

Fishin'

Half in the shadow, half not. Half hidden, half exposed. My knees were pulled to my chest, and my back was against the wall. Cold crept in the apartment through holes where mortar had given up and let go of brick. Each blast of wind brought long skeletal fingers that held me tight and forced their way inside every gap in my clothing.

People moved and talked around me, a little laughter but not much. A girl walked in the door; her long dark hair swung with every movement. Low slung jeans gave me a glimpse of the boxers she wore underneath. A tight t-shirt clung to her slim frame and breasts. The men stared. I remained half hidden.

The girl walked over to the man sitting by the blue nitrous oxide tank. Lowering herself to the floor, she sat like a guy, her sneakers flat on the ground and her knees bent. One arm rested on top of her leg while her other hand reached for a nitrous-filled balloon. She smiled slightly before inhaling the contents of the pink latex.

Another woman walked in the door, leaving it open behind her. She perched precariously on the arm of a tattered couch, the only furniture in the room. "Ya know, we hafta work together on this," she slurred.

“Look at that mess.” She pointed outside the door. From my position, I could see the piles of paper and trash bags that had begun to overrun the carpet in the hall. “How we gonna keep the rats away with trash like that?” Her hands moved violently while she talked. The question was met with a few vacant looks.

Warmth eased through my body, relaxed my muscles, and left me limp. Colors and light swirled in my head as pills and liquor coursed their way through my veins. I was hidden.

A man sat in the corner of the room with a green army gas mask strapped snugly to his head. Another man lit the end of a homemade contraption so that the masked fellow could draw the smoke through a pipe into the mask. Everyone in the room looked up to him. They considered him a superhero. He couldn't leap high buildings in a single bound. In fact, it's possible that he couldn't even move. He could hold his smoke, though. I couldn't remember ever seeing his face. We were both hidden.

The brunette continued to suck in nitrous. The men continued to stare at her. The rat woman had given up; at least, I didn't see her anywhere. There was only one other woman in the room, a large blond with a voice to match her attitude. She was busy explaining all the pictures of children around the room. “The state came in and got ‘em,” she said while she lit a joint. “My goddamn parents got all five of ‘em now. They won't even let me see ‘em.” A man standing beside her nodded as he leaned over to look down her shirt. I remained hidden.

Suddenly, someone yelled, “She's fishin'!” With sighs, the men began to get up and move towards the nitrous tank. I tried to move. I wanted to help her, but I couldn't. My body wouldn't obey. Through a break in the crowd, I could see the brunette flopping around like a fish. Her eyes rolled back as the seizure grabbed a tighter hold. A few faces peered at her while a couple of men bent down and held her arms.

It was then that a man walked toward me and roughly picked me up. I tried to protest, but the commotion in the room drowned out what few weak words I could manage. Busy with the brunette, the others didn't see him lift me from the shadows.

He took me past the party. I was completely numb and couldn't feel the contact of his body. We moved down the hall. I felt like I was floating as he carried me down the dark hall. I stopped trying to protest.

He walked into a bedroom and flopped me on a mattress with dirty covers. I closed my eyes and lost myself in the darkness. When I opened them again, I was slightly surprised to find his face in front of mine. For a few seconds, or a few hours, I watched the colors and lights stream off his head. It wasn't until he walked out the door and zipped his pants that I realized I was naked.