

## The Black Hole

Zora's veins are glow sticks. One of the soft, pink glows follows the arch of her spine. It pulses under her white, cotton shirt. She rolls over to face me. Her hair sticks to her face, covering her eyes but not her smile.

"I'm pretty scared," she says.

"I know. I'm sorry." I curl into her warmth. She curls back. Her lights' pulse is a metronome tapping my neck. She shivers. I assure her that the demons aren't real. She closes her eyes. My own veins swirl, blue. I ask the darkness if they'll keep her awake. I get no response.

Zora's breathing pushes her back into my chest. I squeeze her close to me so that she won't float away. She doesn't grimace or fight; she only sleeps.

~

I push myself out of a padded seat, but my legs collapse beneath me. The sky is pink through the circular window. A flight attendant passes me with his cart.

"Excuse me? Sir?" I call. He jumps to attention and rolls to me, backwards.

"What are you doing on the plane?" he asks. I turn my head; I am the only passenger.

"I missed my stop."

"Well, I suppose we can let you off at the next one."

I cling to my armrests. My vision flickers in and out of black like a faulty light. I sputter something that feels like bubbles on my mouth. The flight attendant tilts his head.

"Are you alright, miss?"

"I can't get off this plane." I can feel the trajectory of the plane, now. It just keeps spinning and going in circles. I'm ever so slightly flung about my seat. I gag.

"Ma'am?"

"Please." I reach for the sleeve of his uniform. "Let me die right here in this seat."

~

"I love you," Zora says. "But I can't believe you love me."

"Why not?"

~

The people who pretend to want the best for us sit us down and explain why exactly they think that we're fucking lunatics. It's not that bad, and it's what everyone else does.

I want to tear out my veins; I can't listen to this anymore.

We return to the black hole with a blade. I lock the door. Press our backs into the cold, tile floor. Cry and cry. They leave for work. We slice our skin: a blood oath. It hurts, but the desire to die leaves.

But it only lasts for a second. So we do it again, and again, and again.

When we can't bear the pain anymore, we spoon, make out, and bleed onto the linoleum.

~

Again with the

Slamming

and shaking.

I shudder. I'm cold. I can't hear. *I can't hear you.*

"You [redacted] to open [redacted]. You need to [redacted] to [redacted]."

...

"I'm sorry! I just [redacted]!" Somehow my tears don't evaporate [redacted] they [redacted] my [redacted].  
My face is [redacted] hot I close [redacted] hands and tugs at fistfuls of [redacted].

I need this feeling to go away.

It's swallowing me [redacted] can't breathe

The world keeps shaking

stop please please stop

[redacted] chest is so tight

it hurts

CAN'T YOU HEAR [redacted] IT I'M BEG [redacted] YOU [redacted] HURTS

[redacted] please please go away please [redacted] away just the [redacted] thought makes me [redacted] im sick

Nobody will listen so I [redacted] into a ball and cry my eyes out [redacted] believe me

[redacted] don't lie The [redacted] is everywhere

STOP STOP [redacted] GOD PLEASE JUST MA [redacted] STOP help [redacted] me

“AL [redacted] Ayou ha [redacted] Ogo NOW!”

Nobody will [redacted] or understand so I [redacted] myself to [redacted] ground and [redacted] my [redacted] r and  
pres [redacted] TO m y s [redacted] i n untill [redacted] out ON [redacted] the W [redacted] TE  
ba [redacted] omFL O [redacted] oh [redacted] god the [redacted] lood [redacted] here but th [redacted] eling  
goes AW [redacted] IIIW [redacted] TED I [redacted] into my arm de [redacted] EPER I don't wa [redacted] o  
SU [redacted] IVE eve [redacted] g's black a [redacted] an't FE [redacted] YMORE it's fi [redacted] ver  
Is [redacted] ight yes [redacted] pl [redacted] [redacted] yes pain P [redacted] IN ca [redacted]  
[redacted] el a [redacted] ore no [redacted] ing le [redacted] t [redacted]

~

She reached for her blanket, but could not reach. Her arm went limp and eventually numb. Her other arm moved pizza into her mouth.

The woman on the TV screen had just jumped out of a window, shattering it in the process. She fell into the snow, dying it red.

*That was stupid. So stupid.*

Her eyes stayed attached, but her mind did not. She dropped her pizza back in the box. The bluish shine of the screen, the only light, made everything dull. She dug in her pocket for her phone. She found it. She tapped on the screen over and over.

No messages.

No calls.

Nothing.

“Come on, come on...” she whispered. Her breath made the screen fog. “No, no, not now, not now...” She pulled her knees into her chest, inhaled, and put her phone back in her pocket.

Black letters crept up the sides of her vision. She wanted to scream, but the lump in her throat wouldn't leave. She put her hands over her mouth and felt hot tears fall between her fingers and onto her knuckles.

*Warmth.*

She nibbled at the nail of her thumb. Everything was words. She couldn't speak. Her eyes stung.

*Go away. Go away or let me speak.*

~

I stare at the computer screen.

My mind, similarly to the human body, is not meant to gorge upon ungodly amounts of sustenance only to regurgitate it.

My mind, similarly to the human body, will grow sick and wither if put through endless cycles of binging and purging.

I am withering.

My brain aches and fails to work. I am exhausted, yet I cannot sleep. I am left blaring music into my ears in a petty attempt to find something, *anything* that will beat faster and louder than my heart. It's jumping out of my chest, giving my mind the power to degrade me.

I'm a failure.

I'm a liar.

I should have known this would happen.

I'm worthless.

I try, but the numbers only swirl around my head. My fingers won't move. My brain won't remember.

I hate my body.

I move to my bed.

This is my only purpose in this world, yet it's eating me alive. My chest deepens and my heart hollows with fear. I cannot reason or claw it away.

I stand.

I walk.

I sit.

I want to die.

I stare at the computer screen.

~

**The truth of the matter** is that I can't go on living and my mother doesn't love me anymore. I wipe tears from my face to my jeans. Crawl into the black hole.

I think that I'm alone. Footsteps prove me wrong.

This is it, I'm dead, I think, especially when I see who it is.

He had seen me like this once before, when I climbed into bed with him because I was afraid that my mother was dead. He yelled at me. He told me to get the hell out and go to sleep. I contort myself; I have to become one with the black hole.

Instead, this time, he speaks to me in a tone of voice I've never heard before. "Oh, honey," he said. "What's wrong? Why are you crying?"

He's joking. Surely, he must be joking.

But he's not. He holds me and I cry.

Until I tell him **the truth of the matter**.

His eyes harden and he backs away. I just want to fucking die.

~

Zora lifts my dress over my head. She holds me to keep me covered. Her nails dig into my back. The music doesn't sound like music; it's the roar of helicopter blades. I press my face into her face. She drops the dress in a crumpled heap beside her shriveled black stockings.

I press my mouth into her shoulder because I don't want to say anything and I don't know where else to put it. I blink, and everything is dark. Her hands crawl like spiders up and down my spine as if it were a ladder. Her nails are like the spiders' tiny high heels. We sway.

I ask her shoulder if this is the black hole.

We sway some more.

~

What is the black hole?

The mind.

Demons.

Chemical imbalance.

A curse.

Something that exists for everyone, but you're too weak to handle.

A plane crash.

hel

You caught it.

Drug.

hell

pm

A cruel fact of life.

A state.

Evolutionary mistake.

Technology.

Emptiness.

A choice.

A lack of faith.

Death.

Death?

Death.

~

Why are we here?  
And why will I stay

and be here tomorrow?

~

What is really in the black hole?

I'm not sure. It's different every time that I arrive.

I'm not even sure that it's real. Though, I suppose that, when I go, it's real. At least to me. I guess that's all that matters.

~

It's hard when you can't talk; you're forced to listen. I'm sick of everybody liking *me* when nobody's liked me for my entire life. I notice the things that *I* don't notice because *I'm* not stupid.

I know *I* don't mean it, but *I* really *do* mean it. Deep, deep down in *my* own black hole.

~

I step away from Zora and turn on the light. She shrieks and shrivels, like a balloon releasing air. I sit down, roll her stockings up my legs, and put my dress back on. I'd feel bad, but I know she'll be back.

~

I stand and bolt to the cockpit. I overtake the pilot, throwing him to the floor. I hijack the plane and fly it wherever the hell I want. The flight attendant, at some point, wanders in and grabs me by the shoulders.

"Those are tremors," he says.

"Damn right they are."

I don't know whether the plane will crash.