

Lapis Lazuli

by Janice Mayo, 2020

People aren't supposed to see souls or their aural emanations, only the strangest among us lay claim to such things. Even so, I can see yours. It's a lovely blue. So immaculately cold, it makes me wonder if you have any warmth in you at all.

Once I spoke to you at the watercooler. I asked how your day was going. You were indifferent, avoidant. It made me want to know you even more. I still have the disposable paper cup you drank from hidden in the back of my desk. The garnet lipstick you wore that day adorns the rim, imprinted like delicate lace. I take it out sometimes and hold it to the light. It has no smell, sterile, as if you've kept even that to yourself.

He drove up to your house last night in a red sports car and honked. You made him wait so long, he honked again. When you finally came out, you took your time securing the front door before coming down the walk. Was it to display your beauty or to show him who was in control? Probably both.

Jittery from too much coffee, I jumped when the car reappeared less than two hours later. He leaned in but you were quicker, opening the door and sliding out. I smiled to myself. Catching your blue soul is like trying to trap smoke with a net. I wanted to tell him you won't be going out with him again, he means nothing to you.

Some say the color blue suppresses the appetite since blue is not a common color found in food. They may be right. You don't eat at work, not even lunch. You've never partaken at any of our co-worker's birthday celebrations, or your own for that matter. You pass up the friendly offerings others bring to share in the spirit of community; cakes, bagels, donuts. Your lithe figure is a testament to your self-control and independent nature,

garnering jealous stares from those that are the least confident among us. I can tell you don't mind though. It gives you power.

You laugh and smile and play coy with those who are attracted to you. On days when you are feeling generous, you let them touch your arm or lean over giving them a glimpse of cleavage. I wonder what it's like where you reside, deigning to look down on the rest of us so far below. You are like Queen Cassiopeia in the heavens. What would any one of us be willing to sacrifice to worship at your feet? Still, I pray you escape her fate.

I watched and waited so long that I thought about giving up. I'm glad I didn't though because I was finally rewarded. It was on the day flirty-guy from accounting showed you the present he purchased for his wife for their wedding anniversary; a necklace, ring and earrings fashioned from lapis lazuli in the most striking blue. It was easy to see you wanted them by the way your fingers fondly brushed across each piece. For just a few seconds, your blue soul took on a tinge of scarlet but it quickly faded when you handed them back. Not quite the true red of those born under a fire sign, but it was enough.

The jeweler told me lapis lazuli was a coveted gemstone in ancient Egypt and later in Europe, ground to make eyeshadows and paints. It was also carved into beads, ornaments and personal adornments and often shaped and fashioned into religious objects. Highly sought after and prized, it was considered a royal color. The gem has been mined for over 6,000 years in high mountains where the air is thin, making it harder to excavate. It's no wonder you like it so much.

I placed the small box on your desk where you would find it easily. The delicate wrapping is a cross between paper and finely spun Japanese fabric, imprinted with

lavender violets and soft green leaves. I found it in an antique store. The minute I touched its creamy texture, I knew it was for you.

You wore the earrings today. They perfectly complement your blue soul. I can tell you chose your outfit to accent their prettiness and not the other way around. You've asked most everyone if they gave them to you, or if they saw who put the box on your desk. I held my breath when you asked flirty-guy because I could see behind his eyes that he wanted to lie and say they were from him. Relief washed over me when he told you the truth. No one in the office knows where they came from, making it a mystery you can't puzzle out. Because of this, my gift, my offering, is all the more special.

You've reached up and caressed the earrings with your fingertips several times this afternoon. I can tell you weren't aware you were doing it because you were engrossed in reading, your brows knit together forming soft vertical creases in the middle of your forehead. This same touching is something lovers do with each other who've been together a long time, a sort of autonomic affection.

It pleases me that the gemstones resting against your skin have caused your soul to take on a warm hue around the edges, almost as if it's blushing. I wish I could tell you how I never gave up, that I finally found something in this world you care about. If you had thought to ask me where the box came from, would I have told you? I'm not sure...I'm afraid if I did, the perfect beauty of your soul might forever change.