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Clarity

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CLARITY

Melissa Ackerman



AS I SAT ON AN AIRPLANE 30,000 feet in the air packed shoulder-to-shoulder headed to New York City, I could smell nothing but feet and the cheap perfume that came off of the elderly woman that sat beside me and I knew I had hit a crossroads. I had walked with the only person I could trust, Andrea, up and down a fast food ridden terminal over and over while she lectured me for three hours prior to the flight and I felt wedged between a rock and a hard place. Forced to choose between whom I believed could become my one true love and myself, I thought about how my heart had endured so much pain caused by a self-destructive and manipulative boy. Despite what he had told me, nothing would change. Despite what I wanted to believe, I knew it would always stay the same no matter how much I wanted it to change. I had begun to remember every harsh word, every bitter lie, and every bruise he had left me with. My soul had tarnished and when it all finally caught up with me, I couldn't help but cry. I turned to the look out the window so no one would notice the tears that poured down my face when I saw the inspiring, addictive, blinding lights of New York at my feet. Then in that moment with the push of one button, I had obtained peace. I ended a poisonous abusive relationship and started living, not for someone else, but finally for me.

I sat on the plane waiting to park at gate B24 at JFK airport and compiled all my memories of Ty and the relationship we once had. I analyzed every fight we had, all the times he won with a swing or smack. All the times I let him guide me to the wrong decision. All the fear he instilled in me. All of it came back and I began to feel broken. Then I tried to remember the good times

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we had, I thought happy memories would make the pain go away but my mind had drawn a blank. I could not recall any good memories with him. We didn't have a single good memory, everything ran through my head but not one memory of him turned out positive. "Why did you stay with him for so long?" I whispered to myself. "Because he made you believe that no one else could possibly love you or want you. Because he told you, you were nothing. Because if he treated you like you were dirt, maybe you actually were." I finally answered back to myself. I found myself wondering if I had made the right decision leaving him, after all he did love me, at least he said he did. My energy exploded into thousands of pieces as I grabbed my luggage

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to get off the plane. "If he loved me why was he so awful in how he treated me? Actions speak louder than words and his actions said, 'I hate you.' So how did he love you?" I kept thinking. I gestured to Andrea who sat four rows ahead of me that I ended things with Ty and she smiled. That smile dragged my energy level to the stars, she knew leaving him would cut the pain out of my life and I realized, I came out of that relationship beaten down but knowing I could still put up a fight. I pushed my way through a sea of half-asleep businessmen and women to get to Andrea and hug her. I drowned her in tears of happiness and relief. The fear had faded and a new soul invaded me.

After eight months of pure torture, it eased my mind to know that I finally freed myself from someone so pompous and gruesome. For the first

time in what felt like my entire life, I didn't need to fake a smile. "I hope you know what you're doing here. You'll never find anyone like me again." Ty texted me, I chuckled at the thought of him thinking I would want someone else like him.

"I know. That's the point Ty. I'm done with you and everyone like you. I've let you control me and tear me down for far too long, and I'm done." I replied. My courage increased by the second, I controlled my own decisions, thoughts, and life for once and it felt like I had advanced to a new chapter. I walked down yet another fast food ridden terminal, but this time I felt powerful rather than powerless. I presented myself with a relaxed demeanor and it felt like a sparkle had appeared in my eyes. As I walked to baggage claim I thought of how had I crawled out of the dark into this new vibrant light and I loved it.

Andrea and I collected our things and went out the doors of baggage claim into New York. The smell of garbage and rain filled the air, and all I could only hear car horns and two people fighting over a cab, I didn't mind though. Despite New York traffic, the taxi ride to Times Square felt relatively short. I was so struck with the flamboyant sites; I didn't pay attention to time. We walked down Eighth Street towards Forty Second Street; the scent of spoiled meat, body odor and heaven filled the air. Surrounded by a sea of tourists and New Yorkers that pushed and shoved their way past me as I stood dead center of Times Square. One breath at a time I took it all in, lights so bright my pupils constricted, wind that blew so hard I could barely stay still and rain that poured down by the pounds. It all completely paralyzed me. The sense of stability reformed in my life right as another

text from Ty came in. “How could you do this to me? After all I did for you! You can’t leave me. You don’t have anyone else. You’re trash. No one else will ever love you like I do!”

“After everything you did for me? Don’t you mean to me? How many times did I take you back after you slammed your fist into me then promised it would never happen again? How many long sleeve shirts did I have to buy to hide the bruises you gave me? Even now as you’re trying to fight for me, you’re treating me like dirt. I’m completely and utterly done with you.” I replied as I embraced the ever so cliché setting. It felt so good to tell him off. The way this city gave me courage and transformed my outlook on everything enthralled

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me. I’m not usually one to become speechless but I failed to grasp any word in the English language. Nothing could form as I stood in the middle of Times Square for what felt like hours and soaked up this great big powerful city and all it had to offer. New York became my home in milliseconds, even though it did smell like a homeless man’s breath. It dripped with perfection. “If home is where the heart is, I’m never leaving this city.” I said to Andrea as she took an outrageous number of pictures and then it finally hit me. I always had the ability to leave Ty, but New York gave me the courage to do so. Placed in the city of my dreams I finally saw what I had missed from my life the past eight months, passion and joy. My passion for

living life to the fullest reemerged inside of me. I could see again. I saw how much life truly had to offer me and how I could not let anyone control my own life.

I woke up the next morning to the sound of car horns. The scent of freshly picked roses filled the room. I dashed out of bed and danced my way through the morning as I dressed for a fantastic day planned in the city. New York motivated me; I redeemed solitude and I knew I would storm the street of this unique and flawless city as the best me I had ever been. It truly transformed me and I am forever in debt to New York. It saved my life.



UNTITLED Vivian Qian

MY PASSION FOR LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST REEMERGED INSIDE OF ME. I COULD SEE AGAIN.