

## Necklace

I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do in my future, which was an issue as I was meant to be deciding my major that year. The problem was not that I had no interests, but instead that I had no passion. It was especially hard to be passionate, I decided then, when my classes were so dull. It had been my second year in university and it wasn't much different from the last. More work and less excitement, if I had to pick something. This was about three years ago, but one day in particular was pivotal.

It was the day after one of my midterms. It was a sunny day and I had planned to meet my roommate after testing. I had my test in the morning and hers was in the evening--it logistically made sense to us.

I had just left the testing building and it was hot enough to fry cats like eggs, I don't understand how anybody was able to move. I walked to meet my roommate--I actually walked most places during my school career. My school's campus was quite small and I didn't own a car or bike. I liked to say I was being eco-friendly and staying in shape.

That day there had been a lot of people around. Probably because it was so warm. My mom used to always say that spring brought the bugs out, bugs being people in this case. I saw a lot of underclassmen sprawled on the grass or walking to and from, but one person stuck out to me in particular. A girl with frighteningly bright orange hair. The hair wasn't what drew my attention, though. It was the death stare she had affixed to my necklace.

She stared at me until we passed each other and even then I could feel the heat of her stare on my back.

I arrived at the restaurant five minutes late. My roommate was sitting at a back table, in a booth. Dianna, the name of my roommate, was scrolling through her phone and chewing mindlessly at her plastic straw.

“You sure took your time,” Dianna said as I slid across from her. “How’d it go?”

“Pretty good, I think,” I said.

“Good because you studied or good because of your ‘lucky charm?’” she asked.

“A bit of both,” I said shortly and waved down the waiter.

He swiftly took our orders and Dianna turned to me again. “You’re gonna get caught,” she said.

“I haven’t so far,” I mumbled.

“True,” Dianna said. “But that doesn’t mean it won’t happen eventually.”

“I’m careful.”

“Sometimes careful isn’t enough, Noelle.”

The waiter brought our food.

We ate in silence for minutes before Dianna spoke, “You heard about the Calloways?”

I looked up, still chewing. “I haven’t.”

“It happened a couple days ago. Richard Calloway was on magic. Definitely still is if you think about it. His parents caught him. They found what he used and then he murdered them.”

“Well I’m not Richard Calloway,” I said.

“I’m just saying,” Dianna said and shrugged.

“I’m careful,” I repeated. Dianna just smiled.

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I often wondered the history of necklaces. I can't imagine the history of the item itself is that interesting, but they've been a fashion staple for thousands of years. Style and material ranged, dependant on time and region, but the purpose has stayed the same. Symbolic meaning, sign of status, sentimental value, and so on. People don't often pay attention to the history, though. They instead appreciate the beauty, the aesthetic, of the object as it is now. Not everybody-- there are those who will love the history of an item, those who love the appearance, and those who appreciate both. None of this is wrong per se, but it is strange when the item isn't meant to be looked at and some notice it anyway.

Like my own necklace, which is meant to be discreet. That's why I found it odd when I saw the same orange-haired girl from before standing in front of my dorm building, staring at my neck as I approached. She closed the book in her hand, though it appeared it had been more for show than actual reading, closing it without checking her page number. "I want to speak with you," she stated curtly.

"How can I help you?" I asked.

"Not here," she said.

She pointed at the door to the dorm building and I pushed the door open. She followed me in. I had never seen this girl before, save for when we passed each other earlier that morning. So I found it strange when I was letting her into my dorm room without a second thought. Her orange hair appeared muddy in the dim lighting. I sat at my desk and she stood in the center of the room.

"What did you need?" I asked.

"I know what you're doing," she said.

"What?" I said. She walked closer and I leaned back in my chair.

“I know you’re cheating,” the girl said loudly. “And you’re using that ugly purple necklace to do it. I’ve noticed in class-- you only wear it during tests and you always fiddle with it.”

“You’re wrong.”

“No I’m not.”

“You are.”

“I’m not and I’ll tell the dean. You’ll get searched and that necklace will get found.”

I paused to gawk at her. I guess she took that as an invitation to continue and I had no will to stop her.

“There’s only one way for you to stop me from going to the dean,” she whispered.

I stood up from my chair to look her in the eye. “And what’s that?”

“Get me a necklace too.”

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I was scared to get kicked out of school and I had complied with the orange haired girl’s demands. It’s funny to me now, that I didn’t even know her name. I hadn’t realized what a mistake giving her magic would be until it was too late.

I had gotten her a bracelet. That was mostly to vary the form--if too many people wore the same thing we would get caught far too quickly. We had just settled into our seats for an upcoming test, the professor had handed out the papers. I had already started, occasionally touching my necklace if I couldn’t remember an answer. I was halfway down the second page when I felt it. A stare

burning into the back of my head. It was similar to the first time I saw her and she had imprinted her eyes on my back as I walked away.

I turned my head, tried to catch a glimpse. I saw her almost right away. Her whole body was facing me and her eyes were wide. The moment I caught her eye, she smiled. It was the most unsettling sight I had ever seen. Her smile was manic and there was a wild, purple glint in her eye--I'm sure I could've seen it even if I was across the room.

She lifted her arm, then, in my direction and I saw it. The line of purple glittering bracelets on her arm, the purple earrings dotting her ears. I could see the faint shimmer of necklaces under her sweater. I immediately turned to face my paper again. I had started holding my necklace, not for answers now but comfort.

She was an addict. The girl was an addict. I couldn't bring myself to look at her again.