

What a Pretty Little Thing

By Its_2_am_and_Im_Still_Writing

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A story with a few chapters, it's a work in progress, and again, will go on whenever I can get my act together..

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1 - What a Pretty Little Thing, The Rain

I was starting to wonder if I was ever going to see the sun again. The rain hasn't let up in what feels like weeks, and the streets had grown accustomed to that water-light that likes to blur and bounce off of everything it can. It seems like there are a lot of things that I might never see again, or at least anytime soon, my home, my family- you. It's okay though, at least now I have a place to stay, hopefully for at least the night. This paper in my hand's getting beat up, what with being folded and unfolded and all, not to mention being shoved into my pocket `cause I can't even find the place.

The writing's a little blurred though, from the water dripping endlessly from the tips of my hair, I can still make out the address, but just barely. These people are no help either, those who stop have never heard of the place and those who do shake their heads and shamle off, none to willing to help a lost little girl. I'm standing outside of one of those tiny, fluorescently lit stores that are the background for every tragedy I've heard so far. These people though, they don't even meet my gaze. Back out in the rain with the hope of a roof, or stand here until they kick me out?

I keep thinking about talking to this guy last night as I lowered my head and dove back into the streets. I was staying at a friend's house until a couple days ago, things weren't working out to say the least. So I find myself looking for somewhere, anywhere to go when this guy offers me a place. "It may not be great," he said writing down directions on the back of old flyer, "But it's home to those who wish it to be". We were talking for a while longer, but nothing else really stood out. He didn't stand out, just sort of blended into the wallpaper. He seemed nice enough, but there was this off-ness that I couldn't quite place... It doesn't matter though, it's somewhere dry and maybe something to eat.

I've walked this street a couple times already, the same neon signs are splashed across the sidewalk and the same industrial type building hoarding their secrets with filmy windows lead up and down in both directions. It can't be though, here's an alley cutting a deep scar into the brick of reaching walls, grabbing up towards an almost claustrophobic sky. "You'll see an alley," he says, "Follow it until you see a flight of stairs leading down to this door". I start into the alley, running my already numb hands against the roughness of the walls. My feet echo and millions of people are walking with me, each footstep creating an army of lost, soaking children.

There they are, worn concrete stairs leading downwards into a pool of melancholy light illuminating a door that stands guard for who knows what. The rain picks up, threatening to wash me away. "Well, there's no staying out here", I think to myself. Each step down seems louder in my ears as I start down towards the door. I'm right in front of it now; the yellow light creates a fierce shadow me across the steps. Scrawled over the door in black ink, slashing it in two, are the words "Abandon all hope, ye that enter here". I can't help but laugh, "Yeah, and I endure eternally", there's very little in this world that offers hope to me anymore.

The door doesn't seem locked, and when I try it, it swings open to a hallway that's dimly lit with a lone hanging bulb. A procession of doors lead away from me, soldiers at ready to see me in. The dark red carpets must have been nice once, but have since been worn down to a sad state, as if many have paced this hall before me. The walls around me seem to close in, highlighting the door at the end like a target, ready and waiting. I try to will myself dry, taking in all of this and breathing the thick air around me that feels full of smoke or maybe just delusions. There's not much life behind these doors, all is still and quiet except for a whisper or a quick step through lone doorways out of sight. Though it seems to wander on forever, the hallway draws you in, until you see nothing but this door.

"It will be room number nine, they'll let you in there." he told me. The door nearest me was number one. I started down the hallway, slinging my bag up onto my shoulders. "Two," I whispered, passing them, and taking in the once golden numbers on each door, some falling off and others stubbornly intact. "Three" I kept walking, noticing now how the light seemed to flicker over everything, dancing away the darkness. The shadow in the corners of each eye had a way of jumping sporadically, keeping time to whatever mad drummer they may follow, probably my own wild heart at this point. "Four" to the left the only furniture in the place, a desperate little table presenting a smudged jar holding a yellow flower. These were always my favorite, so small and humble, pretty in their own little way. I took it, leaving a trail of petals as I passed... "Five".

Music rode through the stale air from one of the doors, or maybe from the walls themselves. A ghostly guitar and a low sad voice sang, "*Stay right here pretty little thing. The night is long, the hour draws near. As your heart hears the words I sing, I'll show you all you need to fear...*" The trails of the song chase me down the final part of the hallway, setting the stage for the next big scene. I breathe deep, and finding enough life in my still cold hands, I reach for the door.

"Nine."

2 - The Doll

When I first stepped into the room it seemed barren, it was as if no one had been there for at least a million years. The room was mostly empty, nothing more than a tomb for roaches, or maybe even rats, by the looks of it. The light that kept me company from the safety of the doorway fled when the door was quickly thrown shut behind me, leaving only a thin line tracing the bottoms of my feet. The room seemed even emptier now that the darkness had refused my little offering of light, or so it seemed to my eyes, who had not quite adjusted to what little light there was. A tiny window tried in vain to brighten the room, and only succeeded in casting a neon glow against the grim floors.

I was trying for the door and looking for the knob, when a voice that seemed all at once to be young and ancient, both innocent and darkly ageless spoke up from the deepest corner of this forsaken little room. "She says that she's sorry you're broken", the voice whispered out. Turning from my desperate attempts to open the door, I saw a little girl step into the wonderful radiation-like glow from the lonely window. She was tiny and dressed in what, I can only guess, was once a white dress. Both the girl and the dress looked tattered and shredded, to old for this world. The hem drug on the ground, and she was standing barefoot with black dirt covering much of her pale skin, as well as her blonde hair.

She held a doll up to me that was in even worse condition than she herself was. It was a sad, filthy little thing, with one arm almost torn off. Its smile was unnerving, it seemed to want to say everything you hid so dearly. It seemed to know, and the light fell across its eyes. It could see into me. "She's broken too." the girl said again, almost too quiet to hear. Her words where more of a sigh than anything else, and she barely seemed to be speaking to me at all. She held the disturbing little doll close to her and stroked its torn arm. "Broken, broken, bro-ken little ones, such pretty little things..." she sang, cooing and rocking it in her arms.

"I am not broken! I'm fine, why can't you see that?" I finally managed to say, far too loud for the small, shadow infested room. She pretended not to hear me, and continued to sing to her demon baby. "I'm not broken, I'm fine. I am not broken... I am not... broken." I said, my voice flooding over with so much held back. I sank back against the wall, sinking to the floor when I felt I couldn't stand anymore. "I am..." I said, much quieter now. It was more of a sigh really, than anything else. The girl crept over to me until she was just at my feet. "She says you should rest." She stopped to listen to the doll again, "She says the others are waiting for you, and that it won't be long yet." She paused yet again. "Transitions should be revered, she wants me to tell you, and to keep waiting, keep watching. They'll be here."

"She doesn't want to be here-" voices from another room, though the wall by my head. "This has to be the last time-", I can't keep listening to this. "She's your daughter too you know!" That's it. I pull my self off of my bed, and grab my bag, stuffing it full of clothes and what little money I have. I'm still putting my coat on as I walk into the kitchen. "Is that him?" I ask, too fiercely. She looked more upset than I've ever seen her before. "Yes it is, this is what you want, isn't it? I can't seem to keep you here without you getting yourself into-." That's when I left, but not before yelling "Tell him I'm not waiting for him any

more, I'm leaving him this time!" I slammed the door and let that gratifying sound announce my leaving. There was no way I was staying here, and there was no way I was staying with him, not now, not after-

I sat up, finding myself still in that dark place. My back hurt from leaning against this hard wall, and my bag was there as my only comfort, my only link back. "You've rejoined us", the girl said. When she came closer and saw the drying tears on my cheeks she looked surprised. "Don't be sad," she smiled shyly. "Look" she said, holding up her misfit toy. "I've fixed her".