

The Lover's Addict

by Victoria Watson

She stood gazing out the window, watching for that familiar walk to turn the corner into the street and continue determinedly under the soft glow of the street lamps. She no longer felt trepidation when waiting for his footfall reaching the front door. She no longer felt the hairs go up on her arm as she listened out for his gentle tread on each stair. She was resigned to him now she thought. He was just part of her day, just like the sun spiking between the bedroom curtains, then the gradual rising hum of traffic as it built up in the street below, and finally the individual door slams as each resident made their way out of their flat to head off into the day. Only then could she feel the building breathe a sigh of relief as it shook itself free of its contents, like a dog drying itself, ridding all unnecessary excesses.

The day would pass somehow and then he would be here, just like before, coins jangling in his pocket, and then he would be gone. The simple rhythm of her life ebbing and flowing within the confines of a Victorian semi-detached.

She sometimes considered the different lives, the parallel universes all inhabiting these same bricks, doors and windows. Each floor containing their own sets of blood, muscle and sinew all striving to reach the end of another day a little wearier maybe, a little battle scarred from the stresses and strains but none the less all existing within the same parameters. All just trying to be. She knew very little about her neighbours, only what she could construe from the occasional shouts, scuffed footsteps above or their repetitive movements in and out of their flats like mice in a wheel.

She listened out for the familiar rise and fall of voices greeting each other on the stairs, a hoot of laughter or the chink of glass bottles being heaved through front doors. It was comforting somehow. The disembodied voices all around her, just getting on with their business while she remained here alone; watching and waiting.

He would bring her chocolates of course; or maybe some flowers, something to make their cheap transaction slightly less vulgar she thought. Something to make himself believe that he was a good man. He would give her that look beneath his eyebrows and then tighten his tie she thought. Yes he did believe that.

Afterwards when it was all over, she would watch him buttoning his shirt, his fingers expertly feeding through each button while his gaze rested on her body. She did not feel alive in those moments. She was not sure if even the building would know she was there, as she felt it would not be able to pick up her heartbeat or the sound of her breath. In those moments she was just a trick of the light.

She waited until he had left and heard the door hush back into its frame, until she had slid the shower screen across the bath, walked into the kitchen combing her hair as she went. She waited until she was sat down at the kitchen table, cup in hand; for it was only then that she felt alive again.

They had met through an app on her phone, but she could not remember which one or even his profile picture or how he had described himself. It quickly transpired to something else though. Something that felt tight in her chest, that made her step back from the window and stay in the shadows. She had often wondered how or if it would end, would he just not turn up one evening, would she wait all night to see the purple sky blooming above the rooftops like a bruise just to make sure? She had to keep those thoughts in check though, any idea of the tightness softening, any thoughts of a different day, had to be pushed to the back of her mind. She did not want to feel disappointed. Not again.

She knew he was addicted to her, incapable of giving her up without some kind of substitute. She stared at the bottom of her coffee cup and the molten grains gave no consolation as they swirled around in continuum. She was like them she thought, nowhere to go but around. She was just a drug that made him return each day; no way out and nowhere to go.