

Lumiere

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Little bits and pieces that I could continue on. Critique, please, and recommend which one would best work for a story line.

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1 - The Sleeper Bin

She sat, curled up in the corner, rocking back and forth mindlessly, her green eyes fixed with some maddening intensity at the padded wall in front of her.

Back and forth, back and forth...

I knew that she was not a normal patient when she came in here. It just struck me as odd because deep down in those eyes I saw this intelligence that just seemed too ground with reality to be insane. But in those eyes also shone this fear and absolute terror that I couldn't define. It was almost animal-like; and that disturbed me.

During our first session, she didn't say anything. I considered the fact that they might have given her too many sedatives; her eyes seemed unfocused and very out of the world, but then this glimmer flickered through her eyes and I just knew, knew, that she was with me. She knew I was there.

I spoke softly.

"Renee," I said, not moving from my chair (we were sitting in her bedroom, "Renee, it's safe here. You can talk."

There was this terrified silence from her that seemed to stretch on to infinity. Then she spoke, her eyes moving from their position on the floor and floating up to me.

"No," Renee said, voice wavering, "It's not safe. You don't understand."

I paused. "What should I understand?"

Her eyes suddenly dilated, and I could actually see the hair on the back of her neck suddenly stand up. She gave a low growl, almost animal-like, and began to breathe heavily. More to herself than me, she began to mutter rapidly.

"He only came out at night, he only came out at night. It made no sense for him to come out now. No sense, no sense...It was daytime. He was for night. Why now? I don't know? Why? I DON'T KNOW!!" She suddenly shrieked, tendons bulging out of her neck, she lunged for the pen in my hand, and I knew what she was going to do, try to stab herself. I jerked backwards, tipping over the chair, and instead of calling for the aides, like most of the cowardly bastards around here would do, to get her sedated and under control, I waited. Drugging these poor people didn't stop the nightmares from coming back. One-on-one confrontation did.

She flew past me, skimming my leg and hitting the floor with a thud. I tensed, expecting her to get up and try again to get the pen, to stab herself, but instead she slumped down on the floor and began to sob.

"Renee," I said quietly. "Renee, what don't you know?"

Normally, someone would help people up if they had fallen on the floor. However, in a the nut-job ward, the patients were very frightened of physical contact. Renee probably would not be any different, and I knew that, so I stood aside while she slowly staggered to her feet, still crying, and faced me.

For a moment or two we stood in silence, appraising each other, before she walked unsteadily over to her chair and sat down. Her eyes had gotten this wierd resolve in it, something that seemed remarkably sane, and she took a deep breath.

"I don't know," she said quietly, "Why it happened. Why he came out in the daytime."

She looked up at me, pleading. "It was my shift. My partner had been waiting, waiting to get that prick where he stood, and he...he killed him. He killed my best friend in the world...A cop.

"And it was daytime." she ended, drawing her knees to her chest on the chair, "It was daytime and he killed." She glanced up, tears in her eyes, "He wasn't supposed to do that in the daytime. His time was night."

Her eyes lost focus with reality. She stared off into space. "His time still is night," she whispered

2 - The Night Runner

I've always thought that the night brings out the most interesting in people. Whether or not we accept that is a different matter, but at night, when I'm sitting in the passenger seat staring out the window at the light-smearred streets, it seems like everything goes into different perspective. Light is harsher, shows everything in truth and spares nothing of reality.

But night?

Ha-ha...Night brings out the darkest of the shadows, the worst of our fears. It is at night that those monsters hiding in your closet unleash themselves, and it is at night that dreams unstick themselves from their hiding spots and come to you, showing you the lure of the night-life, the lure of the shadows and the mystery and lore.

After all, we dream in black and white, no?

Night hides the truth, and brings us that hypnotic fantasy.

Day shows us the bitterness of reality.

Driving in that car at night, the engine purring like a jaguar primed for hunt and the lights glinting like knives on the highway around us, I peer into other darkened interiors of cars driving along-side us, floating like ghosts amid a gray sea, and wonder what their daily life is. We're complete strangers now, but in that instant when your eyes suddenly link with another's, in a car not too far from you, there is a connection.

But then they press the gas, and you are left in your own world.

So what does night tell us about ourselves, hmm?

It shows our fears, our loves, our fantasies.

And the night...Well, like the mind, it is a scary place.

A very scary place indeed.

3 - Seeing

She stared into the washbasin for a moment, then moved away, frightened. She glanced around, feeling trapped in the small hovel her parents had condemned her to, and shuddered. She had agreed to the circumstances, after all; the family was far too poor to feed six mouths...hers included, and so she took a stand to leave. They understood, and she understood. She loved her younger siblings with all her heart, and if one of them died...she would be devastated....Not to mention her parents would be ruined as well.

It had been a brutal winter; since the nobels had taken almost all of the crops that the villagers had found vital to their survival, people were dying. And the water source, a spring not too far from the grounds, had been contaminated. People were getting sick; and Katharina had a feeling it was only going to get worse.

Silence filled the hovel, then, quietly:

"Look into the basin."

Katharina shuddered at the voice, feeling the hairs on the back of her neck rise in apprehension. She stiffened, then spoke, quietly, eyeing the basin warily.

"No." she said softly.

"Excuse me?" the voice said behind her, suddenly sharp.

"I'm not going to do it," Katharina spoke, louder this time, "I said no."

There was a rustle from behind her. Kath spun around to find the warlock lunging at her.

"You will," he snarled, "do as I say. You will," he said, brown eyes staring madly into hers, "look into that basin. And if you don't," he grabbed the front of her dress and pulled her closer, so that they were inches apart, "You will be sorry."

For a moment, they did nothing, both staring each other down. But then Katharina slumped her shoulders and blinked.

"Fine." she snapped. "I'll do it."

Just as fast as he had risen, he released her dress and quickly went back to the bed--sapling springs jammed into the sides of the hut with hay as the mattress--and sat down gracefully. He took a deep breath, and his face came serene.

"Now," he said quietly, "look into the basin."

Katharina slowly turned around and stared downwards into the smooth abyss; the reflection that bounced back to her showed fear and apprehension. She took a shuddering breath and kept her gaze on the water.

"Now," he said from behind her, "Tell me what you see."

Katharina didn't breathe for a moment. Then she gasped abruptly, eyes flickering to and fro. For a few moments, there was only the sound of her shock and terror, and then, reluctantly, she began to speak...

"I see—"

4 - Recruiting

Out of all the things I had learned in high school, rolling with strange and unexpected people/things/words became one of the major parts of my educational training.

Nevertheless, I still didn't expect *this* when I came to get my my job, fresh outta high school with my diploma and giddy outlook on life and whatnot.

"What's ya name?"

Hands crossed in my lap, still gawking at the sheer weirdness of the guy, I shook my head, trying to clear my thoughts. I smiled politely. "Excuse me?"

"Whatcha name? I can't hire you if you ain't got no name," the guy growled, revealing horribly miscolored fangs for teeth and a grimy piece of tabacco in his mouth.

"Oh," I got out my resume-like sheet and handed it to him. He snatched it from me with grubby, sausage-like fingers complete dirty brown nails. "My name is--"

"Alicia Long." he completed, scanning the text in amusement. For a moment a horrible thought struck me; dear god, was this guy going to be my boss? but then he said:

"I ain't gonna be your boss. Joe is, but right now I'm just scanning over some information to make sure your certified." he raised a grimy eyebrow at my suspiciously, and it took all the stomach power I had not to burst out laughing.

Certified? Certified? For crying out loud, I was in high school. What the hell am I supposed to be certified for?

"You're good." he said suddenly, almost scaring me out of my chair.

"Great," I replied, giving another fake smile. "What should I do--"

"Go to Jessica, over in the garage. She'll show you what to do next," the fat old guy replied, rudely interrupting me.

I shrugged and stiffly rose from my chair, keeping my back away from him because for some reason, I did not at all trust the guy. Call it female intuition if you will, but he seemed like bad news.

I staggered over--I wore high heels because I thought this would be a real, no s**t about it job offer--to the garage and knocked on the door. For a few moments, silence, but then a low voice called out: "Come in."

Nervously I jiggled the door handle and eased the door open to reveal a empty garage. A girl--tall, dressed in annoying Gothic splendor--had her back turned to me, busily at work with something. Politely I stood by, but the time extended from one minute, to two, to three, and then finally I spoke up.

"Excuse me," I called out.

She grunted before spinning around, revealing piercing green eyes and a pierced eyebrow and nose. "Yeah?"

"I was told to come here by--"

"Frank. Yeah. He tells everyone to come here." she finished, laughing darkly. It made the hair on the back of my neck creep up in apprehension.

"So--What do you do?" I asked.

She turned around fully and began to slowly walk towards me. "Oh..." she said. "It's simple. I'm a recruiter."

"A recruiter?"

"Yeah," she said, baring her teeth. They seemed to be growing longer. "Frank brings 'em in, I recruit them."

"What do you mean, recruit?"

"It's simple," she said, coming closer and closer. "Here, let me show you."

The last thing I remembered was her lunging at me, mouth open and canines extended and my neck suddenly become a searing thing of pain.

Then nothing.

5 - The Roadblock

I never understood what the language barrier really meant to us. Different language, different beliefs. I know his family wanted to kill me, and mine his, but it was...strange.

We were three houses away from each other. Between the three spread the fence. As high as the second story of the flat complex, and twice as menacing, the barrier spread sixty miles, between the middle of town and beyond. And with the physical barrier that seperated us come the mental one.

The mental roadblock that I don't think my people nor his people would ever get across.

Each night, I'd pull myself away from the family, saying I had to go do homework, and would sneak up the stairs, up all three horrendously steep flights of stairs, tip-toe to the roof door, and slowly open it, entering the world of darkness and, three houses away, the world of hate.

He'd be up there to, prowling to and fro like a pissed off cat or something. We never brought guns up there to shoot each other with...just our glares. I, quite frankly, was amazed we had never killed each other with just the looks. My mother said I had the habit of being able to crack stones.

So I'd sit there. And he'd prowl, and we'd stare at each other with this hate I don't think either of us could define.

And that's how it went, for six, seven months.

But then finally, one of us spoke.

And changed everything.

6 - Chronological Testing

"Mr. Bensworth," the congressman asked, staring severely over his glasses at the old man in front of him, "Are you telling me that the CIA did *not* release Nazi war criminals?"

Bensworth said nothing, instead sitting down in his chair and sitting straight ahead. The congressman continued.

"For years the FBI and Interpol tried without luck to catch those who committed horrendous acts upon society during WWII, and it is just now that I find out the CIA helped them escape? Jesus Christ, what the hell is wrong with you people?"

Bensworth continued to say nothing. The congressman leaned back in his chair and stared over the bridge of his nose at Bensworth angrily.

"You're lucky I'm not bringing this to the entire council, Bensworth."

Silence, then, slowly, Bensworth cleared his throat.

"You won't say anything, Congressman, because it's your daughter's life that's on the line," He said, grinning triumphantly.

The man froze entirely, gaze deadly.

"I beg your pardon?"

Bensworth's grin became wider; more a macabre grimace than anything else. He reached into a side pocket and came out with a hypodermic. Holding it up to the dim light of the office, he gently released the plunger, and a tiny droplet fell out. He then glanced over at the Congressman.

"Danica isn't going to live much longer, Bill," he crooned softly. "We're going to start testing soon, maybe even sooner, if you even speak a word of this."

Bensworth idly stood up and walked forward. Bill tensed in his seat, but instead of attacking, Bensworth merely reached forward and sat the needle on the desk with a quiet thud. He grinned at Bill.

"Goodbye, Congressman."

7 - It's Short Term..

Look in the mirror.

Good. Good, check the eyes, the face.

This is you. Say it with me: "This is me."

Good. Good job. Check the face...check near the neck...

Wait a minute. What are those scratches from? Poke at 'em, they didn't look like they were there before.

Well, nothing's there before is it? Twelve minutes and I'm a fracking vegetable. I won't remember this. Won't remember myself talking. Goddamn vegetable. That's what I am.

Okay, wait, pay attention. Think...Where is that from?

Like I should know?

Touch it...Looks like, fingernails?

shoot. Becky, did you get yourself into a fight again?

Should you ask yourself that question?

No, no I shouldn't. Last thing I remembered was...

That lovely daughter of yours bleeding all over the floor?

Shut up...Yes, yes that is, isn't it? fracking vegetable, that's what I am...

Pay attention. Enough. One step at a time. How much time do you have?

Ten minutes.

Crap, we gotta move...

Where? Where do we move?

I don't know just away from--

shoot.

How the hell did that lady get on the floor?

Well, from the looks of it, you did that, Becky.

No. No, of course not.

Then where did those scratches come from?

....Dammit. What do I do?

I don't know. She looks damn dead to me. Look at all that blood--

Oh god, there's too much of it.

Hide her. Have to hide the body. Have to hide the bod--

How much time to we have left?

Six minutes.

...And then you wake up again?

Yeah. And start all over again.

Quick, check her pockets, check anything...check your goddamn pockets.

Checking...Alicia Stone. Does the name ring a bell?

Don't be a smart @\$\$\$. Write this down. Take the sticky...good, write, write quickly, we don't have time. A-L-I-C-I-A Stone, like the thickness of your head, just kidding, just kidding.

Stick it on her, fast.

Where do I put her?

Like I would know? Away from here.

Okay, okay...the closet. That's the perfect spot, the closet. Hurry up.

God, she's heavy.

Well, she doesn't look fat.

She's still fracking heavy.

In the closet...In the closet we go, woo...

Oh god, you're fading. What time is it?

Too late.....

~~

Alicia Stone. Do you know who she is?

I just woke up.

Well what were you doing?

Dragging her body, apparently.

Hey...What are those scratches from?

8 - Oh la la...

The first thing I noticed were the hands. They were long, graceful...not feminine, but they were strangely beautiful.

I was in art class, he had merely been coming in to deliver a paper to our teacher, but as he turned around, and we both faced each other, the eyes drifted and we were staring at each other.

It was a simple connection. That fast. Then he turned around and was gone.

For days...I couldn't think straight. When I'd draw, it was him, or at least bits of him...my memory, young as I was, was strong, but it seemed that every time I drew him, he began to fade away...

Alise didn't like that obsession. She hated it and often bagged me for it.

"That's a nice way to become a stalker, Christine," she'd say with a side-ways glance. Her roommate was going crazy, and she really could not do anything about it.

And thus it continued.

One day, though, I was sitting outside on the campus, trying to draw SOMETHING else besides the usual, and felt this...presence. It was rather strange, I must say. Feeling watched, I calmly put down my pencil and the pad and spun around...

To see his eyes boring into mine. Brown, they seemed to go on for infinity. I almost lost myself in them, and it sort of frightened me.

I froze up. Completely. For a moment, we both gawked, but then he jumped the bench and sat down next to me.

More silence, then.

"Would you be alarmed if I told you I've been thinking about you?"

I swallowed. This was too...spontaneous to be real. I had to be dreaming, but strangely, when I spoke, it was very calm. "I wouldn't be alarmed," I said quietly. "In fact," I turned to him, "Maybe I'd be relieved..."

9 - Forgive me, Father...

"The choir...they sing beautifully, don't they?"

Frank glanced over at the woman sitting next to him in the pews. He gave a slight smile, hands still clasped in prayer.

"Yes," he said quietly. "Yes, they do."

The woman, such an interesting face, gave him a happy smile before turning her gaze back to the choir, their soft voices drifting through the cathedral as they practiced solemnly.

"I used to be in choir," she said dreamily. Now Frank knew that she was no longer paying attention to prayer, "But I quite after...well, after many things. But I still love choir," she said softly. "They sing so well. Makes all my troubles go away."

Frank gave a patient smile to the woman before glancing around him. The guilt gnawed at him like a pirahna to a cow carcass. He needed to confess. He wanted to confess.

He quickly unfolded himself from prayer and stood up quickly, giving the woman another courteous grin. "Excuse me for a moment," he said quietly. The woman nodded absent-mindedly before turning her attention back to the front.

Weaving his way through the rows of benches and people, heads bowed in prayer, Frank finally reached the aisle and walked rapidly to one of the booths. It was open. Checking once, twice, three times, Frank stepped forward and moved the curtain aside, stepping in and sitting down. He was surprised to find himself sweating. Was it from fear?

There was a long silent. Then, on the other side of the booth, the screen shifted and the blurred and distorted face of the father appeared.

Frank bowed his head.

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned."

More silence. God, the tension was killing him. The Father cleared his throat quietly, then spoke.

"What is it, my child?"

Frank opened and closed his mouth repeatedly, trying to grasp the words he was searching for. When they finally came to him, he uttered them almost inaudibly.

"I have murdered, father." Frank said. He felt his body shudder in revulsion at what he uttered next, "I

have killed my own child...."