

HOLD ON TO THE NIGHT
[SAMPLE]

by

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INT. JEREMY'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeremy drags his feet up the stairs, his button-down unbuttoned, tie dangling from one side of his collar. He gets to his door and the tie drops to the ground.

He reaches down to grab it with a sigh and stops, seeing the two dead mice next to it. He looks both ways down the hall.

He gingerly picks them up by their tails and walks to the bathroom, enters. The toilet flush and rush of water through old pipes lasts til his return to the door. He picks up his tie with a wet hand and sees that the door is cracked open. He gives it a push.

INT. JEREMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is as Jeremy left it - a disaster - but empty. He goes in and messes with the door til it shuts.

He tears off his shirt, tosses it and the tie, and flops onto the mattress. He takes a whiff of the mattress, rolls off it, rummages for a sheet, and spreads it across. He lies back down.

He reaches for his laptop. He stops reaching. He stares at the ceiling. His eyes shutter.

INT. JEREMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harsh creaking echoes through the room. Jeremy leaps up and hits the light; he can hear a faint humming. He runs for the door and looks down the dark hallway - there's a flash of movement at the far end. The humming fades.

JEREMY

Fuck me.

He pursues.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

In no time Jeremy is lost. Everything is dark and he still doesn't know his way around the house. He stumbles down stairs and hallways, trying and failing to step quietly.

A mangy squeal rings out below him, followed by his own tight-lipped squeal of pain and then a mad scampering sound.

JEREMY

Son of a bitch, what the fuck was-

Jeremy reaches down in the dark, patting his leg, touches something.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Classic.

Jeremy pulls out his phone and turns on the light, sees a couple holes in the bottom of his right pants leg, under which he has a couple of shallow cuts. He turns and catches two glinting yellow eyes - a cat at the end of the hall.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

S'pose I should be thanking you for
the mice, ya little shit?

The cat growls then runs off. Jeremy stands and his light shines on an oddly skinny door, the wood old, with a large crack down the middle.

He eyes the door for a moment, then opens it to a steep staircase a foot and a half wide, plummeting into darkness. He leans forward and old, dank air rushes up at him, forcing him back. Then he hears the hum again.

Jeremy starts down the stairs.

INT. THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jeremy's foot crunches onto the dust and dirt of the basement floor. The air is thick, like breathing through soggy mothballs. The house's entrails form the ceiling, jumbled pipes creaking and gurgling. It's hard to tell if the humming is very faint, or not present at all.

Jeremy skirts around the old wooden pillars holding up the ceiling, inspecting haphazard piles of mildewed junk that clutter the space. He spots a cord hanging from the ceiling and pulls it - a dim incandescent bulb flashes on.

Toward the far end of the room he sees an awkward bunch of rotting wooden pipes, dripping water. They almost form a box, or cage. On his way to inspect them he steps in a muddy puddle six inches deep and yanks his foot back.

JEREMY

Shit!

Shining his light down, a white shape is reflected in the rippling water - for a fraction of a moment. Jeremy whips around and his light sweeps across the basement, catching two shimmering white dots as it passes over the stairs. He brings the light back to land on the stairs and the dots stay still underneath.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Seriously, fuck you, cat.

The humming returns, faint, but definitely coming from there, soft and mournful. He swallows, hard, and starts walking toward it.

The dots disappear just as Jeremy's light reveals the shape of a girl under the stairs. She wears a simple white dress and her long black hair covers her face. Jeremy gets within ten feet of her and kneels down. She keeps humming, quiet and timid.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Hey... um... are you okay?

She keeps humming. She sits on her haunches and rocks ever so slightly.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Uh, do you live here?

She keeps humming. A couple fingertips clasping one of her knees are her only visible skin, the rest covered by dress or hair. They are skinny and dry, very pale, and the nails are long and cracked.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's okay if you don't
wanna talk.

She stops humming. The house is suddenly quiet. Jeremy takes a couple steps toward her.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I know how it feels to wanna be
alone. I just want to make sure
you're alright.

Jeremy reaches and touches her shoulder. A little skin shows under her hair and suddenly sucks against her bones like she has no flesh. She whips her head to look at him - her eyes are sunk into her skull, but burning with life. He falls back and the basement light goes out.

Jeremy leaps up, shines his light under the stairs. The girl is gone. Where she crouched lies a pile of dead, dried up mice and rats.

Shivering all of a sudden and breathing fast, Jeremy looks around with his light. The pipes creak and moan. He runs for the stairs.

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INT. JEREMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jeremy's eyes flutter open - they are within inches of the girl's inquisitive eyes. He shoots up with a shocked squeal and she scampers back, curls up in the corner of the room.

He looks at the door, sees that it's just cracked open, opens his mouth, about to ask how she got there, doesn't.

JEREMY

Um. Hey.

She looks up at him, eyes curious but also hurting.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I-I was hoping you'd show up. One of these nights.

He smiles weakly and goes for a plastic grocery bag, lifts it for display. She leans toward him, but doesn't approach.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I picked up dinner. A couple days ago, but still.

He pulls a store-bought rotisserie chicken from the bag. She eyes it warily, smells and curls her shoulders in.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It's different, but I assure you it's better than mouse.

The girl shakes her head, torn between hunger and repulsion. Emboldened, Jeremy moves to the edge of the mattress, almost within arm's reach of her.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I promise. Just try a little bit?

Jeremy pulls off a leg and holds it out to her. She tries to communicate something to him, shaking her hands and curling her lips back.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Just a bite. Please?

She sees Jeremy's desire to please and gives him a look that knows disaster awaits. She grits her teeth and leans over, takes a small bite from the leg in his hand, chews with shuddering lips, and barely swallows.

Her body heaves. Again. Again. She begins to shake, her teeth gnash then lock together, she falls to the ground and seizes up, sharp sounds of pain breaking through her teeth.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Jesus fuck! I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

Jeremy reaches out for her, but she lurches back from his touch, her skin vacuuming to bone and crinkling like plastic wrap under his fingers.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Why didn't you tell me? You should've told me you were a fucking vampire!

Her eyes meet his for a moment, begging with utmost pain and urgency before rolling back into her head.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Fuck fuck okay!

Jeremy kneels beside her, offers his right wrist.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Here, have it. It's what you need, right? Come on, take it!

She is wracked with tremors. He looks around, grabs a belt and folds it on itself, forces it between her teeth - and notices that many more of her teeth than the canines end in points. She gnashes most of the way through the leather.

He becomes more frantic, grabs his comforter and throws it over her, holding her tight around the comforter.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Please don't die. I'm so sorry. I don't know what to do. Just tell me what to do. Oh fuck, please, please don't.

Jeremy buries his head in the comforter and tries not to sob. Her tremors diminish and her breathing grows more shallow and slow. Then he clenches his jaw.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm going, but I'll be right back. I'll be right back. You're gonna be alright.

He stands and runs out the door.

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jeremy bursts into the kitchen, not knowing what to look for. He searches the countertops for anything, then something in the window catches his eye - a couple rabbits hop across the grass.

He throws open the fridge, snatches some spinach and baby carrots, then grabs a knife off the countertop. He spots a Nature Valley bar and snatches that too before splitting.

EXT. HOUSE BACK YARD - NIGHT

Jeremy leaps over the back steps, his phone highlighting the despondent lawn. The moment he reaches the grass he can see a couple rabbits scurry to the edges of his light.

Jeremy picks a rabbit then turns off his light, tries to navigate to it while acclimating to the moonlight. It stares at him, breathing quickly. When he's within ten feet he crouches and pulls out the carrots. The rabbit is uninterested.

He pulls out the spinach. The rabbit sniffs and turns toward Jeremy, but closes none of the distance. Teeth clenched, eyes unblinking, he pulls out the granola bar and the rabbit perks up. He opens the packaging - it makes a loud crinkling sound and the bar practically explodes in his hands.

The rabbit spooks.

JEREMY

Fucking Nature Valley.

Jeremy looks up to see the rabbit has returned. He takes a small piece of granola bar and tosses it near the rabbit. It skitters away, then returns and chows on the piece. He does this a couple times until the rabbit is within three feet.

He takes a larger piece of bar and holds it out to the rabbit. The rabbit approaches by stops and starts, but arrives at the bar and starts nibbling.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

In the bag.

Jeremy snatches the rabbit and stands, triumphant. The rabbit freaks and kicks him, eliciting a high-pitched "fuck!" He almost drops the rabbit but holds, bear hugging it as it squirms and scratches, and rushes inside.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck!

The knife he dropped glimmers in the twilight as rabbits crowd around the carrots, spinach, and remaining granola bar.

INT. JEREMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jeremy bursts into the room and tosses the rabbit to the floor, slamming the door shut and holding it behind him. His shirt is torn and his chest, arms, and face are bloody.

JEREMY

FUCK that little shit! All yours,
give him hell!

The rabbit rights itself and stays stock still, breathing frantically and looking around the room. The mound of comforter that is the girl doesn't move.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Oh fuck no.

The rabbit tries to hop, but before its back feet leave the floor it is in her hands - now more like claws. A spray of blood shoots out from under her draping hair, then she makes a sound like a dog lapping water.

She is still partly covered by the comforter, but Jeremy can see the skin on her arms suck tight against her bones as though she's made of nothing else. Her hair is thinner and coarser, and she shudders as she feeds.

Jeremy keeps pressing back against the door. His jaw is clenched tight and his eyes can't blink.

The girl takes a deep breath and drops the rabbit, now little more than fur and bones, its eyes gone. Her skin fleshes back out and is flush with more color than it's yet had, looking genuinely healthy. She leans back, her lush hair tumbling down her shoulders, and she exhales to the ceiling.

She looks to Jeremy and gives him a big smile - then sees his expression. She takes in the blood on the floor, the blood coating her hands, the blood trailing down the front of her dress, and the blood she can feel dripping from her chin.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Whoa.

The girl starts hurriedly wiping the blood from her face with her sleeve, then trying to get it off her hands and the floor with her dress. Working harder and faster, she lets out a guttural cry of exasperation and collapses into the fetal position.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Hey- hey, it's okay. I can clean it later, really, I just care that you're okay.

She looks up at him, face red with frustration, eyes trying to understand. Jeremy walks to her and squats down, looks her over, his eyes unjudging.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

The girl nods her head, ever so slight, taken aback. He reaches out, takes a still-white corner of her dress and uses it to wipe a tear and some blood from her cheek.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna deal with the rabbit.
I'll be right back. Okay?

She nods again. He stands and picks up the rabbit, heading out. She never takes her eyes off him.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Jeremy hops down the back steps and looks around, his eyes landing on a row of trash cans in the back alley. He runs for them and tosses the rabbit in one, adjusting the bags in the can to hide it better. He looks up at the moon and draws in a big breath. He heads back for the house.

INT. JEREMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jeremy returns to find the girl handling his belt. She looks up and tries to hide it behind him when he enters.

JEREMY

Don't worry about it. Let's just get you some clean clothes.

Jeremy starts rifling through his various bags and yanks out a large flannel, a pair of bright red compression shorts, and baggy sweatpants. He holds them out to her with a grimace.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Um, sorry.

The girl shakes her head with a smile, stands and takes the clothes. She waits.

Jeremy stares for a moment, then whips around, breaking from his brief trance.

With Jeremy's back turned, she pulls off her dress in one clean motion.

Jeremy catches her reflection in the window - looks away at first, but his eyes drift back. He glimpses a lean, shapely body covered in long, jagged scars before the huge flannel slips overtop of it, unbuttoned.

She stretches the compression shorts, curious and playful, before slipping into them and the sweats.

Jeremy waits a moment, and a moment more, then turns back around. Everything is enormous on her, and clashes painfully.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Lookin' good.

She gives him a tight, coy smile - trying to disguise her blushing.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Well. My name's Jeremy.

Jeremy holds out a hand to the girl. She looks down at it, then smiles at him, politely declining. He pulls his hand back.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Uh, and you...?

She swallows, tries to speak, and a rich guttural sound like a Tibetan throat singer comes out. She pulls back, crumpling her shoulders in with embarrassment.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It's okay. Another time.

She smiles, grateful. They stand there, both wanting to keep interacting, neither knowing what to do. Finally, Jeremy starts to chuckle. Then she nods to the door and smiles sadly.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Wait, don't- before you go. In my dreams you-

She raises her eyebrows, calling him out.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Yeah, uh, you were in my dreams. I mean, this could be a dream, but I wouldn't really care- but you played. And I've heard you humming.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Could you hum for me? Before you
go?

She's silent, appearing unmoved.

Then a low hum lilts through the room to Jeremy, a slow song,
more nostalgic than mournful.

He smiles, closes his eyes to listen, tries to hum along.

THE GIRL

(in Jeremy's ear)

Adelaide.

Jeremy's eyes flash open. She's gone.

JEREMY

Good to meet you. Adelaide.