

Curtain Call

You awake. Your back aches. You feel around before you open your eyes. *Train tracks.*

“How did I get here?” you ask yourself.

Another failed suicide attempt. Damsel in distress. You’d much rather be having rapid promiscuous sex with strangers than consistently failing at romantic suicide attempts, a la napping on the cold steel railroad tracks. Still, the taste of death lingers on your tongue. It coats your teeth like the morning mucous you battle with daily. You remind yourself that fuzzy teeth at 7am is a regular part of normal life. You get up.

“Train tracks aren’t comfortable enough, anyway.” You get up and dust the soot and dirt from your designer maroon pants. You know that others judge you by what you wear, and you don’t want to appear too dirty. Too distressed. Too unkept. But how else do you deal with a looming divorce after 10 years of marriage? A nap on the train tracks seems minor in comparison to the papers waiting to be signed. A life of comfort free of nature’s stain on your designer seemed to be your path.

“Fuck it.” You take the papers out and begin to tear them to pieces. You decide to stay committed. *One more year. One more chance.*

As you arise from your industrial cradle, you notice the sounds from the planes above. “Ah!” A light goes off. The planes that lifted you from your slumber served as a reminder of your flight. “*Fuck.*”

You begin to run. Your legs transport you from railway zombie to lofty hummingbird in record time. You run faster and faster until you spot an empty city bus

station. Public transport serves you well. You wait less than a minute before an airport shuttle serendipitously halts at your meek presence.

“Need a lift?” the grey haired shuttle driver asks. His smile is broken and reveals only a handful of yellow teeth. His voice reveals the cause may have been from years of smoking. He coughs as he adjusts his blue cap. He reminds of your recently deceased grandfather. He reminds you of home.

You respond without hesitation. “Yes.” Hope.

You look left as you see a man approaching with a suitcase. It has wheels. You think it odd that carriages have wheels. So modern. Wheels on suitcases remind you of the laziness that exists in America. *Era of Convenience. Thats what we live in.* A young boy in a black leather jacket holds a dozen pink roses in hand. He hides them behind his back. You wonder who the receiving partner is. *His mother. His lover. Maybe himself.* You make eye contact with the ginger man with the fresh hipster haircut. Buzzed on the sides, long on top. Sexy. His gold wedding band blinds you with the reflection beaming in from the large airport windows. Your eyes match and is followed with a simultaneous smile. “Too bad he’s married,” you think. “Actually, too bad we’re in this public place. Too bad I’m too shy to say hello.” He drifts back into the crowd of travelers. Your short adulterous connection immediately reminds you of your overly dramatic scene on the train tracks earlier that morning. *That bastard!* You laugh hard at how you tore the papers to shreds in fury, and wonder why he keeps sending them. Every year. Like an anniversary. You can’t decide if it’s 10 years of threats or 10 years of promises. You save the debate for your upcoming flight to Hawaii.

More suitcases on wheels. More fresh haircuts. No more flowers. No more gingers. A woman with tan suede boots and blue eyes begins to approach the charging station at which you are sitting. She gets distracted by the alarming noise of her cell phone and fiddles in her designer handbag to answer it. She sits next to you, plugs her device in, and begins to speak in Russian. *Gibberish*. A rush of young athletic men rush towards past you two, and you give them your focus. Much more exciting. The group looks like they hold an average age of 16, but they carry the muscle and confidence that you can only dream of. Well, the muscle, anyway. You try to pick out the ones that look legal, to deposit into your fantasies for later.

You smile at an elder lady in floral pants, hoping for a glimpse of human connection. She wears a strong, yet pleasantly distinctive smell. You can't decide if the girl next to her is her caretaker or granddaughter, but you enjoy their caring interaction. You long for it. To be cared for. To be loved. To not have divorce papers sent your way every summer. You begin to fiddle with your phone to distract your mind from your impending tragedy. Something about technology in the palm of your hand seems so powerful and comforting. *All those social networking friends. They seem so real.* You'd much rather be walking. Or spinning. Or finding more eye contact. You turn on a music video. Macklemore, Same Love. You think about how you fucked the guy in the music video. He's handsome. Big cock. Nice smile. You let him live in the music video and let your love live there. One of your many encounters with celebrities and people in the public eye. It only goes so far. One last inhale of the elder ladies classic perfume before their off to their gate.

You'd much rather be walking. Or spinning. Eye contact.

You feel your legs command you to get up, but the feeling of sitting and people watching brings you great joy. You scribble something in your new leather bound journal. It reads: "Finding joy in the simple things is the key to sanity." *Personal mantras are like therapy.*

A man in a suit sits next to you. "Whats up?" he asks.

You think to answer, but get thrown off guard from his fragrance. Musky. Masculine. You enjoy his wrinkles and his classic ora. You immediately decide you'd fuck him, despite his superior age. You watch as he looks at his itinerary for pickups. *La Costa Limousine. Pickup information.* His hands are sexy. As you begin to memorize his motions, you watch as he motions to another man in a similar black suit. They begin to exchange friendly industry banter. You decide limousine drivers are sexy. You inhale deeply and fall in love on last time with his fragrance. Man sex in a spray bottle. Not that shitty stuff they pump out in the malls. We all know the store. Yes, the one with heightened sexual images of what we have defined as masculinity. And now the smell. You maintain silence and watch as they turn too look for their clients. It turns you on to be surrounded by two men in a suit.

You smile at your fantasy as your eyelids become heavy. "They probably all think you're high." *Let them think that.* Little do they know you've really been crying all morning. The death of your father came suddenly, and tears seem to be the only healing mechanism. *And this fucking divorce papers.* Plus, you are a little high. You decide to let *them* decide the truth, whomever *they* might be. After all, choosing where we place our beliefs in only a choice that can be left the individual. *They can think whatever the fuck*

they want. You keep your fantasy locked in your brain and rescind your sexual presence to fulfill a more relaxed, friendly traveler mode.

You feel your right eye begin to dry out. You pull out your eye drops, kick your head back, and allow a few drops of the oil to roll around in your socket. You feel it tingle. A gentle reminder of the blessing of life, and the gift of sight. More importantly, you forgive yourself for knowing the difference between your brain and your heart, and thank yourself for another day with sight. *I know this isn't why he wants a divorce.* A pleasant way to ease out of your other physical needs. The business of the airport grasps your attention away from your handicap.

More suitcases on wheels. More endless insight. No more flowers. No more gingers. No more beautifully smelling people. No more pedophile fantasies. No more divorce.

You open your canvas backpack. It's small, but durable, and the main compartment is the perfect size pouch for all your nifty travel treasures. You glance at the manila envelope and feel a rush of disappointment. *Fuck those divorce papers. Fuck tradition. Fuck it all.* You stop yourself from crying and begin to hum your favorite Elton John tune. *Rocket Man.* That was always your favorite shared song. The song that inspired you to travel in the first place. As the chorus rolls through your mind, you start to remember that you're in a place of healing. The divorce papers weren't a final plea for help—they simply served a reminder of the good life you shared. *Still share.* You enjoy the annual tradition of destroying the already-signed divorce papers, although last years event of lighting them on fire from a hot air balloon in New Mexico was much

more enchanted than the farewell train track shred of San Diego. You're just happy to have one of your eyes in good working condition, and to both your legs. You feel alive.

"Ten minutes till curtain." A forceful voice directs from just outside the doorway.

"Anisa, are you still reading that awful book? Put it down! We've got a show to put on!"

I looked up, placed a handmade bookmark to mark my place, and took a sip of the warm chamomile tea Regina had made. I looked around the room and felt the vibe of anticipation reverberating from the stage manager forceful direction. As I searched for our glittery top-hats, I could feel our hearts sink in fright and excitement, and immediately began to channel Grandmothers words of encouragement and love. We had come this far, and hoped to take our show to the Hollywood Bowl this upcoming summer. We couldn't let her absence or the actions of the stage manager disrupt the good vibes we had worked so hard to build up. We believed in ourselves. We believed in our act. We believed in each other.

I watched as Celine adjusted her microphone. Regina quickly joined to assist in fixing the mic tape to the nape of her neck. Another reminder that, while we felt like amateurs, we were in a good place. A nice theater with professional equipment. It felt like home. We had made the green room feel cozy, with a few comfortable throws, one lavender, one royal blue, to match with the candles and cards sent by our greatest fans —our family. We were such a good team.

The door to the green room swung open as a head decorated with a headset popped in. "Girls, you're on in five."

We ran from the green room and scurried across the stage to find our marks before the red velvet curtains rose to reveal the audience. We waddled like penguins as our neon pencil skirts forced our thighs to stick together. *This damn costume. Regina is no longer in charge of costumes.* Our heels clicked, almost synchronistically, as all three of us got set. They were leopard print, with a sparkly stiletto heel. *Good choice. But I'm still taking over costuming,* I decided.

We looked at each other in the eye and reached out to hold hands. Our starting position was welcoming and friendly, as our choreographer believed that we needed to win the audience over by more than just our fabulous frocks. He believed body language was a powerful communicative tool and could immediately grasp their attention.

I looked up at Celine's wig. *Pink. Regina. Blue.* I was happy my Grandmother decided to donate her fabulous wig collection to our trio before she flew off to Paris with her new boyfriend. The pink one was her favorite. I closed my eyes and thought of all the romantic adventures she was having with David Monroe; dancing beneath the Eiffel tower, gliding through the Louvre, and, of course, necking with David under the Arc d' Triumph. Sure, she was 13 years his senior, but he loved her more than she loved her dancing. I was proud that Celine was able to wear her favorite pink wig. More than anything I felt inspired. Grandmother was our driving force.

Regina strongly squeezed my hand in confidence one last time before the the music started. She always did that. Like a ritual. I loved it. If only I had spoken up when she selected these damn neon pencil skirts. *We just can't move right.* My mind thanked our choreographer once again for adjusting our movements to complement our

complicated wardrobe choice. *This is part of our professional journey. We gotta go through this before we hit big time.* We believed in ourselves enough to come this far, and our moment was now.

We took one final breath before the stage manager pantomimed a countdown on his right hand. I had been sucked into thinking I was the boy on the train tracks. I had forgotten that I had a higher calling. I was born to be here. I closed my eyes and thanked God that I was alive.