

Aussie Happy Hour!

Smells like rotting seaweed but sweet and tart in my throat. Glad I never lived here I mean it's hard enough to survive a conversation with someone I don't know let alone anyone who's got my whole life history on the tip of their broca's area. Deep breath and walk into the shop my god I know this girl remember her face half-blurred in warm brown spirits exquisite in the sweet fugue of memory features all sharp and angry and ugly now but I remember wanting her what did I do? did she see me then the staggering curse the stinking shouting senseless non-man does she remember because I do not I do not.

Too late to walk out now she's seen me pretend I'm looking at something and and and walk right into the porn magazines mind seething in suggestion but turn around right quick before I follow that path.

Buy my cigarettes without looking at her of course I have to can't help it eyes hurt must be spidered slippery with red veins flicker to her and see myself reflected in her eyes.

Contempt so huge it's making her head bulge.

Get out fast blood draining from my face forgot my change she calls out and I have to go back (go back! Go back!) I think she sees the broken capillaries and swell of cheek hair sticking out in tufts and then I'm through the door.

Hot concrete under my feet chewing gum cigarette butts smells like gum trees and gravel. Slide down the brick wall scraping my back hard to get the cigarettes out in the morning. Tastes like burned rubber but I need it that's for sure hacking for a little while and slide into the pain of every poisoned, swollen nerve.

Sitting there with my head in my hands have to just now can't hold it up. Looking through my eyelids red like the rest of the colours inside my heart booming at odd intervals and making me flinch feel the blood surge, fall, wait. Surge, fall, wait wait wait surge.

You can take your hands away from your face you can you can. But it's okay faded back into my body a dry leaf into water and I sit and actually do take my hands away from my face.

Getting up never surprises me any more I'm used to how this meat functions now and I'm off hiding deeply behind hair and sunglasses hunched and hunched into my shirt like an old man gotta get myself together for once so hungry I can feel my ribs through my shirt, through my skin. Each one stands defined, outlined in tight thin flesh.

Seems so long but I know that its not hate walking four letter word walk goddamned feet hurt but no more than the rest of me.

Home and walking up the driveway fast feet focused so hard have to slow down heart playing up again boom and twist inside my chest like a truck backfiring but fleshy and thick.

Paranoid freak-girl locked it gotta get the keys out not so hard now that my jeans are only held up by my belt. Feel it hard against my hips fish them out they are hot from being pressed against my skin; heated alcohol fever must be burning so much energy no idea where it's coming from.

Can't be much left.

Through the door and cool darkness.

The sourness of spilled vodka on filthy carpet lurches under my lips and a slippery finger of the stench strokes and croons to the back of my throat and suddenly I puke into my mouth.

Grimace and sneer and swallow it hard. Twitch hits me and my whole body jerks.

Revelation fires my desire like a kick in the face and I freeze. Oh god oh oh oh it's true there's still some left there's still some there is, there is! There is still some left.

Think yeah pretty sure I passed out before I could get my fast little hands to the back of the freezer and lock them around the exquisite perfection of the vodka bottle wedged into the dirty ice at the back. I stare at the fridge hungrily, soggy empty beer carton crushed against the it guitar pick stuck in the top like a feather.

NOT that way not yet though the sensation of want floods me to the tendons. I will not not in the morning never in the morning that way lies blood and blood and sirens and hospitals and the sheer cold clarity of self-hate.

But craving takes over and turns my hands into claws and my head into a God-damned funnel.

I have to hang over the sink fingers doing that compulsive dance twitch lurches across my face like a wire hook.

Through it and upright wiping that sweet sweaty face glazed inward and I walk past the fridge like I'm not being stalked by something cold and perfect inside and out. Pulls at me like I'm a puppet yank go the strings and I twitch again and almost cave almost allllllmmoosttt –

Force each trembling foot forward and hit the stairs as desire retreats though my mouth still waters so that I'm actually drooling.

And this is the time huh? Morning, is it?

Smell something apart from breath and yank my pants up.

Push the door open and there she is, curled up and stinking just like me ribs hitching in shudders and I always check to see that there's still heat and breath in those lips when sleep or unconsciousness takes the pretence away for a while. Sure I know they're cracked and she moves and wasn't sleeping anyway.

"Hi honey I am home."

I sit without staggering and she grimaces and pushes the hair from her face. My mouth works as I try and speak and then I remember how vaguely, so:

"I have cigarettes. I have nausea. I have disquiet."

The room is so unreal it's got sunlight pouring in all over the clothes on the floor. There's broken glass in the bed.

It is glittering. Stuff still glitters.

"Mmm." She pulls one from the proffered pack like it's a small dangerous animal and I thank Christ one more time that I am not alone in this but have abject company in my abject immolation.

Her face is swollen just like mine and I can see the bloody marks on her arms where she scratches her skin in her sleep. They match the scars, offset the sheets.

"I have," she lights the smoke with a match that sputters sulphur (such appropriation) "no sympathy." Retching, she coughs. Her fingers turn white on the grey-yellow bed-sheets as her pale breasts shake. The stuff that makes the scaly cracked scratches on her arms split has covered her nipples and they look... they look... she is too young to look like the moving walking lying sickness that she is.

She takes another drag.

Her nipples... They look. Chewed.

I can hear kids playing outside. Kids. Playing.

Smoke trickles out of her nose. "You passed out on the floor last night with your arm in the spilled puddle of wine. You still had your drink in your hand. But it's ok. I rescued it." She hacks out a cough and I realise that the shakes have started again for the day and my upper lip is twitching twitch twitch so helpless can't even control my own movements so what Paul so what.

She sits up and I can see the faintness wash through her and hurt her and her cigarette extrapolates the tremors that have her the delirium tremens.

"David turned up last night. He told me you had called my Mum and told her she was a whore. Did you do that Paul?"

She looks at me for a second with her big dark once perfect eyes rimmed in red puffed and poisoned like me with me like me. Cutting arc of guilt whips into my heart did I did I? as the marionette in blackout; the betrayer the monster the liar the drunk?

“Maybe.”

She was a nice lady she was nice she hated me now but when we moved in when it started she did the washing for us one time I think the puke on Sarah’s sleeve or maybe the cum stains she didn’t offer again nice lady perm and a four wheel drive and ironed sleeves and nice shoes.

“I don’t know.”

“When was the last time we had sex? The last time you could? You don’t know that either huh? Do you?” She says the words in a monotone scraping, no acrimony it is everywhere for us anyway.

“I had sex with David on the couch. At one point I looked down and he had his foot on you. I screamed like a banshee when I came.

“You didn’t wake up.”

She takes another drag and holds out the cigarette.

I reach and take and breathe it in and I am not here I am not.

I put it out on my cheek. Slowly.

It hurts.

“Yeah.” She says, and she is crying. “Yeah, Paul. That’s great.”

She puts her hand on mine.

“You stupid, stupid man... you stupid... you broken...”

She takes something like a breath.

“You cripple.”

She cups my chin. She is crying. She is crying.