

# The Remnants of Summer

by: Keely Schafer

I've always wondered what people did in their garages. Behind that thin, secretive yellow light glowing under the door. The sounds of rustles in the early morning.

I wondered if people wondered the same as me.

But as I looked to the technicolor bowl being passed to me, I hoped they didn't.

Cassandra was the third to awaken. Before she even opened her eyes, her hand reached out to instinctively grab the almost cashed bowl and suck it in as her first morning breath.

She passes it back to me. I take it. Look it over. Dregs of ash remain.

"Is it done?" I ask.

She rolls back over in answer. Her golden curls enveloping her like a blanket.

It's worth a try. I hit it. It's not. That was the first thing I learned, it never truly is.

I tip toe through the mass of intertwined, sleeping bodies. 'A successful party', Lucas would say. It looked more like the outskirts of a concentration camp to me.

The kitchen, scattered with debris and muddy footprints, is my quiet refuge.

The full length windows fill the room with hazy, morning light. Though it stings my bloodshot eyes, I can't help but peek out the curtains.

A rusted swing set sits forgotten in the backyard. The swings move back and forth in the wind, trying to entice.

I try to imagine Lucas as a child playing on those swings. White blonde hair that will only darken with age and apathy. Those icy blue eyes. That constant smirk.

I can picture him for a minute, until he looks up at me. There is no innocence in those eyes.

The kitchen chair squeals against the hardwood floor. I jerk and pretend to draw the curtains. I can feel his gaze burning a hole in my back. I imagine my sweater beginning to smoke and catch fire.

He dumps an arm full of prescription bags on the table.

"Whatcha doin', Liv" he croons.

I don't speak but I take the seat across from him. A silent answer.

To him I'm Liv: mysterious, cool girl, a *natural*. Not a trace of forgettable, depressing, Olivia.

Suddenly, nothing else matters.



He takes each bag and meticulously removes each staple. He notices me watching and slides some my way. I follow his lead.

Each little gift bag is filled with prescription goodies :



& every other upper, downer, and inbetween.

All made out to members of the Campbell family.

I've seen the family Lucas belongs in the portrait above the fireplace.

All blonde. All rich. All-American.

I wonder if they know.

I wonder if they helped.

The lines of tall orange bottles form the Great Wall across the table. Separating me from what I want. I fight to keep from smashing it to bits.

We lock eyes. I shy away. Lucas never breaks a gaze. But much like looking directly at the sun, I fear if I stare for too long I might go blind. And I can't have that.

*"What do you want from breakfast?"*

Aw-worthy images of syrup pouring over pancakes and bacon sizzling fill my head.

And I do what I always do when I get hungry.

*"That one"*

My first word, while pointing to a random bottle.

It's our game, playing house. I push away memories of first seeing him play with Cassandra. She's still asleep downstairs and therefore doesn't exist.

*"You sure?"*

Raising his eyebrow. I look down at the Viagra prescription I've chosen. Fitting.

I flush, embarrassed, until I see he is genuinely laughing. I can't help but laugh.

Everything he does is contagious.

He lays out a double dose of his selects. Crushes them up. Lays out lines.

One for me. One for him. We take them shot for shot.

He looks at me with endearing admiration. A new look. One I could get used to.

I feel the warmth of his leg against mine. He opens his mouth to speak.

Cassandra's voice invades our silence.

*"Save me any breakfast, Sweets?"*

She kisses his cheek. Reality seeps back in. But, his leg does not move.

I've won for now.