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How Old Are You Now?

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How Old Are You Now?

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"She struggled to her feet, mind clouded with bewilderment. It was nothing new to her. Same scene every morning or day, what ever time it was when she came to. It became her routine- at night fade to unconsciousness feeling found, in the morning wake to the sting of reality feeling terribly lost. Today was different. Today the sting hurt more, today she needed a change. It is her birthday."

Cover Page Footnote

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HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?

by Chuck Mitrano

She struggled to her feet, mind clouded with bewilderment. It was nothing new to her. Same scene every morning or day, what ever time it was when she came to. It became her routine - at night fade to unconsciousness feeling found, in the morning wake to the sting of reality feeling terribly lost. Today was different. Today the sting hurt more, today she needed a change. It is her birthday.

What the hell did she care, she was lost. She didn't know where she wanted to go, how to get there, or who to turn to for guidance. All she had was thirty bucks she had earned last night for ten minutes work and planned to spend at Seven Towers, but not this time. This time she meant it, she was leaving.

She gathered her small bag and walked along the street looking for the answer. People looked at her and occasionally barked out an obscenity or two in her direction. She met their comments with a cold hard stare and then a grin as the rain began crashing down across her soiled face and hands.

Today is her birthday. Everything was new and nothing could bring her down. Not a numb right arm, the insults from passers by or the rain. Night had begun to settle in when she found her answer in a run-down train station. She darted up to the ticket window, reached into her bag to pull out her money and quickly pulled her hand out after she had been pricked by a sharp object. As her expression turned to anger and disgust, she clutched the instrument and considered throwing it on the ground and stomping it. Then she restrained herself and gave the man ten bucks to get to the next stop. Today is her birthday.

As she stepped onto the well-lit train and out of the driving rain, she was sure where she was heading. As the train chugged along she saw Seven Towers and knew the task was going to be difficult. Tears began rolling down her face as she grasped her right arm and rocked back and forth. She popped up from her seat and yelled at the top of her lungs. People just looked at her. No one offered help or tried to calm her, they stared as she panted frantically. As soon as the train came to the stop she ran to the ticket window and bought a ticket back to where she had left.

It is her birthday and she wants to be home for her birthday.

She ran onto the train and darted to the back where she wouldn't be bothered by anyone. She knew they would just look at her funny and think she was crazy, and she didn't need to be treated like that on her birthday.

The train passed the scenic Seven Towers and she felt at ease. She was home. Her heart began to pound at the excitement of her homecoming. Today was her birthday and birthdays meant celebrations. She was going to celebrate.

The train stopped and she was in the alleyway. As she passed through the crowded alley way, she wasn't abused like she was on the street, she was welcomed. Everyone knew her and greeted her. This was her home and she was glad to be with her family on her birthday.

She walked through a doorway and past a few people huddled in a corner slapping their arms. As she made her way through the room, she was looking for her birthday gift. Sweat was pouring down her face and her heartbeat was like a drum roll. She knew there had to be a gift for her there. They had never forgotten her birthday. They she found her prize. White gold and pearls. She frantically dug into her bag, pulled out the remainder of her money and bought herself a present. She grabbed the sharp instrument that had angered her before and embraced it. She wanted to become one with the object.

The sweat drenched her body and the anticipation of receiving her birthday gift mounted to a high. She stabbed the instrument into her pin cushion arm and an instant ease came over her. Today was her birthday.

This birthday was different, just like she knew it would be. Her eyes began to roll in her head, the sweat became worse than it ever was, blood spouted from her ears, mouth and arm. She never experienced a birthday like this before. Instead of fading into unconsciousness, she was smacked in the face with the cold hard brick of reality. She had never had a fix go this bad.

She sprinted out of the room into the alley where once again she was given a warm greeting from her family, blood streaming from her body all the while. As she hobbled down the alley, she came to a halt and dropped to the ground.

The next morning she woke up and couldn't place exactly where she was. But she knew one thing...today is her birthday.