

A NEW

ME



(THAT'S RIGHT COMPLETELY NEW!)

By

Christina Hawkins

WHY I LIKE IT: *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes... As with any writing, I think, there is always a self-reflective action that happens with the act. On one hand, I've heard some writers say that the stories they create have nothing to do with them, that they are devoid of all autobiographical personality, and, on the other, there are people, like me, who can only create a hero or villain or semi-likeable human out of their own experience and self-exaggeration. Christina Hawkins', "A New Me," rides the better line where it doesn't matter which type of writer you prefer, but that in the creation, in the reading, in the understanding, of the story you read you will experience a self-reflection that changes you.*

The plot is simple, over the course of a year, our protagonist, Carmen, goes out on her own and deals with the realities of life.

Yet, Hawkins turns this period of self-discovery into poetry. There is hardship in trying. There is loneliness in the void. There is love and rejuvenation in knowing that your journey is your own no matter whom you may create distance between. Overall, there is growth.

There is growth within this story. Growth of character, of authorial agency, of writerly instincts, and personhood.

This is a story that reflects the poetry of life in one of the best ways possible: how we are able to speak it to those that want to hear.

Read on. Write on.

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language...)*

Three jobs let go, one held on by the skin of her teeth. The constant requests of her boss. *Just one more night*, he said as he departed the office three hours earlier than she could, a new stack on her desk. The dark circles under her eyes the next morning, his well-rested face behind his open office door.

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Carmen leans against the railing, her arms cross over metal with a cigarette loosely in hand. The ground below is a sea of noise. Excitement and cheers roll up from the crowd, six floors below her boots. Drones whizz over the black sea below. Carmen takes a drag of her cigarette, thinking back on the year as smoke drifts into the heavy city air.

February, 2019. Carmen was seated at the table, her father waited by the stove. The *beep beep* from the timer as it approached zero. Her mother's constant glances towards the door, a red suitcase by the shoe rack. Carmen's repeated words: *I'll be fine. You can't take care of me forever, you know?*

March, 2019. The plane landed; Carmen's red suitcase trailed behind her. She turned brown eyes away as the plane roared back into the sky: back to Scotland. Carmen had shaken her head, *you can do this. This is home now.* She weaved through her new city, through the doors that said: *Hotel Casablanca.* To the woman at the desk, Carmen had said *one room please.*

May, 2019. Rent was due soon, Carmen knew this. She had enough, just barely. *If I eat less*, Carmen had thought. *I can save more.* She brushed brown hair from her face and ignored her lunch break.

July, 2019. *Don't ever smoke*, her mother had said. *You'll ruin your health.* Carmen had never wanted to. Those words seemed redundant. But the box was sitting on the store shelf. A thought about her endless work fluttered through her mind. She dropped the box into her basket. *Just once.*

August, 2019. *You should visit*, her father had said. *It's Summer.* Carmen's hand slid down her face. She wanted to come home, to see her parents. But Carmen remembered the low digits in her bank account that never seemed to rise. Carmen's heart twisted as she looked at her phone and said: *Maybe next month. Work is busy.*

November, 2019. Three jobs let go, one held on by the skin of her teeth. The constant requests of her boss. *Just one more night*, he said as he departed the office three hours earlier than she could, a new stack on her desk. The dark circles under her eyes the next morning, his well-rested face behind his open office door.

December 31, 2019. Three, two, one: Clack.

Lights explode from the tower; a large sphere disappears into darkness. The roars of the crowd under her feet as confetti rains from the sky. Carmen breathes another drag of smoke, turns on her heels and goes back inside. She places headphones over her ears, drowning out the sea of noise.

January 1, 2020.

Another year.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *When I was writing this piece, I wanted to display the feelings that some young adults have when they break apart from their parents and are on their own for the first time. I wanted to present hardships that people face when they try to make their own identity and show to the readers how, sometimes, they should ask for help – even though they may try to shoulder everything on their own.*

AUTHOR BIO: My name is Christina Hawkins. I am a college student currently taking writing classes. The story I've submitted is a flash fiction piece that I wrote in one of those classes. My only experience with publication was one short story that I submitted to my High School's magazine.