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## Moving On

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## Moving On

Alyson Leigh Ray

The chatter of the radio is usually calming at the least, something like a sanctuary at its best, but right now none of that usual magic is present. I stare morosely out of the window of my car, my face

blank but my hands clenching the steering wheel so rigidly the knuckles are flushed white with protest. The usual hum of the night surrounds me; I can just see the ghost of the moon struggling to appear in the dim blue and purple sky. Another version of me would find this scene beautiful, but I can't, not now, maybe not ever again. The natural shifting of the sun has taken on a whole new meaning these last couple of years. It speaks violently of the muffled yelling I can barely hear through the barrier of my closed bedroom door, of clutching my worn notebook and scribbling meaningless circles deep into the yellowing paper until the tip of the pencil gouges a hole straight through it. I'll go to her afterward, surely. Perhaps seeking comfort. Only to find her doped up on whatever new top-of-the-line antidepressant prescribed by psychologist number I-don't-even-remember-anymore.

She won't even acknowledge my presence when I walk in. I'll do it quietly, though there is absolutely no reason to. He will have hidden in his own room and probably won't resurface until morning. He never does. He'll go in a wild symphony of anger and glass breaking. Her eyes will be glassy, her body still, catatonic, almost. A wax doll. Laying on the unmade bed meant for two that nearly swallows her frail body in its vastness. I'll remember a time when those eyes looked at me instead of through me, glowing and full of life and laughter, but still I will go to her. In the end I'll always be the one that goes to her. As I rest my head on her shoulder, noticing the bruise-like fingerprints that mar her otherwise pale perfect skin, I'll hear her breath. That gentle rise and fall will be the only motion from her for a very long time.

In that moment  
she feels  
almost ancient,  
older than me,  
perhaps older than  
any person alive.  
For just a moment  
I think I can see  
a glimmer of that  
old mischief in her  
wide grey eyes.

I've driven far enough out of the city that the radio has mainly turned to static. I absently reach to flick it off, never really turning my eyes away from the dirt road unrolling in front of me. Seeing it makes that nagging anxiety burrow its way somewhere near my heart, like a maggot in an apple core. Without the distraction of the radio it feels more prominent than ever.

**The house is a lonely hulk of brick as I pull into the long driveway.**

With no neighbors around us for miles, the lights shine almost too brightly in the black—it is frightening how quickly night jumps upon us these days—and they feel like blaring beacons of accusation.

I notice, with a bolt of shock and fear, that his car is not parked beneath the looming oak tree, with its bare branches reaching out like skeletal fingers.

The fear sweeps me in like the tide, like I'm going to be swept under until I drown, the waves pulling me under still

even as I walk through the screen door, which is partially ajar, even as I see the shattered remains of the medicine bottle on the tile floor. The shards glitter in the maturing moonlight.

**The house is almost silent. The only sound is the water swelling out from the throat of the faucet and falling precisely down into the metal sink below.** No arguing, no precious items being smashed against the walls. This scene is so different from the routine that it feels almost surreal.

This time, when I enter the room, she speaks. "Darling," my mother says, her voice dusty with disuse, as delicate as a butterfly's wing. In that moment she feels almost ancient, older than me, perhaps older than any person alive. For just a moment I think I can see a glimmer of that old mischief in her wide grey eyes.

"Yes?" I whisper into the empty air.

"I'm done," she says. "No more."



**Mother** Madison Potts