

Assignment 07 – version 01

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SCENARIO 1

The office

It ~~is~~ is an off-the-shelf day, just the way Libby likes it. No surprises, no uncertainties. The corset she wears under her office attire bites into her side, but she doesn't mind it. It brings her comfort somehow, makes her feel in control. Danny, her brother, is always on about the tightlacing and how bad it was for her, and what if he wants kids one day ... Kids? As if! Another department she disappointed David in, The office coffee is still bad but it is warm and it is wet so she drinks it. "It takes only 17 muscles to smile, Miss Du Pree", says Gail Abernathy sweetly as she pokes her head into Libby's office one morning. She's a senior partner and has her own brand of evil - the type that smells like home cooking. But given time you'll find the only thing cooking is your proverbial balls. "Oh, and, Miss Du Pree", Gail Abernathy adds, "be a dear and collate the A-Z collection before tomorrow". "But there must be over 5 000 files in the collection...", Libby replies. "Well then I guess you'd better hop to it", Gail Abernathy smiles sweetly.

~~Lorraine Benet from two cubicles down had perched her bounteous bottom on the edge of Libby's desk and was spilling expletives all over the place as she shared stories of her 'epic weekend'.~~

~~"Of course", says Libby and forces a smile to her face.~~

~~The smile, however, evaporates the moment the woman's large hairdo disappeared out of view. Libby ducks into the restroom and, grasping the corners of her cigarette-scared counter top, she finds her eyes in the mirror. Her mascara is smudged, her lipstick long gone. *Breathe.*~~

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~~She breathes deeply until she can feel the disc of anger and resentment forever oscillating in her chest wind down. She composes a convincing smile in the mirror, touches on her lipstick and, observing her figure in the mirror, decides that tomorrow, she'll bring it in another inch.~~

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~~She walks back to her office with her head held high, past pieces of people they lose there every day, past portraits of dead CEO's and pictures of other people's cats; past Gail Abernathy's office with her precious troll doll collection.~~

~~By the time she reaches her office she is as calm as a windstill day. With her back as straight as can be she shifts in behind her desk where she opens her hand to appreciate the little toy troll in her palm. She then tosses it into her drawer, together with the pens and necklaces and other things that use to belong to someone else.~~

~~Libby sinks into her stories like into a hot bath as even Lorraine's incessant abuse of language and furniture fits into her life. It is consistent, as predictable as the fixed metrical ticks of a metronome. It is part of the whitenoise that makes up the neatly packed, stacked and vacuum sealed life Libby has designed for herself. It has the same spectral density, the same probability distribution as the drone of the aircon, the tap-tap-tap of fingers on keyboards or the awkwardly intense chatter of the red headed corporate Quasimodo in the cubicle next to hers. It is all the perfect aural arrangement for this anaemic setting.~~

~~"Lib? Libby" are you even listening?" she hears Lorraine's voice, so she refocuses, dedicating her apathy to the crimson-rose lipstick bleeding into the creases around Lorraine's mouth. And she feels warm and content at this simple life she had carved from chaos.~~

~~So when a man stumbles through the door, the front of his grey Rock 'n Roll or Death T-shirt soaked a maroon red, it is a square peg in a round hole.~~

Scenario 2

The homecoming

Johannesburg ~~riese~~ before her like a firebird from her youth. The memories came back, stacking higher than the Hillbrow tower's condescending finger jabbing into the skyline. Goddamn, what an ugly city. They say cities have human personalities. If that's true then Joburg is proudly unemployed, unimpressed and all lit up behind the wheel of its souped-up 82' beamer, and blaming you for the skid-marks on the front lawn.

They moved around a lot when she and Danny were little. Doesn't matter what godforsaken hole Lydia put them up in she believed *They* were always under the nearest rock hatching their plans. Whether *They* wanted to flay and study them or flambe and eat them was never quite clear. Which is why Gargamel and his sinister intentions with the Smurfs remains the most frightening villain from her childhood to this day.

She just sits in the car for a while, its leather interior is the present she knows and not the past that she hates or the future that she fears. She picks up the snow globe from the dash and immediately she hears Lydia's voice saying that she should throw away that silly toy, as snow on Table Mountain is highly improbable.

She ~~found~~ finds her eyes in the rear-view mirror. *Just do it. You owe David that much.* In truth, the only thing David can be blamed for is not having the stamina to put up with her shit. And she knows this. She carries the weight of it with her and shame is too heavy a load to carry down a slippery slope. For no amount of chicken dinners or sensible heels or multi-peril insurance can keep her from reeling back into hopelessness time and again, causing her to find solace outside of herself.

She ~~scratched~~ scratches a phantom spec of dirt from her carefully manicured nail. And because her life has been one long lesson on knowing when to exit, she quietly slots the car into gear and pulls away from the curb.

Scenario 3

The party

The party was one of those elegant affairs that quickly becomes inelegant under the glint of crystal chandeliers and free booze. It was being held at a long-standing client of the firm's four-story mansion. The owner of the house was quick to tell that Stanley Kubrick vacationed next door in the Summer, and that the Bredekamp-murders happened three doors down.

Libby waded through the sea of little black dresses and Calvin Klein cheekbones and went looking for a corner and a drink between which she could sandwich herself.

"How's it hanging, Du Pree?" says Bruce from accounting his lips struggling to fine the straw inserted in his Mai Tai.

"Oh, it's hanging ..." she replies from behind her own drink.

She politely endures the interaction but beneath the din she hears a piano playing. Offering a vague excuse, she follows the forlorn notes into the house where she finds a stranger sitting at the Baby Grand.

He's perfect, a stranger is just her type.

As she makes her way across the room she loosens the chiffon bow at her throat. Then some buttons. Hairpins fall in her wake and her hair spills onto her shoulders.

This one is an architect. His name is Preston, she'll try her best to remember it.

Later at his loft, he has a little cocaine saved for a special occasion, and this is special is it not? Sitting naked across from him on his big old bed, his face still flushed, they both giggle like fairy folk drunk on vintage Pinotage. And lost in that finely spun moment, as real and as brief as an intake of breath, he is the love of her life.

But later, as is always the case, at that moment suspended between night and day, smoking a naked cigarette on his suede 10 seater, the regrets rise in her chest. And from every corner, in every reflective surface, Lydia shakes her head in abject disappointment.

Libby takes in the view from his artist loft. The cold window frame presses into her thigh. From this multiple-million view she can see the pollution that blankets the city below. The apartment rises above it, all glass and vertical gardens. But she knows she doesn't belong here at all, above the dirt and the grime. So she quietly leaves behind the memory of him, already bleached white like whale bone under a scorching sun.