

The Awakening

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1.

Darkness. Footsteps. My alarm clock's soft click announces 3AM. The doorknob turns slowly. I sit up on my bed, confused. Why is anyone coming into my room at 3AM? The nurses aren't supposed to wake us for at least another hour.

A second or two. The door opens, allowing me a quick look at the intruder as she pauses in the dimly lit hall, trying to make out the room. A gorgeous young girl. Long blond hair – almost white –, skinny, pale, afraid. Dressed in a slightly too large coat. *Who is she? Why is she here?* The fear in her beautiful dark eyes seems to ease as she realized she is finally inside the room. With a soft creak, the door closes, leaving us veiled in darkness. I slightly resent the fact I can no longer see her. I keep her image before my eyes, perfect, unfading, but can't bring myself to speak. So she stands in the darkness and I listen to her heartbeat, its volume and my fear growing louder by the second. Finally, she moves towards me. My eyelids shut automatically, as she sits down on the chair besides my bed. I feel a thrill of excitement as a strand of her hair brushes against my arm.

“I know you're awake, Paul”, she whispers in a voice almost as beautiful and mysterious as her. It is different – refreshingly different. Everyone here seems to speak in a strange accent. When I'd commented on it, my fat nurse

had laughed and explained it was “British”. I didn’t know what “British” was, so I didn’t ask. This girl’s voice doesn’t sound “British”.

“I know you’re awake, Paul.” “I *know* you’re awake, Paul.” How could she know? She hadn’t seen me staring at her had she? Maybe she’d seen me close my eyes I realize, opening them in panic. “I know you’re awake, *Paul*.” Who the hell is Paul? She’d mistaken me for someone, I suppose. She had come to the wrong room, thinking I was the man she was looking for. Yet I can’t bring myself to send her away, to rid myself of her comforting presence, her wonderful smell. It is unlike any smell I know, any smell that fills this god-forsaken hospital.

“Is there any way you could ever forgive me, Paul?” What is it with this Paul guy? What’s going on? Does she think I’m him? For a second I contemplate telling her she must be confused, but the thought of her leaving fills me with fear.

“Please. You have no idea how hard this has been – waking up without you, *living* without you.” She pauses. We sit in silence for nearly a minute, her hand resting on the side of my bed. Even her silence is beautiful, indescribable. The way this stranger sits next to me, her hair brushing against the side of the bed, her finger tapping on the night table nervously yet gently, her gaze lowered. I want to ask who she is, find out why she is here. Finally she speaks again.

“Don’t tell me you don’t remember. They told me you’d lost your memory after the accident – but there’s no way you could have forgotten this.” She pauses questioningly, as if I knew what *this* was.

Silence. Almost a minute passes. She brushes a strand of blond hair off her face.

“You remember who I am, don’t you?” Her voice is filled with uncertainty, but she doesn’t wait for me to answer. It is as if she were too afraid to hear the truth, as if she already knew what the answer would be.

“Even if you don’t remember anything, things can work, Paul. We can make them work. It’s just like a small border between your old life – *our* old life – and the new one. We can cross this border together, Paul. We can destroy it. I’ll help you remember everything.” Her hopeful eyes fill with tears as she pauses to catch her breath. I can’t watch her suffer any longer. I can’t let her stay; oblivious to the fact she is speaking to the wrong person. I sit up slowly, knowing I have to tell her I’m not him. Her eyes sparkle and she grasps my hand. A smile flashes across her pure face. She leans in expectantly, her eyes huge, beautiful, and mesmerizing. I shiver slightly as her cold palms press against mine, filled with expectation.

My voice shakes.

“Who the hell is Paul?”

The smile disappears. She pulls away her hand. Her eyes widen even more.

For a second she seems too shocked to cry.

Then she buries her face in her palms and sobs quietly.

Standing up, she smiles a sad smile.

“I’ll always love you.”

With a soft sob she walks to the door, her hand brushing against mine one last time.

2.

My favorite fat nurse wakes me at 5AM. They start waking patients at 4, but sometimes you can bribe the nurses with a box of chocolates. I regularly leave candy from my visitors on my night table to ensure the nurses will wake me last and save me the horror of getting up at 4. After all, what is a box of chocolates compared to an hour of precious sleep?

With a cheery smile, the nurse turns on the buzzing hospital lights and plops the medicine tray down on my nightstand. She hands me a small medicine bottle. I turn it over in my hand, reading the label.

prescription: *klonopin*

dosage: 2x a day, prevents panic attacks

DAVIS, Paul

post - traumatic amnesia patient

Oh. I realize.

I am Paul.