Jazz House

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Smoke wafted out of double doors as I drifted through and bright horns beckoned me down a dark hall. The black velvet of the chair I had taken on the outskirts of the room seemed to stretch over the edges of the upholstery, grasping me, pouring out onto the floor, and clambering up onto the ceiling. Gin and tonics corralled the crowd into captivity, entranced under the mellow hum of chordal melody and a cloud of steady smoke. Staged players fiddled with their tuning gears and ran their scales. Soft velvet whispered from a shining grand piano. Hot-white neon poured from the trumpet. The thump and hum of the legato mumble of the drum and bass swung the jazz through tip-toes and sidesteps. Music flooded into the hall, tied together through swung rhythm.

People swung from wall to wall, pinned cheek to cheek. Or hip to hip. They moved in unison. As pairs. As a singularity; driven by common jive left unspoken. The motion of the room could sway any onlooker and woo them into participation. Pheromones and reefer wafted through the air under the guise of “just another Saturday night” (more seemingly, “one LAST Saturday night”), parading into the noses of the dancing lunatics, high on moonlight and neon. One could feel joy with the eyes and hear the voice of God in a four-piece band.

Our singer has taken stage. A songbird. An angel. A preacher. The music broke into a sprint. The bellows of her against the neon on stage moved dancers into a frenzy, kicking the floorboards to pieces along and drowning secular sorrows under the haze of celestial song. In all the world, you could not find a place where the people were tighter, warmer, or more velvety. The spells that decorated the room in blacks and blues held us here together, exhorting, “you don’t want to go outside, it’s cold out there”, easily convincing us that the safest place on this hot July evening was this crammed concert hall. All the smoke in the world couldn’t stifle half the oxygen of that room. Spitting horns and our treasured songbird blasted holy light into a dark venue, speeding up time in our frozen snapshot of jubilant oblivion.

Towards the end of the evening, the night’s soundtrack swung us to sleep in each other’s arms. The outlines of our dark silhouettes blurred together under a dark enveloping fuzz – a fleshy conglomerate of soft velvet summertime – and our breaths merged into a cloud of soft smoke and purple jazz gesticulating above our heads. The room became gelatinous, moving in half-time to the soft goodbyes of the music. Saturday night sizzled to a close, and we all found our hats and coats. The smoke ushered us out and closed the doors behind us. We all look forward to next Saturday, when the jazz house comes alive, for at the end of the week, it feels as though it’s what we did it all for.