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Metallic Dress

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METALLIC DRESS CHAPEL TAYLOR

She always sat at the bar across the room from me, on that bar stool in a tight metallic dress that slid further up her thighs all night. Her closet must have been filled with every color imaginable, blue, gold, silver, pink all of them beautiful. She smiled that odd half smile and sent a wink that gave me shivers down my spine. Her top was low cut and she would press her breasts together as the lucky men at her side talked to her, or rather to them. But she would always punctuate her sentences with looks at me. I had come to know her so well, from across the room. I knew her every gesture, the way she would flip her hair and sip her drink steadily when she wished the man would go away, her casual rearrangement of her bra straps when sitting idle at the bar. One day I'd approach her and in a single glance she'd know that she wouldn't be sleeping alone that night. But I was always across the room, and I knew she'd never move from that stool, she wasn't that kind of girl. She had class.

Between us the couples would dance all night. I had to bob my head from side to side to keep her in my line of vision as the beautiful girls and smooth men twirled and dipped in front of me. The chair I always sat in was worn in just perfectly for me and the pleather no longer squeaked as I shifted in my seat to keep my eyes on her. I always made sure my best pants were clean for Friday and Saturday night. I had to wear them twice and on Saturday night they still smelled of Friday's smoke, but once inside the bar no one could tell. Every night I looked my best so that when she looked my way she'd see I'd dressed for her.

As I remember it this night was a Saturday, though in truth they all blended together and time had no meaning until last call. Arriving home earlier than usual I collapsed on my couch waiting for the clock to reach 10:00, my accustomed time of going to Chubby's. My body felt dead and it was nearly impossible to move. I sat there staring at my shirt and pants which I had laid out for myself. They draped over the back of my desk chair and I stared at them, unmoving, until finally I forced myself to get up, put them on and go to the bar. I arrived at the bar a little later than usual, but still got my seat.

Work had been awful, my spot on the assembly line was apparently performed better by a brainless machine. Because my dad, now residing in a luxury condo in Florida, had been one of the company's founders they were trying to find me a new job on the line, but it meant a pay cut, a big one. But I was in my favorite place, with my favorite girl. She never arrived until 11:00, but I liked to get there early so I could get comfortable and watch her come in. As I waited I watched the pool players off to the left of the dance floor. I could see the sharks from a mile away, but the players never could. All night I'd hear their angry cussing cutting through the music and over the laughter. The dance floor had an aroma of aged, spilled beer that seemed to ooze from the floor boards, mingling with the cigarette smoke and heavy cologne worn by most of the men, combined to create the scent of Chubby's, known nowhere else.

My usual beer turned into five and then a dry vodka and tonic, my father's drink, I never liked it much but some how it seemed appropriate. Maybe it was the alcohol, maybe it was the layoff, maybe it was the day old pants, but something gave me the courage to stand up when every other night I'd only sat in that chair. The pleather whined as its usual load lifted. With a heavy exhale I pushed myself forward, toward her seat across the room. The going was slow as I weaved between the dancers, constantly excusing myself as I interrupted what were no doubt intimate moments. About halfway through the dancers I froze.

There she was, I'd never seen her from this close. The way the lights reflected off the bar mirror made her blond hair glow and sent tiny starlight refractions off of her dress. I could hear that laugh that I had seen so many times. It was gentle and soothing like water. I could almost see the color of her eyes. She was talking to some man I'd never seen before and her fingers gently spun the stem of her martini glass that rested on the bar counter. I'm not sure how long I stood there, hypnotized by her beauty from twenty feet away. She looked so different and yet so much the same.

It suddenly struck me that I should start moving again and as I leaned forward, she too slid off of her accustomed seat. Confidently she strode forward a couple of paces toward me. But then the man she'd been talking to, that stranger she barely knew, wrapped his arm around her waist. As she passed me her eyes flitted in my direction and again she sent that odd little half smile. For a fleeting moment our eyes met. Then the two of them glided out of the room. Talking and laughing together.