

## A Canary in Red

A hotel room on the upper floor.

A woman in the bed.

A man across the room, sitting in a chair.

Beige lace resting against her skin.

Messy blond curls falling around her face.

Her makeup smeared, lipstick faded.

She is propped against the backboard, arm raised and idle on the top of her head.

She gently holds a cigarette between her finger and thumb.

Her other hand lay across her belly, and one leg crosses the other.

Bright red lacquer coats her toenails.

She looks out the window.

Rain falling outside.

The man looks at her.

A cigarette hanging from his lips.

Red smudges in patches on his face and neck.

Gray speckles in his unmade hair.

“I love you, Val.”

“Don’t lie to me. We don’t do that, remember?”

“I’ll run away with you.”

She takes a drag from her cigarette and uncrosses her legs.

“Then we can just be together.”

“I thought I told you not to lie.”

“But it’s the truth.”

“You know you don’t love me.”

“But I do.”

“Sure you do.”

She looks away from the window and back at him.

“Hand me my clothes, willya?”

“I’d die before I would want you to leave.”

She crushes the tip of the cigarette in a crystal ashtray on the bedside table.

“No one ever does.”

Silence.

“Look, it’s not my fault you’re lonely.”

“But... it is. She left because I had you.”

She climbs out of bed and steps on the crimson red carpet and lifts her dress off of it.

“Look, Mr. Allen, just give me the money and we’ll both be on our way, huh?”

A sigh.

He reaches in his bag on the bedside table for the cash, but he hesitates.

“What you waitin’ for? You know you don’t want to get my employer involved. Remember last

time you got my employer involved?”

Silence.

“It’ll be worse next time, Mr. Allen.”

He is still paused with his hand in the bag.

“You were a mistake, Val.”

“I’m everyone’s mistake, now just give me the money.”

He pulls a black pistol out of the bag and points it at her.

Her hands raise limply, open palms toward him.

“What’re you doing, Mr. Allen?”

Her voice with lost confidence, now quiet and soft.

Cold, black steel heavy in his hand.

“You were a mistake.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Run away with me.”

“I’ll run away with you.”

Two gunshots.

Silence.