

Zwischen Atemzügen und Vergessen

Emptiness, Loss, and a Room in a Love Hotel

The air smelled of stale alcohol and the sickly-sweet scent of fear. His breath was hot against her cheek, but it was the coldness in his eyes that made her blood run cold.

Harlan Crowe was the caretaker of oblivion. For thirty years he had wiped away the filth of strangers at the Eclipse Hotel while the swamp inside him grew deeper and darker. His wife had long since left, and the bitterness within him had spread like a tumor. Her name was Emily Finch, twenty years old, fragile as porcelain. Fleeing a pimp in Boston, she had ended up here, in this cheap refuge suspended between despair and thoughts of the next shot.

He had chosen her the moment she pressed down the worn doorknob. It was the spark in her eyes—pride in the midst of desperation. He hated that spark. He shoved her against the wardrobe, his right hand clamped around her hip, his left pressed against her throat. A greasy strand of hair hung over his left eye, beneath it glinting a gaze that no longer felt anything.

She wore only a thin satin slip, her hands serving as a final, futile shield over her breasts and across her thigh. Her face was a mask of frozen resignation. She had learned not to fight back. Fighting back only made things worse. She waited for him to take what he wanted.

But Harlan hesitated. He did not want her submission—he wanted to see the spark. He wanted her to beg for mercy, to prove she was still alive. Her passivity was an accusation. It turned him into what he truly was: a ghost haunting a shabby hotel.

“You’re nobody,” he hissed. “Nothing. What are you running from?”

She closed her eyes. She saw the pier in Boston, the black water below. She had stood there once and lacked the courage to jump.

“Men like you,” she whispered.

Harlan’s face froze. She had said something that did not belong in his script. No whining, no pleading—only the naked truth. His hand trembled. An uncertainty he had not felt in years crept through him. She saw through him. She was not afraid enough.

Emily opened her eyes and looked at him. Truly looked at him. She saw no monster, no avenger. She saw a tired, lonely man sinking into his own mire. She saw herself thirty years from now. His grip loosened—just slightly, but it was a crack in the wall.

The Eclipse Hotel seemed to breathe as moths circled the lamp. Outside, the headlights of a passing car swept across the grimy walls, leaving both of them frozen in harsh white light for a

moment. They stood at the edge of an abyss—one ready to jump, the other too exhausted to turn back.

And in the silence between breaths and oblivion, neither of them knew who was really holding whom captive.

Explore the accompanying photograph for this piece, along with many more striking, evocative, and artistically distinctive images from this and other series, in the web album at www.BioMechMaidens.com.

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