

“That heap of dirty laundry that someone had forgotten to wash”

*by Lauren Landry
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Stumbling out of the car, John slurred a drunken greeting. He reached out for some stability from the porch railing and wiped the sweat from his brow as he looked at me passionately. His friends smelt of marijuana and when I kicked my Birkenstocks off at the door, I saw bottles full of the remnants of yesterday’s chew tobacco fiesta.

Incubus boomed out of the loud speakers and the boys began to sing in an oblivious, boisterous fashion. A bottle of vodka appeared before my face and as they told me to take a swig, I began to think. I had dreams. I had dreams of subway tickets and briefcases. I had dreams of New York City’s bright skyline tracing my satin sheets. I had dreams of dirty sidewalks, Broadway plays, over salted pretzels, and imitation Gucci bags. He had dreams too. John dreamt of fighting fires and sitting in the Red Sox dugout, hawking loogies with the men, gawking at the 2005 World Series’ ring the players could parade on their fingers, hoping for another. Now, he was a high school dropout with not a care in the world, every night hoping a buddy of his will want to get shit faced, so he doesn’t need to drink in the seclusion of his own home.

“No,” I muttered, gazing at my mix-matched Puma socks. He wasn’t surprised, he was constantly making fun of me for being so pure, so innocent, so unwilling to have some fun, or fun as he saw it. He didn’t bother asking again, an extra beer for him, he figured. With only three other people there, inattentive guys too busy laughing at everything they said to even notice me sitting in the corner; he could drink all of the alcohol he wanted.

The bottle was so tempting. There, right in front of me, taunting me, mocking me. But, I didn’t want to live like him, I doubted my self-control. I was scared the burning and tingling sensation down my throat would taste good, too good. At two in the morning, I feared of being too irrational. I feared of caving in. I feared becoming too promiscuous and desiring his touch to the point of many mistakes and a night of forgotten remembrance.

I did want John’s touch. I would not have been there if I hadn’t. No one had ever called me beautiful and told me they wanted to be with me with such desire as he had the previous night. When his hand suddenly swept mine, a tingle ran down my spine. Yet, it was not my hand John was reaching for, it was another cold one. I sat there motionless for two hours and he had not said a word to me other than, “Hey, give me that remote.” And, that night, as for the nights on, I was never the token of his affection. I could never produce that sparkle in his eye. I was only a bottle opener for when his ninth Bud Light just seemed to be too much and when he could not open the tenth for himself. We could never just watch movies and enjoy the comfort of each other’s company. We could never just talk. Alcohol now consumed our friendship and this wasn’t the relationship I wanted.

I lived three quarters of a mile away. I knew that walking was the best bet. I needed to clear my head. It’s funny; John did not even realize I had left. He never responded to my farewell, he never tried to hold my hand, he did nothing but lie there like a heap of dirty laundry that someone had forgotten to wash.

Walking home that night, at four in the morning, down Grove Street, with nothing but four, half illuminated street lights and an open, desolate road, I praised the word, “no”, and I held my own hand.