

Bonnie Love. Putting her dirty blonde hair up in a messy bun, smiling at herself in the mirror, admiring her dimples. On her wrist, a tattoo: the word *breath* in cursive.

Yeah, she's that girl.

As she is fixing her hair, shaking her body to the music in her head— Abba's Name of the Game—

A face. In the mirror. Behind her. A voice says, "Remember."

She screams and cowers, curling up in a corner of the bathroom, arms wrapped around herself, but— there's no one there.

"Babe? You okay?" It's her boyfriend, Victor, and at the sight of him she leaps to her feet and throws herself into his arms, sobbing.

Victor is so attentive. He calms her down, holds her, wipes her tears. When she's finally calm and only when he feels she's okay, he asks, "What happened?"

Bonnie saw a man in the mirror. He was tall, with a thick, bushy beard and dark, piercing eyes. It had looked like he was standing behind her, and there was this look in his eyes— anger. Hate. She thought for sure he wanted to hurt her, but then— there had been no one there. She started to explain it all to Victor, but then something in her told her— no. He'll think you're crazy, and he'll leave you. She loved him so much, and she couldn't stand the thought of losing him.

So she lies. It's a little white lie, she tells herself, and she's not hurting anyone, so it's okay. "Anxiety attack," she says. "You must think I am such a silly."

Victor kisses her, tightens his hug. "I love you, silly and all," he says. "I gotta go to work. You gonna be okay?"

"Yeah," Bonnie says, wondering how she ever got so lucky to have such a perfect man.

Bonnie cycles through her sun salutation. The yoga class is crowded today. She feels the energy of all the other women, and it is good to be here and be surrounded by good, female vibes. They move together as Regan, the teacher, leads them through the process, going from downward dog to a forward bend, and then standing upright. Bonnie looks at herself in the mirror, smiling the brightly dimpled smile, and —

—he’s there, again. The man with the beard, standing right behind her, reaching toward her neck with big, powerful hands..

Bonnie screams again, and then her body goes limp and she collapses to the floor. Regan runs up, checking on her, saying, “Call 911. Call 911.”

By the time the paramedics arrive, Bonnie is sitting up, sipping Smart Water. She’s embarrassed, but feels fine. She knows there was no one in the mirror, that she imagined it— again. “You should really come in, get checked out,” Ann, the EMT says. “It’s better to be safe.”

“I skipped breakfast,” Bonnie lies. “Just, you know, being a little careless? I’m sure I’m fine?”

The paramedics shrug and leave, neither annoyed nor pleased. It’s just a job. Regan takes Bonnie’s hand. “What happened?” She says. “Really?”

Bonnie is touched. Regan is so empathic. She can feel everything. “I actually— I guess it was a hallucination or something. I thought I saw a creep behind me, reaching for me...”

“Okay. That is so not okay,” Regan says. “You need a cleanse.”

As Bonnie leaves, Regan watches her, perplexed. Bonnie is walking with a wide, almost clumsy stance, and not her usual feminine gait. She looks like a bow-legged cowboy.

Wrong. Bonnie feels— wrong. The way her yoga pants hug her legs and her ass. The feeling of her bra. The loose hairs tickling her neck. As she walks back to her apartment, she keeps tugging at her bra, her pants,; she keeps brushing her hair away, and her movements are so sudden and annoyed and aggravated it looks to people passing as if she is being attacked by a swarm of flying ants.

Back in her apartment, she strips out of the clothes— they were sweaty anyway, and takes a shower, and the feeling of wrongness is only stronger, and it's like this isn't her body, and the way it moves and feels is making her feel sick.

Bonnie stands at the dresser she shares with Victor, but she has opened his underwear drawer. She's staring at his boxer briefs, but she is not thinking about how cute he looks in them, she is thinking about how badly she wants to wear them. But, no. She doesn't wear men's clothes. It's not her thing, though she totally supports the right of women to dress how they want...

A hand. On her elbow. Just brushing her skin. "Remember."

She screams, spins, is surprised and not surprised to find no one there. She catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror on the other side of the room, and he is there, behind her, reaching. "Leave me alone!" She yells. "Go away!"

A shape begins to take form now, and not in the mirror, See she's shadows gathering, swirling, taking on a humanoid form. "Remember."

Bonnie runs for the spare bedroom. Her crystals are there. Her candles and incense. She can feel the cold behind her, the phantom hands reaching for her... stumbling into the spare room, she lunges for a basket on the shelf. It's filled with

green peridot, and Bonnie remembers that it provides protection, purity. She clutches it to her chest. “Go!” She shouts. “Go! Please!”

The shadow shape begins to dissolve, disperse, tendrils fading away like smoke on a breezy day, but then she hears that same voice, and it’s barely a whisper, and she is not even sure she heard it, but she thinks it says, “Good.”

Bonnie’s heart races, and she doesn’t understand the what she thinks she heard, but she knows the spooky phantom is gone. She clutches the peridot in her hand, and she realizes she is naked and cold. Back in the bedroom, she puts on Victor’s underwear, a pair of his jeans, rolling up the legs, a t-shirt and one of his flannel shirts. She doesn’t struggle or question it any longer. It just feels right, and she is starting to think more clearly, feel more confident even though her body feels ever more WRONG. She hasn’t thought this clearly — ever? It’s like someone somehow removed her scatterbrain setting and gave her a better operating system.

And so many things occur to her as she finishing buttoning up the flannel shirt. Like how fucked her relationship with Victor really is. Like how he, yeah, protects her, but also micromanages every aspect of her life. The way he treats her like a child or a doll to be handled and managed and mollified and why the fuck did she think that was a good thing?

Bonnie shoves the peridot into her pocket. “Fuck,” she says. “I need a drink.” She goes and pours herself a glass of Victor’s 20 year old scotch. He never let her try it, kept telling her it was too strong for a girl, she wouldn’t like it. She sips. “Lying asshole,” she thinks. “This shit is hella good.”

She sees the word “breath” on her wrist and rubs at it, annoyed. “Stupid,” she says. “Women and their bullshit.” The words surprise her. In fact, she doesn’t sound at all like herself— the cadence of her speech, the word choice, she was all about being bright and sweet and adorable, right?

“Fuck that,” she says now, and she feels like she is waking up from a bad dream. Her arm brushes against her chest, and she frowns. It’s all wrong. This body is all wrong. Why? Why does she feel this way?

She thinks about Victor’s closet. The locked closet. The one she’d been told she was never allowed to go into. She’d never even asked why. She’d just smiled and nodded because, okay sweetie, I love you so much. The memory sickened her now. How could she have let him dictate so much to her?

She feels it. The call of that locked door. The closet. There are answers in there, things she needs to know. And yet— fear. Terror. Growing terror because she knows that if she opens that door, sees what he’s hiding inside, it will destroy her world forever. It will destroy them forever.

Yes. She’d been his life-size Barbie doll, but her life was easy. She didn’t have to think. Make decisions beyond what to do with her hair every morning. He made all the decisions for both of them, and was that so bad?

She pulled the peridot from her pocket. She’d get rid of the stone. Whatever weirdness had come over her would go away. She’d tell Victor what was happening. He’d know what to do. He’d explain it all and make it go away, and even if the whole explanation was nothing but a lie, she would feel happy and safe and what was more important than that?

“Remember.”

She turned and saw the man, now reflected in the shimmering silver of their stainless steel refrigerator. He was pointing toward the closet. “Remember.”

Bonnie swallowed. She looked at the door to the closet. She put the stone back into her pocket. “Remember.” She heard the lock tumble over, and watched as the door swung open, revealing a black space beyond. Bonnie walked toward the door. She couldn’t stop trembling, and she was scared, so scared, but she had to know. Bonnie, the sweet girl, started to cry, and she was murmuring no... no... no...

struggling to stop herself, to keep herself from the truth.... She reached once more for the stone...

## Part II

Victor's walked into the living room, and his mouth dropped open. Bonnie was curled on the couch in a black negligee that clung to every sweet curve of that perfect body. She smiled, her wet, red lips catching the light from the fireplace. "Hey, sweetie," she said in a low, sexy voice. "I missed you."

Victor grinned back. He was quite pleased to see her being so utterly Bonnie. Her little incident that morning had gotten him a little concerned that maybe the spell was wearing off somehow. "Let me show you how much I missed you," he said. They met in a kiss and Bonnie handed him a glass of champagne. Victor took a drink.

## Part III

Wrists tied to bedpost. Ankles, too. Cold air against the skin of Victor's naked body. The smell of rose oil and Dragon's Blood incense. He remembered those smells. He opened his eyes, still groggy from the drugs. A man stood there, holding a book in his hands, man with dark eyes and a big, bushy beard.

"Blake," Victor said, terror flooding his body at the sight of the man. "It's not what you think."

"Yes, it is," Blake answered.

"Nebula cerebrum!" Victor hissed.

"You say something?" Blake said.

"Nebula cerebrum! Nebula! Hmmpff!" Blake shoved a pair of balled up panties into Victor's mouth. "I took precautions. Now, let's get to work. "

He began to cast the spell, chanting in chthonic tongue, the ancient language of the fallen gods. Victor struggled, yanking at his bindings, his body bucking and slamming into the mattress as he struggled to get free, to escape his fate, his shouts of rage rising higher and higher in pitch as he felt himself being given a new shape.

The End

