

## *Payphone*

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I'm brought to life with electric identity imperative.

"Hello?" I say.

"Hey, Pam, it's Duncan."

"What do you want?" I say this sternly and clearly unimpressed. I see Duncan's lips purse as thick stubble brushes me. I feel his grip tighten in a pulsed clench, it's dusk and it's cold out and the short increase in pressure heats my body without give.

"You've got to hear me out. I'm sorry. I'm so so sorry."

"Yeah, I've really not got time for this. Nor the energy. I've been screening your calls for a reason, believe it or not."

"I know! I know." His fingers drum on top of me as I feel his devoid urgency. I shinily reflect the pads of his finger tips, the undersides of the trusses of his fleshy fingers. He knows not what to say into me. These empty moments cost him cents, they're granted him by me as he gives me energy, "It was a mistake, I shouldn't have done it, and doing it I should have told you sooner I should have been honest I'm sorry."

"I'm not sure what you want from me," I whisper ambivalent gravel into his ear, there is static softly veiling these words, setting the entire scene. I detect sadness, and I intuit it tingle. He needs a shave and a wash, his coat is draped on my little shelf, bunched and too heavy right now. His nerves silently run a dime along the printed ridges of my cost, effecting motion by degree. He takes his hand and, still holding the coin with his index finger and thumb, uses the other three fingers to rub a hard circle in his temple.

"I want to see you I need to see you I want another chance I want to talk." He's kindof writhing collapsing on every first person singular. I transmute these words through 37 holes into vibration and into a

duplex coil so he can't hear these words of his because he'd cringe. I could say them back to him and he could decide if that was wise to say but that would cost extra should I have the capability.

"I don't think I can do that. I think you blew it. It's over." She severs the connection. He drops his hand, distending my metal cable housing in a fluid massage towards the ground. I see trodden flyers of nude unrealistic women who presumably aren't currently in such positions but here they are like ripe fruits fallen from overladen trees. I see splotches of gum aged to the stone colour of the city. Duncan's other hand rests on my top as he replaces me to the cradle and ends my dial tone.

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"You said you wouldn't disconnect my power for another two days."

"I couldn't help it. It couldn't be helped."

"My food's all gone bad and it's cold." A baby's hand grabs and yanks on my cable. It has a stickiness that I don't think is mine. The baby and its mother have two drastically different demeanours.

"I couldn't help it. It couldn't be helped."

"What can I do?"

"You have an overdue bill of \$45.67."

"I can't afford that right now. I need some days."

"It can't be helped. I can't help you."

"It's cold thou.."

I interrupt with a prompt to insert more money and am placed back down.

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My receiver dangles and sways at the fullest extension of my metal cable housing. Without words plugged through me this pendulation is my greatest understanding of time. I witness an aisle of other phones and I see a great field of legs pivoting upon hips swinging along the ground on the ceiling like so many flowers blossoming and closing, following the sun. My dial tone a yell into the lilting space around me, the sound of the potential of anybody anyone may know. Speak to me them and I will speak them to you. The more I swing the lesser the swing becomes the steadier my tone becomes to the outward observer the more like a cry for help it becomes the longer I remain outside of the shape of my intended function or resting state. The release of

harvested energy into the world to nothing by the overwrought air of the train station not even equivalent to the fluttering of a butterfly's wings the frequency of my call. Without swinging I no longer know how long I may have been unhooked I am only conscious of my waking my yell my waiting my output of energy my suspension my suspense the tension of my chord the metallic solidity of my body the double jawlike rounds on my receiver the curved black handle the mottled reflection of my face that my 6 is sticky from dirt that

There's a coin and I'm grabbed, saved.

"I just got back, honey, anything I should bring home from the shop?"

"Don't worry about it I have dinner in the oven, just a beer if you'd like one."

"I'll see you soon."

All this said with another arm squeezed around the small of a camel skin coat. A small delicate hand rested softly upon a chest. Weight put upon my receiver when it's replaced in its cradle.

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I like feeling the release of the cradle, the elastic push of spring welcoming me to the grip of a hand. The movement of myself through air then a short burst of warm breath on my receiver.

I like ringing. One of two sounds I make that aren't human voice, and definitely the nicer of the two. It's nice to make a lovely sound, especially when balance nestled between an ear and a shoulder. The dude's messily pouring nuts into one hand from a bag before haphazardly tossing them into his maw. I'm seasoned with salt and nut dust and I hope I don't kill anybody.

"Hello, Broadway Dental, Lindsay speaking."

"Hi there uhhh I'm just calling to confirm an appointment tomorrow for Daniel Morris."

"Twooo fifteen, we've got you here, yes."

"Great, fantastic,,, and the doctor's been briefed on my,, specifics?"

"Remind me what specifics you're referencing there."

"Uhh, my proclivity tooo, uhh, to retch my proclivity to retch."

"I assure you Doctor's seen it all and won't be surprised by anything."

I'm.. trying to get a look in. But he's talking too fast. He's hemming and hahing and there are geological deposits of nut paste and chunk.

He's biting his bottom lip with his front two there but they speak of no issue other than the yellowbrowning of a smoker.

"This is something else though I just don't want her to be alarmed by the sounds or the convulsions or the vapour."

"The vapour you say?"

"Yes it's almost like burp vapour or the suggestion of puke. She,, she just might want to be masked or"

"Well a surgical mask is common practice."

"Yes but something more professional grade for a greater particulate yknow like some sort of respirator I mean moreso than a piece of fabric. And the convulsions I am really worried about the convulsions like how is the doctor supposed to have sharps in my delicate mouth with me kicking and jacking like a loose waste runoff pipe I could bring my own bungees or straps unless you have some sort of suppression stuff there like if the chair is sold with some sort of subduing devices to keep babies in place or mad people."

"I,, I really don't think that'll be necessary I'm sure you're making it out to be more of a problem than it is but I'll be sure to inform Doctor again of your,, proclivity."

"I'd really appreciate that thank you. And I assure you, I've been single for eight years. Have a great day."

"Thank you, you too."

The retcher is waiting for the secretary to hang up first. The secretary is waiting to hear a retch perhaps. Somehow both the retcher and I can tell that the secretary hangs up their phone slowly. The retcher brushes his hand on the thigh of his pants and hangs me up damp with peanut spittle and probably retch vapour.

My liking something it tied inextricably to the paradigm of my function.

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"What was it you said to Claude?"

"Hah, no, nothing bad. Nothing unwarranted."

"He's really upset."

"So I hear."

"Well what have you got to say for yourself?"

"What do you mean, Stephen? I responded to him accusing me of being boring in an argument that we were having is what I did is what I have to say for myself. He came at me. It had to be said. It's common

knowledge anyway.”

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The pursuit of ethics is itself pointless because one just wouldn't do anything that they ought not to. Why would I have to worry about what is ethical when I'm here washing a spoon in the sink?

Guy in a relationship is super nice and giving. Giving giving giving the whole time. Eventually his partner gifts him a threesome for some occasion or another. It's weird and just awkward and unhealthy for their relationship. Turns out he'd insidiously been angling for it the whole time even though he didn't push it or even suggest it. Final shot is of three glasses he gifted his partner ages ago. Three instead of two. Stupid idea had while washing dishes.

Writing and all content and art for that matter ought to be about social relationship. The nature of a piece of art presupposes an audience— itself a social function.

I write so often of internal monologue, but it ought to be more about the relations between people