



## A Moment of Clarity

Caleb Huntington

I'm sitting in the car. Staring straight ahead at some stranger's house. What the fuck is taking so long? How long does it take to exchange money for drugs? I'd honk, but the last time I did that Tyson flipped. I scan through the channels on the radio. Nothing on. I flick it to the Christian station. Sometimes AM is good for a laugh. It's one of those shows from down south that gets rebroadcast up here. A guy who sounds like a cross between Boss-Hog and Jimmy Swaggart is describing hell, the gnashing of teeth, he says, along with a host of other evils, is awaiting fornicators and idolaters in the next life. Bullshit. I turn it off.

It's hot. But I've got to stay in the car. A cop drives by and I slink down in my seat. Fuck. I hate being seen here. This place is sketchy. Big fence, mad dogs, a ton of broken down cars, and the house has moldy cardboard covering most of the windows. A guy got knifed right here last week. I nervously tap out a rhythm on the dashboard.

Then I see him. Coming out of the house. I can tell just by his posture that he scored. He slides into the car. Fuck he smells bad. Like I don't know... rotten ass? God! I roll down the window and start to drive. "Whatcha get?"

"Couple of those quick-release tens"

"How many?"

"Twelve"

"That's it? Twelve total? Six each?"

"Yeah, you dick, it's all he had. You don't have to do 'em y'know"

"Sure. Yeah right. Let's just go to my place and get fixed.

Do you have some change for me?" I ask hopefully.

"I owed him forty. He wouldn't have sold to me if I hadn't paid him what I owed. I get a cheque next week; I'll get you back. Or you can wait till I get my script."

"Whatever. You're an asshole"

"Fuck off. Get your own hook up then"





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We pull up at my apartment, and run up the stairs like the Narcotics Squad is chasing us. As soon as we are in the door we grab some space at the coffee table and start to cook. I hate these pills. They're chalky and hard to dissolve. And just as the spoon's getting hot, a bubble forms and pops, sending slushy globs of morphine flying everywhere. "Fuck!" It's all over me. I carefully get up and go to the bathroom, in the mirror I scrape the drying chunks of powder off my face and clothes, and add what I salvage to the bit that's left in the spoon. I cook it a bit more, but I know it's not gonna do it. It was hardly enough to fix me before it exploded. Now it's fuck-all. I shoot it up. Feel nothing. No glow, no tingle, nothing. I walk out and see Tyson standing the living room. He looks pissed.

"I missed," he says. I know he's thinking the same thing as me ... we need more.

"Alright," I say, "let's clean this shit up and get out of here; I've got a plan"

We head out and get in the car. "That was eighty bucks well spent," I grumble. Tyson just looks at me. "Okay, we're gonna hit the hospital," I tell him. "There is a supply closet near the back entrance. You're gonna go in there and grab whatever you can."

"Why me?" he whines.

"Because it's my car and my idea," I tell him, trying to sound as tough as I can.

"Alright" he concedes, "but we split sixty-forty - for me."

He's such a cocksucker...

We pull up as quietly as possible in my piece of shit rusted and rattling '89 Tercel. I park as close as I can to the delivery door without drawing suspicion, then I give Tyson directions to the medical supply. "Just down the hall, first door past the washrooms." It's pretty simple, even Tyson should be able to handle it, I think. (At least this score should be quick ... as long as we don't get caught.) I sit and bite my nails as I watch Ty walk up and sit down at the picnic table by the back door. Some nurses come out and smoke. When they leave he grabs the door as it's closing behind them. My heart starts to pound. It feels like its actually banging into my ribcage with every beat. One minute passes. Then two, then three. It feels like an eternity. I smoke one of my last, pulling on it so hard

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the sides of the cigarette cave in.

Then all of a sudden he's there. Getting in the passenger's door with a box in his hand. "What the hell is that?" I exclaim.

"Fentanyl," he says. I look at the box. 'Duragesic: Fentanyl Citrate Transdermal Patches' is written in green letters across the top.

"I can see that," I say. "What the Christ are we going to do with those? Plaster them all over our bodies like temporary tattoos? Jesus! Couldn't you just grab some morphine, Oxys or Dilaudid, or something we can use?"

"You don't have to do them..." he says.

"Yeah right."

My girlfriend is home, so we go to Ty's. He lives in a shitty motel. He opens the door and there's that smell. Like a wall. It hits me. Cheese and sweat and feet, mixed with a lot of cheap smokes and not a little piss. Helluva bouquet. I step in. It's a disgusting mess. Flies. Crusty food dried into take out containers. Used and uncapped rigs all over the place. There's even sprays of blood from clogged syringes dried onto the walls and ceiling. I toss a pile of clothes off the couch and sit down. "What happened to the cushions?" I ask

"Fire," is all he says. He hands me a brown paper bag, inside are clean rigs, sterile water, alcohol swabs and a little aluminum cooker.

"What am I supposed to do with this?" I growl, "You got a box of plastic fucking patches remember?"

"Watch and learn" he says, and sets about to rummaging in the piles of crap that are all about – occasionally popping up with something, then throwing it into the mess on the table. He takes his shirt off. I see the big scar from when he collapsed his lung. Looking at his hairy body with its loose hanging flesh, I wonder how a guy can be so flabby while being deathly skinny at the same time.

He starts to cut up the clear plastic patches, throwing a piece of one into a big spoon. Then he pulls out some powdered vitamin C that he "got from the flower shop." Squirted in some water, he begins to cook up the piece of plastic. A new bitter petro-





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chemical smell rises up and mingles with the rest. He's intent on his work. Looking focused and mad with anticipation. "I'm just gonna fix myself first," he says.

"Sure," I say.

I've moved to the window. And I'm standing transfixed. Thinking. I realize that as I wait, I'm cursing each second as it passes. I want to escape the never-ending present. But I've nowhere to go; I hate my past and fear the future. I remember a line from a poem I once read, "I am made of a changing substance, of mysterious time / Maybe the source is within me / Maybe out of my shadow the days arise, relentless and unreal." I wonder what it means. Is this all a dream? Can I dream up a new day? A new me?

The clock ticks; a truck drives by. The sun is setting. A river of crows parts the sky, scolding the people below.

I know that someday, whatever takes these fugitive moments will take me. I will become nothing but a memory. '...Timeless...' the eerie word moves through me like a shiver. I imagine my death. The steely jaws of eternity clamping down on me and never letting go. The future's constant flow into the present will cease. The past will consume me; I will belong to it, be a part of it. Forever. Never again to participate in another living moment.

And here I stand. Waiting for this smelly fucker to cook up some stolen plastic patch and shoot it into my arm. ...For what?

Nothing makes me feel good anymore.

I see a family walking their dog in the abandoned lot across the way. An old man and woman shuffle by, arm in arm.

I can't do this.

I turn around to see Tyson passed out with a syringe still protruding from his bloody arm. "See ya later," I say, as I open the door to leave.

I hope I never see him again.

**Free A**  
Caleb H

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