

Spinning Spirits

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It's not spinning; that would be too gorgeous, too symmetrical, too ordered. It's slipping away, caught in that fateful moment where your heel hits the pavement and, expecting to find a soft cushion, instead finds nothing but air. I'm falling now, sliding across the pavement, constantly in motion. The world looks at me but doesn't see. They look through me.

I'm trying to pick up the shards of my life, shattered like the cheap beer glasses that serenade me with their lullabies. I see meaning at the end of the glass. Gazing through the sepia-toned bottom I see hope, a glimpse of what my life could have been. For a moment there is silence as the pale brew rushes down the edge of my glass into my awaiting throat. The contrast is too shocking. I'm glad when the buzz finally hits and drowns out the voices. Time used to be measured in friends, then glasses, now cases. Days blur into nights and I occasionally awaken by the side of the road with the taste of stale vomit on my lips. The mouthwash serves two purposes.

The revolving door to my doctor's office gets caught. My family doctor is too cheap to fix it. Why even put a door that spins outside your office? To remind us we never really leave. Even when you're sick they have something to say, advice to give, solutions to sell. A pill for all of life's problems. Swallowing pills burns my heart more than the alcohol. I wait for the secretary to come release me from between the glass doors. I stare at the doctor's Porsche in the parking lot.

He is a squat man with an ugly, balding head that shines brightly as he nods. I am on centre stage, captured in the reflection of the light. I slip my tiny feet into my slippers and stand, fully erect, suspended in the air by my outstretched arms and leg, while downward facing toes propel me upright. As he speaks I began to step, growing bolder with each diagnosis till I am gliding, bending, leaping and finally twirling. My left foot firmly rooted in the earth, my right gracefully encircling. Centripetal force pulls me in, ordering my life into blister packs. Centrifugal force thrusts out my voices, splattering them on the walls of the offices like incomplete rorschachs. He has stopped speaking. My voices return to fill his silence.

I leave the office, prescriptions in hands, all three copies. I cut through the park behind his office. I notice a glimmer and reaching down I pull up an exquisite diamond ring. It's beautiful. My face is replicated by its angles: a hundred of me, a hundred possibilities. It must be worth at least a few month's rent, plus new clothes for the kids, maybe even some computer training. A chance at a new life. A promise.

I burst through the door at home, smiling. He greets me in his usual fashion with a glance from the couch, a tilt of his bottle. I notice for the first time the floor is filthy. I walk towards him. I hold my left hand out. "Well you better take the kids when you go," he grunts. I grab his hands and he's encircling me, the beat of our hearts keeps rhythm as we waltz our way through the hallway. I see flashes of a smile as he dips me.

The screaming of my girl disrupts our dreams and her demanding cries drown out my own needs. I leave him and rush to her. There is no formula, only empty bottles. She can't be soothed. He's angry now. The flash of his hand leaves us both on the floor. Staring at my ring, she eventually lays still. He towers over our prone forms; his hand pulls my fingers off my baby. He grasps the ring with his fingers. He pulls. "I'm going out."

The cool bottle soothes my aching face while the smooth spirits inebriate my soul. Each draught drowns out the roaring in my head. My auditory companions return, vengeful at my neglect. I serenade them with silken sips. Before I can empty the bottle it leaps from my hands to join its friends in exile. It embraces death, consuming itself and others, its remaining lifeblood oozing out. I stare at the ruins. My baby begins to cry.