

Fourteen Hours

They sat brooding in the same taxicab, yet somehow they were wandering galaxies away from one another. She told him it was fate that brought them into the taxi together, but he insisted a simple coincidence couldn't transform her careless actions into something forgivable.

"I'm sorry," She whimpered, rosy crescents formed under her baby blues, predicting tears. His pupils almost vanished into the sockets as he snorted in obnoxious contempt. He groaned, "You can't cry April because it makes it all about you, are you really going to be selfish now?"

He twisted his wiry body toward the window before grumbling, "You should have been watching him."

"I thought he was asleep John!" April slipped out of her apologetic chirp with a sharp rebuke, "You shouldn't even have bought that drop side crib!" John, his face ignited with anger, contorted suddenly to view April as he berated her.

"I shouldn't—," John lowered his voice an interval, determined to control his emotions, "I shouldn't have bought a drop side crib? You are so irresponsible, I wish this traffic was moving so I could push you into it." Her lips quivered. April began to base her face with salty tears. The cloudy droplets gave her rosy cheeks an innocent gleam under the stale light fastened to the roof of the taxicab. John responded with a rhythmic repetition of head shakes, manifesting his deep disappointment. The bumbling sobering stopped abruptly as April's eyes grew wider.

She whispered hesitantly, "You are going to... Forgive me, yes?" John squirmed uncomfortably. Her words seemed to diffuse his indignation, but he refused to speak.

“You still... Love me... Right John? We’re still best friends?” April wanted the words to sound smooth but they stumbled upon one another, creating inarticulate verbal mush.

“John?” He still did not answer her, trapped in a pensive state. John knew they were friends, husband and wife even. They built a relationship in 2nd grade upon the resilient foundation of their shared love for banana chocolate chip pancakes. He had been entranced by her thick, almond curls, and she became fond of how specks of freckles were sprinkled upon his face like cinnamon. With such appreciation for one another during their tender youth it seemed evident they were to be friends, best friends... But for how long?

“I don’t even know who you are,” John finally responded. “But... You’re going to forgive me right?” April questioned, clinging to false hope.

“I... Don’t think I can.” John’s words devoured any remaining morsels of vitality left within April. She sunk deep within the leathery crevice of the seat, deep within an idle state of defeat. John inhaled deeply, trying to revitalize himself with any semblance of life force that could be whirled from the air vent into the musty scent of the taxi.

“I know what you’re thinking,” John muttered in monotone. April looked at him abruptly.

“Oh, what am I thinking John?” April spoke, her words saturated with feigned interest and surprise.

“I’m not going to divorce you... Or at least... Not right now.” John trailed off, the sentence was soon engulfed and silenced in the whirring vibrational pulse of the car. April’s lips parted to form a dark, gaping void. The salty retort April had prepared to deliver dissolved amidst the sea of awful thoughts that flooded her mind.

“I really thought he was asleep John. The baby books said nine month old babies may sleep up to fourteen hours a day, he had only been asleep for about half that time I swear.” April whispered.

“Well now even without your precious baby books, you know he’s *definitely* asleep,” John scoffed, his snideness still lingered in the air after he spat his dry remark. He uncurled his fingers, relieving them of the white-knuckled soreness of his clenched fist. He wriggled his awkwardly tense extremities into his snug jean pocket, struggling desperately to even pinch the box of cigarettes within. He tugged them out in three off beat motions. He tapped the bottom of the carton with the tenderness of a parent comforting his baby. John grabbed the first cigarette that peaked above the brim of the papery white carton. Thin wisps of sultry gray smoke curled in the air and puffed out of his nose, breathing with him.

“You... Shouldn’t... Smoke those things...” The comment slid through April’s clenched teeth.

“Why does it even matter anymore April? We have no baby to stay healthy for.” John’s bitter words sat in the rancid stench of his smoky tobacco breath. April was ready to pester John about how she wanted him to stay healthy for her, love her. However, as she peaked at his limp expression, saw his hazel eyes drowning in purplish skin, she refused. Then the first teardrop ran a moist, glistening streak down his face and she forgot every thought she had. They seemed to drift into the babel of news that was spurting from the car radio.

She was hypnotized by the gloomy grayish haze of the sky as she exhaled, “I’ll return the crib tomorrow.”