

G O S S A M E R

Garrett

No food. No sex. No sleep. A reflection pinned to the bathroom mirror, a heap of flesh colors, hanging under the morning frost. Eyes ajar, I focus on the shapelessness. A rude, sexless reality. Sun-scathed, atrophied, displayed in fluorescence, is my nude body. The light glows through the bones of my midsection, jutting—no food, in this body—it's no wonder he won't look at me—no sex, with this body—when he turns his moon-slicked back to me— no sleep, with these tears.

Edgar feigns erratic movements making love to me, his passive eyes drift anywhere but towards me, sex-mechanical, the way gay-for-pay boys behave on their first audition. I wave a finger to his eyes, commanding with a doctoral authority, that he look into my eyes.

Edgar calls me by the name of someone else, and it starts happening. I slip outside my body, past the window, into the chlorine-soaked heat, past the house, past the backyard, and past the willow trees— breathing towers over the mansions, engulfing the Palm Springs resort in a man-made forest— manicured in a baroque, labyrinth design. I swim through the water-colored sky, starless, high as helium in the palpable heat.

A sufferer of premature astral projection, my soul leaves my body during traumatic times. My soul still has bodily functions, and organs. It's just that they don't need to be working, and I can manipulate them in my astral form, like a fat superhero. But, it feels like a panic attack, but also like being lifted miles above yourself, until you can relax enough to ground your soul. I have seen my jaw grinding during sleep. If it happens when I'm awake, my real brain just shuts off, at a gay strip club, at a drive-thru joint. It's inconvenient, but it's better than having ED.

From my voyager body I hear Edgar calling his name, and the more he says it the farther I float. “Patrick.” I am falling on the wrong side of the sky, breathless, where the sunlight can’t reach; the bedroom in particles, granular colors. My dear Palm Springs, a gaping, orange bald spot. I squint smaller and smaller, until I’m just closing my eyes, just getting higher.

“Patrick.” Space does have sound. The sound of nothing. Anechoic. My spaghetti spun soul absorbs the silence. I hear gurgling in the gossamer of my body—the blood sloshing in between the smallest bones in my ears, the walls of my heart coughing and burping; pumping at a tempo of slipping into an anaesthetic sleep, quieter-growing thuds, until losing consciousness.

“Patrick.” My eyes jump out of their sockets, I stretch my optic nerves stadium-sized, the bungee strings bounce up and down, until the bedroom window is in their periphery. Edgar fucks my lifeless body, deliciously, each push melding our bodies closer—there could be six people under those sheet with all the bumping and grinding, but then, looking closer, I see another entity.

In flashes: his legs, smooth and clean, to the touch of cold porcelain. He slips into my body. Edgar takes off the sheets, something he has never done with me. The imposter, a blonde twink, thinner, younger, more fleshed-out. He stares into my eyeballs from outside the window, from inside my body. It takes my brain a few seconds to register how terrifying that was because my eyeballs are so far from my brain, but when the scare comes. I shit myself—my ghost self.

I think of Edgar’s arms around me. I moan his name making sure to say it like I would—round my lips like I would—dissecting the syllables—first name “Ed,” last name “Gar.”

It works. I am taken back to the bed. I see the other soul bolt out the door. Edgar looks at me like he’s just seen a ghost, his lips curl, sweat burbles from his forehead looking down at his member. I look down too, and intersect his gaze. I shat myself—my real self.

Edgar gets out of the bed with his fingers splayed out, air-webbed, like he doesn't want his shit fingers touching his other shit fingers.

My diabetes medicine made me this way, my shit all slushee. Poets say the mind and body age with grace like; a second blossoming of the body, driven by the sharp decisions of wrought, hammered brains— wise enough to lead by example. That's horse shit. Growing old isn't poetic: it's skepticism of disease and imminent death, the everyday things, aching, breaking bones— shitting on your boyfriend. But further down, there's the fear of the nothing that I will leave behind— the cars, the clothes, the quarter of a billion dollars. It means nothing if I have nobody to give it to.

Patrick

The next day, I see an emoji-studded contact, nameless. An awful feeling creeps over me. I open and scroll down the thread; it feels like every ounce of blood is shooting to my head, gravity reversed, rendering my thoughts to zero opacity the farther down I go. The knotted throat and purple fingers are side effects of my world turning upside down. I felt. I knew, that Edgar was in love with someone else. In their picture exchanges, I see the blonde boy from last night, his soul, conjured by Edgar's howling, and put a name to the face, Patrick.

Edgar watches over me, wet with suds peeking through his curls.

Are you in love? I ask.

He wipes his face with the towel, exposing his upper thighs, needle bruised, wilted blood curdling at his waistline. His wandering eyes say it all.

I gather his shit and bowl it out, underhand serve the baggage through the door. I am empowered by the actresses of tele novellas, brash and dazed, women in distress, but while trying to be them, my arm cramps from the sudden movement. I grind my veneers until I feel a crick-crack in

the front one, the most expensive. My eyes peel wide staring into the night sky, which cramps my neck, ensued from reacting to the arm pain. I shoot pain from everywhere, but I am too embarrassed, too in pain to speak. I relax from the rage of being powerless over my body, powerless over my younger lover. Powerless over my life.

Oh baby no, no don't touch it, Edgar says.

Shut the fuck up, you slut cunt! We are so over! I say.

He begs to come in, attentive to the sprain, clawing at the screen and moaning. I see atonement in his eyes; but thoughts about their affair simmer inside. "Affair" I repeat the word, it sounds how it feels, like a sudden betrayal. *Af-fair*, the two syllables shoot through the three chambers of my heart.

Edgar stays outside, and sleeps on my rainbow rug. I Benadryl the neck pain away, but stay awake past the drowsiness, reading through rare diseases found in farm grown Salmon that infects consumers with a previously unknown species of parasitic worms. And that some girls are slinging egg worms around high schools to dozens of consenting hosts; other impressionable girls, with dirty blonde hair and plaid vests, pink-hued hologram phones, popping metallic, pink lip gloss, whispering boy parts to each other, polished, plumpy nail designs, tiny, LED palm trees that mask their mouths. "Retro Kawaii." It's an epidemic. They swallow the naked egg together, the size of a kidney bean, and wash them down with Capri Suns packed by Adderall-spun moms. It grows about eight hundred times its original size, in the span of a week. What was once kernel-sized, now feeds on everything the teenagers eat, eight inches, about the length of a healthy newborn. In the case of one teenage girl, a worm fed it's way into a new home snug on the roof of this girl's mouth. Every time this girl eats, the worm takes a small bite from all her bites. The softer foods are easier for him to reach down and nib on. The worm prefers PB&J sandwiches, uncrusted, or butter-drenched

popcorn shells, but he'll reach down for the hard stuff too. Its insatiable hunger is all he knows because he can't feel his body inside another body. The worm doesn't know if he is overweight or not, he only knows hunger, blithe desire. This girl feels him come down to take a nibble, his ribbed, ringed body sliding through delights her—gives her the most mouth-puckering tickle that spins her ears vertigo, she clenches with a splendor that cracks her enamel-eroded incisors— already cratered from the lingering sugars of hard candy— the only food she can swallow fast enough before the worm comes. By now the worm's learned some tricks: he slides down, and wiggles its midsection to maintain the tickle, coroneted teeth gnash at the chocolate cake in her mouth, he vomits his offspring inside an air pocket in the moist bake, and goes back inside her, nuzzling his hooked tail inside a crevice in her sinuses. This girl sits on the edge of her bed, feeling the second body swimming in the ocean of blood, around the islands of her organs. Somewhere inside her is a foreigner, expanding in size, and gaining mental agility, trying to outgrow the shell of her body. Laughter sounds pile, almost identical in uproar and length from her family. This girl's mother calls her from the living room, and tells her it's time for her to open her birthday presents.

In the morning, Edagr whips out his stretched penis behind the screen door, enlarged from the flow of blood—what the heat does to a man's sex in the summertime as opposed to the wintertime, but still unimpressive.

Young men can be idiots. I have seen all the dick. I won't unlock my door for one. When he realizes that, he walks backwards and lifts his shirt above his nipples; pink skittles, rose white, from his shirt's friction on morning runs.

You'll never see a prettier piece of flesh, he says, smiling with a canary-fucked-the-cat grin.

Edgar is a mean one, but a poor excuse for a hot douchebag.

Let me tell you something about bad boys. The bad boys in high school ran with their cocks out, they would strut with a limp from their dangling egos. The rumor girls passed possibilities around, fragmented sentences that made their way into other mouths, the secret sounded like a thunderous lullaby. They berserked around, electrocuting other girls until everyone was seered, a gym full of mad bitches, all out to get what they think they deserve. Teenagers, upholding the peak of their beauty, of the haphazard smile drawn on their stupid faces, maintaining the peak of freedom, slipping into different clothes at night. Tonight, the peak of their existence. And then four years of tonight comes to a halt. The boy I am to tell of, and I have never before, was not just any boy, or any bad boy. Okay, but, if I tell you something, do you promise to keep it a secret? Come closer, I really can't have anyone else hearing this but you. Wow, your hair smells fabulous, like a fucking passionfruit tree.

Flynn

Flynn Reno folds the cuff of his jeans taugt around his ancles, and wears the most beautiful print t-shirts that ride above his hipbones. He moves in slow motion; the sun beating down his face, when he eats sandwiches, even the lettuce glistens in the light, when his tongue slips out, shredding a calculus exam, and my sketch paper is completely blank.

Everything he does is beautiful. What is the color of love? Red, blue, yellow? Whatever it is, I see him in those colors, in colors only I can conjure. The blue shade of Popsicle streaming from his lips, the golden ribbons tangling from his chest on the field. Nobody else sees him like I do.

And, love looks damn fine today.

I try to stare at him, not from afar, but in passing. The gay communication that is inconvenient and unreliable. For the closeted, it requires: a pause of looks where if both parties

stare long enough, maybe one of them will be brave enough to stop, stop whatever they're doing to fool around, an act that would undoubtedly compromise their schedule for the day, unless they have nothing better to do.

You have to remember that I'm a techno kid. A real veteran of gaydom, right when Madonna invented it. Hooking up didn't come a message away. I didn't get to choose when I had sex, or even with who, but I wanted Flynn Reno inside me. I knew that much.

It must have been after lunch because I am covered in sweat, an inheritance from my father—the sweaty eater who fanned his face with the plate when the cow tongue mom cut up and slapped on the stove was too spicy.

I hold my Spanish books close to me, and spread them out like a fan to cover the splotches, a fat Rorschach anti-hero. I walk through the main hallway because Flynn has free period, and he always goes to the library to do whatever bad boys do at the library, and he always takes the hallway.

Flynn and his best friend Bernie approach me, and I shoot my eyes to the ground so quickly, I swear I'm astral projecting. I hope they didn't catch me. I calculate the right time to look up and smile, but his steps are away from my periphery, and I lose my mind trying to find them, panning back and forth like a human vacuum.

Garret, are you looking for something? Flynn asks

Ugh, yeah no, I was just checking to see if my shoes were tied.

You check for that? Bernie says, laughing with high eyes.

I hurry into Spanish. I feel so hot and fat.

I draw his name, in bold, in cursive, in graffiti. In Spanish, and in pretend braille pressing my pen into my notebook, and flipping it around to see his name, raised in dots and backwards, I touch his mxyzptlk name and close my eyes, my penis, unfolding into a half erection.

I spend full periods waxing poetic over Flynn and of course—dialogue of what he would say, and what I would definitely say back. When I remember the feeling of wanting him, the pure codeine rush, it was more addictive than if in some universe he liked boys. And, in an even farther, alien parallel, he happened to like me. I liked liking him more than I liked him because he sparked my mind onto someone, anyone. *The shape of anyone could affect me, distract me, keep me up at night*, I fear the power of obsession.

Flynn had power over me, but I barely knew him. I only heard his name in snippets of chisme from my friends, their chico or papi talk, when Soozie brought the edibles and Josie yelled at the cross country boys, skinny legs skipping mud puddles like they're falling in position for six miles. But, I wanted to yell too. I wanted to sing. "I love you Flynn Reto! I wanted him to hear it too. I say it under my breath, loud enough so at least I can. This isn't just obsession. This is real love.

I wonder if Flynn has big balls. Soozie says.

Who cares about that fucking shit, you fucking slut? Josie barks back.

Fuck you, you fucking bitch, I'll rip your fucking face off. I want to see his huevos, rancheros! Soozie says.

Josei bites and slurps her hot cheeto infused ramen cup. Her face is unpleasant when she's spiced out, or if someone takes her food, it gets her sussed out, and she makes ugly confused faces. Her mustached lip goes spastic, and her eyes go glassy, with snot dripping down onto her mouth

My friends really are monsters, but it's the kind of girl I want to be friends with, a sassy, spicy girl, a girl like my mother, who batted forks over my father's head, and once splashed hot tea on him during his sleep, ghost gobbling in the night, trying to find his prick in the dark, and snip it. School is home.

It's all about the dick, dumb ass, Josie says after the conversation has drifted, taking a bite from her flaxseed bar. She's eating right for Halloween time, and drinking lots of water to have the glow of a Teen Mom, but without the responsibility, especially the responsibility of being sober.

You got this big ol dick with tiny ass M&M balls? Bitch, you're the dumb one, Soozie says.

Josie stops eating, and holds the ramen just below her mouth, something I have never seen her do; contemplating into the empty track field, something I also have never seen her do. She puts her head on an angle like a long-snouted breed listening-in to his owner, except she listens to her own conscious. Josie nods to herself, agreeing quietly, she'll never say it aloud. *I am a balls girl.*

My junk looks like one of those celebrity pictures with missing eyebrows. I don't know what the eyebrows of the pubes are; it's more of a unibrow thing. I tried to lean it down, rake through the jungle, but I did it with the wrong size clip. Instead of having two polar white streaks, I decide to buzz it all, and have one glaring fupa.

I am late for school that day, discomforting myself for days. Flynn also happens to be late.

With hands pressed on the food shack window, he peaks to see if his usual morning muffin is ready. His white undershirt scuffs under his biceps, reflecting light onto his underarms.

With his hair still damp; it hadn't hardened or sculpted into shape yet, he smiles when he sees me behind him, perhaps smelling his burning hair from my hot gaze, he tussles it around with his fingers as if knowing too that, he won't look his best until after first period, when the product settles, and the blood colors his cheeks, and his tired eyes day dilate.

You want, just the muffin?

Yes

Or, do you also want, some milk?

No that's all, just the muffin, thank you.

Or, would you like, some tea?

No thank you.

Are, you, sure? It's hot.

Oh come on, yes, I'm sure.

Flynn plunges into his pockets; he throws pennies onto the counter like they're hot. His short's pocket tongues sticking out like an amateur illusionist.

This, it is not, enough.

That's a dollar.

Son, it is a dollar and ten cents now, the taxes are going up, the vendor says, raising his hands above his concave shoulders. The government is reaching its filthy hands into the pockets of loyal Americans and—

Okay okay, let me check my backpack.

No worries. I lean in and pay.

Thanks man, what a fucking dick.

What, was, that? The man leans in with a gaunt face, and a milky eye that wanders.

Nothing.

What period do you have right now?

World Religions.

I hate that they renamed it that. The only religion we learn about is Catholicism.

I get you, Flynn says reaching down to his backpack, Fuck!

What?

I forgot my uniform in my car.

Are you gonna go back to get it? You're already late.

Flynn pauses, savoring a thought like candy.

Do you smoke? He asks

Smoke? Yeah. *Now I do.*

The smoke cleaves my throat open, my neck is one big, throbbing wound, the coughing builds the burning too, the sweat pours in hot rivers, until I finally leave his car and spray vomit on the bushes. My face pulses, all sections of it to the same deadbeat.

Flynn comes from behind me, hysterical, and wraps his arm around me to prop me on my feet, I feel lighter in his arms, terrified that I am in my astral body, I look down but it's just my body. He's either really strong, or not buying Ramen Cup with Soozie for lunch has been paying off. I sit back down in the passenger seat with the door open. Embarrassed, I build up enough bravado to ask.

Can I get another hit?

I'm not letting you smoke out of my piece with throw up mouth, dude, do you want some gum or something? I have water. He looks all over the car. *Oooooooo.* Flynn ogles inside the sectional.

What?

Nahhhhh

What is it? Let me see it!

He is keeping a secret, that smile, he is planning something. He wouldn't just take me to his car, and smoke me out. This is crack marijuana! I am such an idiot! My head races and recycles animations of drugs, the bad ones with faces and bad breath, the ones the substitutes play for Red Ribbon Week. With the eggs. The frying. The dead static of the sizzle.

Woah woah, you need to relax bro.

Relax! Don't tell me how to conduct myself, I say pushing random buttons on his console.

It's a cookie, I forgot I had it in my car. I thought about eating it, but I wouldn't learn shit.

You never listen in class.

I do listen! I even look at their mouths. I don't like to participate, but I like to listen.

Are you usually high at school?

Once or twice. When I'm high it's not about the grades or school. I go to this other place in my mind. Flynn checks my eyes for attention. I feel like a boy again. I'm curious about everything because the touch of everything feels brand new, fresh every time. I just get lost, playing.

But, don't you ever get tired? Don't you just want to graduate? Do something serious?

I don't know. I don't think that far ahead. You get real deep when you get high, don't you?

Yeah I guess. This is my first time smoking.

Oh so you lied to me; you said you smoked back at the stand?

Yes, I lied, but now I'm telling the truth.

Flynn's eye looks up at me from the car carpet as if I am his axis, his head, tilting to meet my gaze. He smiles and licks his lips, voluntarily, or on purpose because they are too clean to be wet the way someone wets them when they are late to class, or when they lie to a teacher.

Yeah I do want to get out of here. I don't know if I'll be too big in the city, but I want to, maybe, go somewhere, smaller, quieter. I don't want to go to the colleges my friends are going to. They want to follow each other, even if it's not to the same school, they're an hour away from each other. I want to go somewhere East, Flynn says, again looking down at the carpet.

Kiara and Syd are roommates.

Your friends are idiots.

Have you ever seen anything on television, ever? Your friends are idiots.

And what are you? You're nothing, I mean you're not really anything. I wouldn't want to be all over the place like you, hanging out with different people all the time, participating.

I like jocks.

What?

I like you.

Uh? Okay.

This is me telling the truth.

Okay. Ha! What.

You know you don't have to say anything, right? You can even shut your eyes while I do it.

He is nervous and so am I, but the words just come out through my fear, I think he might know that I am scared too. He double takes his reflection as if making sure his decisions are his own, and that this isn't a dream and I, his singing siren.

I think your hair looks great. What product do you use?

I just use oils, uh, actually just butter. Unsalted.

I love butter.

Right.

I'm going to touch you, okay?

Yeah. Sure.

I want to lick his buttered hair. I want to put it in my mouth. I come close to his lips with my forehead and act like I dropped something right on his penis. He lets me touch it for a bit, you know, to see if my imaginary glue is there, or around where he is sitting, or on his ass. I check under his briefs and I see if my mouth can feel for anything, since my imagination is more sensitive, I look for maybe two minutes, and *aghhhhh fuck! There it is!*

I leave his van almost immediately with the jock of a celebrity to the paparazzi, I kiss him on the cheek and thank him for a decent time. He drives away. I am mad because I think he is my boyfriend now and he is obligated to take me home or back to the front of school, but I remember that I left before him. My head, oscillating pendulums.

I spend the day like I normally would with my girls. I want to tell them so badly that it hurt me inside. I want to tell them that I was in love with Flynn and that they ought to stop looking at him, effective tomorrow, if they know what's good for them because Flynn Reno is my boyfriend. I had part of the truth right.

Flynn and I spent our last year sleeping together, it went from its origins in the van, to somewhere with a little more panache— a room after prom. He rents a room next to his other room with Carlie, the decoy date, but spends the night with me, faking tiredness to avoid the awkward sex.

We watch movies all night, naked, kiss when we want to, he chokes on a piece of kettle popcorn and spits it out, and he talks in a robot voice all night. The sounds of the T.V. mixing with our sounds, have you ever had sex, and it felt like being in a car chase with a hunk at the wheel, moaning sirens into your ear? My senses are revved to their fullest throttle, each moment spun from a perfect supercut in my mind, celluloid left in the dark. He illuminates them tonight with green eyes, baby's breath, a corsage made of lavender and weeds from his backyard, wrapped in a long blade of grass.

After that night, Carlie started talking thunder and everything got wet and messy. You stopped talking to me, and picked up football full-time, and you built yourself the way you thought they wanted to see you, fit, and funny, and straight. You passed me in the hallway, and looked at me like you're the one who can see ghosts. When you stop at the sound of my voice—a voice that had once been whisper-close to you—you made it into just any voice in passing. *I could be anyone*, is that

what you said to me when you left whatever this was? What did you do with our memories? Did you erase those too?

Flynn dated Carlie and got her knocked up right before graduation. She wasn't pregnant for the walk, but she looked beautiful in the pictures taken, her rattling skin that the rumor girls were raging jealous over. Carlie could never keep her baby a secret, instead she chose to make it grow, she became the most popular girl for trimester. She brought him everywhere. She brought him to the football games, and to the theater plays that she hated. She brought him to the Goodbye Dance.

One night, when I saw you picking her up for cheer practice, I smiled at you, and you smiled too. Not the way you used to, but instead knowing, scared even, of what you knew I saw. I saw what you made of yourself. Now that the football quarter was over, and life was tearing at your seams, burgeoning in to rescue you from yourself, you didn't let it in. You chose this. You chose her.

Rumor has it, Flynn and Carlie's boy was all grown up a few years ago, but he was confused about the strange feeling when staring into his mother's wardrobe. This boy plays with his mother's fancy mall perfume, a violet that when sprayed onto her vanity looks like a wetter water, sumptuous, catching the blue fluorescence.

This boy places all his mom's things in a row, stark on the white marble counter like souvenirs: the blush, the lipstick, the bra, the panties—with an intricate floral lace weave, and a baby pink bow on the elastic line. He assembles the lineup in order from first to last on his body, and stares in the mirror, shifting his weight, adjusting his posture. There. In this pose. With his hands cupping his missing breasts, he sees her, the woman of his dreams.

Rumor has it, this boy grows up and decides to start taking medicine to make the more boy parts of him disappear, or at least less noticeable. This boy hates his beard. He shaves every five or six hours because he hates the feeling of it growing out. An assault on his body, he itches

everywhere, on his chest, on his ribs, in places where he didn't ask to have hair. It's not that he hates the look, he ogles at older men, especially one of Flynn's friends who stays past his mom's bedtime. This boy thinks he fancies him too. One night, his dad's friend sneaks into this boy's bedroom and pokes his mouth with his erect penis, something the temperature of blood, in the black. This boy has no time to react, but stares with lunar eyes at the wolf hunched over him, fiending.

Rumor has it, that a few years later, this boy's life crumbled from a few nights that he squints at with distant lucidity, a memory that trickled down, and infected him silently, until the day it had nothing else to poison. He doesn't remember his laughter, but a potent noise that filled the room, not his voice, but a rasp in his throat. Was he real, or did this boy ruin himself thinking he was? His questionable existence has nothing to do with what this boy feels, the feelings he knows are real, recycled into his sour experiences with other boys. In her real self, now, this girl jumps off the roof.

Splat.

Edgar

The phone rings in the wake of night, I have a pinch in my heart.

Hello? Garrett? Are you there? a voice sobs.

A voice hardly familiar, but the quirks, the nuisances, they're all there. I think. I hope. I half pray, in the silence that his voice emerges from the static.

Edgar, is that you?

I'm sorry. I didn't know who else to call, he sobs.

Don't move I'll be there.

His jaundiced skin burns bright under the fluorescent street lamp. It gives his face a green hue, the true blue that dawns on his legs—opening and closing, toes pointed to the sky, pointed to the ground, while he comes in and out of realities—the shade of indigo kissing blue, flirting with violet, and making a mess of it all. Liquid and doting, red vessels risen above the blanks; his look is alive, but missing, as if his eyes were bought.

His eyes, wider in contrast to the rest of his face— his small lips, his small cheeks, a smaller birthmark, the shape of a garland rose, on his smaller neck. He's looks just as robust, it can't be weight loss. It was only a year since his frame left the door, and his shoulders look the same, like they could still walk out on me and reach both sides. His shoulders, bare in a sleeveless shirt, arms soaking in the moonlight.

Is this warm enough for you? I ask

He smiles at me, and looks into my phone's flashlight as if it were a portable sun, leaning his cheek on the flash, absorbing its warmth, he swallows the top part. Orange leaks from the corners of his mouth, shining through the part in his mouth.

I look in all directions, and make sure nobody sees me take him. Under my arm, he laughs with his neck rolled back, head on the rest, he falls into a deep sleep. Plenty to catch on the five-hour drive.

I peek at his sleeping body. He has changed, still recognizable, but different. Did I propel him to this? I could have given him shelter. I could have gone beside myself, if I wasn't so focused on him leaving, so focused on my anger. I wish he left like Flynn, faking it until he died. But Edgar wants his drugs, and his friends in the dark, he wants it in the morning, and in the evening, an endless vacation paid by men like me who know how dangerous boys like him are, men who see fire and instead of playing with it, set themselves on fire.

The light cascades from the monolith billboards, onto the dewy road, gasoline slicked of neon greens and pinks. The street lights peek-a-boo every few seconds, Edgar's face stays the same through each light splice, but I hope that in one of the back outs, he would wake up and be who he used to be in the amber. He would look better, his scent would return to him. I wanted this to be over. Everything will be better in the morning. The rising sun hit my eyes and dilates them, firm, squeezing tears from the back of my eyes, water settling over my parched iris holding my doing pupils. Everything will be better once Edgar sees the light too.

Patrick died, from an overdose.

Oh.

Are you happy now?

A little.

You're sick.

I'm just happy you called.

Are you? He says, scanning my frame.

Welcome back. You know where the shower is—

I know.

He undresses there in the front of me. His skin reflects the morning light. There are more scars, a cut on his ankle, elevated, as if the wound reopened three or four times. Veinless, his pale skin dotted with heroine incisions, each one from a time forgotten; a hole for each time using, a huddle of holes for the days living with the addiction, the dots that run from his ankles all over his calves like comet spray, for the places he had been, and the addicts he had met along the way, a visible timeline made of brown little divots.

I pick up his pants to start the laundry, but feel a glugging weight sagging his pants down. It's his phone. It takes everything in me to not to snoop, but I see a message from someone with emojis, the familiar feelings return. I don't want to look, I can't.

You there yet?

The open question scribbles mind. I unlock his phone with the same passcode from before.

I barely have room with Jess here man.

Awww come on

I can't man I'm sorry.

I don't wanna ask the old man.

YOU'VE GOT TO! HA

UghHH okay.

You there yet?

And, it starts happening. I slip outside the window, out into the morning light that touches my iridescent skin, from home is my unconcious body, and with my x-ray eyes I see Edgar showering. I am furious. This is really happening. An awesome force pulls me farther and farther

into the ether, no matter my fight, and into a void of light that swallows its surrounding light, the pulp of my iris comes undone, burning off, my eyeballs melt too, shucking the seeds from my dandelion eyes, the white fur sails through the pool of light. My rage tethers me to my real body, the emotion seethes through me, red untanglings of the ghost fabric. From the emergence, Patrick gallops to me on a white horse. He looks youthful, magical even, nothing like his soul when Edgar accidentally conjured him that night. He jumps off into a fluffy cloud, breaking his fall.

You look swell.

Take me back. Let me go.

Oh dear, you've made a mess down there, haven't you? Patrick breaks the red thread from my body, pulling it off as easily as hair, with the same soft tearing sound of breaking single strands.

All the hate leaves me, I see it falling into different patterns, red circles and spirals dissolving into the light. My head is clear, absent from its Earthly attachment, absent from her heartbreak, the idea is heartbreaking too. I would cry if I could.

Edgar will find my body, and he will do with it what he sees fit. He will stay another day, and take more showers, drink my Balthazar bottles, and he will stay for another week, he will slip into my jetted bathtubs, warm himself wrapped in my designer sheets. And then, when days turn to weeks, and nobody can reach me, he will consume all I have with the same fire I saw in his eyes when we first met. He will leave my crack-cocooned body. But when the place gets raided, they will never know. They will never know that my the true cause of death was loneliness, from the boys of my past, the ghosts in the hallways, in the bedrooms— their empty bodies, turning their backs to those they convince themselves of loving. But, it's fine. It all is. From inside the void, I peek past the web of light, the lines, clean with a wet precision that cuts through my ghost, too formless to be a body. I squint upon them, wondering what will become of them, now that I can haunt them too.