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Creative Writing

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Shuffle

It was a Sunday night in mid September. The house chores were done and Kate Fischer was doing her trigonometry homework. She heard a rustling noise coming from downstairs followed by a loud clash. She quickly sat up on her bed. Her mind began to race; the worst possible scenarios flashed in front of her eyes. Kate took a deep breath and reassured herself it was only her father knocking over empty beer bottles.

A few moments later, she heard it again, closer this time. Someone was smashing glass against the walls downstairs. Kate recomposed herself and uttered out the words, “Dad? Is that you?” but there was no response.

She shrugged off her paranoia and grabbed her iPod off the nightstand. Kate didn't have time for imagining the worst; she had been fantasizing about her future for a while now. Kate couldn't tolerate the sleepless nights, and emotional pain anymore.

Her mind was always a web of conflicting thoughts about what she had done to deserve this life. She seemed calm and composed in front of many, but inside she was an emotional wreck. Kate had a pessimistic outlook on life due to many years of verbal and physical abuse at home.

She put her iPod on shuffle and hit the play button. This was it for her; music was her escape. Kate asked her iPod a question, making sure her it was on shuffle, and hit the next button to play a new song. She found hidden meanings within songs and related them to her life or the

question she asked herself. She simply called this game “Shuffle” and saw it as a playful thing she and her friends made up just for laughs. Through the years, Kate became dependent upon music to block out anything negative in her life. Anytime she had problems, she ran to music in hopes it helped her feel better. This game of hers turned into a habit.

She whispered softly to herself, “Should I go through with it?”

Every muscle in her body tensed. Her nerves tingled and a wave of chills crawled down her back. She anxiously waited those milliseconds of silence that just seemed to have lasted decades. Suddenly, the thump of a bass drum exploded in her eardrum. Her muscles loosened as the sweet words echoed back in her head.

“Well I’ll tell you my friend one day this world’s going to end. As your lies crumble down, a new life, she has, found.”

Kate’s train of thought had been broken by someone stumbling up the stairs. The second she glanced over at her bedroom door, a black shadowy figure stood in her dimly lit door way. The person staggered over to the foot of her bed into a faint stream of light. Her father glanced down and stared directly at her. His old leathery face was distraught. Kate’s eyes darted timidly across her room before meeting her father’s glare. She looked up at him in fear; she knew he could sense the tension in the air because his lips curled up into a devilish smile.

Kate was afraid of her father when he drank. He threatened her, hit her, and belittled her until she felt like the worthless maggot he called her. He had problems and needed help but refused any bit of concern or assistance that came his way, unless it was Budweiser.

After a long silence, Kate’s father cracked a shrewd, devious smile at her and opened his mouth to speak. She caught a strong whiff of alcohol in her father’s breath.

“What do ya think you’re doin’?” Kate’s father said.

Kate began shaking with fear. “I did all of the housework and then I thought I’d relax a little and maybe watch some TV before starting my school-.”

“You touched my TV?” said her father.

“Well, I just wanted to take a break before doing my homework,” Kate said.

“Homework? What homework you doin’? You’re never gonn’ amount to anything, just a dumb worthless girl.”

“I-”

“Shut up. Did I say you could speak?”

Kate snapped her mouth shut, stared her father straight in the eyes, and waited.

Her father slapped her right in the mouth and snorted. His gut bounced with every chuckle that came out of his mouth.

“Dumb, worthless girl,” he said as he left, slamming the door behind him.

Kate sat there, eyes fixed on the door, sobbing. She hated her life, and when she thought about her father, her blood boiled. She was sick and tired of being put down all of her life. Her friends’ parents didn’t treat their kids this way and she didn’t understand what she did to deserve this treatment.

As far as she could remember, she did have a normal life like her friends. Kate had two parents that loved her, instead of one abusive man she had to call her father. Her mother had gotten into a car accident when she was seven and died on impact. After that, her father started heavily drinking and their family broke apart from there. She swore her father had gone crazy after the accident. He started getting angry at the smallest things Kate did and began hitting her.

She took a staggered breath, brought herself back together and stopped sobbing. Kate got up off her bed and walked over toward her closet. Hidden in the far right corner of her closet sat

a shoebox buried underneath a pile of old clothes and storage bags. She pulled out the shoebox, dumped whatever money she saved up and put in there and counted it out. Kate had \$267.19. This was enough to get a bus ticket to Seattle, Washington. Kate lived two and a half hours outside of Seattle. She had never been there but always had an urge to go.

This is finally my chance, she thought. I can actually get out of this hell hole and do something with my life.

Kate had never left home before. The farthest distance she traveled was walking eight blocks to school in the mornings. Kate wasn't ready to leave home and leave her friends behind. She was terrified of what the world outside Wapato was like. She began fixating on the negative thoughts that kept popping in her mind. Finally she told herself nothing could be worse than living like this with her father. "If she could put up with him for ten years, she could handle whatever was in Seattle."

Kate grabbed a duffle bag out of her closet and started piling clothes into it. She grabbed her phone, iPod, the chargers, and some snacks to take with. Kate then remembered the cops could track a cell phone and she did not want to be found, so she left her phone behind. She didn't think she would need it anyway considering she wasn't going to keep in touch with anyone. Kate walked over to her window and opened it. Her bedroom was on the second floor, but her patio roof was conveniently right outside her window. She grabbed some sheets and tied them in knots to keep them together. Kate lowered herself onto the patio roof, tied the sheets to her windowsill and used them as a rope to climb onto her patio from the roof. Once she landed safely, she began walking toward the bus station to buy a ticket for Seattle.

"Hello little miss, what are you doing out this late?" said the Ticketmaster.

"Hello, I'm looking to buy the next ticket out to Seattle please," said Kate.

The Ticketmaster looked down at Kate suspiciously and said, “Seattle, eh? Well don’t you think it’s a little late to be visiting Seattle? Where are your parents?”

“Oh, well they’re actually in Seattle. Kate said. That’s why I need to go there. It’s kind of an emergency sir.”

“Hmm, alright. Well I suppose I have to sell you a ticket then, huh? Said the man as he chuckled. What kind of person would I be if I kept a little girl from her parents. Here you go miss.”

Kate thanked the man, took her ticket, and sat down across the room waiting for the next bus out. She stared down at the ticket in disbelief. At precisely 10:05 P.M. she’d be boarding a bus to Seattle.

Kate hadn’t slept well the past few nights and she had an hour before her bus to Seattle came so she decided to take a power nap. Kate was startled by the ringing bell that announced when the bus arrived. The LED sign read “Seattle, Washington” in red digital letters. Kate gathered her belongings and boarded the bus.

She sat alone in the back left corner. There were only three other people going to Seattle: a middle-aged man, an old woman, and a middle-aged woman. The two women were sitting together on the bus, laughing about something the older woman encountered earlier that day.

Kate was riding for two and a half hours until they finally reached Seattle, WA. She grabbed her duffle bag and walked off the bus. Kate looked around the station and didn’t know where to go. She walked up to the information desk and asked the receptionist where the closest hotel was.

“About a few blocks down from here, there’s a small motel called Mike’s Motel. Just be careful, it’s not in the best part of town.”

Kate thanked the lady for the information and began walking toward Mike's Motel. After the first block, she saw a blinking sign. Kate was ecstatic to see this place was only a little farther. She was tired and couldn't wait to go to sleep and have breakfast in the morning.

Once Kate reached the motel, she found the front desk and approached the man behind the glass screen; his nametag read Mikey and he had a cigarette in his mouth. Mikey was sitting down, so Kate couldn't see too much of him, but she could tell this guy cared about his appearance, it showed. He was wearing a white muscle tee that clearly defined his biceps and the veins that bulged on his arms. He had these beautiful blue eyes, and feathered light brown hair. He had to be in his early twenties.

"What do you want?" said Mikey.

"Hi, um, are you the owner here? Because, I need a room for tonight. I was wondering how much it'll be."

"Nah, that's my pops. I just work here while he's away. So you're a run away, huh?"

"What? No, I didn't say that."

"You didn't have to. A teenage girl comes to a motel on the bad side of town with a duffle bag, needing a room? It's hard to imagine you're not a runaway," said Mikey. "What's your story, kid?"

Kate stood outside and talked to Mikey for about fifteen minutes explaining her home life and why she left. Finally Mikey told her he'd let her stay the night in the motel for free. He felt bad for what this kid went through with her father.

"Here you go, kid. You get room 10. If you need anything, you can call the front desk, there's the number in your room," said Mikey. "If I don't answer, chances are I'm not at the

front desk, but in my own room. I live in room 1. Feel free to knock on my door, or give my room a call. That number is going to be in your room too on the nightstand.”

Kate couldn't believe her luck. She was grateful to find such a nice, good-looking guy to help her out. She took the key from Mikey and began to walk away. She stopped for a few seconds, turned around, smiled and thanked Mikey before walking away again.

Once Kate got to her room, she unlocked the door and turned on the light. She was staying in a small beige room with one twin sized bed, a small mini fridge, a nightstand, and a desk phone. There was also a small bathroom that only had a toilet, shower, and sink. Kate didn't bother unpacking anything from her duffle bag when she entered the room; instead she went right to bed.

A ray of sunlight coming through the only window in the room woke Kate up the next morning. She got out of bed and took a shower. Just as she finished getting dressed there was a knock on her door, it was Mikey.

“I thought you could use some food. I brought over pancakes,” said Mikey.

“Thanks, I was starting to feel hungry too. I wasn't sure where to get food,” said Kate.

“You're welcome,” said Mikey. “Hey kid, you know you're going to run out of money sometime. How do you plan on making a living?”

“I don't know,” said Kate. “I haven't really thought about that yet. I guess I have to get a job, but I don't know where or how.”

“Hmm, well tell ya what kid, I have a little side job and I could always use your help, what do you say? I'd pay you, and let you live in the motel for free.”

“Well, what kind of job is it?” asked Kate.

“What if I told you, you could get paid for kissing a guy?” said Mikey.

“For kissing a guy? I don’t understand,” said Kate.

“I’m not very good at explaining these things. Come with me. I want you to meet one of my other employees, she should be able to explain it better.”

Kate followed Mikey to the second floor of the motel to room 33. Mikey started banging on the door and yelling ‘Natasha’ until a tall woman answered the door. She was wearing a silk robe and her hair was piled on top of her head in a bun.

“What do you want, can’t you see I was in bed? And who’s this girl?” said Natasha.

Mikey smiled and said, “Her name is Kate and she ran away from home. I wanted you to tell her about the job opportunities here.”

“Oh, okay, well in that case leave her so we can chat,” said Natasha. Then she looked down at Kate and said, “Come in darling, don’t be shy,”

Kate followed her into the room and Natasha said, “So darling, what did Mikey tell you about this job?”

“He just said I could get paid for kissing a guy,” Kate said.

Natasha began laughing and said, “Paid for kissing, huh? Well I can tell you right now, there’s more to it than that. I look at it as an art. You need to keep your body in shape and looking good. Nobody wants a woman that can’t take care of herself. I’m constantly going to the doctor to make sure everything is doing well. You’re getting paid to make your body feel good.”

“I’m sorry, but I still don’t understand,” said Kate.

“What’s there not to understand? It’s sex for money. That’s the job you would be doing. You’d get paid for making your body feel great,” said Natasha.

“Oh no, I can’t do that, I won’t do that. You’re talking about prostitution,” said Kate.

Natasha looked Kate straight in the eyes and said, “Well that wasn’t so hard to figure out, now was it? Besides, by the looks of it you don’t have much of a choice. How much money do you have left? Maybe \$100, honey that’s not going to get you anywhere. No one is going to hire a runaway to work for them. So what happens when you run out of money? You’ll be forced to live on the streets and become a beggar. You’ll be lucky to get the scraps out of someone’s garbage can.”

“I don’t know what to say. I don’t think I could allow myself to do that,” said Kate.

“I thought the same thing. It was strange at first, but you get used to it,” said Natasha.

Kate began to cry. She wanted to start over and have a new life, but this wasn’t what she had in mind. She sat across from Natasha in silence for a few minutes. Then Kate said, “I have no choice. I really don’t. I can’t go back home. I won’t do that. I wanted a new life and this is what I got.”

Natasha waited a moment and then said, “Well, that’s looking on the bright side of things. I’ll be helping you throughout this process, okay? It’s not easy. You could become depressed if you don’t know how to handle your emotions. I had my ups and downs when I first started, and no one was there to help me. I was all on my own. Come on now, lets tell Mikey.”

Kate and Natasha left room 33 and went to Mikey’s room. Natasha knocked on his door repeatedly until he answered.

“What, what! Oh it’s you two, so how did things go?” said Mikey.

Natasha had a devious smirk on her face when she said, “You’re welcome.” And then just walked away and left Kate standing outside Mikey’s room dumbfounded. Mikey looked at Kate, smiled and said, “Glad you made your decision.”

“I have no choice, and Natasha is helping me.”

“You did have a choice, and you made the smart one,” said Mikey.

“Yeah, I guess. But I’m going to go back to my room for a little bit,” said Kate as she started walking away from Mikey without giving him a chance to respond.

Once Kate got back to her room she laid on her bed and stared up at the ceiling. She left one shitty life behind just to have another shitty life in Seattle. Kate broke down and started sobbing. She couldn’t help but imagine what her mother would say if she saw her daughter now. She felt miserable and more alone than ever. Kate looked down on herself for making this decision; she was disappointed. Kate’s mind was filled with thoughts of how this could have gone worse. She tried convincing herself that she made the right decision.

Finally, she stopped crying long enough to wipe away her tears and figured she should talk to Natasha. Kate got up off the bed and walked to Natasha’s room. She knocked on the door and waited patiently for Natasha to answer.

Natasha opened the door, saw Kate and said, “Hello, darling, what can I help you with?”

“I want to start learning,” said Kate.

“Okay, well it’s simple. You ask the customer what they want, they tell you, and you tell them how much it costs,” said Natasha. “There are times when you have to be careful who you take as a customer. A lot of guys abuse women like us, but you’re already used to that now aren’t you? I mean with your father and all.”

“Excuse me?” said Kate.

Kate couldn’t believe what she had just heard. Of course it was true, but to think Natasha had the nerve to say that to her.

“Look, you got to have a tough skin for this. There are going to be a lot of nasty things said to you and you need to prepare yourself for it,” said Natasha. “You know what, you’re coming out with me tonight, no excuses.”

“I’m not ready for that yet, I just agreed to it today,” said Kate.

“There’s never a right time to start, except the sooner the better. Be outside my room at 10:30 tonight. Do your hair and makeup, and wear something that shows some skin,” said Natasha, and she closed the door before Kate could respond.

Kate walked back to her room, and took a nap until 9:00 p.m. Once she got up she took a shower, put her hair up nicely, did her makeup, and put on a black skirt with a red tubetop and red heels. By the time she finished getting ready, it was 10:26 p.m. Kate began walking up to Natasha’s room. Kate knocked on the door and Natasha answered almost instantly.

“Oh good, you’re ready,” said Natasha. “Let’s go then.”

Kate didn’t respond, instead she followed Natasha out of the motel and down a few streets. The houses they passed were beat up and some seemed abandoned. The corner stores had graffiti on the outside walls, and there were weeds growing in the cracks of the sidewalks.

They stopped at a corner in an alley and Natasha told Kate this is her usual spot. Other women occupied other spots in town. This job was very territorial and segregated. Natasha walked over to a bus stop and Kate followed. There was a map of town inside the glass at the bus stop. Natasha pointed out the different territories and who belonged to these spots, the reputation these areas held, and the customers they got.

Natasha gave Kate some last minute pointers, like being careful who your customers are, and how to approach them. Natasha strongly encouraged her to not go back to the customer’s house. If anything, always bring the customer to the motel. Natasha didn’t want anything bad

happening to Kate; she felt responsible and protective of her already. Since this was her first night out, Natasha didn't think Kate should go alone with any customers.

A car rolled up and Natasha went up to talk to the person in the driver's seat. Then she turned back to Kate and waved her to come over. Kate slowly wobbled over to the car, terrified. Kate saw one older man and looked up at Natasha in terror.

"I'm going to take this customer, said Natasha. I don't want you going with anyone without me so how about you wait for me in that corner mart right around 5th St. It's called Georgie's. You'll be fine and don't make eye contact with anyone or draw attention to yourself more than you already are. Just walk around and wait for me there. I should only be about a half hour, okay?"

Kate just nodded her head up and down, keeping quiet. She didn't have a choice but she figured she would be safer in a public store so she decided to go to Georgie's. She walked down 5th St until she saw the corner store. Kate pulled the glass door open and a bell rang as she walked in. A few people turned and stared at her, some watched in the corner of their eye and pretended like she wasn't there. Kate began walking around the store keeping her head down and watched her feet as the heels echoed throughout the store. She couldn't help but attract attention to herself. Two guys came up to her and put a dollar in her skirt. The one man laughed and said, "What? That's not enough for a piece of ass like you?"

Kate raised her eyes to the man's and said, "You can't even afford a piece of trash, let alone me. Go back to the streets and leave me alone." She was furious and didn't tolerate disrespect. These men didn't really know her or the life she lived. Kate couldn't understand how people can be so judgmental, they didn't know she had no choice and that if she did this wouldn't be what she did for a living.

Before the man could respond, Natasha stepped in and the guy said, “What do you want? Get out of my way; I was just talking to your friend here. Unless you want to help me out for a dollar.”

“Well now you’re talking to me, and sure what can I do for you? Would you like syphilis? How about herpes? Or maybe AIDS, followed by a slow painful death,” said Natasha.

“You’re sick. Get out of my way slut,” said the man.

Natasha quickly called after the man as he and his friend were leaving, “Well you have to be for this job!”

Natasha looked back at Kate and yelled, “Didn’t I tell you not to attract attention?”

“Well I don’t tolerate disrespect. They didn’t know me and had no right saying what they did to me,” said Kate.

“Yeah, well get used to it because you’ll be getting worse through the years. I don’t know where you got this crazy idea to start speaking up for yourself now, but that’s going to get you killed, so stop it,” said Natasha, and with that they left Georgie’s.

Natasha and Kate returned to the first spot Natasha took Kate. This time, another car rolled up next to Natasha. Kate waited anxiously for Natasha’s reaction. Eventually she called Kate over again to the customer. Kate walked up and saw there were two men in the car. An older, middle-aged man was in the driver’s seat and a younger man, maybe in his mid twenties was in the passenger seat.

Natasha looked at Kate and said, “Now’s your chance. I’ll get the older guy, so you don’t feel too uncomfortable and you can have the younger one.”

Natasha opened the car door for Kate. She was nervous and began breathing heavy. Kate wasn't ready for this, but she had to be. Kate sat down in the backseat behind the passenger and Natasha sat next to her behind the driver.

"How about we go back to Mike's Motel?" Natasha said to the driver.

"Well, is that better for you?" said the driver.

"Yeah, I like it there, more private," Natasha said.

Natasha started giving the driver directions toward Mike's Motel, the same way she and Kate walked to get to 5th St. As Natasha was giving directions to the man in the driver's seat, she began touched his forearm and slid her hand up his arm to his shoulders. She started massaging the driver's shoulders and let her hands wander. Kate didn't feel comfortable doing the same thing so she just sat quietly in the back as Natasha persisted to flirt and touch the driver.

He began to sway when Natasha moved her hands around his body and the car drifted off toward the yellow double lines on the road. They were going at least 65MPH when the driver swayed into oncoming traffic. Kate screamed and brought everyone's attention back to the road. The driver tried swerving out of oncoming traffic, just as another vehicle was going about 80MPH and coming straight toward the car Kate and Natasha were in. The other vehicle slammed on their brakes, but they were going too fast and couldn't stop in time. Kate and Natasha's driver hit the other vehicle head on. Kate saw white airbags engulfing the people within the car and the driver's head banging off the steering wheel a few times, repeatedly, from impact. Kate was sure she saw blood on what was left of the windshield, and Natasha's feet were in front of Kate's face.

Kate's vision became blurry and everything began to turn white to the point where she couldn't see anything. She heard a loud siren. Kate's consciousness came and went in sporadic

bursts. Her body was tingling and felt as if it were being lifted onto something. She saw red repeatedly flashing around her. Every bump in the road tore apart whatever tolerance for pain she had left, and then she saw black.

Kate began to regain her sight hours after the car accident and woke up to a man in a white lab coat talking to another man and scribbling notes on his clipboard. She couldn't make out the words, and tried looking around. The lights beamed down on, blinding her from seeing much of the room. She noticed a metal tray next to her with bloody tools, and a strong bleach odor about the room.

The two men noticed Kate was awake and walked over to her bedside.

“Hello, Kate Fischer, my name is Dr. Roberts. It seems that you were in an accident, and fractured some ribs. We took care of you and removed any bits of glass you may have had in your skin. You're fine now. You're going to be sore for a few weeks, but that's nothing a bit of rest can't solve. I strongly recommend you stay away from any activities or sudden movements for awhile.”

Kate opened her mouth and tried to speak but the words would not come out. She was shocked and could not remember being in a car accident. After a while of deep thought, Kate pictured Natasha in the car. She saw her legs in the air and that was it. Her memory was a blur, but Kate kept trying to piece things together.

Kate saw a mirror on the side table next to her bed. It was lying next to the hospital tray containing her dinner. She picked up the mirror but couldn't even recognize the person staring back at her. Kate didn't know who she was anymore or how she got to this place. As a child she imagined becoming a doctor or lawyer; she never dreamt of fleeing her home and being forced into prostitution.

Kate's eyes darted back and forth from her own reflection's. Her vision became blurry from holding back the pool of tears drowning her eyes. She kept telling herself to be strong but couldn't escape feeling disappointed and disgusted. Kate blinked several times allowing the salty tears to streak down her face. She couldn't bear to look at herself anymore and slammed the mirror back onto the side table.

Kate heard a beeping noise and turned her head to face the EKG monitor next to her. She stared at the lines and markings on the screen climax and drop over again. The rhythm was hypnotizing and with each –BEEP– Kate lost herself in time. She picked up the mirror again but this time Kate saw closure within her. She wasn't a prostitute anymore, but the middle-aged woman staring back at her lived a long sad life as one.

“Ms. Fischer? Hello I'm Dr. Jackson.”

“Hello Doctor.”

“The results came back from the tests we ran earlier and I'm sorry to inform you of this, but the virus has spread farther than we thought. The HPV reached your cervix.”

“So what are you saying exactly?”

I'm sorry Mrs. Fischer but since the HPV wasn't found or treated right away, over time it became stage four cervical cancer.”

“What? I just don't understand,” said Kate.

“Again, I'm sorry. I will send in a nurse to take care of any concerns you may have,” said Dr. Jackson.

“Oh. Well alright,” said Kate.

Dr. Jackson walked out of Kate's room and shut the door behind him. Kate sighed and composed herself. “I'm dying,” she whispered aloud.