

Fall 12-1-2018

## When I'm Drunk In the Morning, She Sets the City on Fire

Miguel Contreras III  
*College of DuPage*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Contreras, Miguel III (2018) "When I'm Drunk In the Morning, She Sets the City on Fire," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 1 , Article 53.  
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol41/iss1/53>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact [orenick@cod.edu](mailto:orenick@cod.edu).

## *When I'm Drunk In the Morning, She Sets the City on Fire*

Fog drapes itself over Dem's mind. It gushes, and expands itself like seafoam. As it envelops him, it gently coaxes him to sea with each forthcoming of its seductive curl. Dem descends deeper, and the depths consume his mind. They claim his submit form, each tug, towards the abyss. Sanity drifts from Dem's lips as iridescent pockets of air ballooning up towards the fading surface. Reality totally escapes him, and he succumbs to himself.

Dem persists in the midst of indistinguishable and endless blackness that surrounds in all directions. Yet, inexplicably, he still discerns the space as visible. Unable to process it, he perpetually cycles through the same mental loop as his consciousness spins. As panic ensues, color manifests around him. Like a weak light that grows in strength with the pass of every moment, the colors illuminate the previously unseen. As if paint precisely, expertly, seemingly intentionally, pours onto blank canvas.

The colors fill into shapes and a rigid metallic table arises from the void. The scent of formaldehyde temporarily overwhelms Dem's senses as the great artist surrounds him with the scene:

Walls were absent; strange diagrams seemed to be suspended in mid blackness. Shelves lined with countless unidentifiable chemicals propped themselves up atop ominous, industrial cabinets. A creaking light fixture hung from nothingness above a substantial center table, bathed in light.

Dem drifts towards the center of the perceptible room but stops short. The colors reappear, except differently. Airy hues swirl amongst each other just above the table's surface. The wisps dissipate and reveal pale, nearly grey, sickly skin that covers the entirety of a motionless human form. The merciless, icy grip of the metal saps away Dem's warmth as it presses against the naked laying body. Terrified, Dem traverses outside the light's range. He searches for a discrete angle to view the withered body beneath the dingy yellow glow. He hopes he does not witness what he somehow already knows:

Electricity coursed through his core. Eyes bulged, chest seized, and he gagged. Before him lay his own disfigured apathetic expression: his eyes were gone, replaced by two crossing lines of stitching wire that formed a pair of X's on his face; like a doll that failed to have its buttons sewed in. The flesh on his left side had been skinned away, and exposed each individual piece of his rib cage. No sign of blood showed on his skeleton, as if that part of his body had been totally ensanguated. His horrific doppelganger still breathed, yet somehow, his body being alive did not come as a relief.

Dem possesses little time to recover from his disturb-induced paralysis. Colors brew, and colors churn again. A sturdy wooden door with a linear handle solidifies itself, and it turns. Dem scrambles, retreats behind a cabinet, and peers around the edge. An attractive form clothed as some sort of surgeon enters through the doorway, not dressed as one would expect them. He observes her as she crosses from the door to an opposite end, where a voluminous tub that matches the other equipment forms: Each step she took was matched with a click from pointed shoes. A white lab coat extended just above her knees, contrasted by black stockings tightly wrapped around long curved legs before they disappeared beneath her coat. Buttons teased, tightly pressed in on her chest, and streaked hair tied up and away revealed refined facial features.

Dem struggles to register her identity. She clicks past him, and the scent of pine extract forces him to an unsettling epiphany: he stares at Lucy. Liquid splatter reverberates off the tub from the other side of Lucy's turned back while Dem attempts an instant of respite. He takes stock of himself, and finally understands. There is no escape from the bizarre:

As he shifted his perspective about the room, he eventually landed upon where he should have found his own hands, but discovered nothing. He moved to where his legs should have supported him upright: only an empty void. He was utterly absent; no longer physical, devoid of all form. If it were even possible, he felt faint, swept into a dizzy haze.

Space warps as Lucy saunters towards Dem's deathly body exposed on the table. The distortion drags Dem's disembodied consciousness forward and meets Lucy at the table as she arrives. Dem's every movement is shackled, and his sight is manipulated by some unseen force to be fixated on his grotesque body as it decays amidst the grizzly scene. The same unseen force that now leaves him to the mercy of Lucy.

Her predatory eyes invoke shivers as they probe his vulnerable anatomy and she, with a surgical mask, covers her candy lips. Agonizingly, tauntingly, she lifts her index finger and leisurely drags it along the gape in Dem's torso, where nothing, save the white of his bones, remains. Dem's consciousness suffers every moment of the unbearable stroke, he endures every sensation that should only transpire within the body. Lucy finishes, and her mask fails to conceal the twisted smile that stretches itself from behind it. Meanwhile, Dem's mind pounds with the explosions of his body's runaway pulse as he emits quakes of helpless and fearful anticipation.

Lucy reaches beyond Dem's vision into the blackness beneath the table. When her hand returns, it carries a scalpel with a blade hone so precisely it draws blood with the lightest of touch. Dem's breathing shortens to shallow, shaky breaths as Lucy lowers the flat edge of the razor to his skeleton, and she menacingly caresses each bone. Dem imagines beads of sweat rolling down his nonexistent form. He strains desperately to scream, or to avert his eyes from the unnatural feeling of precarious steel that prods the inside of his still living self, to no avail.

With concentrated and calculated viridescent eyes, Lucy lifts the blade, and places the fine tip at the onset of his twelfth rib and ever so slightly presses into bone. Searing fire courses through Dem's veins, every nerve in his body commands every muscle to battle relentlessly against his invisible restraints and escape. His torture intensifies as Lucy carefully carves a hairline incision from one end of his limp, defenceless figure to the other. She completes it only just before Dem loses awareness.

Dem recollects his scattered, incoherent thoughts. His energy dwindles, and still unable to look away, he studies Lucy's face. The unassailable expression of release covers it, with sinister smile that betrays her intense pleasure. Lucy pulls her tool away from the living corpse. She stares at it with wide eyed approval before she locks it into a fanatical embrace. It is if, Dem thinks, she can writhe in those feelings forever.

Her head snaps back to her victim. She tugs away her surgical mask, and forgets, at least for the moment, about her beloved instrument, when her expression curiously shifts. Her critical nature melts away to intrigue, and fanaticism gives way to affection. She calmly sashays to where Dem's head is postured, but he can no longer observe her emotions. The sensation of a tender caress starts across his forehead. Bewildered, Dem attempts to maneuver himself in any way, in a vain hope to glimpse her, but remains cemented in place. He can only wonder about the suddenly altered person at the head of the table.

With each gentle caress of parting hair he finds no solace, only the ominous feeling of prey groomed before the kill.

The voluptuous shape of her lips forms on his forehead, and every hair on his body stands on end. Dem counts his breaths, inhales, exhales, deepens. He does anything he can in an effort to slow his accelerating heart, but it only takes Lucy's whisper to bring it to a terrified halt:

"I love you."

The scalpel plunges into the marrow of Dem's third rib, the air instantly steals from his lungs, the yellow glow blazes to a blinding white, a high pitched screech envelopes all of his senses and then—  
nothing.

Dem once again finds himself staring at the familiar surface of his bedroom ceiling, stunned. He lapses into a coughing fit, recovering after a moment of reminding himself to inhale. Shaken, he lifts a sweaty hand to the cell phone dimly illuminated beside his bed. He swipes across the screen a few times before arriving to the first picture. He lay there for a long while, pondering and staring at the only picture of Lucy he'd ever been allowed to take. His heart swells, and yet, his thoughts still make him shudder.