

## **Fragments**

By L. Gray

Note 1: All the mistakes are mine and I love them. Wouldn't mind if someone pointed out the grammatical ones, though. Would help me improve.

Note 2: The things described are neither autobiographical, nor fictional. It's a mixture.

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**Have you ever tried recalling a nightmare, right after you woke up? Heart waltzing, ears ringing, sweat running out of every single pore in your body, and you are almost paralyzed with fear that you will actually recollect the fragments of the picture?**

**I wished I couldn't remember. And I didn't. Lucky me, huh?**

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- Would you consider me drunk if I... well... hugged you?

Her genuine smile made me feel like more of a worthless piece of shit that I actually was.

- Of course I won't, silly.

The embrace I offered was stiff and unnatural. I didn't understand why I couldn't just give it up.

Something clicked though. Something about a young girl, dirty and crying on crispy sheets, under the bright yellow lights.

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How old was he? Fifty-eight? Sixty? A withered gnome in his bulky bluish sweater.

- I am still quite vigorous, you know.

Sure you are, man, no doubt about that. But why would I care?

- We could be together if you like.

Oh, really? I am so flattered, you can't even begin to imagine.

I smiled politely.

- No offence, but... no. I do have a boyfriend.

Can be really convincing when I lie.

Something in his eyes after I said that made me ashamed.

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**Have you ever been in a desperate need of help, but not able to cry out for it? Because of your pride, because of your cowardice?**

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- Come on, time for the truth. When did you lose your virginity?

Oh, their eager, sparkling eyes that make you twitch and wish you haven't agreed on a slumber party.

- Um... round nineteen I think. Don't remember exactly, I was wasted.

Say that firmly, add a sheepish chuckle, and they will buy it.

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- How do you do that?

- Do what?

I was honestly trying not to burn that toast. Needed to concentrate on the timer. That was really hard, considering the amount of different liquids inside me.

- The confidence thing. You know... you always know what you want. What you do. How to do it. Seems, you always get what you want.

The toast blurred in front of my eyes for a brief second.

-It does?

My voice sounded false.

- Yeah. I wish I could do that too. Manage things I mean.

I wasn't hungry any more. I felt like crying.

- Don't wish that.

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### **Have you ever recorded yourself on tape only to find the voice doesn't belong to you?**

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- You wanna talk about it?

So much concern. I smiled.

- About what? The hospital accident?

- Well... if you don't want to...

- Nothing serious, sweets.

At this point I was grateful we'd been smoking. Takes the edge off.

- Really. – I said quietly, - I puffed it up by being cryptic. The guy was just celebrating his release and wanted some fun. He didn't even touch me much.

- But...

- Let's drop it, 'kay?

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The music was loud and permeating. Human shapes, hid behind the fog, set up an illusion of being alone. But I was still perfectly aware of the one I was dancing by. The rare moment of happiness, you know.

- Are you OK?

- What?

- I said, are you OK?! You look kinda gloomy.

I think I skipped a beat then.

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### **Have you ever met a person for a couple of minutes and dreamed about them for years?**

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The little girl wiped the saliva off her face and kept drawing with her pencil.

- You're the most beautiful girlfriend I've ever had.

The sound of TV soap was deafening. So was his whisper.

- I wanna kiss you again.

She sprang to her feet and dropped her notebook

- I... I need to go to the bathroom.  
- I'll wait. Not in a hurry here.  
She rushed outside to his ward. She knew it was his ward. The rest were playing cards there.  
- Take him the fuck out of my room!  
They stared.  
She ran to the bathroom and cried.

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- You are strange today.  
- Am I?  
I giggled and swayed on my feet. The sun was shining through the window glass. Like winter was never coming.  
- Guess I'm just real tired. And my boss is a jerk. Isn't it fucking funny?  
I burst out laughing and couldn't stop till my stomach ached. He was looking at me, as if I were a wonder and a leper fused into one.  
- How about... tonight? Are you free?  
- Dunno yet. I'll call you, 'kay?  
- When will you do that?  
- As soon as I know.  
- And when exactly will that be?  
- By the end of the day, what's the fucking problem?  
He sighed and looked at the ceiling, irritation clear on his face.  
- Stop swearing. And why can't you be normal, for Christ's sake?

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**Have you ever touched the dead body of a loved one, because you just could not resist the urge? Were you scared it might rise and be totally different?**

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He shut the door and lit up his cigarette. It was already dark outside. He sank on his knees and put his head on my lap, breathing in deeply.  
- What are you doing?  
He didn't answer, just kept breathing. And breathing. And breathing. And...  
- You gotta stop that.  
I heard someone running and laughing in the distance.  
He put his hand on my thigh and squeezed it.  
- I said stop.  
His inhales got heavier and more tangible.  
- Stop that already!  
I pushed him off and jumped down from the table.  
He smiled and put the cigarette into his mouth.  
- You didn't like?  
- Wha... - I stepped back and shook my head.  
- You gotta stop that, I mean it.  
- Why?  
I blinked.  
- Because I'm a living being.  
- Oh. Are you really?  
I stared at his smirking face.

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The little girl opened the door slowly and peeped out of the bathroom. The hall was empty. She hurriedly passed it, looking around in search of an adult. She spotted a nurse sitting at the table.

- Excuse me.

The elderly woman looked up from her book, slightly irritated at being interrupted.

- Yes?

- Could you, please, do me a favor and lock my door for this night?

At seeing the perplexed face she hastily added.

- You see, I cannot lock it from the inside, it's broken or something, and this... this... man from another room, he kinda... keeps coming in.

Her voice faded to almost a whisper by the end of her rant. She lowered her eyes.

- Well, I could certainly do that, dear. But let me ask you something. If he bothers you that much, why do you keep letting him in?

At the end of the hall one of the patients started to sing. The sound was muffled and squeaky.

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**Have you ever felt like a scum, because of a minor mistake? The one hurting someone dear to you and making them say: "Well, thanks a bunch. All you ever do is shitting on me"?**

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I recognize this look when I see it. The look of someone fallen hard. Why don't I have this same look on my face for a change? I must have had it a couple of times in my life too. But why not more often?

- Can we... you know... Could we... kiss for real this time? I mean... just for tonight?

I chuckle and move aside.

- What's so funny?

Honestly, I do not mean to hurt. Not this time, not ever. But what's fair is fair.

- Nothing, really. I am sorry. But I always mean 'no', when I say 'no'. No matter, what you've been taught to believe.

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The little girl curled up on her bed, facing the dented wall. She wanted to cry again, but all the liquid had been drained out of her body. Dawn was slowly approaching, but the yellow lights were still on. The nurse had promised to turn them off, but obviously forgot to do so.

The girl put the blanket over her head and closed her eyes.

"I am like this girl from the show. The one who was raped." – she thought. – "Only, I wasn't. And I'm not a brunette. Does this make any difference?"

Upon this thought she felt asleep.

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**Have you ever tried forgetting a nightmare, right after you woke up? Staring at the ceiling, feeling your heart would burst in a second, cold sweat getting in your eyes?**

**Well, I have. But I didn't succeed. Not ever again. And I'm grateful for that.**

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The End