

# pink eye

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Our bathroom was dilapidated. The sickly, yellow lighting made my mascara look crusty, my forehead oily, my eyes sunken. I had pink eye. I would wake up with my eyes shut, my eyelids glued together with crust and slime and blood. There was a hole in the floor. Someone like us got scared of the ugly brown tiles and smashed them in. The concrete underneath was also ugly. Kristine and I covered the hole with a white rug. The rug was too long for the space between the sink and the wall.

I broke eye contact with my reflection and opened the medicine cabinet. My tweezers were pink and sticky. I started plucking off my widow's peak. My hair was long, all one length, black, stringy and bendy. The first strand I tweezed had seven bends in it. My widow's peak did not end and I plucked out all my hair. I rubbed baby oil on my scalp. I scratched and scratched and scratched and then I bled. I wiggled my nails into one of the small wounds and I peeled off my scalp. I flicked my wet skull. I felt for seams and knocked on them until the thing shucked like an oyster.

I reached toward the sky with my right hand. My arm went numb. It reached into my skull and swished around a little. The swishing made a noise. I reached through my throat, into my chest, into my stomach. My hand felt hot and my throat burned. I shook my uterus around and it hurt. I brought my arm back out of my skull. A few shakes sent blood and bile and water onto our white rug. My feet were gone. They were now two piles of small wooden blocks. I tumbled, starting from the bottom.

The bathroom floor was cold and the rug was wet. My head was warm, I was feverish, I pressed my forehead into the floor until it ached. Nothing happened when I blinked. Nothing happened when I squeezed my eyes shut. I pressed my eyelids together with my fingertips until the mucus stuck them together, and I pulled my eyelids open again. Clumps of eyelashes and goo fell onto my cheek. I laid on my back and looked up and counted the dots on the ceiling. I was in My Boyfriend's bed.

His eyes were closed and he was smiling. He was thinking about me. We were trying really hard. He put his arm around me and I skipped the song that was playing. It was "Always On My Mind" by Willie Nelson. My Boyfriend opened his eyes and saw me watching him.

"?????" He asked.

“I’m not hungry.”

We had never made so much eye contact. My copy of *The Stranger* fell off the bed as I rolled onto my back. I was at the part about the Stranger. My Boyfriend did not sit with me, but he kissed my forehead when he walked past me sometimes. Maybe that was nice.

“What are we doing.”

I looked at him and waited for him to say something more substantial. He didn’t.

“We don’t have to be doing anything,” I said.

“I don’t want to live that all over again with you.”

“I agree.”

It had been like this for some time now. He let me visit him every evening when he was free, I would never sleep over because he didn’t think we slept well together. Sometimes I felt nice when I walked home, usually around midnight. Sometimes he would tell me things that made me feel close to him, like that he hadn’t been suicidal in a while. I hadn’t been, either. We both would live for a long time. He would have good last words, good middle words, good beginning words.

“What’s your favorite crop?” I asked. I wanted to change the topic.

“I’m not answering that,” he said.

“Humor me.”

“It’s a date question,” he said. “We’re not on a date. I don’t want that.”

My eyes defocused as he spoke. "I know. You told me."

After a while, he told me he liked hemp. I liked corn. His skin was cool and colorless and my legs were tanned. He kissed my ankles and wrapped his arms around my thigh while he waited for me to put his sweatshirt on. I wondered if I could love him. He did not love me.

My Boyfriend covered my eyes with his hands and so I closed them. I imagined that later I would sit on the right sofa and Kristine would sit on the left and I would tell her about seeing My Boyfriend and I would cry and she would give me a hug.

"Have you been taking your vitamins?" he asked.

"Yes, sometimes." My eyes were bothering me again. Maybe he would text me later.

HAD A NICE TIME WITH YOU.

I wondered if he was proud of me; if he had dreams about me. I counted the dots on the ceiling. I thought about eating pork buns with vodka at a table beneath a bottle-cap mural of *The Starry Night*. He pulled a bottle cap off the wall and held it over my lips. He told me he had a friend he'd always wanted to have sex with.

The dots on the ceiling were holes now and my memory was leaking through. I pushed it back up. That all happened months ago. I was in his bed, I was wearing his clothes, and I probably was enough now. He probably didn't mean those things.

"\*\* \*\*\*\*\*," I said.

"Yeah?"

"I'm going home." My tear ducts were gluey and I had a migraine. My Boyfriend looked up at me and raised an eyebrow.

“Ok.”

I put my shoes on without tying them. I tripped while opening the door. I rolled my ankle at the bottom of the stairs. I said goodbye to the doorman.