

I had a dream last night. It's a little hazy but if I think really hard, and focus on the memories clouding my mind I can almost feel it here right now. I bet it makes you a little curious what it was, right?

Well, I had a dream that I was stolen in the night. Physically taken somewhere, somehow. I don't know why. I didn't cry. I didn't scream. I didn't even feel the hands gently taking me. My mind was just gone and my body was numb, completely. I don't know if they put something in my nightly camomile tea or maybe they brainwashed me in my sleep to just go with them. Did I walk by myself, under my own strength or was I dragged kicking and screaming across the ground. There's no way to tell. I don't know how or why it happened, all I know is that it did.

As my eyes hazily start to open, I notice something. My limbs are numb but I think I can feel the faint sensation of something holding me perfectly in place. Arms above my head. Legs, slightly open. My back wriggles and my position shifts slightly against what I think are bonds, binding me down to something firm. I think it's a table but there's no way to really know. It's so hard to hear with all the fuzzy static in my head buzzing through my mind. In the distance I think I hear a sound, like a gentle drone of a binaural beat playing in the background, nearly drowning out all the sounds of the room I've been taken to, but one noise rings out crystal clear like a bell. Chain. The gentle rattle of chains right against my ears. It's definitely chains. I'm chained up to this, this, thing. Place. Table. Help. Please help me. My mind struggles slowly, cogs grinding to push through and even allow me to become at least somewhat aware of my own helplessness. I try to push anything I can through the thick, viscous syrup that is my own thoughts. My own mind. Was it ever even mine? Oh god, whatever will happen to me. I would panic. I would scream but my voice just stops. Sound getting lodged, trapped in my throat. I can't speak. Everytime I lazily attempt to say something at best it comes out like a gentle, breathy, gasping whisper. Please anyone. Where am I? What is this? Who am I? Why me? I don't know anything and any slight attempt to scan my mind for the faint hint of what could be an answer, a memory, anything about myself is just blocked. Like it's locked behind not just one door but hallways of endlessly locked doors. I can just imagine myself. My inner self, my conscious self, running up and down the doors, shaking each one. Pounding. Screaming. Inside a mess of chaos and confusion who from the outside, to my captures perspective, I can only assume looks dazed at best, totally mind fucked at worst. I barely stifle to hold back a small smile and I feel so confused as to why this absolutely messed up situation I am in would bring me joy or I guess, relief. Like coming home to where I belong. I belong here. I belong to. To. No. Wait. That's not right. I can only assume it's part of the cruel trick being played on me. No, that's not me. It can't be my own thoughts. My own thoughts are stuck. This is something far deeper. Darker. More twisted than anything I could do to myself right? Right? Right?

I try to shake my head, hair tossing over my face and back again. My eyes are starting to clear but still not enough to make out more than just outlines. Shapes of what seems to be a person. People. Things. Some sort of room full of artifacts? Equipment for some sort of experiment or ritual or who knows? It's hard to make it all out and my head is now ringing. Buzzing with the realization of how fucked I am. Oh no. I can't move. I can barely speak. My mouth is so dry from even the weak attempts at a word. My breathing is getting heavy and ragged now. Gasping

between the sighs. Torn between total and complete surrender to whoever and whatever sort of concoction I was given and dragging my brain out of the beautifully designed cage I've found myself in. It's all an assumption after all but it's the only thing I can think about. Some sort of drug. This must be how that feels. To be drugged. I haven't felt this way since I had surgery and they put that drip in my arm. It took hold so fast as I babbled nonsense about being so easy to hypnotize and being embarrassed to give up the information without thought, telling these total strangers all my secrets so readily but it felt right at the time. This feels so similar and yet so different because this time I try to hold back. I fight. I struggle. I give in. Trapped in a loop. A spiral. Again and again. Spiral. Spiral. Down. I didn't see it coming until it was too late and I was here. Here where I belong. Here with them to look after me. I'm so sick with thoughts and feelings and they are helping me. No. Wait, that can't be true. This isn't my house. This isn't my bed is it? It feels so real but I swear it was all a dream. Maybe if I close my eyes, it will all just go away. I could fall deeper into the dream and wake up tomorrow, back to myself. Knowing everything was just a figment of my fucked up imagination and I'm not really being held captive by a stranger. Strangers? Suddenly my eyes pop open, no forced open by a rough hand as light overwhelms my tired mind and bleary eyes. I'm awake once more. This is real. I try to shake off my attacker but they are so strong. Far too strong for someone as weak as I am at this moment. Barely thinking, barely moving. Barely conscious if not for the vice-like grip of this person? People? The hold they have over my own awareness of the situation. A rough hand grips my throat, turning my head to look at them. Is it that same hand or not? Who knows but someone catches my only just enough awake gaze. The twisted grin on their face barely noticeable for my heavy eyes but I can feel it, hear it snickering at me. Laughing at my helplessness. The smile burned in my memory as I'm struck with a sense of déjà vu. I know that smile. I know it far too well. I bet they think they have me right where they want me. Like prey, I'm their little plaything. They're toying with me like a bird trapped in a cage, staring down a hungry cat. I'm just a lamb to the slaughter and we all know it. Especially me. Their voice is dripping with glee as they laugh to themselves quietly, thinking I can't hear it. Or worse, maybe just quiet enough to know I can, just. They are surveying their handy work. I'm just a project for them and the aura in the room says they are very proud of what they are doing. Everything went according to their scheme. They've been planning this to ensure nothing was left to chance. They knew the steps to take to have me in their grasp and now I'm here, they won't ever let the hold they have on me slip or slide even a little. They can risk losing someone, something they've worked so very hard to perfect. "You were very, very naughty trying that. Silly little thing." They tell me. "I don't know what you were doing. Thinking you could get away from us again. Again?" That word hangs on my lips as I'm compelled to repeat it. Without a second thought for what I'm doing. Again. Again. Like a spiral with no beginning or end. Endlessly left to cascade down, my mind swims and then sinks in it. "Ooooh, That's very good." They tell me. I feel a faint brush of a hand on my head. Pushing back my hair out of my eyes so they can get a good look at me. Their prized possession. Staring me down, studying my vacant and glassy eyes. Pupils dilating as I lose the fight for my freedom so badly. Trying to struggle to hold on to anything at all, any semblance of resistance or thought, or free will, anything. Anything to help get out. Please let me go. I manage to whisper. They tut back at me, shaking their head and in turn shaking mine for me. I look just as helpless as I feel, my head being forced to gently brush back and forth in time with them. "No." they whisper. "No one is coming for you. They never were. And you trying to run,

again..." That word superglued to my brain. Again, again, again. I'm so trapped. "You running isn't helping this little predicament you're in. How many times will we have to play this game again for you to get this through that pretty head of yours. So empty. So helpless. So caught. So drugged." They cackle at me. That's right. I was drugged. A flicker of a faint light goes off in my head. Like a previously locked door, creaking open just enough to see a memory of the last time I was taken. A forest. The crunchy crinkle of leaves under my boots which are barely even laced. I had to leave. Dragging my heavy limbs through the forest I keep moving until I simply can't anymore. I'm so tired. So thirsty. So needy for something. A hand reaches into my pocket and is met with the feeling of something cool to the touch. It's is a small vial of neon green liquid with an attached note that simply reads, "For your eventual escape. It is inevitable." The second my eyes see it, I know what I must do. Autopilot kicks in as I start feeling the dread of a secret bubbling from inside my core. Opening the stopper of the tiny glass vial, my hands start to shake slightly. I have to fight against my own body to not drop it. Is it fear? Adrenaline? Part of me knows this is wrong. Wrong. My mind screams at me. Stop this. Don't. No. No. Please don't. Part of me wonders if the screaming was all inside my head or if it escaped from my mouth too. It was all too fast to tell. I drink down the liquid quickly, saving the oddly familiar taste of pure numbness as it rushes over my tongue. Wait. Help. No. What have I done? Regret hits me as my brain sinks into a feeling I didn't know I was craving. A dizzying spin makes me feel woozy. I want to sleep. Sleep. Sleep. So badly now. A single tear drips down my cheek. The last feeling I'll have for a while as I hear the familiar sound of my body hitting the ground. Normally adverse to the dirt, I can't help but relax so completely until my keepers find me. Sleeping peacefully with a smile, crumpled up in a heap like a pile of leaves under a tree. Miles from anywhere, anyone. Totally caught. The game begins again. Again. Again. Again. A word that's been woven so deeply through my mind it is now part of the structure my thoughts are formed on.

"And that was not the first time we did this." they tell me. "Do you even know how many times you've come back to us?" They don't even let me reply. Shaking my head no for me. Knowing I am in no position to do anything on my own without explicit instruction from them. The chains are less to keep me from escaping again and more for their own amusement to see me in such a compromising position. Knowing what any sound of the chain rattling would do to my brain. Ringing through the hollowed out expanse that was my mind. It's now the void. They are looking down at the shell of what was a person. If I think really hard about it, I could possibly find that person again, but not now and definitely not without guidance from someone less compromised in the free will department. "You know..." They speak in a tone that sends a shiver down my spine. It hits me like a train, going full speed right into my sense of what's real. "It might have been a hassle to keep you in this loop, but we are actually finding you to be rather enjoyable. Each time we wake up back up you scream and cry and beg and plead, and then we give you this." They shake a small familiar glass vial full of neon green liquid in front of my face and like a moth to this bright green flame I am instantly fixated on it. My eyes nearly crossed from how fast they darted for it. So compelled to want this. I feel like an addict who needs this special drink. I need it badly. Desperately. I need it now. I could try and push back the hunger in my head, not to show them how much I wanted this little drink, but I am in no position to hold any kind of poker face. They can read me like a billboard. It's just that obvious. The need has got me. This vial is the itch I need so helplessly to keep scratching. Again. Again. Again. "Aww someone's gone and

gotten themselves a little addicted to this huh?" They bounce my head up and down for me, and for a second the desperation nearly lets me help them. Teasingly they swirl the liquid around the vial right over my face. It's almost hypnotic how it spins and spirals in there. This is really what keeps me a prisoner. This tiny droplet, barely even a mouthful of the mystery liquid is so much stronger than even the chains holding me down. It keeps me so weak and docile. Exactly as I wanted. Wait, I wanted this? No. That's a lie. They did this. They trapped me. I kept coming back. Again, again, again. Back for this. My keepers giggle at my confusion making my face blush, bright red. I can't help and react for them. This is what I wanted. I wanted this. I needed this. This is where I belong. I'm home, again. Again. Again. I hear the gentle sound of the mantra. Again. Looping from my mouth. Again. The syllables feel so nice on my tongue. Again. It feels correct. Again. Finally I can relax. Again. Again. Again. Until it stops. Stopped by a finger pressed against my lips. Signalling me to stay silent. Silencing my words. My thoughts. My world turning numb again. Again. "Shhhh." they say. "Quiet now my little addict. It's always a shame to see you so torn when you first get brought home to us but delightful when you come back to your true self. Your real self. Less sick with thoughts of your own making and so much better blank like this. Your medicine seems to finally be working again." Again. My mind repeats back to them. Pure habit. It's instinctual. Fingers press into my cheeks, like pressing a button that makes me smile. It's not a real smile but empty and hollow like a broken toy. "See," they say, "isn't it so much better now everything's back in its place. You're here to be fixed again and we can keep playing our game. You know, it's been weeks now we've been playing this little game of recapturing the naughty little runaway, and each time I think we do get a little bit closer to the desired outcome. The final game draws nearer every day and soon, you'll be just like one of the others." Others. Yes, the others. The the sides of my blurred vision I see cloaked figures all dropping their hoods in perfect time. Each one wearing a blank expression and a hollow smile. How I imagine I will look in due time once they perfect my dosage. I can just make out on some of their mouths a slight tint of neon green. Staining them from their consumption of the thing I want so much. My mouth salivating slightly at the thought of being able to have that much and not being restricted to just a single drop at a time like I have all this time. I'd give anything to be like that. "Jealous?" The keeper leans close to whisper at me. As they look right into my eyes. It's terrifyingly intimate like they are scanning my head for any signs of life and reading absolutely nothing. I am a slate, empty and clean for them to write all over and I know when given the chance, they will take great joy in doing so. "You don't need to be jealous of them anymore. Soon, this is your fate too. All this time we've been making sure you are ready. Your body needed to go through all these changes to make sure you would be the one. The perfect plaything for us. All that running. All that letting you go and dragging you back. All that time making sure you were addicted to this, that was all in the name of making you stronger. You feel so weak but actually, you are the strongest of us all and as such you will be, ours to keep. Forever locked here. Smiling. Happily compliant to every single whim. You're not like the rest of them you know. Each one of them was greedy. They took too much too soon, you held back and for your restraint you will be our prized possession. Like a pretty bird, kept in a cage. You are our precious one. Something for us to play with. You amuse us greatly and you should be cherished for it." With that the feeling of hands grabbing, sounds of unlocking chains and the dizzying spin of being sat up for the first time in a long time, barely make through my senses. They are dulled by the medicine. Hands hold my head, titling it back as something enters my

mouth. I think it's the next dose of my medicine. My special medicine. The one I'm addicted to. I don't remember taking it but I don't need to remember. They can do that for me. Gently they guide me off the table and with a slight tuck of my hand, I'm led through a curtain to a special room. A room with no walls, but bars. Gilded. A cage. My cage. Mine. Inside the special room is a bed, fitted with straps for what, I have no clue and I'm in no state to make assumptions about anything. All I know, it looks so comfy. Covered with pillows and blankets and my sleepy, drug warped mind starts picturing how nice it would be just to climb in, snuggle down and sleep forever. Soon. Some of the hands replace the bits of my torn clothes that still have some dirt and leaves stuck to the sides with simple, comforting less torn ones. I feel myself sink to the floor. My knees hitting the soft padding under me as I am lowered down. They didn't even need to say the command, moving me was enough now I am so easy for them. So docile and theirs. This position is one I have a feeling I will become very accustomed to. And as I gaze longingly up at the keeper. My keeper. I feel, someone brush my hair to one side as a piece of jewelry is wrapped around my neck and fastened at the back. I know this feeling. It's a necklace? No. A delicate choker? That's not it. Collar. My collar. A mirror is placed before me and I see someone I don't recognize. This isn't a person. This is a thing. A pretty little thing, but I have no idea what. They vaguely resemble someone I think I used to know. But the second I try and place that face my mind scrambles and I'm back in my safe corner. I'm home again. Again. Again. The reflection too starts mouthing the word. Again. I see they are caught too. It makes me proud that we are such strongly willed minds to keep ourselves locked up like this. I see the collar on this one is the same as mine. How odd. It's the perfect colour and even has a little tag with a name I can't read. Afterall it's just a jumble of letters that makes no sense to someone so drugged. Then noticing something. Something that wasn't there before, I think. With a blink their eyes change. Were they always bright, neon green? Glowing. I'm not sure. I'm not sure of anything but I like them, I love them, I look deeply into them. Staring them down in the darkness they draw me in. Deeper and deeper under some sort of entrancing spell. As wave after wave after wave of feelings hit me all at once. I'm so sleepy all of a sudden. So very sleepy, helpless and struggling to even keep looking at the green glow I love so much. I want to keep looking but I just, can't, stop myself from falling into it. Under it. Down. Everything fades to black. The room is gone. My mind, gone. Body. Gone. All the people, no longer a thought. Barely noticing the feeling of being lead and placed in the comfy bed. Strapped down with a soft blanket on top. Ready and unable to do anything else but sleep for as long as it takes. Not knowing how I will feel when I wake but deep down a part of me knows, the truth of the matter is that with my medicine, I'll be okay. I'm always better when I take my medicine, again. Again. Again. No. Better than just better. I'll be perfect for them. Just as they made me. Just as I made myself. I took my medicine and I loved every second of it.