



The Necklace – Day 2

The next morning came around rather unwelcome, the sunlight bouncing off of a mirror in his room, casting rainbows all over Stephen's bed. This itself would not usually be a problem if his head was under the pillows, however given the activities of the night before, he had fallen asleep on top of the bed. The man groans as the light dances over his eyes, stirring him from the drunken slumber. Twisting and turning, he rolls off of his bed, landing with a thud. Instantly, his brain starts to whirr into life, bringing back images of the night before, mixed with large periods of haze. He mumbles the same vow he says every time, he promises not to drink that much ever again!

After a few aching moments, he drags himself to his feet, aiming himself at the kitchen. His goal is to make it to the cabinet where he knows the aspirin and the glass of water to swallow it with are. The short walk feels like a lifetime, every sound and vibration seemingly amplified by the ringing in his head. Collapsing into a seat at the table, he downs the tablets, then lowers his head to the cool wood. What did he do last night...? He drank, played pool, drank, played more pool... and the rest is pretty much lost to the annals of time. Next door, someone turns a Hoover on, causing him to wince and look at the clock. 11:32am. Half a day gone already - just great.

When he decides that he is fit to move again he heads back into the hallway, picking up the phone that he had dropped when depositing the keys onto the nearby dresser. Having a quick glance at a screen that was *way* too bright, he found there were no missed calls or messages... Probably means he isn't supposed to be in work today. That's good. It also means that Chris most likely isn't up either. Slowly escaping the hangover's clutches he decides that it's best that he ate something. A cursory glance in the fridge tells him that there is no food to be had, and his nose tells him that what remains really ought to be thrown out.

He sighs, resigning himself to a shopping trip, but first and foremost he figures he should man up and take out the trash. Wrestling with a bin bag he manages to coax the partially sentient food out of the fridge, whilst doing a slow whip around of the flat, emptying all of the other bins. Standing in the dull hallway he takes a deep breath, and opens the door, allowing the corridor's artificial light to fill his flat. Suppressing a groan he half-carries, half-drags the bag of rubbish down and out into the even brighter sun. Depositing the trash in one of the communal dumpsters, he eagerly looks forward to getting back to the dimly lit flat.

A shrill, bubbly voice interrupts Stephen's ascent to his flat, as he holds the elevator open for a voice that is both familiar and strange. It's his neighbour, a buxom blonde with a love for pink and girly things, and he would guess, not a whole lot up there. He's exchanged the occasional word with her, but while always cheerful his presence never seems to stick in her mind; he, on the other hand, finds it hard to forget her, yet in time his infatuation would develop into a cloying discomfort, her sugary, ditzy persona making his few exchanges with her awkward. As the doors close and the elevator starts to move once more, a moment is spent in silence. A silent relief washes over him, as he begins to make a shopping list in his mind...

"Cute necklace," a sweet, high-pitched voice brings him back to the scene. Through the mirror he can see her luminous blue eyes gazing at him, smiling from cheek to cheek, sight dropping back to his chest, and to the heart-shaped pendant that hangs before it.

"...Thanks..." He replies with some hesitation, it being so light and unintrusive he had failed to notice he was still wearing it.

"Get it from a special someone?" She prods gently, still smiling.

"Uh, no, I wish!" Stephen chuckles somewhat uneasy. *"It's, uh, just something I found last night, forgot I still had it on."*

She giggles. *"Lucky you! If only I found such pretty jewelry lying about, like, y'know the money I'd save?"* She giggles once more as the doors open and she steps into the hallway first, as if used to men behaving in chivalrous fashion around her.

"I guess..." Stephen flashes her an awkward smile, which causes her to look back at him and giggle.

*"It suits you, sugar. Like, I think a little *femininity* can look totally cute on boys, but you're all so afraid of girly things..."* She giggles once more, while Stephen suppresses the urge to correct her on her mistake. As the two stop at the end of the hallway, she turns around and extends her hand. *"You're... Stephen, right?"*

"Correct, and am I right in saying you're called Cassie?" he replies, extending his hand and shaking it softly.

"Absolutely! Pleased to meet you!" She teases in reply, before she lets out a short gasp. *"Oh! Umm, sorry about the hoovering earlier. Like, I thought I heard you coming home late, so I told myself 'Cassie, why don't you be a good neighbour and like, wait till the afternoon to start making noise?' But I totally forgot. Sorry!"* She winces in a cute fashion as if to reinforce her apology.

"I... guess it's the thought that counts," he replies, giving her an awkward grin, and after a brief pause, tries to wrap this up. **"Cassie, if you'll excuse me, I have a date with a cold pillow, a glass of water and some more aspirin."**

"Oh, I know, like I've been there myself," she rolls her eyes and giggles once more. *"Well, it's nice meeting you, sugar. But don't be a stranger 'kay? I don't bite!"* She laughs and playfully gnashes at the air. He smiles and nods, not meaning anything with the gesture, but hoping that Cassie will take it at face value. Thankfully, she turns and opens her own apartment door. Winking, she shuts it, allowing Stephen to visibly relax as he closes his own.

He stands there, letting the cool air gently brush his cheeks. Rubbing a hand over his face he replays the conversation in his head, making sure that he wasn't hitting on her by accident. Once he is confident that everything was coming from her end, he retreated into the kitchen to make some food.

The rest of the day was just eating, being lazy and nursing the mother of all hangovers. Finally, after many hours, the throbbing subsided, allowing him to get into bed and pull the covers over him, and a pillow over his head. Content in his small pocket of coziness he slowly drifts off to sleep, his brain showing him select moments from the conversation with the attractive neighbor...