

Preface

Shannon stapled yet another photocopied body part on the wall in front of him. He had spent hours enlarging nipples, shrinking hands, and fifteen good minutes making a freakishly large penis. His Frankenstein-like mural was near complete. Picasso would have been proud.

"When I'm done with the front" Shannon said, "I'm getting started on the right side, then the left side and soon I'll have a funhouse copy of myself."

The irony of Shannon's statement was subtle, but nonetheless noticed. You see heroin had already made a funhouse copy of Shannon, a three-dimensional shadow of the Shannon of yesterday, the all state quarterback well-oiled machine. Shannon was now the has been rock star, two inches from being dead in a grave from a heroin overdose - Shannon.

And yet he always seemed in such good spirits. Each one of us had our own little doppelganger, and each one of our funhouse mirror personalities was born from a different seed -Shannon's from fame, Lilith's from sex, and David's was his lack of a father figure and a mother that bought him prom queen Barbie instead of the infamous G.I. Joe villain Snake Eyes.

Me? No, not the drugs, though they were there, not the sex though it was there, no, not even the violence, although it was there. No, no, no. I suffer from love. Not the hold me all night, kiss me in the morning, ask me how my day at work went sort of love. It was the other kind of love, it was the leave me alone, I hate you, restraining order sort of love. That love in question is Lilith who is with us now, thumbing through some sort of new age, brainy brain food sort of philosophy book. If I am not mistaken, David is in the children's section reading *Where the Wild Things Are*. I, on the other hand, just made myself a hot cup of java in this oh- so- trendy little corner coffee shop. Before me are thirty or forty reprints of art masterpieces from which David and I used to block the line of sight of between us and the circus going on outside.

When I was a different person a long, long time ago, I would come to this bookstore coffee shop on my lunch break and fill up on coffee and scones. It was my only escape from deadlines and order forms, blue ink for clients, black ink for my own use. It was my only escape from ringing phones, jammed printers and of course Danny, little Danny boy. Danny was like me, only rich, only egotistical, only demanding, only delusional - only Danny was nothing like me. He had the position that I went to college for, the position that I had worked for, had the talent for, and for which I had the drive. Danny did not go to college. Danny had not one ounce of artistic ability. Danny did not know the color scheme. Danny did not know who Jean Michelle Basquiat was, or even who Edward Hopper was, or Edvard Munch, for that matter.

However, I apologize. I do tend to get ahead of myself. I do tend to ramble. What we have here is a hostage situation. One perpetrator, three hostages: a sheep, an addict, and an innocent, all held under the gun by a lunatic who was once a normal tax-paying run- of- the- mill, boring citizen. His name is Leo. Pleased to meet you.

According to some random history book that I found in the world history section, in 1913 a man named Gavrillo Princip killed some Archduke named Franz Ferdinand. Also according to that book, Princip was a member of a Serbian terrorist group who called themselves the Black Hand. For quite some time, the Black Hand had wanted to see Ferdinand dead, and when he planned a parade in Serbia (ignoring the warnings from his advisors who said that there was a plot to kill him in Serbia), the time was right. Ferdinand's first mistake was not listening to his advisors.

My first mistake was not listening to my friends.

Ferdinand's next mistake was advertising his parade route.

My next mistake was running around with a media-crazed rock star.

Ferdinand's demise was paved by fate. The first attempt on his life was a bomb, but it failed. The explosion sent people running in frenzy, including the Archduke, including the Black Hand, including Princip. Automobiles chased Princip down side streets and back alleys and lost him when he ran into some random department store. It was a confusing set of events, bombs exploding, cars flying around corners, terrorists running for dear life, and a young Princip, scared and confused. Meanwhile, Ferdinand's car was separated from the army of guards and authorities. Ferdinand, his wife, and his driver were lost on an unfamiliar street and stuck in traffic in front of some random department store, in front of a scared and confused terrorist, and ultimately, in front of a gun. A nineteen-year-old terrorist named Gavrillo Princip killed Ferdinand, his wife and his driver.

Thus, began the Austrian occupation of Serbia, Germany's blank check and the anger of the Triple Alliance and the anger of the Triple Entente. The following year began the first World War, which began millions dead, the Russian Revolution and World War II, Hitler, the Holocaust, genocide, the atomic bomb and the end of a great American depression.

I, like Franz, did not plan to run into my aggressor. It was just the first available getaway route. And there I was stuck, trapped, only to come face to face with Lilith. Lilith is my own private Gavrillo. The name Lilith, by the way, is biblical. Lilith was Adam's first wife. You know, Adam, Old Testament, bad apple, tricked by Eve Adam. Didn't know that Adam had a first wife? Sure did. He couldn't control her because she was of the same dirt as he. She was his equal. She wanted to be on top. Blasphemy, huh? Nowadays, a woman on top is preferred. To make a long story short, Lilith was cast out of the garden and Eve was made from man to be his servant. I believe Lilith spent the rest of her days roaming the countryside harassing men that crossed her path. She haunts mankind. She haunts us in our sleep, in our dreams. This is Lilith's revenge, much like Cain, much like Montezuma. This is where we get wet dreams and the Lilith Fair. This is Lilith in the biblical sense. This is Lilith, in the hole in my heart sense, in the hostage in some oh-so-trendy, brainy brain food bookstore slash coffee shop sense.

I love her, I hate her, but I love her more, and this is how this all really began—rejection and pain, torture in empathy and all of that stupid lost love sonnet sixty-nine stuff. Love begat loss, loss begat pain, pain begat sadness, sadness begat rage, rage begat self-destruction, self-destruction begat selfless destruction, selfless destruction begat regret, regret begat sadness. This is the cycle of life in bookstore coffee shops and dive bars and history books. Amen. So begat a life changed. So begets my memory. So begets your entertainment. Film at eleven. Amen.