

Fade

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Chapter

I fade in and fade out feeling like I'm fighting my own brain for consciousness. My eyes won't open all the way and when they do all I see is red. Pain, red hot and searing. I hear my name being called by so many voices, so many hands touching me. My face, my chest, my neck. Light then darkness, then flashings of so many colors. I hear crying close by a shuddering sound that racks my soul. It's familiar and brings a deep sadness.

Mom?

I hear yelling, ambulances, police cars. I fade in and out so many times. I don't know how much time has passed, where I am, and I can't seem to open my eyes anymore. My head is throbbing, my chest feels all wrong, and my lungs struggle for oxygen. It hurts so much to breathe. Each inhale feels like a deep stabbing like a knife is being held to them. Finally I'm lifted off the ground and the pain rages through my body. I feel warm sheets and soft layers of padding that feel like warm milk on my skin. In its comfort I fall again into complete unconsciousness.

When I wake again I hear the rolling of wheels, more yelling, though the words are intangible to my ears. I hear my name a few more times though it's not being yelled anymore. As I feel my brain begin to wake up I feel the pain again, though dulled. I still can't open my eyes, and my body won't move. I'm so frustrated I just want to scream and cry as my mind tries to mush together a tangible thought. I feel a warm hand in the darkness, instead of the quick brushes, the cold metal against me, or the pokes of needles this one is warm. And it stays there right on my arm and keeps me centered. It feels like the only thing keeping me on the ground, like if it let go I would slip away again. The room suddenly gets cold, I hear a door slam, and the shuffling of feet and more hushed focused talking. The hand squeezes and rubs against my skin then is gone again. The room is so quiet. I feel something cup my face. I breathe and my head starts to whirl. I slip into a warm slubber this time and I welcome its pain free stretch.

for a while longer I feel my brain spark together some thoughts, some recognition of life. I'm never fully asleep or awake. I have no clue how long it's been. Everytime I can stay partially conscious it's hard to even think. It feels like my thoughts escape me before I can even fully conjure them. They just barely slip past my grasp. I don't dream, I don't think, I can't even hear or feel much less move. Every once and awhile I feel that warm hand again. Its warmth seems to reset my heart each time and

grants me just a moment of stability. It registers in my brain that this isn't the end, there's still hope. I want to reach for the hand and bring it closer. Shield it like it's a small flickering flame, I don't want to lose it again. But each time it leaves and I slip away into the darkness.

It's a constant beeping that wakes me up next. The smell of hand sanitizer and hospital hits my nose. My brain seems to reset and I can finally think in words.

What ?

I attempt to open my eyes but I'm only left with frustration and continued failure. Definitely a big no on being able to move or even twitch a finger. I can feel the tightness of a sheet around me. I can feel warmth again and damn is that beeping annoying. I guess it being there means I'm still alive but I don't know how messed up I am. Am I on life support? Shit how big was the thing that hit me. I remember being hit. Walking home, Adrian, the whole day before. I guess I'm not brain dead then, or heavily concussed. At least not anymore.

I feel panicked within the darkness. My breathing and heart rate doesn't increase but I feel the panic in the pit of my stomach.

What am I gonna do? Do they know I'm alive in here? How long have I been out? Damn.

All these questions flood through me, they make me want to throw up and I whirl. I can't move or control my breathing or even flinch. I feel like a husk, my body is a prison.

Damn damn DAMN!

I can't even cry the pain and chaos away. It feels like my heart is being clenched in my chest. My fingers tingle and my eyes burn with the continued need to cry, to scream, to curl up in a little ball and just go numb.

I hear the click of a door opening and I'm pulled out of my fit. I hear feminine humming and the wheeling of a cart. The humming is of a peppy tune that I can't place but it's soothing enough I feel my heart lighten a bit. I hear metal clicking and a light dribble of water. I hear a throat clearing from the same feminine voice. A squeak of writing on a white board.

“...Angelene...huh pretty name”

My heart jumps in my chest.

Yes, that's me! I'm in here!

I wish I could give her a sign, a noise, a flinch of my eyelids. Anything. But still my brain won't connect to my body.

She continues her humming. I listen to it like it's the best song I've ever heard. I hang on to every noise she makes, every squeak of her shoes on the tile, the sound of her opening the curtains, even the clearing of her throat is like heaven. It all comes together to confirm I'm alive. I have a million questions but I focus on the things I do know. I am in a hospital, I can't move, I'm stuck. My body is mostly numb, not registering my racing mind and sending hot, cold, or any electric indicators to my brain. I feel a light weight spread over me. Most likely a blanket and some clothes. I can feel when I'm cold or warm, but I have no idea the time of day, the date, or how long it's been. I could count. To not lose track of time, but what about sleep? No, counting for too long would drive me over the edge.

I guess the main thing I can do is keep my mental state intact. I assume I must have some type of head or neck injury or something severe from all the pain I felt before the last time I drifted off. So maybe I should just focus on healing. Conserving energy should help and sleep. It's a bit hard when I feel so awake.

I decided not to count and just focus on the day. I figure out the nurses shift, listen as closely as possible to the people walking by for a date, time, anything to give me some type of answer to what was going on. The nurses in the hallway sure liked to chat about unimportant things that couldn't help me, Husbands, children, gossip, patients. What I did learn was that I was at North Point regional, Probably the hospital closest to the accident because I don't remember ever hearing about it. I learned my nurse's name was Mardee and I heard her be called Ma'am a few times so she must be an older nurse. She smelled like lavender, latex gloves, and hand sanitizer and was my anchor. She always spoke to me during her brief examinations and check ins. After a while there must have been a shift change because conversation ceased and the lavender scent left. The hands that shifted me in bed were much colder and conversation was null and void. I had grown fond of my exploration, letting my other senses take over to keep my sanity. I had grown tired so I assumed a day must have passed. Even a vague estimation was better than nothing. So I relaxed my racing mind and lulled into rest, my only escape from my personal prison.