



Today was going to be an amazing day. Always need to be positive. Hoping is for people unwilling to do what is required to make their dreams come true and today I was a man with a dream. Hope was beyond me. I needed to be proactive.

I just needed to get the ball rolling. Staring down at my phone, it occurred to me Ravyn was taking her sweet time if she was to start things and I didn't want to appear as desperate as I was to begin. If that's what it took however, then so be it.

"You shouldn't have!"

I fidget, startled by the interruption in thoughts and peer up as Lexy is now peering down at me. A marvel even with me sitting down. She wore the giddiest grin I have ever seen her with. I smile, concerned. I didn't know what I was being accused of.

"What's that, babe?"

“You know, I haven’t really celebrated one in so long-” she pulls a box out from her pocket and I can feel my heart trying to beat out from my chest. “But you actually went out and got me something! How did you know- *Did Autumn tell you?*”

I try shaking my head before switching to nodding.

“Um, ye- yeah! You know, she just couldn’t help herself.”

“*Actually*, I am kind of surprised she remembered what day it is.”

“Tuesday?”

She giggles and playfully taps at my chest. What did Autumn tell me? God damn it, is it an anniversary? Has it been a year? I don’t know.

“Yep! And a girl only turns twenty-eight once, right? I can’t wait- Can I open it? I can open it, right?” She continues, fiddling with the box in her hand. A birthday. No, I was not aware. Damn it.

“I mean- No! No. Please don’t. *Not yet.*”

I hid the box for a reason. It was Ravyn’s and I don’t think Lexy would like it very much.

“I can’t? But it’s my birthday. Unless, you mean for **later**?”

I sat there conflicted. Okay, yes. *Nod you overgrown buffoon.* It’s meant for later!

Nodding, I raise my hands up to cup hers.

“Today, is going to be a wonderful day. Have it all planned out for us!”

Nice. Slowly pulling my hands back, with the box in it, I try thinking of nice restaurants I can get into without a reservation. That likely wasn’t necessary. Just something *different*.

Okay, slick. Calm down. The **gemmed anal plug** you got Ravyn will not be taken by your girlfriend on her birthday. Surely, within a day you can get another gift that would actually be valued and appropriate.

Today was going to be an interesting day. Amazing might be a stretch now depending on what I can come up with on a whim.

Sitting up, I hug Lexy and lean down to kiss her. I try to think of what would be a treat. Most birthdays for the last five years were spent in bed fucking like a wild animal while Cassidy lined up shots of cocaine in between sessions. I am under the impression Lexy would be intimidated by Tylenol.

Trying to have a strong relationship built on some emotional connection seemed ridiculously demanding. I've long accepted that I have *issues*. Lexy was open in many degrees where I wasn't. Of course that was the personal over, what you got instead in the magazines. I wouldn't say she was completely different in interacting with everyone else, just more, cranked up to the max. Which I suppose everyone puts on another act for the world from the person we are at our core, as opposed to in private. We're social animals, we were built to crave acceptance and that often requires negotiating who you are to what you sell yourself to be.

I was pretty much just a guy currently coping. Not even coping very well by all rights, Autumn would ask me daily how many people I think I've spoken to. Such a bizarre question and I suppose one mandated by the fact I really haven't been keeping things together all that well.

I could always cook something. I wish Autumn in fact had told me or I had a memory worth a damn, I am sure Lexy once told me before what her birthday was. No matter.

I can't really remember the last celebration I partook in. Age was just a number. Although if I could make the day special for her then that by itself would at least make it matter. A memory. Something to cherish. Not everyone is a nihilistic asshole.

"Tell you what. If you're up for it we can hit The Mayan in a bit after a bite to eat."

She smiled. It had been a while since we went out and danced. We weren't too far from Disneyland. There were plenty of possibilities, LA was full of them.

Today was still going to be an amazing day.

Leaning up on her tiptoes she cups my face in between her hands before planting a light kiss on my nose. She turns and makes her way toward the bedroom. Kat was in her room with the door closed, which served just fine. No awkward stories about childhoods that seemed to either lead Lexy into becoming a giggling mess or a girl with a deep shade of red, wanting to hide.

Stepping into the kitchen it occurs to me I have no clue what is in their refrigerator. Opening it, it becomes an adventure game of finding something suitable while pretending like it was always the plan.

It is occurring to me more and more that I am likely going to step out in front of a bus when I am too old to truly care about anything or anyone.

I was reaching out to Ravyn hoping to rekindle a vision of some part of the glory days. My mind was beginning to go in and out. I have seen footage of myself now where it's clear I am not well. The most help I am getting is in the form of daily reminders from Autumn. Lexy tried talking about it some but honestly? I don't think it's stuff we've been ready to delve into.

I never broach on it from my end and I guess it's easier focusing on the good over dragging up the rest of it. It'll always be easier to smile and pretend everything is great over the alternative.

I long ago accepted I was simply fucked in the head. Every day from there is grinding to the next and trying to make the most of it.

The worst thing about my dysfunction, it hurts the people you love. Just as much as it's hurting you, if not worse. Because apathy very quickly follows behind. Whatever I do? Whoever's heart I'll break? I'll feel bad about it but in very short order?

I'll likely get over it.

Depression I've come to feel is selfish in nature. If you listen to people long enough, it's a desperate cry for help where the entire world is supposed to bend to their whims.

If I can make her have a nice day?

I can at least pretend for five minutes I am not that bad. It's a cycle like any other.

As if to prove this point, while preparing the New York strips, I considered mixing some more fun into the mix. At least for me. As much as I thought about how this day needed to stay focused on Lexy, I was probably going to hate myself the entire time. I forgot how much I despised this feeling when it was gone. I was a bird freed from a cage that had been placed upon me from childhood and on. A loathing for the simplicity and lack of true meaning. I had values and that was it.

Even though they were slim.

Slicing up some add ons for a mini caesar salad, I lace mine with a touch of goodness.

"Okay, so, I hope you're ready for a surprise! Later I mean! Is this okay? I am not overdressed am I? Or underdressed?"

Dropping a sixth of a milligram of LSD into the mix, I turn to her, to find her in a white spaghetti strapped mini dress. I guess my face said it all. She blushed and fidgeted uncomfortably a bit. I guess my expression didn't displease her, she continued smiling, rubbing one finger under one cheek.

"I'll always say underdressed. You look absolutely **amazing**."

I meant it. She normally wore jeggings and t-shirts. Was likely the most commonly dressed woman I've been with in years.

This however was a special day for her so I am glad she had something in the closet to go all out in.

She peered at me expectantly.

"It smells so good! I am so glad you can cook. You'll make a great husband someday."

I would make a joke about scrubbing a mean floor but her own statement seemed to have made her suddenly insecure about where her words took her. "I mean, not that I was thinking about it."

"Autumn will be a very lucky woman when that day comes."

My head begins to ache a bit but Lexy is doing wonders in at least making me forget the earlier line of mental discourse with myself. Setting up wine glasses, I figured one with the meal would be fine- it was still early. Setting the bowls and plates out, I am glad I at least had sense to set the table before beginning the food. I figure Kat will bitch about it later but only out of spite. She should be used to things vanishing for Lexy.

"My podcast got so many views yesterday! I think my guest was a popular one."

I wince. "I mean did you **actually** post it?"

"What kind of manager would I be to waste your time?"

I look down at my plate. That was a loaded question given she changed her mind every five minutes.

Whatever, it was a fun little interview. If it made her happy I'd do it every other day.

It just concerned me how she seemed to only have three fans sending her stuff directly to her house. Stalkers are always a concern. We aren't all failed movie stars but we're still minor celebrities in our own right.

In any case, I was losing focus. If I did that for too long I'd just focus entirely on me again today was supposed to be her special day.

"You know, I imagine people really don't give you the credit you deserve."

"Oh? I mean- yeah! Obviously not but that's okay! I am here for YOU GUYS. You're the reason I get out of bed and-"

"Lexy, everyone battles under your name."

"*Yeeaaaah* but it's a very marketable name!"

"Sure, I am just-"

"I mean can you imagine calling the fans the autumnites? Acites might sound slightly better?"

"I think that would offend more people than it pleases."

"Which is why we call them Lexyites!"

"Exactly."

She looks down, seemingly thinking about it. It's usually easy to predict when she's about to doubt herself in these conversations. I hated it and found it cute at the same time. She was always confident in front of the cameras or others. There is always who we are in front of the lens and everyone else and the person we are in the comfort of our own confines.

"Maybe it's not the most original. Do you hate it? Crystal was my first client and she obviously ran away the moment she felt it was all a failure."

I would point out Crystal hasn't done anything since beyond serve as a padding for half the roster but she may blame herself for that too.

"Lexy, I've never really stuck with nicknames in my career. Never really cared. I-" She stared like a wounded animal. She hears enough grief from the people we're facing and Konrad who, is insane and now our ninja wants to murder him. Really weird times. Besides, it was her special day damn it. "I *love* your ideas. If I didn't I wouldn't be here. And I love being here with you. Hell, Autumn owes you everything. I forgot she existed until you started managing her and look at her today! You know, she's closing in on being an active middle of the road performer. People actually know her name! I saw her name on a sign. I think. There are like three Valentines in SCW but the important thing is you did that. She's really come a long way. I am not just saying that because I love you. I am saying this because it's true and I want you to accept that you are an amazing manager."

She smiles and for a moment seems unsure of what to say once more. A rare instance but a good one. We continue to eat our meal, Lexy going into some logistics and I am going to be honest. I have no clue where she is going with this.

As we're finishing our steaks she starts to talk about her 'side project' and I am just thankful she never asked me to partake in some furry fetish. She started giggling uncontrollably, talking about how much kids seemed to love Bear and Penguin. I nod, trying not to pretend they are the creepiest thing I've ever seen in my life meant to be aimed at children.

"I just, really wish they were more competent, you know? Like if Autumn just reprises her role it would be a start."

"She was never more beloved by the fans." I assume.

"Hahaha! Ha. *Oh no...* I think I need to take a break. Overworking myself. I feel so weird."

I nod, disappointed. I should be feeling something but it's taking a little longer to kick in. Lexy's head falls back and she appears to be having a hard time focusing.

"I- Huh. So many beautiful colors," she whispers in a daze. Oh no. **Please no.**

Her eyes were very clearly dilated. I had a feeling we weren't going out now, Disneyland would have to wait. Maybe the Mayan? A little dancing could be in order.

I assume this was her first experience. I only prayed it was a good one.

People always seem to have weird ideas of what a trip would be premised of. Outside of often being unpredictable, it was an attack on all the senses in more ways than one.

I stood up to turn the light off. Turning back she had picked an apple up from the tray in the center of the table and began to stare at it. This was fascinating for her. This would be the most fascinating apple she had ever seen in her life or the most horrifying. She stared in pure awe.

"Hey, uh, how are you doing?" I ask. Leaning down and gently placing my hands on her shoulders, I don't even try to hide my concern. She shakes a bit from the sudden sensations and peers up, her eyes glazed over and I felt terrible.

Lexy did not need to ever be high on anything.

"It's so... It's so red."

"It is!" I agree. I would be doing this a lot for the next two hours.

"I, I- the walls are churning."

I nod, pretending to know what the fuck that meant.

I nudge her a bit and she stands. At least things hadn't kicked completely into hyperdrive.

"Come on, let's get more comfortable." I try directing her to the couch where I can hopefully keep her relaxed until it wears off. She stubbed her toe on the table and for a moment I knew she was back to her senses.

“Damn it!”

But the powerful psychedelic went immediately back to work. She sat on the couch as I gently nudged her before sitting beside her.

“Everything is so beautiful!”

“Enjoy,” I say, unable to fully hide my envy.

For twenty minutes she sat there, seemingly staring off into a whole other dimension. She might as well have been in a coma, she wasn’t responding to a damn thing. And then it came out all at once as she turned to me.

“Space, time, everything is open? I don’t, I can’t, we. We can’t-”

Oh no. I hope this wasn’t going to turn her into a philosopher on being one with the universe. Or worse, I just created another Gio by accident. Some people like to imply their experience changes their perspective on life. That they are detached from their sense of self. Which sounds horrible. I am way too egomaniacal for that shit to be a good thing. She turns to me and clutches my arm with strength I didn’t know she was in possession of.

“I am sorry. I failed us.”

I blink. Did she see us flying through space and we hit a meteor? I shake my head.

“We’re fine. We’re good.”

“It’s my fault you’ve lost so much. It’s my fault for us losing the tag belts. I tried to stop everyone who had a bone to pick with us. I failed at all of it. It won’t stop. It just keeps piling on.”

Sadly, people will often speak their minds while under the influence of any type of drug. I wanted to call her silly but now wasn’t the time.

“I am failing us. All of us. I can’t fix everything. I am trying but I can’t fix it all. I can’t even face it. The conspiracy is me. I am the conspiracy and I am killing us.”

I tried to be more comforting. I also wanted to make fun of her for being so arrogant to believe she has been the sole factor for all of us. She took the concept that she was responsible for all of our success and failures seriously. Unhealthily so.

What a horrible birthday present.

“Where are the elves? I feel like I should see elves.”

She whispered. I smile. That’s far less alarming.

For *two and a half hours* Lexy went on various tangents on her visions and matters of her soul.

It was slowly becoming apparent that she was coming out of it the more exhausted she appeared to be. I stood up to get her a glass of water as she remained speechless. I wasn’t sure how to start discussing her experience. How do I explain what happened?

Sorry hun, I drugged the salad?

It was supposed to be mine?

I debated this and turned to see her attention was elsewhere now.

Lexy had grabbed a hold of the boxed gift I had gotten for Ravyn. I didn’t feel like stopping her. Screw it, she just had the wildest trip of her adult life. I’d just tell her it was a joke if she hated the gift. Hell, for all I knew she’d **wear it**.

I stared at her awkwardly as she peered into the box. I waited with a smile for her to pull it out. She peered at me, then back to the box in her hand and then to me once more. It wasn't until she gasped and a look of surprise, awe and horror manifested itself in her eyes and jaw as it dropped open that it slowly began to register to me how she was perceiving this in entirely the wrong way.

The box was slightly larger than a standard ring box, to compensate for what it was. It was still meant to be presented as something considered sacred. As a joke. I figured Ravyn would at least roll her eyes, ashamed to confess she loves it. The diamond at the tip of the but plug was real.

Lexy practically shoved the box back into my hand and once more her words seemed locked in her throat as she tried to say something to absolutely no avail. The words weren't coming to me either. As it turned out it would seem she didn't want either of us to say anything. She turned and exited out the front door, just leaving me standing there. I tried to take a step forward and found myself conflicted.

Do I tell her it was a joke? And what does that really mean for us? Besides that, she didn't say yes to the implication. I wasn't actually trying to ask for that level of a commitment and now I couldn't help but be hurt. I was rejected anyway.

Alone again I question what I am doing. It's in vain of course. Questioning myself does nothing, the cycle always continues. I only found myself dwelling on what came next. My phone buzzed. Peering down I see it's a notification from the one and only Ravyn Taylor.

Ignoring it and against my better judgment, I stand up and carry the box with me right out the door after Lexy. She couldn't get too far, she was practically comatose twenty minutes ago.

I felt like the victim in a shitty teen rom com. How often does someone feel like they are being proposed to before storming off from their own home?

Looking back and forth along the street I have no clue where Lexy ran off to. How in the hell did she disappear that fast? Did she fucking *sprint* the moment she closed the door behind her? Sighing I shut the door. Today was officially a terrible day.