

Zoe is the kind of person you lose easily

by Victoria Cooper

His fingers repetitively rubbed the back of her neck. She knew what it meant and she knew what he wanted but she felt nothing. Not the feeling that he wanted from her anyway. His motion of touch made her recoil and disappear into her body. She could see herself floating inside the vessel of her body; protected from him and his repetitive fingers. Constant and abrasive; somehow her withdrawal made her safe. She had been in that safe place before and she knew it so well.

“Shall we go upstairs?” he whispered.

The voice was seductive, luring her back into the room. She wasn't ready to come back, she wanted to remain in that place where words and actions drift downstream. She went further away, eyes shut tight now. It would stop if she kept inside herself, it would stop if she breathed more quietly. It would stop.

“I've really missed you this week, you know”

Her body was lifeless now, like a deflated balloon; empty. She shouldn't feel this way, she knew that. Soothed, appreciated; even desired that is what he wanted her to be. But she felt none of those things. She reached for her phone to break the spell and the time flashed up before her, in front of a photo showing smiling eyes and laughter. The moment captured of carefree happiness; two people exuding life and youth and joy. Her very best friend, partner in drunken weekend ventures. That photo saved to remind her of all the good memories and bond of friendship that nothing could destroy.

Friends since school, inseparable giggling, shrill, excited voices and deep understanding of each other. They would always be there for one another. She saved up in whispered slurred evenings recounts of her current passion; who he was, what he said to her word for word. Advice given, mostly ignored. Then commiseration, consolation, total understanding that they always had each other; as they downed more prosecco and margherita. United in discovering life's joys, terrors and sadness as they flew nests and moved away. Sharing the best parts, but always finding it was the sad things in life that united them the most. Words had not been necessary but her presence in everything had been like oxygen.

He followed the direction of her gaze and a flicker of hesitation penetrated the nape of her neck. The silence was ringing in her ears. She navigated her way to the settings page and pressed delete on the screen saver. He watching her all the while; the rotating motion of his fingers continued to bore into her.

“Really? I thought you loved that photo”

She stiffly stood up and turned around to see him fully. There were tiny beads of sweat on his upper lip and she noticed that his fingers were still restless next to him.

“No, not really” she said flatly. “Zoe is the kind of person you lose easily”.