



“Today... Is going to be an exciting and fulfilling day,” I tell myself.

Staring blankly into the mirror I try not to immediately cut the words down for what they were; A prayer into the void. Need to stay positive however, no matter how much of it is false in nature. Indeed it and maybe, just maybe, if I am a good little boy? My dick will get hard.

“Hear that?” I say while peering down at it, trying not to be entirely patronizing or judgmental. “Today is going to be great! Just... Fucking... Great. Holy shit I want to kill myself.”

Originally it had been physical trauma. Something about mixing copious amounts of cocaine, viagra, a lot of alcohol, four hours of penetrating prostitutes followed by hours of pain did a little number on me. I had thought that the insurmountable pain focused on the most sensitive part of my body had been chastening enough.

Apparently not.

In the time since Rise to Greatness I’ve seen every specialist in the area and some further out hoping for other opinions or fixes. I was whipping it out to science and despite doing every known test they had to give, supposedly it’s fine.

Between blood tests, a ‘*Nocturnal penile tumescence test*’, urine tests, thyroid tests; Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

*“Everything else checks out, Mr. Marshall. Your testosterone levels check out, physically you’re fine. Have you perhaps experienced an increase in stress or anxiety? Depression can definitely have an impact-”*

*“Are you kidding me? I am too sad to get a hard-on?” I wasn’t able to contain myself. I start laughing at the prospect. My only real coping mechanism. I’ve always been sad. My dick is what made it bearable. Laughing now wasn’t working, the laughter was frantic, clearly desperate, hoping for a real answer that my mind could find acceptable.*

*“It could be many factors psychologically, although for that I’d have to send you off to another specialist. I’ve seen quite a few, it’s more common than you think. Be it issues with a relationship, feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, trauma-”*

*“This is the most traumatic experience of my life!”*

It’s been the August of no love. I’d consider it the driest summer since I was thirteen. I never really considered how much my life has revolved around trying to entertain people so I can penetrate them.

As a result I had way more free time than I knew what to do with. This only made it more unbearable as I had more time to reflect on what I wanted but couldn’t have.

I was refusing to take medication for it out of some semblance of pride and honestly because apparently there was risk of further or even permanent damage thanks to the pre Rise to Greatness festivities. At that point I really would have to just call it a day.

Sighing I go about taking the razor I am holding and begin carving away the hair trying to expand out over my face. It was a little after seven. Things were so bad I was waking up early on my own, never quite making it a little past eleven at night. All the energy in the world to burn and no desirable way to burn it.

I try focusing on something positive as I finish up in the bathroom, throwing on a pair of boxers with some jogging shorts. Taking a moment to dig through my bag I settled on a sky blue tank top. Glancing over to the twin bed opposite of the one I had settled in the night before, I actually missed the familiar red hair that would normally be in the opposite bed. With Breakdown being in Detroit and with a little comforting push Sophie agreed to spend at least a little time with her family.

Her father was still some odd years away from retirement and apparently both of her parents still lived and worked here. She was originally from Canada but had spent most of her life in Detroit, hence the nickname Motor City Bitch.

He was apparently a social worker. Seemed like a nice enough guy but that wasn't really for me to decide. Regardless I was left with a bit of time before texting her at the agreed time.

I spent half of it staring awkwardly at women on the television screen while sitting at the edge of bed. I listened to Emma Stone explain love in some weird zombie movie all the while transfixed on her lips. This was not healthy.

*"When you love something, you shoot it in the face, so it doesn't become a flesh eating monster."*

"Damn right you do, Emma," I mumbled in a withdrawn tone.

My diet wasn't helping me with my mood. In the last month I've been trying to eat every natural aphrodisiac I could. Dosing everything in cloves and sage including full cloves raw. Bits of dark chocolate here and there that made me want to gag. Swallowing oysters every way they could be cooked which was always something I despised with a passion. They had the texture I imagined a ball sack would and the taste was awful.

I was following this with plenty of pomegranate juice and tea followed by encouraging one liners aimed downward hoping to spark the little guy to life but nothing was doing it. If it was on a list of things listed online I was diving headfirst into them.

Tried spicy food, eggs, a bull's testicles, chicken livers and I am starting to think the internet is a terrible, God forsaken place.

It was when Sophie texted me I remembered I needed to text her. It was time for me to go pick her up, her only text was in bold capital letters demanding I get her out of there.

Making the trip there wasn't too bad, she had at least told me the best way to avoid traffic. It took no time at all to find myself in a rather nice suburban neighborhood which was not what I had pictured Sophie growing up in when I first saw her family home. While Detroit had a hell of a bad reputation there were parts of the city that still had some semblance of money, even if most of it had fled the great death of the big three.

Sophie was already outside talking to her parents who stood idly by at the door, her father holding an arm up around his wife. Her mother smiled as I pulled in before turning to say more to her famously estranged daughter. Mr. James waved a greeting as I watched from the car window Sophie running her mouth about something. I always found family engagements awkward whether they were my own or anyone else's. Sighing, I turned the rental car off, killing the air conditioning. I opened the door to pick up halfway into the conversation.

"-I will mom, don't worry about it."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like to come in for a minute, Ace? We'd love to sit and chat more-" Mr. James was cut off immediately by Sophie turning to me with what appeared to be fear and immediate resentment.

"No, **you**, get back in the car! We're going to be late!"

Blinking in between glancing from her and her father I shrugged before sitting back while waving to the sweet old looking couple before closing the door. This was fine by me.

Sophie continued saying something while now taking the steps needed to close in on the passenger side. She opened the back door first to chuck her bag in with the desperation of someone fleeing for their lives. I could hear her now yelling over the car.

"I'll call you! For sure! I mean it this time! I- Yeah! I love you, too!" She waved before opening the door and getting in. I turned back to the couple where they idly stood by and once more waved as I cranked the car back up.

“For fuck’s sake, get us out of here.”

“Yeah, don’t want to be late.”

“I told them we had a fan event and then I was going to go visit some other friends while we were in the area that I haven’t seen in... I don’t know, thirteen years?” She says seemingly trying to get her story straight herself. I backed out of the driveway and she immediately seemed more relieved as distance began to be created.

I try not to laugh.

“That bad?”

“Lots of memories here. And you spoke to them briefly yesterday, they won’t ever shut the fuck up once they start.”

She had never really spoken about them much. The only real conversations we had about her family life had been long ago and it was more in her being tears over her brother who had died in the Iraq war drunk out of her mind.

“Oh God, my room. They haven’t changed my room. How psychotic is that? You’d have thought it was some kind of weird temple there. They never- No matter how much time it has been they haven’t changed much of anything.”

“You mean I could have seen your room from when you were a teenager and you robbed me of that?”

“Not sure what you’re expecting. It was mainly posters and clothes I can’t fit into anymore.”

“Alright, well. It’s your hometown. Take us somewhere fun.”

She sighs and glances over.

“Not sure I can help you there, what do you think I did back then? Want to go to a skating ring or go smoke weed behind the mall?”

“Mallrats still existed? I figured that died in the 90’s.”

“Come to think of it, you’re the first boy I ever took to see my parents.”

“I am glad you waited until now to bring home a thirty-six year old man, I think there would have been an uncomfortable conversation otherwise.”

She smirked but otherwise leaned back seemingly exhausted despite not quite being nine in the morning.

“They seemed nice though. Happy to see you.” I continued while trying to think up a way out of this conversation.

“Yeah I guess. They were always great. I had the world’s greatest dad. I was the only fuck up in the family,” she says nonchalantly. She didn’t give me time to say otherwise before continuing. “Oh, you probably should never talk to them again. I told them you were my boyfriend. Mainly to avoid mom going into her spew. I wasn’t counting on her to start talking about settling down. I would have thought being clean still would have been a good enough conversation before trying to catch up elsewhere.”

“Oh my.”

Come to think of it, it has been years, at least that I am aware of, where she has stayed true to her convictions. She would occasionally drink with me, which, when she did she would drink a lot. However that wasn’t a particularly common event. She also smoked weed occasionally which I suppose is a cheat although it felt like the general perception on that was that was the equivalent to smoking a cigarette every now and then.

“Yeah, well,” she paused a bit, seemingly a bit embarrassed. “It was still mostly fine. I can say I went home once before I died and not have that regret. It was ridiculously hard. My room wasn’t the only one never touched. Not going to lie, I didn’t have it in me to go check Seb’s room. Just being there was enough. I probably would have jumped off the wagon there for sure had I crossed that line.”

Seb was her deceased brother. I’d be lying if I said I remembered his name. I had nothing to say to that. Glancing over as I came to a stop sign I reached down with my right hand to grab hers from the side of her lap hoping it’s in some way comforting. It startled her briefly but I guess it did something as she smiled and cupped it between it and her other hand.

“Alright, so based on the conversations when am I supposedly going to be giving them grandchildren?”

She laughed a bit.

“You’re stupid. And they better be really happy if that was ever the case, they’d be the ones raising them.”

I was about to talk about having a problem about not shooting blanks considering my children but I was reminded by this notion I couldn’t shoot anything now. Now I am sad.

I figure we’ll go shop around, see if there are concerts or anything happening in the city this week and just stick with the usual schedule.

“Can I ask you something?”

I really hope it's not dealing with family or traumatic events.

"Of course. Anything."

"Why have we never been a thing?"

She asks this in the same way she would have likely asked what I would want for breakfast. I wish we were still at a stop sign. Driving one handed felt awkward timing-wise. Which I suppose could be an answer.

"I'd say timing and circumstances."

An amazing set of timing and circumstances considering we were both massive drug users and whores.

"Everything has been so different for the last seven years. Since-"

She didn't need to remind me. I was there for it. It was a scene practically out of Pulp Fiction where I am sticking her in the chest with a Goddamn syringe the size of a child's limb.

"-That day. Somehow despite always being there for me it's never been more than as a friend. I won't hold it against you but I want to know. Do you think we could ever be more than that?"

This feels like a horrible time to want to ask this. The way she was trying to get a read on my body language and facial expressions I am assuming it's why she was asking this now, assuming we're both currently emotionally vulnerable.

She also just told a bold faced lie; if I break her heart now she'll probably smother me with a pillow in my sleep or post pictures of me in embarrassing situations shit faced online. She would be the one to have all of them. She's a sweetheart. An incredibly vindictive and mean-spirited sweetheart.

Glancing over to her she was staring directly into my face and probably reading the initial uncomfortableness like it was painted on my face by Leonardo Da Vinci himself, clutching my hand with both hers slightly tighter. I don't think it was intentional but her thumbs were trying to dig a hole into the center of my palm.

"Soph- Yes. Of course! You're more than just a friend-" I had to stop myself from saying she was my best friend. I don't think that's what she wanted to hear.

Pulling over into the parking lot of a Carl's Jr., I have to pull my hand back away to set the car into park. Leaving the car running I turn to face her.

"You're really uncomfortable right now," she notes. "You didn't have to pull over."

“That’s fair. In my defense, I just assumed we were going to go get some breakfast smoothies.”

I am also the worst person in the world to want a serious relationship with and I’d rather not ruin our thing. It works. It’s a well tuned machine. I also had no more best friends to burn. Come to think of it, she has a horrible track record too. She goes scorched earth when she stops giving a fuck. I just stopped answering the phone when I was done in my affairs.

“I’ve thought about it too, does seem odd considering our track records,” I confess.

“So what about it then? I mean-” Sophie glances up, a small grin spreading on her face. I am usually not the one being propositioned. “-I am single. You claim Ravyn is just your tag partner who you now publicly refer to as ‘*daddy’s*’ little girl, despite both of you being closer to forty-”

“Are you sure this is what you want?”

“What do you mean? Are you not interested?”

Now she’s just making me sad.

“I mean, maybe I’ve really been reading this wrong. But this last month has been absolutely amazing. It’s just been us and you’ve really been gungho about our time together. I admit that right before Rise to Greatness I was concerned. I didn’t talk about it at the time but I know damn well you were high out of your fucking mind back in Miami. You were hitting everything hard and that scares me. I don’t want to fall back into that, even for you.”

Thinking back over it, I was suddenly sure asking her about joining in her pilates was some kind of trigger. I’ve been trying everything to bring my dick back to life. Come to think of it, I have been spending pretty much the entire time with her. I sure as fuck wasn’t calling Alexis with my inability to get an erection. She would torture me with promises and stunts she’d have no interest in otherwise as I was forced to watch completely limp.

“But I can even accept it if it’s occasionally like that week was. I’ve just always been scared of really going for you. Like, you’re fun and all but who the fuck just wants to be another one of your random flings? You publicly torch people.”

“I am not *that* bad.”

“The world saw your relationship with Kennedy Street start and end *terribly*.”

Why is she saying it like that was terrible? She enjoyed that show too.

“That’s just one time.”



Feeling compelled to interrupt her before she can name any other examples that I am absolutely aware of, I reach out to once more take her hand.

“Look, I get it. It’s not that I’m not interested, I just wouldn’t want it to end how these things often do. This last month has been great. Last ten years have been. You’re the most important person in my life.” This wasn’t a lie. This just wasn’t me mentioning the current medical/psychological emergency that was currently driving my every whim. I’ve been meditating daily too, trying to raise my libido’s spirit power. That wasn’t working for me either.

“Great. We’re both adults, *soooo*?”

I guess this is one way to come to an agreement. I’d never tell this story to anyone.

Raising my hand up I cup her cheek and lean in for a kiss. I’ve kissed her before but I think most of them any time recently would be how you kiss a toddler or how those crazed pet owners will occasionally kiss their dogs. She placed her hands up into my chest and for a moment it felt like an experiment. I tried pulling back but she wouldn’t let me.

After an extended and passionate kiss she pulled back. Opening my eyes I smile and try to think of something to say that is not how if we manage to hit a year we can have an anniversary in a parking lot of Hardy’s.

Her expression was something else, I thought I had seen all of them on her over the last eleven years. Kept saying ten before, I guess ten was close enough.

“So? Cat got your tongue?” She asks teasingly.

“Not yet but it will.”

God that was a lame line.

“Oh yeah? Going to make this pussy purr?”

She talks nastier than I do.

Ten minutes ago she was losing her mind over being trapped in a house with her parents. Time changes a lot of things I guess.

She glanced around mischievously before deciding to unfasten her seat belt.

“Okay, so how about we have a little bit of fun to kick things off, wheelman? Just sit back and take us the hotel and I will...”

She leaned over and ran one hand up my thigh going towards the corpse I am having to carry around. I was then reminded **people will fucking die before it comes out I can’t get an erection to save my life.**

I quickly grab her hand and try to hide the sudden panic as I smile and raise her hand up to kiss it awkwardly. Think of something, quickly, you stupid asshole.

“Huh?” I could feel her breath on my chin as she glanced up confused.

“Sorry, Soph but...” Say something. “Let’s save this, you know? Maybe this sounds off putting, especially coming from me but...” Stop saying but. “I want this to be special between us. With you I am feeling especially sentimental. You were right to be concerned about my prior relationships often turning into what they were and I don’t want that at all. Which means we can do better than a parking lot of probably the worst fast food chain in the world.”

She squints her eyes I guess letting that sink in. She knows me to the point I wouldn’t refuse a sexual engagement from a homeless woman covered in shit if I thought she was hot. I’d just opt to have her shower first if possible.

“Holy shit, are you actually sweet occasionally?”

Raising her hands thankfully away from my crotch up to my chest she kissed me again, passingly. Pulling away we are once again eye to eye.

“Okay Romeo. Let’s go.”