

When Dreams Come Knocking

by Jennifer Donnell

I wake to a gentle knocking sound, like a human alarm clock- *knock, knock, knock*. I sit up in bed wearing a striped pink and white shirt and mismatched print panties, realizing I kicked off all my covers while I slept. I pull them around me, the fuzzy beige blanket and the dark brown animal print comforter. I remember my nightmare, how I dreamt I was teaching yoga at the same location as another instructor. She was mean.

I listen to the knocking noise and decide it's either the men working on the repossessed house across the street, or my neighbor and his girlfriend making sweet love in their bathroom, pounding into one another against our common wall. I've learned to ignore most of their sounds, even when he drinks too much and wakes me up at six o'clock in the morning, vomiting. He's barely in his twenties, but already tuning out the beauty and madness of the world. I notice he gets high before he seduces his girlfriend. The smoke comes through the vent and fills the bottom level of my home. I burn the incense they don't, to hide the odor from friends who stop by. Occasionally, people still manage to smell it and are disappointed I haven't offered them a joint. It seems water and tea aren't enough for anyone, anymore.

It reminds me how I used to listen to music incessantly as a teenager. Every waking hour included my radio, blasting loudly in my bedroom. I did homework to it, danced, imagined the future, fought with my parents, and ate little Ritz crackers with cheese. Mostly, I pretended I was at a rock concert, in the front row, seductively catching the eye of the fit, longhaired rockstar I most liked. I didn't factor in the fact that his interest in me would be

illegal, as I was jailbait- and not even jailbait, as I started listening to his songs when I was barely thirteen. He was the same rockstar who would later gain weight and overdose, alone, in a hotel room. I did manage to meet him in person once, years before his eventual demise. I was fifteen, but my best friend could drive and we were lucky enough to get into a small venue. The band eventually appeared out front, and I had to run to the car for my camera. I was terrified he'd leave, my beautiful sexy rockstar, but he waited patiently. I took a photo with him and the rest of the band.

“You're such a good musician.” I told the frizzy haired drummer, who looked at me like I was a teenager girl who didn't know what I was talking about- which I didn't.

When my friend took a photo of me pulled tight against the lead singer, my crush of crushes, I knew it was my chance, “What are you doing after this?” I asked, faking a self confidence I didn't truly possess at fifteen. I didn't seem to realize that I wasn't old enough for any of the clubs they'd go to. I'd heard that fans sometimes followed the band to an after-party. Once, at an amphitheater show, he even told the crowd where they were hanging out. Only that was two years before and the band's popularity had been in sharp decline. Still, wherever they were going, I wanted to go. It wasn't that I was trying to be a scandalous groupie. After-all, I hadn't even kissed a boy yet. I just wanted to be near him, to have my fantasy become real.

“Awww, I'm just going home....” he admitted, rather sheepishly, knowing he was basically admitting he was a boring adult, which ruined the visual I had from metal magazines- that he partied all day and night. He smiled down at me, warmly, gazing directly into my blue eyes, almost as blue as his. I think he could tell I loved him and that he knew he could corrupt me but wouldn't. Besides, he had successful models to choose from. He didn't need teenage girls who didn't know how to kiss, who escaped their parents arguing by

listening to their radio, by imagining themselves in world they knew nothing about.

