

I Never Left Las Vegas

The color of the sun is green. It glitches out into pixels every few minutes due to the slow processing capabilities of the sky's hardware. A Ford Escape drives beside me on the highway with two men in the front. The one in the passenger side wears a black shirt, no. A red shirt, no. A purple shirt. No, it's a white shirt. Actually, let me start over. It's not a shirt; it's a suit. I watch him pull a piece of paper and a feather quill out. He dips the tip of the quill into a bottle of motor oil and begins to write, taking a sip from the bottle every few seconds. He packs it all away into a briefcase and leans forward, staring straight at me through the driver's side window. In a matter of seconds, he vanishes into nothing. The man who is driving begins to apply makeup in the rearview mirror. I notice the back left wheel is missing. I continue to drive myself to the Olympics. Oh, Wait. The Olympics aren't this year. Thinking hard about a new destination, I crash my car in a head on collision with a hearse. I black out, but wake up unscathed minutes later inside of my totaled car. In front of me, the hearse is running and appears not to have taken any damage from the accident I caused. A salary man in a suit carrying a briefcase climbs out of the backseat window of the hearse and onto the roof, where he begins to raise a family of four. I watch his eldest son graduate high school with honors, and the younger son end world hunger. His wife has no eyes, mouth, or nose. Her face is a smooth surface. I watch the salary man tie a noose around his neck and hang himself from a cloud. My car door has been impacted, and now has taken on the shape of a gate. I unhinge the gate and roll out into the rubble where I find his suicide note. It reads "I'm so sorry. I'm sorry for who you are."

Something is off, and I feel different. But I cannot seem to place exactly what it is. I blame the uneasiness on my lack of sleep due to a recent fear that was sparked by a terrifying documentary about aphids that I had watched last weekend. As a gardener, I was absolutely mortified. I donated some life savings to a charity foundation that seeks to promote the pesticide industry. The sun felt so much brighter after my donation. I'm still smiling.

I realize that I still need a new destination. I want to make friends, so I decide to walk to the police station. I greet the officer at the front gate, and start small talk about criminals. They're all so pathetic, I say. Complete morons. Contribute nothing to society. Free loaders. I've only ever sworn once, I say. It was just a bad situation, I contest. It was on the day I lost my mind, but thank goodness that I found it under my right pointer's fingernail. I must have left it there when I went grocery shopping last. I'm against using plastic bags, so I usually carry my groceries home under my fingernails. It's so environmentally efficient.

After my confession, I am then immediately taken into custody. "That's an act of sin," the officer says. I am arrested for swearing. Inside the jail cell, I light a cigarette and put my phone on the charger. The cigarette is broken, and a bright light is pouring out of the end as it burns. I don't really smoke; I just enjoy the smell of what a fabulous Las Vegas nightlife might be like. In my heart, it's what I really want. Sometimes when I'm alone, my mind wanders around the idea of flirting with suspicious men who are scared of commitment as I win big money on the penny slots on the strip, wearing sunglasses inside. This is my second biggest lustful thought, and I tend to repress it. My repressed thoughts usually manifest into anger. I become so angry that I yell at my garden. I'll yell things like "squash, why is it that you never call me back!?" I just need something to yell about, even though I don't really care too much.

Squash is just very hard to stay in touch with sometimes. I always apologize after, and squash is so forgiving.

My cigarette goes out and I rip the filter in half to find Las Vegas. I shove the city into my pocket and make a mental note to dispose of it later. There is no trashcan in the jail cell, and I do not litter, never have. I throw away my dreams, just like any other respectable person would. Dreaming too much and suicide are very closely linked, and some even consider the idea that they may be completely the same thing. Everyone dreams though, as sad as that is. Sleep was invented so people could dream without it interfering with reality, and admittedly sometimes, I want to go to sleep early. Some want to sleep forever.

I am charged with two felonies at my hearing. What is the second one for? I ask. They say that I cut my bangs horribly, and will be forced to wear a plastic bag over my head. I insist for paper. I tell them to think about the environment. Global warming is a threat, endangering the lives of the glaciers enough already. Pedestrian litter like plastic bags could cause them to choke, and thus will affect the harvest of their meat for the ice industry. They agree. I use a 50% off coupon for my bail charge and I am sent home with a paper bag on my head. They say I must wear it for a total of twenty hours within the week. On the back of the bag printed in bold time new roman reads “We’re so sorry. We’re so sorry for who you are.”

There are no holes cut out on the bag for my eyes to see. As I put it on, I find a screen inside with a video on a constant loop. The loop playing is of a girl in my image wearing a white slip walking between the corners of a room with no windows or door in a 6x6 enclosure that

contains the entire city of Las Vegas within its dimensions. I take the bag off so that I am able to watch a documentary about fiber optics installation. I put the bag back on and the loop has changed. The girl in my image is now laying down on the floor of the room, staring blank up at the ceiling. I find my physical body forced to the floor, unable sit back up. I say that I must water the garden. I manage to lift my arm so I can take the bag off. The zucchini is dying. I tend to the zucchini, nursing her with milk and sugar. I put the bag back on. The loop has changed again: the girl is now strapped down in a chair, and is having a knife pushed into her leg by an invisible force. I feel a sharp pain on the leg of my physical body, and I am deeply wounded. The wound heals at the beginning of each loop. As it plays over and over again, my body is in sync with every repeated puncture. I can't take the pain, and shake my head until the bag falls off. The bag hasn't been on my head for even an hour.

I put the bag back on. The girl in my image is sitting in the 6x6 room dressed like an angel. She's strapped tightly down into the chair from the previous loop. Her halo was only very recently spray painted gold; it's still wet and dripping. There is a man behind her with a chainsaw. He is wearing a suit and has name tag on that reads "Hello, my name is *****." He runs the machine down on her shoulder, severing her arm. I panic and shake my head so the bag falls off. My arm is on the other side of the room, and the man with the chainsaw is behind me. He switches the machine to "off" and pulls a briefcase out from the inside of his suit. He opens it and retrieves a letter and reads what is written on it to me. I can't understand what he is saying because his voice is censored. His mouth is moving but instead of speaking, different tones replace the fluctuation in his voice. In the middle of reading, he begins choking and falling to the ground slowly, his hand reaching into the back of his mouth as if something was lodged back

there. He pulls a battery out and sets it on the counter. It's a triple A battery, and it would just be a perfect replacement to the dead one in my sea salt heating lamp. If only this battery he pulled out wasn't dead too. I was really close with my sea salt heating lamp, and we were even interested in each other at one point. All of a sudden, one day, it just wouldn't turn on any more. I cried myself to sleep, thinking it was all my fault. I swear I never meant to take too much, and always gave back what I could in our relationship. And I could have bought a new battery for it, but even if it turned back on, I knew that it just wouldn't be the same. What if one day it just so suddenly went out again, just like that? I wouldn't be able to trust that it was going to stay lit for me. It is a painful thing to think about, but I did move on. I miss the gentle glow of its company on lonely nights. It's been so much darker in my house since it died.

I stop reminiscing on those days and watch this man who is apparently named ***** begin to choke up gears and computer chips, making just the biggest mess. I run to the bathroom and dampen a towel, placing it on his forehead as he kneels over spitting up more wires and screws. As he recovers and stands up, he starts crying tears of oil. I fetch a bucket and start collecting them so that I am able to water my garden in the morning. He cleans up and takes a seat, where he pulls out a new arm from his pocket. There is a label above the elbow that reads "wash with like colors." He motions me over, and glues it into my arm socket. It is fully functional, all except for the fact that I cannot hold my arm any higher than my head. He pulls out an electronic translator and shows it to me to read "will you please help me find a new battery?" Using the translator, I agree to help and in addition, invite him to a magic show happening inside of the five-star nuclear power plant a few blocks away from my apartment. He agrees and I show him to my car, a 2004 Dodge Neon. I've never really been on a date before,

and never imaged that it would be with someone so incredibly handsome. I just can't wait to sip on the finest nuclear waste as I watch a girl be sawed in half. The drinks are brewed right inside the very place itself and served to you during shows. It'll be just like the movies. I hope he doesn't see me blushing.

After the wreck, my insurance company was happy to pay for all the damages. My car was delivered back to me in a package on my front step, and they had even filled the tank for me. Kind people work at my insurance company, and whenever I call, we have long conversations into the night. We often talk about unfulfilled fantasies, but sometimes we will have long drawn out arguments over how the weather really is. However, that's rare, and we usually just agree to disagree. Clearly, it isn't raining outside. I just can't believe some people thrive off lies and deceit. I tell myself that I'm just too good for that, but then I remember that I have no one else that will care to listen to my lustful desire of someday becoming a grocery store clerk. It's my number one most terrible thought. No one else knows how much I secretly love to run plastic bags through my fingers. It is such taboo, as I stand in solidarity with the glaciers. I try my hardest to keep true to my ethics, despite these forbidden, disgusting thoughts.

My car only has a driver side; there is only one row of seats and can only fit two people. There are only two wheels, and the radio is only able to play static. I blast the static through the speakers on slow, quiet days. The trunk of my car is the size of a shoebox. In the trunk, I keep a gun loaded with my prescription sleeping pills. I shoot one into the back of my throat whenever I feel like dreaming.

We drive to the nearest drugstore for a new battery, which is located in the middle of a sulfur field off the side of the highway. It's by where I had gotten into my crash. The hearse is still running where it was on the day of the accident. There is a small memorial on the roof for the salary man. His suit is folded up in front of the memorial on top of his briefcase, where I imagined he kept all of his most important documents. After observing the hearse situation, I see that the entire left side of the drug store is absent of a wall, and also functions as a drive-through window for those in a rush. The greeting card aisle is the first upon entry. I observe a middle aged man picking out an "I'm sorry" card. The man reaches his hand under his toupee, pulling out an ink pen to sign the card "To dearest Jeremy, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for who you are. Sincerely, Jeremy." The battery section shares an aisle with the stained-glass section. Although it is beautiful, I am reluctant to buy the stained-glass piece that depicts two investors fighting over what business they should invest into next. They just can't decide. The two men start crying.

The man with me wears a business suit and is a salary man in nature. He stares into the stained-glass piece with lust and jumps into the picture, entering a new dimension. He wants to present a business venture with them. The subject matter in the stained-glass piece changes to an image of ***** with the investors. The men ask him for his proposal and he opens his briefcase. He can't wait to show them his credentials. After all, he invented college, and he never even went to college for it because higher education would not exist without him. ***** reaches inside the briefcase and pulls out a gun. The men cheer, they've never seen someone with so much potential. This is the most impressive resume they've ever seen.

I am left alone in the drugstore. I feel grief and heartbreak. “We could have been something, *****! I never told you, but I was in love with you! I have never before been so attracted to a man’s voice. I wanted you to censor out everything that I didn’t want to hear! You used me, *****!” I shout into the stained-glass dimension. My voice is loud enough to reach into this world, and he becomes angry at me for embarrassing him in front of the investors. He shoots a bullet through the glass and right into the drug store, shattering it. The shatter catches the attention of the cashier, who is applying his makeup in a mirror behind the beauty counter. He becomes angry at me for embarrassing ***** in front of the investors.

He drags me into the backroom: a 6x6 enclosure with no windows or door, where he straps me down into an electric chair. I look around me: this room contains the entire city of Las Vegas. He revs the machine up and runs it along his tongue. He begins to bleed out light from his tongue; it’s a blinding bright light that falls from his mouth and quickly floods the room. “This is what heaven looks like. And you, you look like an angel, a sinner, a shame. Your time is up.” He presses a button on the wall and I am shocked by the electric chair until I am pronounced dead. My vision is black, and there is nothing. I take the bag off my head.

I hold the bag in my hands in my living room and turn on the television to Local News Channel 5. There is breaking news. Just wonderful! I’ve been so bored sitting alone with this bag on my head. The newscaster announces that my twenty hours of wearing the paper bag are up and displays an image of my gravestone. Congratulations, he says. You’ve made it to Las Vegas. I sigh heavily with relief and wait for my letter of discharge from life in the mail.

Three days later, I find an envelope in my mailbox. The return address cannot be displayed here for the all intended purpose of protecting the safety of the sender. I excitedly open it up and take out the contents, it's a postcard with an image of my own apartment on the back. It reads: "We're so sorry. We're so sorry for who you are." I dig deeper and pull out pieces of broken mirror. There's a salary man living inside the fragments, I see him when I look in. I collect the pieces and store them in my briefcase for safe keeping. I notice my gun is missing. I fall into my bed and beg for a dream.