

*She*

It's amazing what a week's worth of Tramadol and total seclusion can do for the soul. The sound of a neighbor's hotel door closing sends a startling reminder that there are still other people in the world. Other people. In my mind they spread out from around me like the shock-wave of an atom bomb. As the wave travels further away I feel more at peace. Alone and available to myself. I feel the cotton sheets of my hotel bed. Soft and cumulous. Yes, on this Egyptian Cotton I feel peace. But I also feel freedom.

Itchy. I also feel itchy. Apparently a small and very justifiable side effect of Tramadol. It is a mild itch. One that only requires a mild scratch... only delivering more satisfaction. The simple task itself is enough to keep my eyes from rolling back in my head completely. But I'm nowhere close to the cliché of the artist looking for one last escape. That image flashes before me. Me cold and purple and naked with an empty prescription bottle on the bedside stand. . . the sounds of E! news softly spilling A-List secrets over my naked corpse.

No no no. Nothing that dramatic. No addiction. No lethal cocktail. Just a little botox. And an eyelid lift. And if you must know a tummy tuck. Nosey twits. Why all the work? Well it's 2017 and the spotlight is only getting brighter on me. And as that glow grows brighter the more unflattering angles become illuminated. Of the many effronteries technology has cast upon us within the last 100 years; the aforementioned atom bomb, petro, GMO's... but most of all, cameras in HD. Beauty is a relative concept and I'm relatively pretty. But I'm an artist and I'm a woman. I'm also a perfectionist which makes those two an arduous combination. My inner motivator is the voice of Woody Allen saying,

"Ok again, but this time with some authority!"

I'm an artist, God Dammit!

"Oh good, Yes. More!"

I'm a WOMAN!

"Just like that! Yes. Lovely. Lovely."

All this feeling. All this mild itching and mild scratching. All this melting into my king size cloud and all this absurd spontaneous smiling has led me to one conclusion...

I am suffering from a mild case of euphoria.

Why the hell not? Daytime television bliss is upon me while remnants of my take-out collects fruit flies around me. My mind hops from one lily pad to the next with no rhyme or reason. One moment I lay grinding the pillow between my thighs to thoughts of Greg Kinear and the next I palliate the presentiment of our nation's collective comatose with lines from my pocket guru Gangaji. If I'm recapturing anything this week, other than 5 years of youthful spunk that settled somewhere just below my periorbital moats... it is balance. This is the creative recharge I need! I'm on the verge of making something big. Something real and entirely me.

I giggle at my own pithy justifications and feel the bandages around my cheekbones peel away from the skin slightly. For now I'm happy here in my little fortress of seclusion. "The Sheraton." I can't even decide on when I'll leave it. And frankly I don't have to yet. So while I have the time, I count my blessings...

I raise my hand and can make out the silhouette of my thin, ringless fingers. I start to count. One blessing with my pointer. Another with my middle finger. Deep breath in. Deep breath out. I smile an open mouthed smile. With a trail of movement that floats and sparkles in the dim glow of the television, my fingers fall to rest on my clitoris. A deep breath in. A deep breath out.

I'm a woman for Christ's sake.

"Yes! Yes! Feel it!"

I'm an artist, God Dammit!

"Oh yes, just like that!"

My mouth gapes wider and I lean into the cloud beneath me. Pressing my blessings into every beat... My fingers firmly massaging the pulse of the zeitgeist.

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