Webster Street

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She packed her things and wearily sighed her farewells in the expanding light of morning. She kissed me and I could taste her mouth and the holes of her heart filling with alcohol one lonely Friday night. She hugged me tightly and I felt the burden of her book bag dragging her down faster than whatever useless degree she decides to pursue. She drove off and I’ve already designed her “I went to college and all I got was this disappointment” novelty tee shirt.

This was two months ago, but the troubles began the moment she decided on the university. Her parents swelled with pride and their house has since settled into a perpetual state of orange and black. This was inevitable after the tacky sweatshirts, neon logo stickers, and the orange car that gives off a shade that, in my opinion, is a terrible match. The car that took her away from me.

I guess you could say that we were having problems prior to her leaving. She grew distant and threw herself into the laps of her friends and seemingly endless school activities. Attentiveness became more and more fleeting each day, like a bird mocking me as it ascends from the ground and gets a little too close to the sun. Perhaps she prepared early for a departure to a place in which I do not belong. Even still, I can’t shake the feeling that she just doesn’t care.

Her first visit home brings little relief. After a long catching up with her parents, we make our way back to her bedroom. “I’ve missed you, Stevie.” She holds me close, but only briefly. I lie on her bed, quietly anticipating, hoping, and pleading for any affection. Our disconnectedness takes form in the book she has chosen, written in a language I do not understand. Le chat gris dort toute la journée. I close my eyes and recount her touch; how our bodies intertwined under summer sheets. She could smother me with her soothing voice and I would not mind. A voice that once spoke only of me now fills with pointless academia babble. She never stays for long. Her friends filter back into town and she runs off until all hours of the night. By the time she crawls into bed, I am too tired for talking. I pretend to be too tired for much of anything she enjoys, just to teach her a lesson.

Oh, how I miss the snuggling. What good has teaching ever done anyway?

A closet full of clothes and she can only find sweatpants. All of hair on her head inspires her no further than a ponytail. It swings like a golden string, so tight it seems to protrude straight from her skull. If that were so, pulling it may

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end my competition against her brain. She has grown less fond of my pulling her hair. Taking my usual position on the bed, inconveniently and irreversibly in her blind spot, I think of that skirt. Those jeans. Perfect to latch onto without skipping the view. The perfect combination of form and function. The only function allotted for sweatpants, I have learned, is eating ice cream dangerously close to a laptop screen. As if they haven’t taken enough from me, her school materials get more food from her than I do these days. Cookie crumbs line the bindings of books. Cheese-dusted fingers caress uncaring pencils. Pizza-greased calculators solve the mystery of her new calorie intake. These long weeks have faded the memory of her cooking from my tongue. Months of fresh, home cooked meals. Occasionally frozen fish sticks, but still made with love for me. Who could complain? Well, I didn’t complain then. She let’s Domino’s do all of the cooking now. I gave thought to her cooking for someone else, but who can be too jealous of the guy who just made off with sweatpants and fish sticks?

Perhaps in an effort to mimic our current status, her bedroom is always messy. It’s as if signing your left away to years of busywork and debt excuses you from the important things in life. The clothes of beauties-past line the floor. It’s as if she has broken free from her cocoon and emerged, not quite as a butterfly, but as a lowly moth that I can’t seem to capture now that she has found her wings. Capture her. A thought: Like the simple moth, she has merely become enthralled with a light, which seems promising, but ultimately is a meaningless distraction. She is under an enchantment that is being dished to generation after generation in the form of stickers and pullovers that brand each one who choose to get in line for the slaughterhouse. They are all sent to go after these crazy dreams, only to return home with their tails tucked between their legs. I have to save her. I have to save us. As she stumbles over her words by the window, I plot my construction of a grand gesture.

Les animaux sortent pour jouer.

She wakes me to say that she is leaving. In my half-conscious state, I can still make out the obligation in her touch. Her car vanishes around the corner and I pull the same act across the sea of lifeless linens, strutting out the front door to retrieve her once and for all. Things would be different this time. I should have never let her go, but going after her now must hold some merit, considering how far I had to go. Heat leaps from the pavement and is little help for calming me down. The occasional tree pats my shoulder reassuringly with its shade and I keep moving forward. When I see her, she does not see me. She is wearing a playful dress, her face buried in a book beside a fountain. For the first time in what seems like a lifetime, I really see her. My body was already moving closer to her by the time my mind caught up with it. The air was calm and I was ready. The car hit hard.
I like to imagine she ran deliriously towards my body as I lie there, wishing I were back on her bed. I'm not sure of the details, but she came. I heard her exclaim my name and I didn't need anything else. "There has never been a love truer than theirs," they would say. Who would say this exactly, I am not sure, but they would say it nonetheless. "They looked so peaceful as they lay together one last time." Our two figures finally reconnecting against that blazing asphalt. "She was crying, but he was happy. They were happy." She and her cat.