number would you say?” I tugged on my sleeves even harder.

“Ugh I don’t know a four”

“Do you ever feel like your body is not your own?” I sunk into the red couch further. I stared at the oak floors, at the false antique furniture with tattered wood and scratched paint that always made me feel like I was at a bed and breakfast. I looked at the dark bookshelf in the corner by the closet and read all the motivational posters and book titles. I did anything but look at Angie.

“Vera? Do you want to answer my question?”

“Yes” I breathed to myself more so than to her.

“Yes? How often?” Goddammit. I knew there was no good place this was going. I wanted to leave. I felt like we just had sex and she was telling me she had someplace to go and I had to leave.

“Um like a nine?” by now my voice had grown quiet. I hated this quiz all of the numbers were arbitrary anyways. Angie put down the manual and took up her notebook and pen; ready to write more useless things she doesn’t even care about.

“Can you elaborate on that?”

“I don’t think she’d like that”

“Who’s she?” I rolled over and began picking at the black blanket draped over the arm I was resting on.

“Vera, who’s she?”

I’m in my bathroom again. I am looking into the mirror. I am in the bathtub. I am fully clothed. I stop the drain and turn on the water. I wait until the tub is full to the very rim so that I can’t even dare to breathe lest I spill some of the water. I watch as the faucet drips into the warm pool around me. Carelessly leaving ripples in what must be an ocean to it. Coaxing me in with its toxic perfume of simplicity.

He’s petting my cat. Looking at me. Waiting for me to do something. Waiting to know what to do. I’ve been there. I hate people that are there. Sad. Lost. Puppies. He’s petting my cat. That’s mine. Not his. He assumes it’s his because he’s been here before. He acts like they’re friends. They are not. She is mine and mine alone. Nobody else feeds her every day and cuddles her every night. She is mine. She needs me. I need her. I need her more than she needs me. But she is mine nonetheless.

“Do you want to know what I want? All I want is to see you happy”

“Don’t you get it? That’s never going to happen!”

“I don’t care! I really like you. I want to be around you!”

“Well you shouldn’t! I’m a cold heartless bitch! I give zero fucks about you!”

“Alright. You’re a cold heartless bitch.”

Gets up to leave.

Wait. Wait. I’m sorry I didn’t mean it.

My head. My head. It’s burning. It’s a city completely lit on fire in the middle of august. It’s being ripped apart by two opposing trains. It’s fine. It’s not. It’s melting in a pool of acid. It’s fine. It’s not.

Short breaths

Shorter

Shorter

Rubbing my back.

I either want to punch him or fuck him.

Both at the same time

I want to suck out his life

I want to rip out his soul.

Whimper. Whimper like the coward you are. Whimper so that he’ll feel bad for you. Be crazy, let yourself go. Pound on your head and writher about and scream and cry and have fucking panic attacks so that he’ll give you another pill. Make him feel concerned about you. You should fuck him.

Do it. Do it. Do it. Do it you little bitch. You little slut. You’re already a slut, what’s one more? To add to your list pages and pages long? You’d have it in you. You’d have it in you to be the person you’re supposed to be the person I want you to be if you just hadn’t taken that pill. Those sedation pills. They sedated you. You should be locked up. That’s what they’re doing. I told you not to take the pill but you didn’t listen. I told you not to take the pill…