Jenna's Story, Part I

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

"Jenna slid the needle into her pulsing brachial vein; she always used medical terms she had learned before she dropped out of school, at least the ones that she remembered from that long ago. The prick of the needle and the rush of meth that flooded into her veins when she pushed the plunger down didn’t bother her anymore. They were just minor inconveniences. She could feel it melt into her blood and run along the pathways of her body to her brain. Jenna fell back into the green beanbag chair on the floor in front of her mirror. It was taking longer than normal for the life to come back to her when she shot up, but it would come eventually; the waiting is what bothered her."

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She looked at herself in the mirror. Her long orange hair was matted and dingy. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d taken a shower because there weren’t any in the house. Her skin was dotted with small red sores, some more red than others from Jenna’s attempts at popping them, believing they were zits. Her clothes, borrowed from a roommate after he had vomited on her after his morning hit, were tattered and full of holes. Her face was gaunt and white, matching the rest of her thin body. Once when one of her roommates walked in on her naked, he compared her to the people in the Holocaust. She didn’t think she looked that bad, but then again, to her she was just herself, except when she smiled. Her teeth, once brilliantly white thanks to her cosmetic dentist father, were now yellowed and cracked. Some of her back teeth were missing, but you couldn’t see them when she smiled; of course, that didn’t really matter because she hardly smiled.

Jenna felt her hands start to shake and heat begin to run through her veins. She leapt up out of the beanbag chair and paced back and forth in front of her mirror. She shook her hands roughly and ran them through her hair. Her mind was jumbled, trying to think of things to do to calm her jitters. She could go outside, but who knows what time it is, she hasn’t been out of her room in days, let alone near the window; besides it could be cold or rainy and it wouldn’t be a good idea to go outside if it was like that ‘cause then she could get sick; but it could be sunny and warm, and she has been feeling kind of cold lately and she could go to the park, she does like to swing, but the park is a long ways away and she didn’t feel like spending her energy walking. But there was always the bus, she could take the bus to the park, but she didn’t like the bus; there are creepy people on the bus, they all stare at her like they know what she’s thinking; they read her thoughts and follow her where she goes, they sit outside her house and watch her and her roommates, looking for a way to get in; no, she wouldn’t take the bus, she’d just stay home. She could call Charley, she missed Charley, but Charley didn’t want to talk to her, not after what she’d done to her for so many years; maybe she’d go find a roommate, yeah that’s a good idea. Who?

Jenna stopped and looked at the floor; a thin line ran under her feet from her frantic pacing. She was still shaking her hands wildly. She was hot; her room was suffocating. She walked toward the door, intending to follow through with her plan of finding a roommate to entertain her, when someone knocked. It stunned her and she jumped back. Her heart skipped beats, stopping then starting again, not keeping a steady rhythm. She regained her balance and her breath, and opened the door.
“Hey, Jen-Jen.” Ray stood in front of her. He was taller than Jenna by about a foot, but he was scrawny. His arms were awkward and gangly, like his legs. It looked like you could snap him in half, but Jenna knew all too well that he was stronger than he looked. His hair was down to his back, matted like hers only it was blonde. He was wearing a black beanie, something she had never seen him take off. His clothes matched the ones she was wearing; he having been the roommate she borrowed them from since it was also he who had vomited on her that morning. His smile was dingy and cracked, like hers, but it still seemed to radiate with the shine that white teeth gave off. Jenna’s eyes lit up when she saw him. 

“Raymond,” she said with a fast curtsey. “To what honor do I credit this lovely visit?”

“Well, I was just thinking that maybe we could, ya know,” he said trailing off. His eyes gleamed. He reached out and touched her neck. His hands were ice on her skin. They stuck to her, burned her, and she jumped back with a gasp.

“Whoa,” he said, snatching his hand away, “you’re really hot there, aren’t ya?” He laughed and the sound rang in her ears. It was like an echo off a canyon wall. There was no end to it; it just kept ringing and ringing. “Well, what if we...,” She couldn’t hear his words anymore. They were jumbles of echoes and slurs. It was one continuous sound. She looked around the room. Everything was moving around her; a blur of color in every direction. She looked up at Ray. He was right in front of her, then he was across the room; then on the ceiling — never in the same spot twice.

“Stop moving,” she whispered to him. She felt herself stumbling in her place, trying to keep track of where Ray was. Dry ice touched her arms and her chest. “Don’t touch me!” she screamed as she pulled away and ran into the back wall of her room. She fell into the soft squish of the beanbag chair. The room was still running in circles with Ray in the lead. She put her hands over her eyes, but quickly pulled them away. They were fire, scorching everything they touched. She felt the ice on her cheeks and screamed again, but she couldn’t shake the ice away. Her eyes saw Ray again and tried to focus, but he was moving too fast.

“Jen-Jen! Hey Jenna! Are you okay!? Jenna, look at me!” she thought she heard him scream. Her eyes darted around the room and saw the telephone for a split second. She reached out towards it.

“Charley,” she said lightly, eyes still darting widely around the room in search for something stationary. “Call Charley. Charley. Tell her I need her. Call Charley.” She felt the ice let go of her face, but its prints were still there, singed onto her skin. She saw Ray’s ratty figure standing over something; then he would move to another location, then another, always hovering over something. She could hear the ringing sound of his voice, things smashing to the ground, clicking in the corner far away, and then his voice shouting again. She blinked her eyes and they stung, like someone had
poured alcohol on them. The room got blurrier and she closed her eyes again. She didn’t open them, but just stared at the dark flame behind her eyelids. She could hear her heart beating. One thud; then four; then two; then one again; the pauses between the beats got longer and longer as she sat there sprawled out on the beanbag chair. Ray’s voice began to fade away, no longer echoing like the Grand Canyon. She felt something cold touch her, but it didn’t hurt; it was just cold. She sighed and kept her eyes closed. Jenna saw something walking towards her from far off. It was walking slowly through the black fire of her body. It was a girl with dark hair and a bright friendly smile. It was Charley, she was sure of it.

“Charley,” she whispered, trying to reach out to her best friend. Charley reached her hand out toward Jenna, but they were too far away from each other to touch. Charley slowly disintegrated in front of her. Her mind went black and all Jenna could hear or see was the black fire that engulfed her body.