

## Synecdoche

My name is Nick. It's not my real name, but a nickname. I know, I know. What kind of fuckin nickname is Nick? It is and it isn't. Here's the story. Me and my guys were hashin it up one night and started philosophizing- is that a word philosophizing?- anyway we started getting into some pretty profound shit about what a name means and what it stands for. Writing it down makes it sound like bullshit, but it made sense when we were high. Like most things do. I guess I'm probably not suppose to write that, huh? This is suppose to be about why I'm getting cleaned up. Whatever. We were high. It made sense.

So we all started picking out names. There was Psy, and Duh, and Key. I'm not telling their real names, you know, to protect the innocent and all that. The weed was great that night. Psy thought he was a Laser Man from the planet Jupitune and he believed he could quantify the nature of things as well as feel the wood growing under his skin. Like I said, the shit was fresh.

I never got that good and high. I mean, I get that numbing sensation of blissful fulfillment, and all that, and sometimes with the right music I could even see all the sound and hear of the color. Those nights were rare, though I should say that this night was one of them. Key knew a guy from out west, he brought in this real sticky orange bush. Sometimes when the light touched it just so, I could swear it was glowing.

Anyway, so Key. He was one of those guys chicks love. Rugged good looks, random bursts of witty comments that everyone found absa-fucking-lutely hilarious. He could sit down at a piano and bang out Bach as if he had been practicing his whole life. I fucking hate him. But he gets us laid a lot and then there is the sticky orange from out west. This night he was standing perfectly still for like half and hour, or maybe it was an hour. Hell, it could have been only fifteen seconds for all I know. He suddenly starts shouting at all of us, "I'm the key! I'm the key! The key to everything!".

Moving on to Duh. Duh and me have been friends since we were kids. We took our first drink

together, smoked our first cigarette together, and pretty much the first hit of everything else you can think of. He reads a lot, or at least a lot more than me, not sure if it really takes though. People who read a lot like to walk around quoting Shakespeare and correcting the way everyone talks. Duh just kind of follows us around with a goofy grin on his face agreeing with everyone. On this night though, he was in the corner agreeing with everything we were saying, occasionally muttering to himself. Finally Psy couldn't take it any more and shouted at him.

“What the fuck are you goin on about, are you high?” he says.

We found this incredibly funny.

“Duh”, Duh says and then continues to say this word over and over again as we laugh at his comedic genius. Some words sound great in the right circumstances.

So that was us, the four musketeers. Me, Psy, Duh, and Key. Oh shit, I forgot about my nickname. I couldn't come up with one, nothing seemed to fit, and I was never exactly prone to random outbursts of crazy like the others. After several rounds of , 'C'mon fuck-tard, pick a name', they settled on Nick, because they thought it was lame and a bit funny. What I didn't tell them was that I liked the name. It fit. It felt empty. It was as if I couldn't be described. I was singular among them. That's what we do as people I think. It's total shit. We pretend not to need one another which is the total opposite from what is true and in the small moments when it does happen we run scared shitless for the exit sign. That's why I hate people. Except my guys. We might be a bunch of scumbag, pill poppin, low lifes, but at least we're real about it. Or at least, I liked to think we were.

After the first session we sat down and talked, and I told you this wasn't the first time I tried rehab and then you asked me to embellish and I told you to fuck off, (sorry bout that), but then you were like write it down. Well, as you can see, this is it. I'll hit you with that tale right now.

Like any good story, it started with a chick. The first time I met Kate the evening ended with her ramming her fist into my face as she tried to convince me to stop kicking the shit out of her boyfriend. She made a pretty convincing argument to my face.

Duh and me, and Duh's chick are drinking at the counter this one night. Yeah. Duh. Of all of us he was the first to find a lady friend that stuck by him. He had cut out all the bad shit too, the pills, the x. No rocks. No powder. Alcohol and cigarettes, that was it. Fine lookin legs on that lady too. They always laughed at all the same dumb things too. But thats what love is man. Laughing at the same stupid shit. Hot sex in the shower, or wherever else. Killing time, watching movies, or walking around looking at things you both find interesting. Easy, that's the way to explain love.

I don't walk up to chicks at bars. It's a waste of both our times. I'm not clever like Key, who was there that night killing it like usual. I'm pretty good at scaring them off with my whole demeanor. Open hostility. Works every time. I like my women drunk, horny, and ready to go. Saying that, it was far too early in the evening for that to be the case when Kate sat down next to me.

Duh's eyes immediately went wide and he nodded over to her. So I turn to see. He's right too, she's fuckin beautiful. Dark eyes, perfect hair, the whole thing. Perfection. A ten in a bar full of fives.

She was waiting for the bartender and turns to me, "Hi," she says magically.

My defense mechanism clicks right in, "Piss off."

Duh starts elbowing my side, his eyes are asking if I'm fucking crazy.

She orders a pitcher of something fruity.

"Sorry," I say not really meaning it.

The bartender returned with her pitcher and a couple of mugs, she kept the tab open and left without ever looking at me again. I lit another cigarette.

Psy took her seat and clapped me on the back, "Watch the master at work." and he pointed over his shoulder where Key had stopped Perfection. That's what I call her now. They talk, he points at me, she turns and looks at us then turns back and walks past him.

Key came over, "Sorry, bro.". I hate that word 'bro', he had just started using it a couple weeks before that night. Still does, I guess.

"Thanks", I muttered between drags.

I looked back to see who she sat down next to. The guy looked like a real asshole. Sweater vest and collared shirt. Probably a writer, one of those hipster fucks who sit around listening to The Smiths all day while passing judgment on everyone. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but a fist in the face will knock a mother fucker out.

We had a good time that night, got nice and drunk, mixed with the pills I was feeling great, and we closed down the bar like usual. The four of us walked out together, them talking about nonsense, me lighting up another cigarette. I see Perfection talking to her boyfriend by his car. We stop outside the bar to smoke. Psy starts telling some story about the chick he almost hooked up with, but I'm not paying any attention. Perfection is getting into it with Asshole and I was very interested in what they had to say. They said it loud too, going back and forth about some shitty thing he said. Any chance of me ignoring them completely disappeared when he grabbed her and tried to pull her into his car. Asshole didn't even see me coming. I laid into him with drunken abandon. Within seconds she was on top of me, fist slamming into me, trying to tear me off of him. Eventually Psy and Key pulled us apart. Duh just stood there grinning like a kid at the zoo, staring at the animals in their cages.

We ran after that, leaving Perfection and an unconscious Asshole behind. I didn't think twice about that mother fucker, he deserved that shit. So we ran without looking back, more concerned with not getting arrested right then than anything else.

The next night started pretty much the same as all the others, us meeting at Key's apartment, and then crossing the street over to Lacy's Bar.

We were there for maybe an hour when Perfection sits down next to me again. She dropped her bag down on the bar, keys clanging inside, and looks at me completely hostile, "Are you going to tell me to piss off again?"

The violence in those words turned something on inside me, so I tried being nice to her.

The relationship lasted about four months, it was the longest I ever had. It felt like years honestly. We couldn't agree about anything. I liked salt on my fries, she liked them without. I liked

white bread she liked wheat. She hated that I smoked, drank, and popped so many pills. I hated that she wore clothes in the house. It was an opposites attract thing I guess.

In the bedroom, though, everything changed. We were like Beethoven or Picasso. We created masterpiece after masterpiece. It was like a song, all the musical notes working together to make this perfect melody. There was a chemistry that was so unexplainable that that even trying describe it is frustrating. Usually in the bedroom I'm the perfect male cliché, get in, get off, get out, 'I'll call you later'. But not with Kate. Nothing was off limits. We made having sex into a marathon sport that left us bruised, exhausted, and laughing hysterically. If there was an Olympics we were going for gold. We almost burned down her apartment once, when a kiss hello turned into 'who cares whats cooking?'. There was no limits in the connection we made in those nights. It started to feel like happiness, I think. I don't know.

We did regular people stuff, too. She liked classic rock and I was punk rock, but we seemed to find a happy medium with the live music we would go see. Always in raunchy haunts where your shoes stuck to the floor. Honestly, if my feet aren't sticking to the bar floor then there probably ain't no point in me being there anyway. Maybe I had stopped starting fights so much since we hooked up, but that didn't mean I didn't like having the possibility of one breaking out.

We were gonna get matching tattoos, well Kate wanted us to get them, but I wasn't really into it. The ink on me was a brand, a scar of my life choices, or lack thereof. I got this spooky looking forest that starts in the middle of my back and wraps around the sides and up my chest, stopping right below my neck. All the trees have faces and they are looking out wicked scary. Haunted, is what Kate called them. I have others, but that's the one I'm most proud of. Cost me three stolen cars. Well, four actually, but as luck may have it the second car was a police officers off duty car and he walked outside right as I was pulling out. I had to ditch it only a few blocks away because traffic was too thick and that fat fucker was chasing my ass down. I waited for night to get the rest.

We went to a poetry reading, something called a glam, or blam. Whatever, I fell asleep halfway

through my tequila, that was the real crime. She was pissed at me for a couple days for that. The idea was for people to express themselves out loud in front of other people, to what end I don't know. Maybe it was like this, folks just trying to get clean.

There was a farmers market we went to like once a week, sometimes twice a week. I didn't mind cause it was outside and I could smoke, though sometimes she asked me not to. I told her it was too late to teach me decent manners that at some point in time in my past whatever part of your brain absorbed those things just turned off and stopped processing information. She smiled. Man, that smile. That was what did it right there. I was on board. Matching tattoos. Car. Job. House. Whatever she wanted I was in.

Sometimes I would sweat out the drugs, not because I was broke, which was often the case, but mostly just because I forgot to take them. Withdrawals hurt like hell, but not as much as when she told me not to come around anymore. Too much baggage. Too much shit running through my veins.

I told her I would get clean, and meant it. She was worth it. The first time ever. A few days later I checked myself into Layside. She came to visit me, but I was too sick to see her, not that I really wanted to right then. It was her fault after all that I was even there. They called me up to the meeting room and I actually started up there, but stopped right before entering the room. I stood shaking, freezing, against the wall before going in. I stood there for a long time watching the cars pass outside the window. SUV's and trucks. An ambulance and a fire truck, their sirens and horns playing to the chaos rocking my body. I imagined a kitten was stuck in a tree and started laughing uncontrollably. The orderlies had to help me back to my room.

A couple days later I started to balance out a little better into what I guess was normal. I started getting anxious for the next time Kate came to visit, but it didn't happen. Instead it was Key who came by, we shook hands and gave each other the man half hug. He looked terrible, maybe always had, but in my new 'sober' state he looked more so. Looking back it was because of what he was about to tell me. He struggled with it for a moment, eyes darting about to everything but me. Finally he got it out

though. Kate had been hit by a drunk driver right outside the clinic. I just stared at him without seeing. I mean who gets hit by a drunk driver in the middle of the day? Any sane person gets drunk at night, right?

I checked myself out of Layside then. No point in staying there any longer. Key and I caught the bus uptown, we caught up to the guys at Lacy's and got nice and wasted. I don't remember much about the next day, but the day after I woke up in Psy's house, the one owned by his dad. He asked me if I was ready, I said that I was, for awhile now.

Key picked us up with a car he borrowed from whatever girl he was sleeping with these days, it was an old Chevy, rusted around the bottom edges and choking on its own fumes. We drove north out of the city. It took us about two hours to get there, and there were a lot more people there than I expected. All of us stood around the coffin while a priest said some nice things from the bible. An old woman cried, maybe it was her mother, or an aunt. I didn't care much to ask after them. If Kate had wanted them to be a part of our life then she would have. She never talked about her family, something we shared. The funeral was short and filled with anger. Afterward I just stood there staring at the coffin.

I remember Psy's words exactly in that moment, "I got some shit in the car, lets get the fuck out of here, man." I turned and looked at him. They were like words from another place and time, like he really was that Laser Man from another planet. I didn't want what he was offering any more, I wanted what I had lost. I ignored them, pleading and begging, as they tried to get me to get in the car. It was two miles to the closest bus stop and it took me the rest of the day to get back here. You guys let me back in, I told them people up front I wasn't gonna leave this time. Not until I'm fixed right. I think I'll still tell people my name is Nick, the emptiness of it is comforting now. Whenever I decide it's time to leave this place maybe that will change. Maybe not.