

NOTHING GOOD HAPPENS AFTER 2AM

It was only from the position of lying face-down in an alleyway next to my passed out, reprobate of a sister while alcohol and leftover flecks of glass began seeping their way through my hair, scalp and finally into my brain, that I was able to learn a hard lesson: nothing good happens after 2AM. Ever.

It was with a certain apprehension that I walked through the hallway towards my intended destination. The corridor cloaked in blackness, I had but the distant illumination of a dull blue light to guide me. Marching forward with naught but the click-clack of my footsteps creaking against the wooden floor as evidence of my existence, I found myself reaching for the sapphire gem around my neck. No, it was my neck itself, a knot in my throat, a pebble lodged in deeply in my oesophagus. This, the indicator of my trepidation, at what I somehow knew had been a mistake. My shining light grew brighter as my heels found a new surface to abuse. Walking onwards I could feel the stone growing in mass, an increasingly heavy burden to carry, yet still I continued on. I walked until I approached the source of the light and saw a man standing next to it. His shadowy brown eyes followed me in the darkness, betraying no emotion as they did.

I moved to speak but not a sound would escape, all blocked by the ever increasing rock I carried. I swallowed and it dropped. Through my throat it dropped. Through my body it dropped. Into the ground below it dropped. It struck with the force of an earthquake, shattering the very foundations of the world, breaking the fibre of reality. I cast one last glance at him before it was all ripped apart.

Lifting my eyes came with an ease akin to that of moving mountains. Instinctively my hands went searching for my phone, whose 4-inch LED display, my peripheral vision told me, was ablaze with activity, bathing my bedroom with its malicious white light. My fingers worked automatically as my eyes lazily dragged themselves to view the message.

The ground seemed to shudder as I forced my body onwards. One foot attacked the tarred surface while the other swiftly following suit, before the first got it chance to work again. My body sped through the streets towards my goal, the message burned into mind, an image of an atrocity waiting to happen. I would get there and I would save her. I just had to.

The flecks of broken glass trickled out of my hair, rattling on the ground as I ran my hand over the wound. Leaning against my incapacitated sister, the world around me began to gain enough stability for eyes to focus on the object moving directly towards us. He had crept from the shadows like an agent of darkness, consuming light as he went along, blocking out the illumination from the nearby street lamps as he inched closer to our position. Staring into the windows to his soul I could see nothing, read nothing but still I knew that men like him were to be avoided. Hell, this situation was to be avoided yet here I was.

The image I had me sprinting to Claire's aid had been of my darling drunkard sister passed out and posed with two shirtless men. However, the part that had me crashing through the doors of the bar was the caption that read 'Soon.'

His feet made no noise as he crept closer, coming to a stop mere inches from my face. His eyes were cold and his nose crooked, a scruffy beard emerging around his face.

"A word of advice, miss ..." he spoke for the first time, though my mind took a while to understand what wanted "Ricrant" I answered. "Ms. Ricrant, just call your sister's phone or call her friends and let them make sure she gets home, it's not like any of the men inside swing that way anyhow. Don't come into my bar and start a fight over some stupid picture a bunch of idiots sent you." At that the man took my purse and walked away but not before turning to say "And don't let me catch either one of you back here again."

Had I stopped to consider that I knew both men in the photograph and I knew where Claire had gone to out with them I may have tread with more caution and not started a fight with them. Had I simply called Claire or both of the men to ask what was going on or had I taken the time to wait then I also would have gotten the next message declaring the entire thing a joke. I also probably wouldn't be lying on the ground picking beer bottle fragments out of my hair. "Nothing good happens after 2AM" I said to myself as I picked up my sister's cellphone and called us both a cab.

Paul Cupido