

Ghost Ride the Whip

You look at your phone, and the words in the grey box stare back at you.

“It’s over. I’m sorry. Just wasn’t feeling it. You understand. You’re a great person, and I know you’ll find that special one!”

You set the phone down in the comforter, thinking that your drunken blue boxes from last night are already embarrassing enough, especially since they stopped responding Saturday. You don’t even remember how many texts you sent. There’s at least one too-long paragraph for a thing that only lasted a month. You want to throw the phone, but that’s expensive. Puffing out some air while setting it firmly on your nightstand would have to do; it’s the one they helped you pick out on your IKEA date.

You rub your temples and pinch your nose as you do the morning ritual. Sit on the bed and wake up from the waking up. Time to go to work, in the Monday-est state you’ve ever had. Your body feels heavy, and your head is foggy. The shower helps to lighten your muscles and bones, and the morning news from your smart speaker burns the fog away in anger at something a senator said about nothing.

Your feet are heavy as you shuffle your grey crew socks along the carpet. You’ve made the erroneous mistake of drinking coffee before having the shower, so the bathroom will be graced by your presence twice at least twice this morning. Doesn’t matter, nothing mattered. The shattered glass in the sink was too heavy of a metaphor for you, so you left the kitchen quickly.

The brush on your head neattens the baby-waves starting to show in your head, and that’s the first thing that makes you smile that morning. You take extra time in the bathroom mirror

staring at what exactly in your brown face could make them not want to see you anymore, but the self-depreciation is interrupted by the chirping of your phone from the bedroom. You're late for work.

You grab your mask after throwing on an un-ironed polo shirt and grey slacks. You lock the door and shoot towards the elevator before realizing you forgot your bag. You run back, waste time cursing yourself, and grab the messenger, luckily remembering your undercharged phone.

It's a gorgeous day outside when you make it downstairs. Sun beaming and birds chirping on a dogwood tree beginning to bloom into springtime. Unfortunately, your car was parked underneath the tree, and it's deep blue exterior is covered in a caked layer of pollen. Seeing the yellow powder reminds you that you ran out of Allegra-D a couple of days ago. Air conditioning it is. You notice too, a deep dent in the back bumper of the car, with some red paint scraped into it. Something else expensive to fix.

You get in and turn the car on, waiting for the bluetooth to pair to your phone before driving off. Sounds like you choose a good playlist to shuffle from too. No R&B, no neo-soul, just Three 6 Mafia, Gucci, and the road. Every single one of your favorite songs, played and your finger gunned at imaginary enemies you conjured in your head, and sometimes at the other people on the road who couldn't drive. You shout and yell lyrics that would disappoint your grandmother at 8:30 am into the highway winds, where you lower your volume as the traffic slows to a crawl. Probably an accident up ahead, you think, especially when the traffic comes to a halt.

You take the time and use the ambient traffic noise to look over at an empty passenger seat, to think about the talks you had, and the things you did in the backseat, all in a month. You grab your phone from the cupholder and shoot a quick apology to your boss. You quiet the music, and put on a switch over to the local radio for any news about what's holding up the highway so much. A local reporter is on, interviewing a person about a murder of their brother.

"No one deserved to be taken away like this," the voice said. "I always said to walk with someone home..." The man took a breath. "And if we find you, I want revenge! No forgiveness, no apologies, no nothing!" The anguish in the voice translated well over your speakers.

The reporter cut back in, "Police are currently looking for a vehicle of interest, said to be a deep blue Honda Accord. Witnesses say that the car struck the victim, sending him into the air and crashing on the ground, where the driver then reversed into the victim as they tried to get up off of the ground. You're asked to call Crime Stoppers with any information."

What a city this was. Sprawled out beyond belief, filled with more empty buildings than occupied, and suburbs stretching into all directions, filled with white fearfals and Black hopefuls, all corralling a city of white hopefuls and Black fearfals. It was the name of the victim that made your blood run cold then as you spun your thoughts around.

The same as the name of the person in your phone. The one who previously occupied this seat. On this Monday-ass Monday, the day had simply started out wrong. You turned up the music to drown out the fact that your thoughts were spinning out faster than your fingers could scroll down social media to confirm what you already suspected. Unfortunately, you would miss the rest of the news that morning, even the happy story of a child who saved his grandma from a

speeding car. You looked down to turn the AC up, and noticed that the passenger airbag light was off. Something more to get looked at.

As you returned to your flustered scrolling, the traffic began to lighten back up, and you put your phone down again for safety. You didn't hear or see the passenger seat adjust itself as you refocused on the road and Lil Wayne's lighter clicked through the Pioneer speakers. The buzz from your phone distracted you from the brush of fingers on your thigh, and the police lights from behind your car stole your attention entirely from the reflection of a red-eyed, white undead face in the passenger side mirror.