

LIFE #8

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"Shit." J. staggered up. What happened? Just a bad dream, she consoled herself. Discomforted, she squinted into the rays of the morning sun, forcing their way through the pale crimson blinds as if to tell her: "Got you. Whatever your alarm clock can do, we can do better." It was just that J. had long disposed of that nerve-wrecking cock-a-doodle-doo'ing chicken thing which had been fitted with a micro chip by some fast food company - "with a sick sense of humour for people with a sick sense of taste", now that was a slogan K. would die for. Disposed of it with a good and refreshing kick out the window. Strike. Beckham style. The sun wasn't quite as easy to handle. But she was working on it.

J. wrinkled her cute nose and looked around. Everything was the same as she remembered it from the day before. In disorder. Chaotic. A reflection of your inner self, Daniel had told her. Wise ass. His bedroom was probably a shrine for the right angle. Bed. Table. Hanky. Immaculately aligned. Alarm clock. Box of condoms. If he ever needed those, anyway. Not in a bedroom like that, she was certain. Perfect order, terrible Feng Shui. Doggone Daniel! She felt a cold shiver run down her back. "Doggone." For some reason she couldn't fathom, the word caused uneasy feelings to stir in her belly. Though it perfectly described her current condition.

"Milk." A thought from deep inside. Another word, but a pleasant one this time. Significantly more pleasant. She lept out of bed, almost surprising herself with the sudden rush of energy. Kitchen. Yeah, there ought to be some left. Her bedroom might look like the Huns went in, through and out again several times in a row, but the kitchen was a sacred place. No order there, no order in life itself. Another good advice, this time coming from her mother.

The phone next to the bed started ringing. J. noticed it absent-mindedly. After the third ring of the bell, the answering machine would kick in anyway. And J. hated to run across the room in defiance of most laws of physics (and some that hadn't even been discovered), only to find herself being too late by just that little bit of time she had started to affectionally call the "two seconds from hell". Fate's very special gift to mankind. Or to her in particular. She hadn't found out about that yet.

Click. "Yeah, hi?" Darn, the phone's speaker was set to "on". J. grimaced. It was a good thing she was already awake. Her nightly noises were not meant for any feeble-minded random caller to hear. Did she even snore? No-one had openly and truthfully answered that question yet. Or at least lived to tell. K. used to say her purrs sounded lovely. Always the charmer. J. would have said the same, had she been in his place. He wouldn't want to feel her claws all over his face. He preferred them on his back. Guys.

"Guys." S.'s voice pulled her away from her brooding. "A. stood me up again yesterday - would you believe it? Supposedly something 'urgent at work'. Well, you know how I - " J. moaned. S. was her best friend, but on this special morning even a proposal from K. or a Nobel prize nomination in quantum physics wouldn't have been on the list of things she wanted to hear about. Especially not on the phone. She crawled back under the sheets, however failing to ignore her friend's chatter. On days like these, she cursed her exceptionally good sense of hearing. It had helped her save a life and catch a cheating boyfriend in the act, but sometimes she wished - precisely for those reasons - she had kept her mouth shut back when the talents were passed out.

"So I thought 'what the heck' and went on a date with Brad - " Oh dear, what's next, J. sighed to herself. The words "Brad" and "date", if used within the same sentence, usually spelt trouble. At least for the one uttering that sentence. Except maybe for sentences like "I'll never date Brad" or, as J. had come to prefer, "no-one should ever date Brad". Or her personal favourite, "an angel spoke to me in my dreams, he told me the date of Brad's slow and painful death".

J. peeked out from under the pillows and decided to let fate run its course. " - and after the third ale he starts telling me all about that erotic dream he had about me. Could you believe it? Erotic! About

me! Brad!! Gosh, can I get any worse than this?" J. pulled a hair from her forehead. Poor S., she thought. But she had it coming. No-one - at least no-one female - goes on a date with the Chatterbox of Doom and comes out unscathed. Typically one would end up either comatose or a misandrist. Or both. On most occasions, an erotic trauma is thrown in for free. All-inclusive. The bag is under the seat, thank you.

At least he didn't dream about her, J. thought. Maybe it was just that she had too cleverly avoided any situation where she would get in danger of being told. However S. could do with a little bit of a change, J. mused. Even if it was only in the dreams of dreadlocked students in their 23rd term.

"Dreams." J. had always been irritated about playing a part in men's nightly silverscreen extravaganzas. It made her feel like she had starred in a movie - usually one directed at the adult audience, she was well aware - and not seen a single cent of the royalties. And had none of the fun. Or the fame. Her movies would be blockbusters, she was convinced. True Oscar material. Move over, Gwyneth Paltrow. At least this time no-one would twist his tongue into a Gordian knot when the time came for "*and the Oscar goes to...*". And Coldplay would be writing their songs for her and not have to name their albums after some out-of-fashion letters from the "leftovers" part of the alphabet.

To her dismay, she yet hadn't met a Spielberg or a Tarantino. Only Ed Woods. "*Plan Sex From Outer Space*." Written by: A Brick. K. had the imagination, but he wasn't dreaming of her. He took her being there for granted. She had left so many times and always came back. He didn't even think about what it would be like if, one day, she wouldn't. J. wished he would ask about her dreams, at least once. Not just about where she had been without actually caring for the answer. These thoughts made her head ache. Even more than usual on this day.

"Hangover." J.'s head was spinning. She trotted back to the kitchen. Why aren't they selling milk flavoured with aspirine? Now that would be a company whose stock she would buy. She decided she'd tell K. about it when he returned. He would find a way to make that product a huge success. And they'd be living happily ever after in their own crib somewhere in the Carribean. Or at least in a flat with a balcony, for a start.

She could only faintly remember anything from the evening before. She had been around the block with a couple of friends and colleagues, that much she knew. Around quite a lot of blocks, it seemed, as she started noticing the pain in her lower legs. A full-blown blackout wouldn't have bothered her as much. But yesterday seemed to be so incomprehensibly far away, more like a day from a previous life. Great. She would need an Ouija board and a medium dose of witchcraft to remember all the embarrassment she had obviously suffered. Where were her car keys? I can't possibly have driven home alone, J. mused. Then again, who had brought her to bed? After pondering the thought for a moment, she decided she didn't really want to know.

"J." The door. K. came. "Where are you, sweetie?" J. felt that comforting tingle she always had when he came back to her after a Sunday morning in the park. Allegedly he was there to play volleyball, but she considered it a physically impossible stretch of the imagination if a man did not have second thoughts about a sport where the female clothing habits are second only to those of mud wrestling and bikini tossing.

"There you are." K. zestfully threw himself on the bed next to her, planted a kiss on her forehead and tickled her under her chin. He knew she fell for this every time. J. playfully winked an eye at him and

skillfully avoided his grip. Just one look in the mirror, to check the condition of the work of art she - justly, she hoped - considered herself. Some uncertainties never die. No matter how often K. swore how ravishingly cuddleable she looked when she woke up. Men aren't to be trusted. Except maybe gay men. Unless they had fallen for the same guy as you. "J., get out of the bathroom!", she heard K. boom. She liked it when he was so adamant. Cheerful. Those were the best moments with him, dream-like sometimes. Only few and far between.

She looked in the mirror but her mind hadn't yet translated the signals from her visual nerves into a language she was able to understand. She gazed at her dark blonde hair, her green eyes, her perky nose... and some things that definitely weren't supposed to be there. And never were there for the past years. She was positive about that. The photographs of K. and her, which he had used to decorate the tiles in the bathroom, proved that. She had to check. The photographs... J. felt a shiver run down her spine. "I told you not to bounce around in the bathroom, didn't I?" K. softly but authoritatively lifted her into his arms and carried her to the kitchen. "Shall I pour you some fresh milk?" Tenderly he put her down on her four paws. Her mind reeled. How long had she been dreaming? Good Lord, how long had she been dreaming?

