

The Day of Night

by

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The blackness of my apartment was nothing compared to the blackness encompassing me as I was unexpectedly struck in the head stepping through my doorway. The taste of blood was the first thing I remembered when I finally came to, that and the rustic smell of burlap pressed against my nose. There was also a terrible throbbing pain erupting from the side of my neck. Plus, I was cold as hell and felt as if my blood was the temperature of a rock on the moon. The choking smell of exhaust fumes brought me to the realization that I was in the trunk of a fast moving car.

My captors seemed oblivious to the gamut of hills in this city and my body was tossed around the unpredictably large trunk. Recollection of what had happened to me was floating in the fog around the periphery of my now conscious mind. The events that had just taken place continued to elude me. A sticky fluid had also run down my neck onto my chest and fastened my shirt to the hair on my chest. A wave a panic struck as the car sped through a cold pocket. The sounds of the ocean permeated their way thru the trunk of the car and I realized my feet were bound together. The car came to a stop and the sound of doors slamming brought adrenalin pouring into my brain and a bitter metallic taste saturating my mouth. The trunk opened and muffled voices in a language incomprehensible to me signaled my departure from my motorized prison. I struggled in vain at the definite approach of the ocean, which was met with solid blows to my ribs. Suddenly it felt as if something was crawling through every vein in my body. An intense heat erupted throughout my body followed by waves of unbearable cold. Vomit filled the burlap sack around my head and ran down my neck. My choking prompted the attackers

to remove the hood and for the first time realized I was well above the ocean getting closer to what seemed a long drop. There was no way to make out the features of their faces. The absence of light was the first noticeable element I remember upon hitting the surface of what felt like concrete and plunging into the frigid salt water. Gasps of air were replaced by water as I slowly lost consciousness.

The amount of time that passed was inconsequential considering the fact I seemed to still be alive. Flashes of intense heat and cold continued to rack my body as it did back on the surface despite the fact I was lying face up at the bottom of the bay in complete darkness. My brain had lost all comprehension of the events that had just taken place. Sudden terror replaced bewilderment when I realized I was breathing water as if it were air. The expectation of waking up from a nightmare flashed somewhere in my head but with great effort realized I was not asleep. The salt water had loosened the tape around my legs and instinctually I began slowly propelling myself up through the layers of cold water.

The Freedom from my presumed watery grave caused me to wretch and expel a large volume of salt water from my stomach and lungs. The dubious fact that I was still ostensibly alive brought waves of panic and helplessness. This could not truly be the case, yet I was now standing under the dark expanse of a dimly lit bridge bathed in the eerie glow of the full moon. Sometimes the unthinkable leaves you without a feeling of fear and evaporates the questions of logic. My overactive imagination may have finally revealed its use; otherwise the events that had just taken place would have expended the

last fragments of sanity. This predicament left me with no choice but to locate the individuals responsible for this heinous act and get some answers; good, I still have my sarcasm. Who was I kidding, how was I going to get any answers, these guys just about killed me and I had no idea who or where they were. I laughed despite myself and abruptly burst into sobs. The intensity of the rival thermal changes taking place in my body seemed to have exhausted themselves. The outside temperature had an uncanny ambience despite the fact I had just left the frigid confines of the ocean. The other nagging problem I was experiencing at the moment was the absence of properly functioning lungs. I had not taken in air into my body since plunging into the murky ocean from so far above. My mind raced with images of shadows and sudden bursts of light. Home, that seemed the next best place to go, I was starving.

The striking reflection in my bathroom mirror must have caused me to faint because I was now lazily staring at the cobwebs on my ceiling. The bed was close and crawling over to it seemed the best idea I've ever had. The pain in my neck was gone and if I could only remember what the mirror revealed, some questions would be answered. The knock on my door erased any thought of returning to the mirror. Finally, the banging stopped and was replaced by hollow silence. The contents of my apartment were in shambles, as if my attackers were in search of something. Their possible return sparked the idea to get my ass out of here, now.

Streets were shimmering from dampness of the fog. An odd sensation occupied my body with every person that passed me. I could feel the pulse of each person that came within close proximity of me and for the first time I noticed these were the only pulses I felt. My hand clutched at the area where my functioning heart was supposed to be actively pumping blood thru my body. Its absence caused me to scream out loud. The vestiges of my imagination slowly disintegrated as I vainly struggled to maintain a grip on this ghastly reality. The two men who just passed me gave of no palpable pulse and as I turned my head they started back towards me. I quickly rounded the corner and sprinted down the hill ducking into a walkway between houses. Strange hope displaced my anxiety as I wondered if these were the same men that failed in their attempt to kill me. They passed the walkway and I crept surreptitiously after them as they rounded the corner. To my surprise, I realized one was female but disguised to portray no gender.

The figure seated in the black leather chair cursed sharply under his breath. “What are you telling me?” The two solemn figures standing before the desk were reluctant to answer the loaded question. “We can’t locate the body,” the taller answered meekly. The dark shape harshly replied, “You had one fucking job to do, and you failed miserably”. “Which one of you two parasites couldn’t keep your lips together?” They knew it was futile to answer and abruptly turned to leave. From behind came a hissing reply, “Get me the results of the tests they ran today on Mr. Holden’s specimens and find him.” The shorter figure was suddenly racked with a coughing fit as she exited the room. “It may not be long now,” she thought to herself.

Poe Holden kept his head down on the counter when the waitress came over to fill up his coffee cup. “You alright sugar?” She replied. “Lady, you don’t know the half of it,” he said sardonically. “Well, I can guess by the blood all over your collar you had a pretty rough evening,” she retorted back. An unnoticed circle of dried blood had formed at the top of Poe’s collar and dried against the lower part of his neck below the Adam’s apple. Anxiety swept him again as he thought to himself. He remembered the two holes on his neck but not the fairly subtle wound now presenting itself between his collarbones. “Here’s a towel honey, wipe your self off,” she continued. “By the way, the name’s Louisiana and I get off in ten minutes, you look like you could use someone to talk to.” Not knowing where to go or what to do Poe felt comfort in her suggestion. “I’ll take you up on that Louisiana, let me go to the restroom quick, I’ll be back directly.” A lonely figure in the corner booth looked slightly up from the paper as Poe passed by on the way to the restroom and after a few seconds slipped out the front of the café and into the pouring rain.

Lou was wiping up the counter as he came backed towards the front of the café. He hadn’t noticed how striking she was as he realized he never looked up when she was speaking to him. She smiled at him and motioned to the door, “You ready to get soaked?” The rain felt soothing on my face. I was still having these unstoppable hot flashes. She walked steadily ahead of me presumably because she was already drenched and looking to get inside soon. There was something so familiar about her. It took some time to get to

her flat and she opened the door hurriedly and pulled me inside. She sat me on the couch and walked to the bedroom to change clothes. As she was undressing I could see a large tattoo on the lower half of her back through the half open door. Just then my head started to spin and vertigo caused me to vomit onto the rug in front of me. “So you don’t like my place?” She bantered when she entered the room. “I’m sorry,” I replied, “It just hit me.” As cool as ever Lou replied, “I’ll make you some peppermint tea for your upset tummy.” Ten minutes later the warm liquid began to soothe my stomach and I finally felt a little more stable. “My aunt Eunice used to make me this same stuff for me when I was younger but added a little kick to it.” “It used to really piss off my ma but it always made me feel a lot better. “Sorry,” Lou replied, “but I quit drinking a couple years back on account of the trouble I kept getting in to.” “You and my aunt have a lot in common then,” I added. “You mean she was a ravishing babe who played a mean guitar?” laughed Louisiana. “Yeah, she played guitar,” I said flatly. “Well, I know I said you looked like you needed someone to talk to but right now you look like death warmed over, no offense.” “Maybe you should crash on my couch tonight, I don’t work tomorrow and can give you a lift in the morning”. “Do you live somewhere in the city?” she asked. I sat and stared blankly at her, “I do but it may be better if I don’t go back there just yet.” This caused her forehead to crease and she smiled. The last words I remember were, “I’ll get you a blanket.” The streetlight broke through the blinds as a coughing fit brought me out of my dream. The dream consisted of a dark figure coming towards me but never getting any closer. The face never became clear and I couldn’t move despite the fear welling up inside me. It seemed to last forever. I went to the sink to get some water and

check if Lou was up. The urge to split was overwhelming. I didn't want to mix her up in whatever the hell was happening to me. There was something about her I couldn't quite place and felt drawn to her. She seemed like she might be someone who would believe my ludicrous story. Maybe telling her would somehow make it more real to me. I needed to hear my thoughts verbalized in order to figure out what to do next. The confusion in my head was getting worse and clear thoughts were becoming scarce. It seems hard to believe but the events that had taken place in the last 48 hours may have prolonged my life.

My past had finally caught up to me. Years of heroin abuse and drug addiction had presented me with an unwanted turn of events. The fateful day two years ago changed my path in life but did little to slow my self-destruction down in the least. Diagnosed as "positive" only sent me into a continuous state of denial, depression, and heavier drug use. Alienating my family was the first link to break in a long chain of poor choices and terrible decisions. They were willing to help me, but I refused and took off without so much as a goodbye. I thought the west coast would offer some sanctuary but only offered me more smack and darker corners. The "bottom" is aptly named and when I finally landed there I was more than ready to die. Waking up in that hospital bed with tubes up my nose and in my arms is not something I would single out as a stellar moment in my life, but it planted the seed in my brain that I wasn't ready to die yet.

Unfortunately for me the decision in this matter was already chosen for me. The IV drug abuse had graciously allowed me to contract multiple strains of the virus to which most medications were no longer effective. The doctor provided a straightforward explanation of my options, revealing to me the perplexing concept of resistance. We had discussed

my options and it was my choice to decide the outcome. Despite the fact the drugs would unavoidably diminish my quality of life, I had decided to commence the complicated task of prolonging my life.

The medications surprisingly held their own against the virus for over a year allowing my immune system some restoration. The better part of last year I was also sober. My outlook regained a slight edge on positive. But the past few months, however, carried me down a road of no return. Inevitably, the meds stopped working and my immune system began an all too familiar obliteration. I eventually decided to go off my meds in hopes of maintaining my humanity and some semblance of a normal life for whatever duration I could keep going. Making peace with yourself is easier said than done. I filled a notebook worth of explanation and rationalization of my past self-destruction. When I finally wore the pen dry the expulsion of dread, sadness, and futility was complete. Acceptance of my fate would now be with an almost clean conscience and open eyes. The unexpected vicissitude of the last 48 hours rendered me helpless. I almost felt cheated. I had been ready to let go and move on to the next unexpected fate. Now it seems as though I was somehow cheating death as well as the disease living with me for the past undeterminable years. On top of that, I had no idea how I had been granted this ghastly existence. Christ, breathing water was not something remotely fathomable to me. This wasn't a condition I could look up in a book or even attempt to explain to another person. What the fuck did those people do to me? The uncanny part was that these people were now my saviors. I haven't felt this well for a decade. I was on Death's door and now I was living in his house. The thought of explaining this to Lou was crazy. How

could she possibly understand what was happening to me. I had to tell someone, if only for the simple fact of hearing these thoughts come out of my mouth and into another's head. She would be up soon. The sunlight started filtering through the blinds as I stared at a Tragically Hip concert poster hanging above her mantel. Flashes of memories came rushing back to me. The smoke filled venues I used to see the local bands at presented themselves with an almost palpable illusion. Those days seemed so long ago, almost as if it was in another life. When was the last time I had enjoyed myself like that? It wasn't even a concept I could imagine anymore. The thoughts of the people I knew back then caused me to close my eyes tightly to remember their faces. Happiness has been missing for so long.

Lou came out of the bedroom with a smile. "How'd you sleep sugar?" she exclaimed. "Fine, considering the endless nightmares." I sardonically replied. "Super!" she said, "Then we'll have something interesting to discuss over a big piece of hog and some eggs."

We walked down to the bottom of the hill to the cross street and wandered in to a greasy spoon she liked to inhabit on Sunday mornings. She sipped her coffee as I unfolded my story. Her expression never wavered. Maybe she's heard this one before I thought. Not even the part about breathing water caused any kind of response from her. Her only movement was to place her hand over mine when I got to the part about my illness and disintegration of the relationship with my family. I've never seen someone with such benevolent eyes. It took over an hour to finally get all my thoughts of the previous

couple days out of my head. She smiled at me as I finished the last word. All she said was, “I think I know someone who can help you”.