

Blank Future

by Emily Sparkles

Driving down the interstate. Classic morning commute traffic.
Typical news stories interrupting the morning radio shows.

All familiar. All everyday. But something more...something also
familiar. Something terrifying.

As she gripped the steering wheel and stared ahead, the *deja vu*
became complete and she recognized the horrific stirring.

*I might as well just keep driving. Past my exit. Beyond my job. Just
drive. Until the tank runs out of gas. A blank future is better than
this bleak one.*

She wasn't suicidal. Not the last time, not now, not ever. It wasn't
that she feared death. Perhaps that was part of the problem. The
Afterlife was the point of it all; making it through this one, being
received to the blessed relief beyond with her Creator. Her
preacher-father, church-camp experiences, theological studies,
personal struggles...she knew what she believed. She knew why she
believed it. Yet here she was. Stuck in hopelessness; a walking
oxymoron.

Of course she went to work anyway. Patiently batting her eye-lashes
and stretching a tight-lipped smile across her face when forced to
deal with coworkers. Pulled up to her desk as close as she could,
seeking solitude by turning her back to the rest of the office.
Consumed with thoughts of Last-Time-I-Felt-This-Way.

Last Time: Fresh out of high school. Destined to work in retail
forever. Avoiding college. Avoiding future.

A mind like a speeding train, destination locked in, route
meticulously followed. What started as a game had turned into a

prison; a cliché for certain, but applicable.

Driving to work, to the mall then, on the interstate.

I might as well just keep driving. Past my exit. Beyond my job. Just drive. Until the tank runs out of gas. A blank future is better than this bleak one.

Cut to hospital rooms. The heart beats. A dull thud. 38 beats per minute. She should be calm. Shouldn't have the energy to be this anxious. A misguided yet strangely relevant disdain for society's weak individuals. Sensualists. Yet she is a writhing worm. 35 days of inpatient treatment. Two and a half weeks of partial/outpatient care.

Life renewed. Purpose found.

College degree earned.

A job in her field.

And yet the feeling has returned. Without the comfort of her disorder to support her.....

STOP.

The heart clocks in at around 65 bpm today. The heart thuds louder. A reminder. Seemingly of their own volition, her legs thrust her out of her desk chair. Without a destination in mind, she walks down the hall. Feels every toned muscle moving with grace and purpose. Feels alive; invigorated. These muscles dance daily. This higher heart rate sustains her. These are things she would have to abandon should she answer the disorder's tantalizing beckon.

She stops walking. She listens. She hears. Hears her own body. Hears her own whispering hopes. Hears that voice she claims to rely upon, reminding her that she truly can let go and let God.

All of our futures here are blank. Time to pick up the pen and fill it up.

