*What exactly is the truth? I wonder about that from time to time.*

“Did you see the news?”

“Yeah. Awful, isn’t it? Who would do such a thing?”

“To think that she could fall from grace like that.”

“I bet she wanted the money. They always do things like that for the money.”

“Or love. Whatever the reason, there’s no denying she attacked him. That’s the truth.”

*The headlines read ‘Carnelian City model attacks government official. Interviews underway.’ It’s funny, I look at that headline, under the blinding lights of the city, and all I seem to feel is relief.*

“Welcome, Ms. Ametrine.” The guard stands to attention as Ametrine walks through the door. Following suit is her counterpart, a man in a matching ebony outfit they had been dressed into that morning. Ametrine peers at the man, a sharp gaze that makes the man flush a deep crimson.

“Thank you.” Ametrine says with a wave of her hand, ignoring the other models who glare from their seats. “I apologize for being late. I’m afraid Ferron- “She nods to the man looming beside her. “-and I were held up at the company for a special commercial.” She places a hand to her head, pressing against the fishnet veil that has been crafted for the occasion. A snicker can be heard, but it is followed by a terrified squeak and the sound of chairs creaking. Ametrine knows better than to look, smiling despite herself. “I believe they’ll want us back soon if we can hurry this along.”

*I ask myself what the truth is because after years of playing the cookie cutter I tend to find myself mixing the truth with lies a lot. It’s a rather dreadful existence, knowing that what is true is a lie, and what is a lie is the truth.*

“Don’t worry, Ms. Ametrine, we are only asking a few questions due to the nature of the crime.” The guard ushered her into one of the interrogation rooms, a shiny room full of stale air and the glaring red cameras that dotted the corners of the room. Inside is an investigator with a forgettable name, her attorney that the company hired, a couple cups of water she never asked for, and a cushioned chair. She places herself in the chair, legs crossed, and hands folded. She smiles patiently, watching as the people in the room take a moment to stare. Yes, she is real. Yes, she is who they think she is. Now, let’s move on to the murder attempt.

*I can feel myself burning. My skin grows weary, my soul threatening to break free. Of course, I keep things like this to myself. Nothing good comes from telling the truth.*

The interviews are all the same, like a neat stack of dominoes tipping over.

“Did you know her?”

“She was just another model from X District.”

*She was a model. Not the best, but not the worst. She had a real smile, something the company hated. That’s why she was placed in X District, the one furthest from the capital, where the ads were less than ideal, and the views were limited.*

“Did you have any idea that she may have wanted to…” The investigator clears his throat, takes a sip of water. “…attack the governor?”

“No.”

“Everything you have said is true?”

“It’s true.”

“…and you have nothing else to add?”

“No.”

*The truth is so simple, yet so difficult. So, when we can’t say it, we pack it into a little box. A two-lettered, barely audible, little box. Then we pray that the box burns.*

“Well, that was a drag.” Ametrine checks her phone, scrolling through dozens of voicemails, emails, until she finally snaps the device shut. She struts past the other models alongside Ferron. They do not say another word until they reach the shuttle. With a hum, they start their journey back to the company building. Ametrine glances back and forth between the window and Ferron for about half the trip, her polished nails clicking the glass at an allegro speed. She can play the piano if she really wants. She can’t.

*We pray the box burns, because otherwise we are left there in an eternal stare off, both of us burning but only one of us suffering.*

“Alright, Ferron out with it!” Ametrine finally gives up her one-sided war, turning her full attention to Ferron. Her hat fell from her face, revealing her head of red locks the company tried desperately to keep under control, her sharp hazel eyes like a wall of steel, emphasized by a deep rim of purple on one eye that peeked beneath a mountain of makeup, revealing no sense of feeling. Ferron knew better, though, and she knew it. He stares at her with a matching intensity that makes her falter. Her posture is slouched, her legs jutted to an angle to be more comfortable. No one can see them in the shuttle.

*Then, after the steel melts and curls, turning our bodies inside out, we finally open that terrifying little box.*

“The model has been taken care of. They won’t find anything on us.” Ferron says. His eyes are steady with a look that has been molded to perfection over the years. The only thing that gives him away is the trembling in his voice, playing like a harmony beneath the melody of his words. It is a sound only Ametrine can hear.

“I guess the company was right.” Ametrine turns back to the window, her fingers tapping away. One at a time. Now tap twice with each finger. She really can play the piano.

*The truth isn’t simple in a world where what is true is what is not. So, all we can do is stare at one another, my eyes glancing into hers. What’s true is what we believe, and so long as that stands, we can be safe. It’s true. It must be true.*

Their eyes stop making contact, as Ferron and Ametrine fall back into their perfect postures, their eyes glossing.

*Yet it’s not true.*

**Repetition**

**Jessica Blackmer**

***The last broadcast of Chelsea Kingston. The case has been classified as a moment of insanity. The recording has been filed into police files for the last twenty years.***

It’s true. Every last drop of it. It’s true sand burns your eyes, it’s true that the sky can turn blue behind that gray blanket of clouds. It's not true what they say, however, about me quitting. I'm back, folks, and today I will bring you the whole truth, and nothing but.

What do I mean? Well, I know a lot about this little old city we call home. I know the offices hidden behind their fancy bulletproof glass; I know the man struggling to make it to his rundown little apartment with groceries from that cute little farmer’s market in the west- have you seen that place? Cutest little slice of heaven, and their produce? TO DIE FOR- oh, poor wording. My bad to anyone offended. Unless it’s you, Kyle. You still owe me twenty bucks, you thief.

Did you know that the farmer’s market is more than meets the eye? It’s true. Sure, there are the gleaming ripe tomatoes, the watermelons that seem to swell with every hour, and then in that little slice of the slice, we find ourselves with a little market.

**Bang.**

Oh, my that struck a nerve. I’m afraid my producers don’t know what to do with themselves. How did you get in? How did you hijack the airwaves? So, so many questions, but I’m afraid I don’t have the time for those minor details. This is the big one, folks.

**Bang.**

Sorry, folks for the rude interruption! Some people have no manners. Now where was I…the sky? No… oh! The farmer’s market! You heard it here first, folks, but that little place in the corner, across the street from that bakery with the good loaves that don’t hurt your teeth-have you all been there? It’s heavenly. Oh, but not the time, because turn your head and you find yourself with a little back-alley trade. It’s the kind of place where no good goods get sold and secrets go to die. What secrets? Well, that’s why I’m here, folks! I told you before, I speak the truth.

**Bang. Bang!**

…Looks like they’ve lost their senses. I’m afraid this broadcast will be a lot shorter than I thought. Oh, and I have notecards and everything! Let me just- **The sound of rustling paper can be heard**- the alley, the school, the cemetery… Aha! Here it is! The main event.

**Bang, bang, bang!**

Oh, hush now, will you? Here it is folks! The secret you are dying to know! Ahem… what I am about to tell you is the complete truth, the whole truth. As true as flowers bloom in the spring and die in the winter. Maybe you won’t believe everything else I’ve told you, but believe this, because this may be the last broadcast I’ll ever do.

…

…I’m a witch. Ha! The pale looks on your faces must be priceless, I’m sure. Maybe you threw your hands in the air, maybe that poor little radio has been smashed to bits and you’re scrambling for why the station is still playing. Maybe you knew all along… I would have liked that. Maybe you would be smiling.

It’s as true as the air we breathe. Everything they have ever said is not true. I’m here to tell the truth. We are not a dangerous existence. We are the reason this city will thrive. I hear them, I see them, but I can’t touch them. You, dear folks at home, are the reason. Mark my words, there will come a day when the spirits return with a vengeance. I can only hope you stop turning your back on us before then. Let us see the light again, and maybe this city will have a chance to survive. I’ve seen them… and they…it’s not true…and-

**Boom.**

…This broadcast has been interrupted. Please stand by.