

SCREAM INTO THE NIGHT

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Trigger Warning: This piece contains references to moments of crisis and emotional vulnerability, particularly in relation to trans identity. It includes a depiction of a suicide attempt and its aftermath. While not graphic, the emotional impact is explored and may be distressing. This piece also includes strong language. Please take care while reading, and reach out for support if you need it.

Nightingale paused. A slight sound from above broke the monotony of their trudge home. After a long day at the café, it barely registered. Until they realised it was coming from that building. The one tied to their memories of before. Before the café. Before they felt real. Dread washed over Nightingale as their slate eyes flicked upward. Their gaze caught on a streak of blue against the weatherbeaten sky. Hair. Blue hair, just beyond the fire escape. Had it not been for the sliver of a hand, the tendrils could've been mistaken for waves lashing out against the shore.

Nightingale stalled, locked in place as anxiety set in. Their binder hugged their ribs — a familiar, usually comforting pressure. Now it only heightened their unease. Surely this person was just out for an evening smoke, they reasoned. Enjoying the view as the sun traced below the horizon. After all, Nightingale was planning to do the same after their shift. Take a moment away from the sharp eyes — the ones that lingered too long when they noticed Nightingale's pride pins, close-cut hair, and low-lilting voice.

Nothing should have seemed amiss.
Except it was that building.
And Nightingale couldn't smell smoke.

They stood bodiless.
Breath gone, time stopped, mind flashing to the last time they were here.
It wasn't like that.
It couldn't be.
Not again, not here.

The world wrenched back into focus as the figure moved — shuffling forward, half-hidden by the black-brick building. Panic sloshed in Nightingale's throat. They could walk away. Pretend they never saw. But it didn't feel right — not when they knew that urge, the way disappearing seemed like the kindest choice. The simplest end to pain. They couldn't afford to be wrong.



Pulled by a gravity all their own, Nightingale rushed towards the fire escape and began to climb. Time leapt, but couldn't keep pace. After a millennium, or a millisecond, they slowed, and with a careful tread, took the remaining steps to the roof.

Everything was still. It had been like this the first time, with only gusts of wind ripping across stone for company. They turned the corner. Nightingale's eyes fixed on the figure ahead of them. They stood where Nightingale once had, a few feet from the edge.

The person looked fragile in the fading light, pale as foam-capped waves under a dying sun. In imitation of a ghost, Nightingale stole forward, hesitated, and shuffled to a disquiet stop. The storm-tossed ocean stilled. Then turned. In that moment, their hollowness swallowed Nightingale whole.

Eyes locked. Brown met grey. Tumult met sorrow. Then a flicker of recognition. The unspoken weight of being seen settled between them. Seconds passed, and then a few more.

'Please don't do it,' Nightingale whispered into the shattered silence.

The person crumpled in front of their eyes, hands flying to their mouth as sobs broke over their quivering frame. Young. They were young, Nightingale realised. Trapped on the brink of adulthood, still unable to make the leap. Their tawny eyes were too child-like to hold such weight. Taking a step forward, Nightingale was met with a flinch.

'Shit. Sorry.' Nightingale stepped back. 'I should have warned you. I don't like surprises either.'

Wary eyes snapped upwards, tracing Nightingale's expression before darting back to the ledge.

'Hey, eyes on me. Can you tell me your name?' Nightingale prompted gently.

A shake of the head. Then movement — the teen stepped back. Their foot caught on the industrial stone. Then slipped. Nightingale lunged. Desperation clawed at their throat as the world narrowed. The wind vanished. The roof disappeared. Hands outstretched — reaching towards the tilting figure. Fingers brushed wrist. Then gripped.

Nightingale leant back, anchoring them both. The blue-haired youth caught themselves — centimetres from the edge of the roof.



Sound returned first — the distant rumble of cars rising like the tide. Then came sensation. A skittering cold that jolted Nightingale back into their body. A body that was theirs now, but hadn't been the last time they stood on this roof. As the thundering in their chest subsided, the world eased back into focus.

The blue-haired figure stood awash in lamplight, stripped of masks, bare of walls. Breath tore from their lungs, followed by unbidden tears. Violent shudders wracked their frame. A small pin on their collar caught the light — blue-pink-white, slightly chipped. Slowly, gently, Nightingale shifted back, still clasping their trembling wrist.

'P-please,' Nightingale breathed. 'Please... I-let me help you.'
Don't let this end in hospital rooms.
Don't let this end with you locked away.
Don't let this end with a painted smile and false promises that you'll be okay.
Don't let this end for you how it did for me.

Two pairs of haunted eyes met. One belonged to a young café worker who hid their hurt behind pleasant, practised words. The other, to an adolescent brought low by a world that feared they burned too bright. A world that flinched from their sincerity. Both had been told they were too much — just for being who they were.

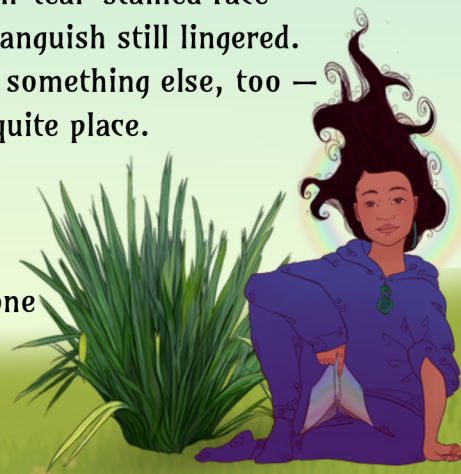
With one last tug, the stormy-haired teen collapsed against Nightingale, sending them both to the ground. Nightingale shifted, adjusting so they could draw the teen close. Relief crashed like a tidal wave.

Minutes passed.
Then a few more.
Tremors eased.
Breath slowed.

As the lamplight settled across their two bodies, Nightingale once more caught sight of the chipped pin nestled just below the teen's chin. They recognised its quiet bravery — what it took to wear it so openly. Warmth crept back in as they rocked back and forth. Back and forth.

The sun had set when the teen gave signs of calming, turning their tear-stained face upwards. Their gaze was no longer glassy and distant, but dulled anguish still lingered. The expression lanced through Nightingale's chest. But there was something else, too — a familiar flicker. The ember of an emotion Nightingale couldn't quite place.

Words are not always spoken. They can be woven, stitched, and burned into the fabric of the world. Screamed silently into the night, when no one is listening. But once in a tide change, someone does hear — someone does see.



And even more rarely, someone does understand.

‘My name is Siren,’ the teen rasped, voice tremulous. Their eyes searched the stars above them, as if trying to find their place.

‘That’s beautiful,’ Nightingale whispered. Once more in awe — of the teen’s courage. Of their resilience.

Siren’s lips lifted into the smallest of smiles.
They gave a hesitant nod and met Nightingale’s gaze.
And then, Nightingale knew.
The ember they saw in Siren’s eyes.
It was hope.
A fragile and flickering hope — but still there.
Still burning.

For Nightingale, hope had taken time.
A solitary battle, hard-fought — quietly won.
Siren wouldn’t have to fight alone.

