**Daydreamer**

The whole room went silent, ten years leading up to the last ten seconds. “Get out,” the professor said, quite calmly, looking past eleven rows of students straight at me.

The cold air rushed through my jacket as I stepped outside. The streetlights were just flickering on despite the fact the sun had been set for almost an hour now. The fluorescent store sign cast a colourful negative on the white snow that covered a thin layer of the ground. I walked away purposeful, even though I lacked a known destination. I turned left down Proteus, then right down Novo Street, and walked straight until the snowflakes had coated the brim of my hat. They started melting onto my face contrasting my drying hot tears.

There was a small hotel on the right side of the street, and I sat in the lobby for three hours.

I couldn't go back to my dorm, couldn't go home to my parents, I didn’t know where my friends were, so I just sat there, and watched the world go on.  The lobby was old and warm. Their high ceilings had gold accents, and light pink roses sat on every table. It reminded me of my Aunt Tracy’s wedding. Everyone was smiling and polite, even though they had been talking behind each other’s back minutes before; about who gained weight, and whose son knocked up a teenager. I hated that wedding; everything seemed like a fabricated painting of what a wedding was supposed to look like. This lobby was like that, what a fancy lobby is supposed to look like.

A man with a dark grey coat sat down beside me, he was on a loud phone call. From hearing half the conversation, I understood that they were discussing numbers, and stocks, and the market. Just hearing those words made my stomach ache, replaying flashbacks from school earlier that day.

Did I really say all those terrible things out loud? It seemed more like a dream than a memory.  The class wasn’t bad, the teacher was a nice person and did not deserve to have a student storm out screaming profanities.

The man stood up and walked away, still on the phone. The world seemed to go on whether I was a part of it or not.

Next, a woman with a big blue purse entered the lobby. Behind her was the bell hop carrying three matching blue bags. The woman wore a long white coat and black boots with a red bow on them (that matched the shade of her lipstick). She looked beautiful, confident and elegant. She took out a white cane and started tapping the ground in front of her as she moved forward. When she got to the middle of the lobby, a man rushed up to meet her, addressing her by name.

“Ms. Scott, welcome back, we have your room ready on the ninth floor to your liking. Is there anything else I can get you?” The woman looked right over the head of the short man talking to her.

“Thank you, I’m fine, I would like to go up to my room now, I’ve had a busy day.”

“I hope your flight wasn't delayed,” the man said, “Due to the snow and all.”

Ms. Scott started walking towards the elevator.

I watched her walk across the lobby and thought about what her life was like. Did she go to school? Had she ever had children? Been married? Fallen in love? Followed her dreams and innermost desires? I tried to imagine everything that had happened to her before this very moment. Did she have a plan? Is she where she saw herself when she was nine?

Maybe our lives are the same, maybe in fifty years I will walk into a foreign city and be addressed by name. Maybe one day my shoes will match my lipstick.

At nine years old, I had my whole life planned out. I knew what I wanted to do when I was older, I imagined my dream house, I had names for my first five children, all written down in a Barbie lock diary.  I wanted to be a lawyer; I wanted to help people. When I was seven, my Dad was hit by a car, he broke his leg and I remember a lawyer coming to my house and saying, “Go on a big vacation, treat yourselves to an expensive dinner; sometimes bad things happen for good reasons.” So we did, we traveled Europe for three months, Dad’s leg healed fully and I decided that I wanted to be a lawyer, so I could help other families go on vacation too.

After a month, everything went back to normal at home, the rest of the money went into a savings account to send me to university, and I started pretending to be a lawyer to my stuffed animals.

The clock in the corner of the lobby started to chime marking 10 o'clock and the room was almost empty now. I buttoned my jacket over most of my face and made my way back into the cold. The snow was now heavier and the wind was blowing strong. The footprints I made in the snow were swept away before I could take another step. I put my hands in my pockets to warm up but I found  my university student card instead. I dropped it down a sewer drain. I could not see where I was going, or what I was going to do now, but I knew 100% that I never wanted to see that card again.

It brought back my stomach ache though, much worse this time, but it felt more justified. I was hurt by reality, by the brainwashing expectation that you need to make all life decisions at nine years old. That if you cannot see your future, then you won’t have one. With all my confusion and uncertainty, I felt no regret throwing away my student card. Watching my student card fall felt incredible, I felt a thousand pounds lighter. I took my notebook out of my purse and tried to shove it down the sewer drain too. It was too thick and wouldn’t fit into the tiny cracks, so I sat down in the snow and ripped the book apart, page by page, shoving each one down the hole.

Once the back cover was gone, I felt different, lighter; the nagging stress that consumed my brain suddenly didn’t bother me anymore. I lay back in the snow and let the snowflakes fall on my face. My toes and fingers were numb but my heart was beating fast and strong. I thought to myself,

“I hope the woman back at the hotel is happy right now, I hope she’s asleep with nothing left to dream about, because she has everything she ever wanted. Did she see herself in this place at nine years old? Maybe never knowing what was in front of her until she reached out and touched it helped her take the future as it came to her, three seconds or three years from now. I wonder if that’s why she’s so successful.”

I then closed my eyes and began to daydream again for the first time in ten years of what my life could be.

(Word Count: 1221)