GRIT AND GRIME

A creative memoir by

Brianna Autin

If you need this book,
it is for you . . .

but you might want to pour a glass of bourbon.

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The House of Curtains and Slot Machines

You're at your great grandmother's house.
You're lucky to still have two of those.

Your mom dropped you off here.
She told *no one* when she would return.

Have the time of your life.

Dance with your great grandfather in the living room.

Practice your routine for when he takes you to try out for American Idol

someday when you finally hit 18.

Lord knows you need the practice . . .

Put on your aunt's old *ballerina costume.*

Run around the house playing ***pretend.***

Collect all the spare change you can find in the house.

Check:

The Cushions

Under the Bed

The Entryway Table

Granpas Pants Pockets

The Junk Drawer

TRY YOUR LUCK.

Play the penny and quarter machines your grandparents keep in the *side* room that holds *mostly* casino gifts that they **collected** from their many years of ***loyalty.***

Days go by.

Days.

And Days. . .

AND DAYS. . .

GO BY . . .

MOTHER IS CALLING.

She's on the way . . .

TIRES ON THE DRIVEWAY.

You fear what you might be going home to this time . . .

A game of hide and seek should delay things. . .

If she can't find you, maybe you ***CAN'T*** leave.

RUN

HI DE.

Hide behind the ***long green curtains.***

Grandma has had them since the 1960s.

NEVER FORGET the embroidered pattern.

It resembles flowers but isn't.

NEVER FORGET

the grimy layer of dust

hidden on the back side.

There's a knock on the door.

KNOCK. KNOCK
KNOCK. K N
O C K. KNO
CK. ***KNOCK***
KNOCK! K N O
C K K N O C K.

K N O C K .

It must be ***HER.***

She comes inside and pretends she doesn't immediately see your *tiny* little feet at the bottom of the curtain.

She doesn't know where you could *possibly* be hiding.

She takes long enough that you think

you might actually be winning.

THE CURTAIN FLIES OPEN.

You've been discovered . . .

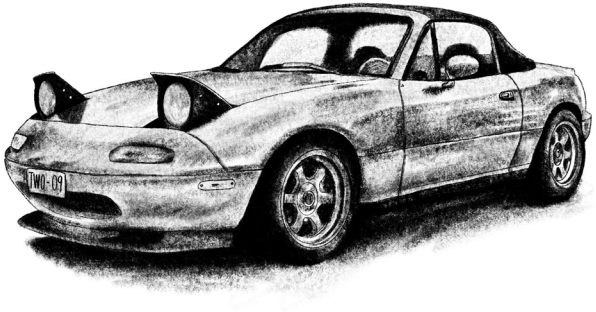
Everyone pretends it's a *silly little game.*

Don't let anyone know you're upset . . .

It might stir up more trouble.

You'll just have to try again next time . . .

The House of Magic Crochet Chains and the Bright Blue Miata



Your grandmother, her husband,
your great grandmother,
and your aunt
all live in a house together off Highway 20.

You go to visit them often.

Your great grandmother wakes you up.

She's already made a full-on gourmet breakfast buffet.

Eggs.

Grits.

Toast.

Orange Juice.

Strawberries in sugar.

Oatmeal.

Milk.

Cantaloupe.

Bacon.

Sausage.

She puts on Mickey Mouse Clubhouse every morning.

You're probably too old for that now.

You watch her crochet.

SORCERY.

You **NEED** to learn this magic.

Ask her to teach you the way.

You must **first** learn the **fundamentals** of crochet.

You **cannot** attempt an actual project until you **master** them.

Magic knot.

Chain.

Single crochet.

Double crochet.

Granny square.

YOU MUST START WITH THE CHAIN.

I'll do the magic knot for you, then you can start the chain.

You must dedicate hours to crocheting the
longest chain humanly possible.

This will prove you are ready to **go further**.
This will prove you are **dedicated**.
This will prove it to you.

Go deeper.

Go further.

Learn more.

Nope.

You just have to keep making chains.

Lessons will never go beyond piles of crochet chains.

Guess you'll just have to teach yourself one day—

if you even care.

Grandma's husband is a pretty cool guy.

Cigars.

Penny Loafers.

Cargo Shorts.

Ray-ban Sunglasses.

Facial Hair From the Gods™.

The garage stores his prized possessions—

a bright blue drop top Miata with the pop up lights and his mini bar.

Sometimes he takes you on *long* drives *down the bayou* to buy **wood tip cigars**.

Let the **top down** and feel the wind *blow* in your hair.

You're free here.

His little white whips of hair look magical in the wind.

Sometimes while the car sits in the garage you pretend to drive it.

Fantasize about the day it might be yours.

To be ***freed*** by the *wind* in **your hair.**

Hang a white crayon cigarette out of your mouth.

Pop up those lights.

GRIP THE WHEEL.

He promises you *maybe* one day it'll be yours.

M A Y B E when you go off to college.

He gets cancer again.

Nobody tells you . . .

He dies.

Seven days.

No one tells you for a week . . .

168 hours.

10,080 minutes.

TEN

THOUSAND.

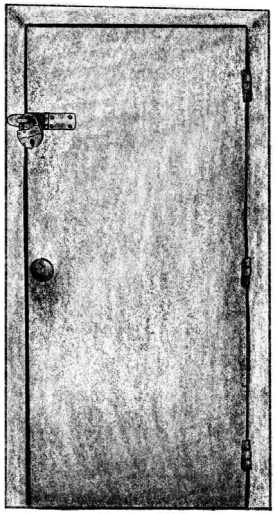
You never get the car.

Your grandma's new boyfriend moves in.

He cuts the grass in your grandpa's clothes.

She sells the car and moves to Texas.

The House of Iron Doors, Burnt Light Bulbs, and Bloody Noses



You constantly get these crazy nose bleeds.

It's getting pretty annoying.

TIME TO GET UP FOR SCHOOL.

Mother helps you get dressed.

Blood begins to leak out of your nose.

Just a drop.

Then a steady stream.

BLOOD ALL OVER YOUR LAST CLEAN SCHOOL UNIFORM.

ok.

THAT'S ENOUGH.

You stay home from school because there isn't enough time to wash the uniforms.

Don't know the cause until years later.

God damn dry blood vessels.

You have your first encounter with a sex toy
while you help your mother make her bed.

Its purple and sparkly.

GO WASH

YOUR HANDS.

You **find** a light bulb playing in the hallway.

It's burnt funny.

You **find** your love for bath time.

It's a sacred place.

You can play out all your *deepest* ***darkest*** fantasies while mother leaves you alone here.

The headlines read:

MOM BARBIE JUMPS IN AFTER DAUGHTER BARBIE WHO COMMITS SUICIDE BY JUMPING MILES DOWN INTO THE WATER BELOW FROM THE SOAP DISH.

THERE ARE NO SURVIVORS.

Double tragedy.

Double homicide.

You don't realize until much later that this *house*

is actually the *house* of lies

and

those light bulbs were actually used for drugs.

Four years go by. . .

Maybe five. . .

Now you live with your grandmother in a trailer next door to what was your childhood home.

The first one you remember at least.

They always tell you that you are strictly forbidden from going into the house next door and you can only enter the garage below with very specific permission.

Her husband lives there too.

He likes to yell at you about not eating the meat he serves in every meal.

How dare you insist on eating a meal that consists of just vegetables.

You think about that house a lot.

You don't have a bedroom.

There's a spare but you aren't allowed to use it.

So you just sleep on the couch.

You wonder why you're not allowed inside.

Sometimes he yells at you for things while you lay ready for bed.

Sometimes he spits in your face when he yells.

He likes to yell.

Don't worry, it's only temporary.

Mom just has some things to do.

getting off drugs...

The garage below is closed away behind an iron door.

Held by a heavy padlock.

Seems dramatic . . .

You have some friends from the neighborhood over for the day.

Everyone is *playing* outside.

DOGS BARKING.
BASKETBALL DRIBBLING.
BIRDS CHIRPING.
TRAIN WHISTLES BLARING.
CHILDREN YELLING.
CARS RACING.

Your grandmother's husband gives you permission to play pool in the ***secret garage.***

Unlock the ***HEAVY*** iron padlock.

Push the crypt door ***o p e n .***

You start up a game with one of the neighborhood boys.

What's his name?

Something with an I?

Ivan

Issac

Isiah?

Or was it an L?

Lamar?

Logan?

Honestly, it doesn't matter . . .

You don't really know how to play pool.

What 10 year old knows how to play pool?

He says your ass looks ***G R E A T*** in those jeans.

But you want to look cool, right?

You lean over the table to take your shot.

YOU LAUGH.

HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA H A HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA H
A **HA HA HA HA**
HA HA HA HA HA H
A HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA **HA HA HA**
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA H A HA HA
HA H A HA HA HA
HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA ***HA.***

There is no way he could be serious.

Straight as a stick and as skinny as a skeleton.

That's what your family always tells you.

Things escalate.

COME OVER HERE.

I'll show you mine if you show me yours.

He pulls his pants down first.

No time to reply.

He quickly pulls down yours.

Who knows what happens next?

You choose to forget.

RUN.

OUT OF THE GARAGE.

STRAIGHT INTO THE TRAILER.

LOCK THE DOOR.

You will tell no one what happened to you here today.

Not for a long time.

The House of Rice and Flies

You are 12 years old.

Just hanging out in your bedroom that you insisted your mother paint lime green.

Mother yells for you from across the house.

Yell back in reply.

Mother is livid.

DON'T YELL IN ***HER*** HOUSE.

Only ***SHE*** can do that here.

YOU MUST BE PUNISHED.

Get the seafood tray.

Lay it in the middle of the kitchen floor.

Fill it with dry rice.

KNEEL YOU

LITTLE BITCH.

Mother sets a timer on the oven for 1 hour.

Mother walks away.

Hide your tears until she's gone.

They can come pouring down once she rounds the corner.

Your brother's dad kneels in front of you.

He shows his **condolences**.
He *doesn't agree* with her **decision**.
He *doesn't agree* with ***her*** **violence**.

Ironic.

He beat her in a closet while you were at your grandmother's house.

She was unconscious.

She woke up to him dragging her by her hair across
the floor.

You don't know until years later.

You think he's the only positive father figure you've ever had.

Ironic.

You will go on to have scars in the

shape of ***grains of rice*** in your **knees**

for the next ***SIX*** years of your life.

This house was built on top of an
improperly closed sewage drain.

This house becomes infected with maggots and flies.

It's as if the house itself

is infected with a disease of evil doing.

Sit in front of those French doors that lead to the patio
and make a game out of killing flies in midair

with your bare hands.

You find strange pleasure in your ability to actually catch them.

THEY

DART

ALL

AROUND

THE

WINDOW.

You lose yourself there for hours.

The House of Sexual Mischief, Screams, Hand Shaped Bruises, and Pure Uncontrollable Guilt

So, you are dating this guy.

You're like 13.

He's closer to 16.

He cuts himself,

so you start doing it too.

Maybe it will help with the crippling weight of your childhood.

One night you're upset for one reason or another.

You slice your arm open.

Lightly.

But a bunch of times.

Honestly, you're scared of the pain.

You're such a pussy.

Why can't you just commit like he can?

Mom storms in.

Furious.

Says you might have given yourself tetanus.

Cool . . .

You to go to the emergency room.

This is a trap.

ARE YOUR THOUGHTS SUICIDAL? *DO YOU WANT TO KILL YOURSELF? WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO YOURSELF?* ON A SCALE OF 1-10 HOW DEPRESSED DO YOU FEEL? *DO YOU UNDERSTAND DEPRESSION?* HOW MANY DAYS A WEEK DO YOU FEEL UNHAPPY? DO YOU THINK OF HARMING YOURSELF OFTEN? WHAT SORT OF TOOL DID YOU USE? HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK OF HARMING YOURSELF? *DON'T YOU CARE HOW THIS WILL UPSET YOUR FAMILY?* HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR FUTURE? ARE YOU HAVING THOUGHTS ABOUT HARMING OTHER PEOPLE? *HOW WOULD YOU DO IT IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO IT?* WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD A TETANUS SHOT?

Somehow you get the feeling there ***definitely*** is a ***right and wrong*** answer to this line of questioning.

You lie.

Say whatever you have to.

Just want it to be over.

You do get a shot though.

Mom decides dating this older guy might not
be such a good idea anymore.

Takes your phone.

You don't think you did anything wrong.

FOR FUCK SAKE.

WHATEVER.

TWO WEEKS GO BY . . .

Mom needs a night out.

She calls your aunt.

PARRR--TAYY IN NEW ORLEANS.

Your aunt arrives with your cousin so you're not alone for the night.

Both of you are old enough to not need a babysitter,
but Mom asks one of her work friends
to stay on the couch.

A free babysitter.

She gives you back your phone for the night.

It's for you and your cousin to do another one of those
weirdly sexualized photo shoots you do together.

And *JUST IN CASE* you need her.

Dress your cousin in your most "adult" dress and heels.

You have no business owning that shit.

Who even bought that?

You take some of the weirdest photos of your life
—posing her with a traffic light.

She looks like a pin up doll.

If pin up dolls were children.

You figure it's harmless to send him one last message.

"I'm sorry we can't talk anymore. I miss you. I love you."

Send.

You wake up at 3 or 4 in the morning next to your cousin.

MOTHER quietly *but*

violently

R I P S

you

out

of

the

bed.

Your cousin doesn't wake up.
She doesn't notice.

M O T H E R drags you by the arm

into *her* bedroom and tosses you to the ground.

GET ON YOUR KNEES.

TAKE OUT YOUR PIERCINGS.

YOU CAN'T SAY A SINGLE WORD.

DOWN TO THE **GROUND**

AND

OVER ***MOTHER'S*** LAP.

MOTHER **spanks** you.
Relentlessly.

With her *BARE* hand.

Each blow harder than the last.

She's built up momentum . . .

SCREAM FOR HELP!!!!!!

She holds you down . . .

CAN'T GET AWAY.

NO ONE DOES.

Your cousin never hears your ***S C R E A M S.***

Or so you think . . .

Your "so called" babysitter woke up to your **p l e a d i n g.**

Called her boyfriend to pick her up.

Snuck out into the night.

Not a single word of what happened to you.

NO ONE EVER SAVES YOU.

THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT.

All *because*
YOU PRESSED SEND.

Mom forces you to spend the rest of the night

sleeping next to her in bed.

You wake sounds of her **aggressively** *s h u f f l i n g* things

around the room.

YOU SLEPT TOO LATE.

GET YOUR LAZY ASS UP.

WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU?

Try to *c r a w l* out of the bed.

You're body is in so much *p a i n*.

Go to the bathroom.
Witness the evidence of the night before.

Your entire ass covered in *b r u i s e s* in the shape of

M O T H E R ' S

left hand.

Purple, *yellow,* and *blue* prints of her ***fingers***

on your ***cheeks.***

When a man bruises your ass in bed you think you deserve it now.

Somehow convinced yourself it feels good.

Today you're up to no good.

You've got this boyfriend.

He's a bit **old** for you.

Thats a trend.

Mom allows it.

Just 14 vs almost 18.

Mom is at work.

They keep upping the rent.

He asks if he can come over.

No one has to know.

Oh shit.

Is it time?

He lives close by.

Walk on over.

Try to *c r a w l* out of the bed.

You're body is in so much *p a i n*.

Go to the bathroom.
Witness the evidence of the night before.

Your entire ass covered in *b r u i s e s* in the shape of

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Is it time?

Mom allows it.

Just 14 vs almost 18.

Mom is at work.

They keep upping the rent.

He asks if he can come over.

No one has to know.

Oh shit.

He lives close by.

Walk on over.

He's barely in the door before you're locking him in.

Door knob.

Dead bolt.

CHAIN.

Are we locking someone in or someone out?

Oh wait. . .

Kissing.

More than kissing?

TOUCHING.

He pushes your head down.

Hair.

So much hair?

Whatever.

Get to work.

Don't be such a prude.

You knew the day would come some day.

Don't be so scared to touch him.

Give it your best big girl try.

It'll be good enough.

Too good?

What does he want now?

Wasn't that enough?

Never.

Lets shower.

Oh. . .

Kissing.

Humans shower together, right?

Okay. . .

Kissing.

MORE KISSING.

CAN WE STOP FUCK-ING KISS-ING?

Sure.

Lets go to the bed.

God damn it.

More surprises.

Too bad you haven't

learned how to say no yet.

Weren't you expecting this?

What?

SEX.

You don't want to.

TOO BAD.

HE'S BIG.

YOU'RE so *SMALL*.

DON'T PISS HIM OFF.

PLAY IT COOL.

I SAID *COOL* DAMN IT.

Go all the way.

A week goes by.

Thinking.

Keep thinking.

Another week.

K
E
E
P
T
H
I
N
K
I
N
G
Y
O
U
S
I
L
L
Y
G
O
O
S
E
.

You feel so much

guilt.

Try to tell him.

Maybe he'll understand.

Maybe he regrets it too.

You're being so childish.
Its not even a big deal.
Everyone does it.

Tell him you wish you waited.

Why?
What does it matter?
You're being over dramatic.
You always do this.

He wants to come over again.

Okay. . .

You love him.

MORE SEX.

Oh,

you're almost at the

C L I M A X.

RING RING RING
RING RING RING
RING RING RING
RING RING RING
RING RING RING
RING RING RING
R I N G RING
RI N G R ING RING
RI NG RING RING
RING RING
RING RING R I
NG RING
RING RING
RING Ring RING
RING RING
R I N G RING
RING RING
RING RING
RING RING
RING
RING RING.
RING

FUCK.

You laugh.

Don’t answer it.

Let yourself finish.

Have you finished yet?

BANG BANG BANG BANG
BANG BANG BANG BANG
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BANG BANG BANG BANG

Thank god you locked the chain.

MOM IS POUNDING ON THE DOOR.

Throw on your clothes.

He doesn't have time.

Out the window.

No pants.

RUN TO THE FRONT DOOR.

She's not there.

She caught him 'round back climbing out the window.

MAJOR HELL IS RAISED.

MAJOR.

YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELL-
ING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING.
YELLING YELLING
YELLING YELLING YELL-
ING YELLING YELLING
YELLING YELLING YELL-
ING YELLING YELLING
YELLING YELLING YELL-
ING YELLING YELLING
YELLING YELLING YELL-
ING YELLING Y E L L I N G

YELL.

SO MUCH YELLING.

Drop him off at home.

She yells at *you.*

She yells at *him.*

She yells at *his mom.*

She says you should keep your legs shut.

She should keep her mouth shut.

You ride home.

In silence.

Guess she does know how to be quiet.

Her rage is *silent*
but **mighty**.

You don't know how to tell her he's manipulative.

You don't know he is manipulative.

You don't know how to tell her he emotionally abuses you.

You don't know he emotionally abuses you.

If you did you would notice mom does it too.

You don't know how to tell her it wasn't what you wanted.

So you don't.

Mom says it's time to move.

Too close to your stupid boyfriend.

Way too expensive.

If you think this will be a bright, fresh new start, go to page 230.

If you think this must ultimately lead to disaster, go to page 233.

The House of Delusions

If you thought this would end anywhere but a major catastrophe, you are poorly mistaken and may be slightly out of your mind.

Get your head out of the clouds.

STOP BEING DELUSIONAL.

The House of DIRTY Looks, Dirty Names, and PSYCHOLOGICAL SHAME

You get moved into the new place.

Its a shotgun house.

This bedroom is way cooler.

Retro wood paneling—but you can cover it.

Mom still basically hates you.

*You're gonna have to go to the **gynecologist**.*

*You need to be **STD tested** since you wanted to be **such a little** **WHORE.***

MORE SCREAMING.

You sit in the rocking chair.

MORE SCREAMING.

**SHE'S COMING AT YOU.
SHE WRAPS HER HANDS
AROUND YOUR THROAT.**

SQUE EZEE.....

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SUCH A

WHORE?

LIFT YOUR LEGS.

KICK.

HARD.

MOM

DOWN

GRASP FOR *AIR.*

She pulls you out of the chair by your feet.

WRESTLE.

WRESTLE FOR YOUR MOTHER FUCKING LIFE.

Oh wait. . .

She's crying?

She's sobbing.

She sits on the floor with her back against the wall.

SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB SOB

FUCKING SOBBING.

HORRIFYING.

CAN WE BE

DONE NOW?

Yes. . .

but just 'till tomorrow.

HIDE.
CRY.

SLEEP.

FUCK.

IT'S

MORNING.

There are bruises on your neck.

Surely you can't go to the doctor like this.

She puts make up on your neck.

It's the wrong tone.

Surely someone will ***notice****.*

Someone will ***care****.*

Someone will ***ask****.*

sorry,

no.

Another Silent Car Ride.

So anxious.

No one at this office will ask you if you are okay.

No one will say anything about your incorrect shade of neck foundation.

or the black and blue it failed to properly cover.

They all stare at you.

Judgmental eyes.

Crossed Arms.

The building *reeks* of

Shame.

HOWFUCKINGSTU-
PID ARE YOU?DON'T
YOU KNOW YOU'RE
SUPPOSED TO USE
A CONDOM?YOU
MUST BE A SLUT TO
HAVE SEX AT FOUR-
TEEN. HOW COULD
YOU? FUCKING DIS-
GUISTING. DO YOU
EVEN KNOW HOW
MANY GIRLS HE'S
SLEPT WITH? GUYS?
NO, YOU DON'T
KNOW. YOU DON'T
KNOW. SHIT, YOU
COULD HAVE AIDS.
YOU COULD BE PRE-
GANT. PREGNANCY
COULD KILL YOU,
YOU KNOW. DON'T
YOU UNDERSTAND?
WHATALITTLE SHIT.

Sheeeessshhhh . . .

Who knows when you'll unpack that.

A decade later and you still don't feel safe at the doctor's.

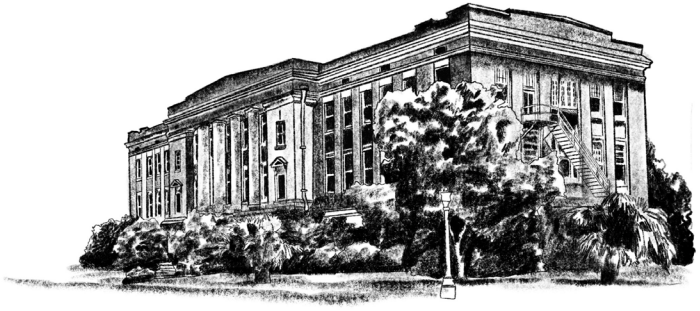
Anxiety.

In every office.

You'll find better doctors.

Mom will say she doesn't remember.

The House of High School Crushes, Over Filled Bathtubs, Fishbowl Cocktails and (Un)fulfilled Dreams



You wake up in green silk sheets with a fluffy white blanket made by some expensive company your boyfriend likes because he thinks it will impress people.

He's getting dressed for work in the closet light while you lay in bed watching.

You don't have a job, so why get up early, right?

It's just easier to wait until he leaves to start functioning.

All of your friends and family hate him,
but you can't seem to see why.

He loves to remind you about your
lack of consistency in work.

Always boasting about his job waiting tables at
the most prestigious steakhouse in town.

He ***never once*** brought
you **there**.

You wake up in those green silk sheets again.

Fuck.

Feel something wet between your knees?

B L O O D all over his fancy white blanket.

You told him that might be a problem . . .

He insisted.

IT HAS TO BE *WHITE*.

He immediately returns it to whatever capitalistic nightmare of a store he bought it from.

Guess he can't stand to wash it . . .

Could* BARELY *even
TOUCH IT.

You feel like a ***burden.***

You are a burden.

A DISGUSTING BURDEN.

It hurts,

but you swallow it.

You always do.

You won't let him see you cry this time.

You casually admit to him that you have a crush on this girl.

Met her in high school—

He knows you're bisexual, right?

It's just a crush.
She never even knew your name.

What a crazy coincidence?

She's your new neighbor?

Just moved into the apartment upstairs.

You come home from work.

She is sitting on the steps outside of your place.

Dropped on your doorstep

like the legend of storks

dropping of ***long-awaited*** babies.

TALK TO HER.

Every chaotic love story has to start somewhere, right?

OH WOW!

It's **YOU!**

It's been so long!

She has absolutely no idea who you are.

OUCH.

Embarrassing . . .

It takes a while, but **eventually** you become friends.

You're **always** anxious around her *(of course)*.

She has **no idea** you've had a crush

on her this **whole time.**

She didn't even know you existed before that day on the stoop.

Hell, ***you*** *didn't even know until you saw* ***her*** *again.*

You stood up for her in high school
when your boyfriend made fun of her for being ***emo.***

What an attention whore.

Maybe she just likes those clothes?

She never knew that either.

Months later you go out to a bar with your boyfriend.

He's a little *t o o o o o o o* eager about your little crush.

She *just so happens* to be **there**.

You sit across from her in the booth.

She's sitting next to some guy.
She *swears* she is ***NOT*** on a date with him.

Boyfriend goes to the bar.

She makes you nervous.
You don't say much.

*Pretty awkward with this ***NOT*** date around...*

You need to **collect your thoughts.**

Go to the bathroom.

And *for the love of God,*

GET IT TOGETHER.

While you're there, ***he*** has a *private conversation* with ***her.***

PLANS ARE MADE.
YOU WON'T FIND OUT UNTIL LATER.

She sends her ***not*** date home.

She rides home with ***you.***

Makes sense.

You're neighbors after all.

Three bodies pile into a bedroom
with a bottle of red wine.

A few glasses
after a few glasses,
she's rolling around on the floor.

Yelling** for **you.

Oh,

FUCK.

She pulls you in for a ***kiss***.

He ***watches.***

Is this really happening?

It is.

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE OKAY?
CAN YOU HANDLE WATCHING THEM FUCK EACH OTHER?
OR ARE YOU A LITTLE BITCH?

IT DOES.

YES.
NO.
YES.

You panic.

You escape.

They keep going.

You smoke a cigarette.

You cry.

You smoke another cigarette.

What's that sound?

Someone's ***coming.***

It's ***him.***

Why don't you **just** *come back to bed?*

Why are **you** upset?

Isn't this what **YOU** wanted.

Cave into his luring words.

Go inside.

Hands are everywhere.

You want them nowhere.

You don't know how to ask them to leave.

Just lay **sandwiched** between the *two of them,*
v i o l a t e d and **trapped.**

CAN'T MOVE…

Silently cry yourself to sleep.

Two years later you'll have recurring dreams about him.
You won't be able to move.
Two more before you realize why.

Its morning.
He leaves for work.

She lies naked with you for hours.

You're vulnerable with each other.

You admit your crush.

She admits hers.

She tells you the secret conversation from the night before.

Remember when you went to the bathroom?

He asked ***her*** to have a threesome with you ***both.***

You didn't know that was on the agenda.
He never asked you.

NO ONE EVER ASKED YOU.

NO ONE FUCKING

CARED TO ASK.

They decided how the night would end.

THEY convinced you it all happened *naturally* . . .

You **NEVER** want to do that again.

They say they ***understand***.

You stop hanging out with her for a while.

It's just

too emotionally heated.

Eventually you think you're ready to be friends again.

Hang out with her once on your own first.

See how things go.

Awkward.

But **fine.**

You invite her out with you and your boyfriend *again.*

It's fine!

They know how much they hurt you.

We are all adults here—

we can be friends.

She's your friend,

and he loves *you*, **right?**

Wrong.

She's already there.

Again.

He buys the drinks.

Again.

You share a drink the size of a **FISHBOWL** with ***her***.

*What does **he** drink?*

You're too drunk to notice.

She rides home with you both,

A G A I N ,

This time to ***his*** place.

You can't walk.

Can't move your own body.

He throws you over his s
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p
Carries you u

She f o l l o w s
e h i nd .
b

OH NO.

You're gonna be sick.

Definitely gonna be hung over . . .

She sits with you.

VOMIT EVERYWHERE.

He fucks off.

She thinks you need a bath.

She's probably right.

You're **in no position**

to deny *her*.

She turns on the **H O T** WATER.

The bath fills water.

She takes off your clothes.
She's just being helpful.

Right?

WRONG.

HER CLOTHES HIT THE FLOOR.

You thought this bath was just for you—

How rude of you to assume.

You're not complaining—
he's *not here and let's be honest,* ***she's*** *fuck-*
ing beautiful.

She holds you from behind.
She pushes the water up onto your chest.

For a brief moment, you feel p e a c e .

Loved even.

MORE

VOMIT.

She rubs your back.

She knows you love that.

Makes you feel safe.

She yells for him.

He comes.

Do you think he can fit?

T O O R D N U K . . .

COME ON IN!

You don't respond.

THE WATER IS FINE!

HIS clothes hit the floor.
We SQUEEZE.

He tries to fit.

He **changes his mind** *pretty quickly.*

MORE VOMIT.

You're silently thankful.

She helps you get O U T .

No need for clothes where we're going.

She guides you to the bed of *silk sheets.*

Again, you're in no place to deny her—

You are floating through existence.

Unaware of the reality surrounding you.

Get a grip on w h a t t h e f u c k is even happening around you.

GET A FUCKING GRIP.

It happens again.

A maze of hands and other body parts you never asked to navigate.

Why didn't he say anything?

He blames everything that happened on **you.**

You didn't want to do this again.

They
knew.

You **never** said **yes**.

You **n e v e r** said **no.**

So ***w h e r e*** *does that leave* ***you?***

You will barely even remember the events of that night

beyond the

B A T H T U B .

It'll take you **four more years**
to learn how to V E R B A L L Y express
CONFIRMATION.

Say **BOLDLY** what you **do**
and ***don't*** like.

Say no.

I SAID NO GOD DAMN IT!

YOU let ***him*** convince you that your closest friend is **bad** for you.

You should live with ***him*** instead.

*It would be **soooooooooooooo** much **healthier** for you.*

N O N E of that *other* stuff was ever ***his*** fault,

remember?

You live with him for three months.

THREE.

Just three.

92 DAYS.

TWO THOUSAND.

2,208 HOURS.

You'll disassociate through most of it.

Unable to remember large chunks.

You'll remember the time he hit you in the face.

The time he choked you.

All the times he held you down.

But, you won't be able to remember whole days.

Only moments.

This is how you'll **start learning** to say

N O .

It will *h a u n t* you for **YEARS** to come.

You will get out.

You leave with no goodbyes.

It's easier that way.

He will *f o l l o w* you in your **dreams.**

You'll just keep running.

The House of Expensive Beds and Dirty Clothes Piles

You wake up in your tiny apartment in the bed you paid $800 for.

There's no money.

Fuck it, you deserve good sleep.

Look up at your great-grandmother's sheets that you tacked to the ceiling.

This is the only home you've ever felt safe in.

You built this whole little life by yourself.

For yourself.

Your cat is right next to your face—

she extends her paw to rest on your nose.

She wants pets.

There's no time.

You fly out of bed.

Snoozed your alarm a few to many times—***fuck it.***

You spent an hour in bed the night before thinking

about what you should wear today.

You'll end up choosing something different anyway.

Fuck it.

You just throw some shit on.

Haul ass out the door
with all **THREE** of your
daily drinks.

FUCK IT.

Phone. Air conditioner. Lotion.
Keys.
Deodorant.
Two Oranges.
Sketchbook.
Mouse. Tape.
Purse.
SD Card. **Glasses.**
Skin. Toenails.
Teeth. Trash.
Fabric dye. Water.
26 Rings. Tweezers.
HAIR. Iced Matcha. **CAT HAIR.**
Lip Cream. Car
Roach. Uterus.
Bear Spray.
HUMAN SPRAY.

If you're lucky, maybe some food.

8-10 hours in the studio.

Walk.
Drive.
Front door.

Immediately on the other side are your two cats.

Eager to ~~overstimulate you.~~
love you.

They run to the door.

Like DOGS.

You set down 30lbs of **bag.**

ALWAYS SO MANY.

B-line to the bathroom.
Hope for a few minutes of privacy.

THE CATS NEED YOUR ATTEN

EVERYONE
NEEDS
YOUR
TION.

RIGHT THE FUCK NOW.

Like two little children you've left alone all day.

Lock yourself inside right away,

OR ELSE.

GET FRUSTRATED.

THROW A M O T H E R F U C K I N G TANTRUM.

Who's a little kid now?

On the other side of the bathroom door
safely shut.

TAKE OFF ALL YOUR CLOTHES.

You can't stand the shoes around your feet
OR THE SHIRT WRAPPED AROUND YOUR TORSO
OR THE WEIGHT OF YOUR JEWELRY
OR THE GRIME ON YOUR HANDS
OR THE HAIR ON YOUR NECK
OR THE . . .
UHH . . .

TOO MUCH.

BREATHE *for a few minutes.*

Collect your clothes from the pile on the floor.

THROW IT ON THE BED.

Re-emerge into the ecosystem of your home.

Sit on the couch.
TRY TO RELAX.

You're not really good at that.

FUCKING RELAX ALREADY.

Tired for two hours.
Wide awake for the next.

god damn it.

Mind won’t shut off.

DID YOU BRUSH YOUR TEETH THIS MORNING? YOUR BREATH SMELLS LIKE SHIT. WHO WERE YOU SUPPOSED TO EMAIL TWO HOURS AGO? WHO CARES? DID YOU GROW UP WITH GRANDPARENTS? ARE YOU THE OLDEST SIBLING? HOW ARE YOU GONNA BUILD THAT SHIT YOU SAID YOU WOULD MAKE BY FRIDAY? WHY DO YOU ALWAYS OVER PROMISE? WHAT TIME WHERE YOU BORN? WHAT DO YOU THINK HIS ZODIAC SIGN IS? HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED INTO YOUR NUMEROLOGY? WHAT ABOUT HUMAN DESIGN? AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE READING THAT MEMOIR? CANCER? DID YOU CLEAN THE LITTER BOX? IT SMELLS LIKE PISS IN HERE. DID THAT LIGHT BULB JUST GO OUT? WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN? DO YOU SAVE YOUR HAIR ON THE SHOWER WALL? IN AN APOCALYPSE, WOULD YOU TRY TO FIGHT IT OUT OR WOULD YOU JUST IMMEDIATELY GIVE UP AND DIE? HOW DOES A CHIMNEY SHOOT WORK? REMEMBER WHEN YOUR NEIGHBORING APARTMENT COMPLEX CAUGHT ON FIRE AND YOU DIDN'T NOTICE? DO YOU EVER WISH YOU COULD UNZIP YOUR SKIN? IF YOU COULD BE ANY MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURE, WHAT WOULD YOU BE? WHY DID THAT PERSON SAY THAT THING YESTERDAY, LAST WEEK, LAST YEAR, TEN YEARS AGO? WHAT WOULD YOUR IMAGINARY JOB BE? WHY WOULD YOU IMAGINE YOU HAD A JOB IF JOBS WHERE IMAGINARY? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU CLEANED YOUR SHOWER? WHO'S THAT GIRL HE'S DATING NOW? WHAT WERE YOU ALLERGIC TO THAT YOU AREN'T ANYMORE? DID YOU EVER SPELL THINGS OUT WITH SOAP ON YOUR SISTERS BACK IN THE BATHTUB? WHY DID HE NEVER CALL YOU BACK? DO YOU THINK YOU DESERVE IT?

MOM IS CALLING.

OH RIGHT,

SLEEP.

Remember that expensive ass bed

YOU BOUGHT?

Ignore.

That pile of clothes on your bed gets thrown on the couch.

Who are you kidding,
you are *not* *putting that shit away right now.*

The pile keeps going back and forth
from couch to bed
and back to couch.
There's a new pile
on the floor next to the laundry basket.

Has to be good enough.

Your days are chaotic.
You don't have time to process anything.
You feel safe.
You feel happy.
You feel fulfilled.
YOU FEEL FRUSTRATED.
You're just really tired.
But this house is your refuge.

Float around in a dissociative fog.
Constant influx of input information.
Ever changing chaos of life.

But
at least you have
that really expensive
bed.

You gave yourself the space to be free.

To do whatever you need.

Take off the mask.

Feel free

or hide from the

world under your bed

or in your clothes piles.

Dance around naked after your shower

or lock yourself away in your bathroom to decompress.

Wash your dishes at 3AM

or never wash them at all.

This is your space.

Do what feels right.
No one is there to judge you
but these four walls.

And if these walls could talk, they would say
they are

UNBELIEVABLY PROUD OF YOU.