
THAT DAY

As she stared at the motionless body before her, Claire Ricrant took a seat. When she was younger her father had given her some advice that she now began turning over in her mind. "The worst feeling in the world," he had said, looking down at her through his glasses, "is when something you love lets you down. When it stops being what it was originally and becomes something you hate. The problem is that now you have a gaping hole where that thing used to be. You'll come realize that you have to let go of your beloved as you remember it so that you can deal with the malformed and twisted remains of what it has become." If Claire was the kind of person who prayed then she would pray for that not to be true.

There was something remarkable and almost funny about the events of that day. It was remarkable partially insofar that she'd managed to get herself thrown through a pane of glass and flatten two wooden trestles in the landing but mostly because that was not the worst part of her day. In hindsight she wouldn't even place it at second on the list but she was getting ahead of herself. She should go back to the beginning.

The day had started out normally enough for Claire. Her sibling had barged into her room and dragged her out of bed before going on an epically long rant during which Claire managed to take in the words 'noon', 'company' and 'dinner' through her hangover. Though that was all she needed to understand the situation. Nicole was always melodramatic when it came to other people visiting them so the lecture wasn't out of place. As her sibling left the room Claire heard her say the first truly valid thing of the day: "You smell like a dumpster. Take a shower."

After peeling her sibling's dress from her body and taking a shower, Claire scrounged herself up some toothpaste and a comb. At least she was hygienic now. Mom would be proud. She may have to burn the dress, though. Dad wouldn't be. To her great surprise Claire had actually managed to get some serious studying done for a few hours before their company turned up and with it, the end of her peace.

The thing to understand, Claire had mused as the doorbell rang, about Nicole's friends was that they were mostly hipster wannabe artists. Pretentious but harmless she thought. Okay, maybe that one was blatant but it was still true. She was required by familial law to love her sibling but not the idiots that her sibling associated with. She ditched her hoodie and slipped on a pair of socks before leaving her room.

"Claire, could you wait for a second" her sibling had said as she intercepted Claire enroute the door.

"I think your friends are here. You really have bad timing."

"30 seconds. I just wanted to talk about last night."

"What about it?" No really what about it? Claire couldn't remember a thing beyond 1:30 am.

"I'm worried about you. Taking last night into account, I think that the drinking and the partying is getting slightly out of hand." No wonder she sounded hesitant earlier.

"I'm fine" Claire had said.

"No you most certainly are not."

"Sibling, I know what I'm doing. I don't want or need you to keep lecturing me every ten seconds on how to live my life. "

"What do you want then?"

"To be left alone. To live my life without your pity talks."

"Last night you passed out and I had to fish you out of the bloody hell-hole that you buried yourself in."

Claire read her sister's face, trying to calculate the probability of a forced-calm lecture versus outright hysterics. "Do you really think that's fine?" her sibling had said, her rounded vowel echoing throughout the landing. Nicole was cursing. That meant she was plenty angry. Claire put the odds of more screaming at 2-1 and a forced-calm lecture at 1-2. If she played her cards right she actually could get her sibling to walk away in disgust but that reaction would be prove difficult to provoke and she didn't have the will or the heart to push Nicole that far. Not on this issue at least.

Claire was spared a response when the doorbell sounded again. She turned away from her sibling and went to answer it. "You can't keep this up, Clary. You can't keep running away. You are going to get hurt." Nicole had said, her eyes pleading with Claire to listen.

"Maybe not forever. But for now I can answer the door." Claire had said as her response before immediately regretting it. That had killed the argument as intended but she had also just been a massive asshole in the face of Nikki's concern. Claire thought she could hear a sob in the background. Okay now Dad would really disapprove. She composed herself and answered the door. "Can I help you?" she had ask before everything went black.

The first thing that came back to her, when she recounted her tale to the police, was the ceiling. The sight of the vertical lines running parallel to one another transfixed her gaze. She remembered thinking that their depth was changing as she scanned from one side of the room to the other. "Elevated" she said under her breath. The ceiling was elevated from right to left. If she drew a horizontal line from the one side then she'd get a quasi-triangle when she hit the other one. She didn't remember what broke her reverie but once she moved, the broken glass alerted her to the gravity of the situation.

The second thing Claire remembered was the pain. Once it hit her, it hit her like a train determined to split her head open. She could feel the blood oozing from the back of her skull, gluing her hair together in a God-awful, sticky amalgam of crimson and mahogany. Running a hand through her mane she felt the broken glass tricking out and onto the floor. The next thing that came back to her was what Claire defined as the second worst part of her day. She'd been handed an ass-kicking of note, winding up in the study of all places, and had had her sister thrown at her before they both went through a glass table. Once again the remarkability was found when the events were placed in context. As Claire regained her focus, she came to realize that she was the only one in the room.

If the eyes were the windows to the soul then Claire wondered what kind of abyss she'd be staring into when she found the bastard that had done this to them both. She wondered what the hell Nikki had ever done to deserve meeting that sad sack of humanity. Claire knew she was a bitch, but her sister wasn't. It made her angry just to think about. She sat up, trying not to pass out again, and made her way out of the room. She had to find her sister and make sure she was safe.

Claire remembered being both indignant and offended when she rounded the corner and saw him. She remembered thinking that the man was a caricature. A human grizzly bear, hyped up on something and tripping on something else. She had been about to raise her voice at him when her mind had snapped to attention and her fist unclenched. She knew this man. She didn't know how he had found her but Claire knew that she had met this man before. Where was he from? Was it Club 87 or maybe from Toxic? All she knew was that his being there could only be because of her and as such the consequences of his being there were laid squarely at her feet.

As Claire stared at the intruder in their house, she felt the weight of the world crashing down on her shoulders. She remembered that she had stared at him as she'd opened the door that evening. He'd clocked her straight after saying "Hello" but for those two seconds she'd been bemused. Who was she kidding? She hadn't been paying him any attention, she'd been too busy arguing with her sister. She'd absent mindedly given him half a chance through her negligence and now Nikki was paying for it. Claire's reaction to him at that moment was somewhere between horror and flat-out rage. When she saw what he had done to her sister, however, Claire truly lost it. She threw herself at him, hoping to take out an eye or something.

Claire remembered waking up for a second time to find Nikki strewn across the couch, an open gash on her head dripping blood into a puddle. The place was ransacked and the intruder long gone. That led her to the worst part, the fact that this was all her fault. The fact that her only sister lay beaten and bloodied because of some guy Claire had probably met when she was drunk. She sat up a second time and reached for a phone.

With respect to her father, the worst feeling in the world was the realization that Claire had truly failed someone she loved. She realized that now there was a hole where Nikki's trust and faith in her used to be. Ultimately, she had to accept that there is nothing in the world that she could do to change what she had done.

Looking up at the clock on the hospital wall, Claire saw the minute hand crawl past twelve. "Thank you" she said out loud before taking her sister's hand and preparing for the rest of the night. She didn't know what her sister would say when she woke but Claire just gripped Nikki's hand tighter and hoped that there would be at least one opportunity to say she was sorry and tell Nicole that she loved her.

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