

Lines with Billie Holiday

by Lauren Napier

I never fell out of love with him. He just snorted coke off of my counter. Off of my Billie Holiday album no less. Something that happens in no more time than it takes to sigh was enough for me to ask him to leave my apartment and to, ultimately, leave my life.

The partygoers scattered about my studio apartment shift nervously as he leans in to the line that has been laid out for him. Everyone seems to know the result except for him. Is he testing me? The glow of the lamplights illuminate his New York Dolls' inspired attire and the skunk stripe newly dyed in his hair. For a moment it was like time paused, as I saw a flash of the future and the door shutting in his face. I blink. The clock starts to tick again and a few bits of coke still cling to the bristles of his mustache's outline. He looks up and makes eye contact with me.

"Out." I say in a disappointed monotone. "Get out." He doesn't seem to respond. Instead, he just stares at me, like a deer caught in headlights. Handsome and confused.

"Lauren...." he offers in a rough, barely audible voice.

"Out. I mean it." I walk over and open the door for him. No one else exists in this room layered with the silence of my disbelief, their awkwardness, and the clanking of the steam heater. It is just the two of us interrupted by this sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"I didn't think you would care." The excuses start. "I didn't mean to upset you. I didn't..."

I shut the door. I turn around and rest my back against the door. It is almost as if there isn't a wedge of wood between us — I can feel him inches away from me. I can't control the sigh or the tears that

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escape my body. I collect myself enough to walk through the people who are trying to avoid looking at me so intently that it is a wonder the carpet doesn't catch aflame. My best friend has beaten me to the counter to pour me a shot of whiskey. It's not the solution — but it's a temporary fix until my apartment is clear.

Bzzzzzz. My phone is vibrating. It doesn't help his case that the phone is near the corner of the album and there is a line of coke shaking in the wake of his incoming call. I take the shot and sit in the floor amongst friends.

“Play ‘Jolene’.” I ask.

“Of course.” And my shaggy haired guitar-player strums the chords to our favorite song to play together. I sing the familiar lyrics and let the whiskey seep into my blood stream - slowing down my heart rate and clouding my emotions. I will let myself cry tomorrow but for now I will forget that I love him and lose myself in the moment.

