

“Do you?”

By L Scully

WHY I LIKE IT: *Guest editor/author AIMEE NICOLE writes:* Often writers present the reader with an illusion of honesty. It's easy to take home a piece of garbage writing and binge-read. To feel accomplished, like you squeezed every truth from the pages. Reading L Scully is an experience that you travel. The words are truth morsels that you tongue over and over again. Sometimes the words in your mouth are the writer's and sometimes it's your own story bubbling up to the surface. This particular piece was brilliant to read because I connected quickly and with fervor. The journey behind us can be in destruction, not always a tale you want to tell at parties with friends (or strangers). I found myself thinking of a handmade pin I bought from a graffiti artist with a cartoon cutout, the words: "Why aren't we better at being alone" printed across some happy people jumping into the air. The juxtaposition of a message we send out into the world versus reality. It's hard to chose a piece of writing I like, so I'll just put this here and ask you to read the whole thing: "I love that she puts her fingers in her mouth after touching me. I love her soft brown hair. Perhaps we're better off as friends."

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I.

I've been thinking about sending my ex boyfriend an email and I've been wondering if he even has sex with his new girlfriend. Our names both start with the letter "L" which doesn't feel like a coincidence. He can keep his stuff that says P + L. He's not the type to monogram and neither is she but I still picture his parents getting them embroidered linens with those letters as a wedding present which they'll stuff haphazardly in their Queens apartment or cut up to use for painting. I just got an email from the partner of someone I

thought I was in love with sophomore year of college inviting me to a home screening of Hairspray, which I sort of hate, but the tenderness of an invitation made me smile under my several layers of sweaters.

II.

I'm so tired but I still just want to be fucked at the end of a long day. A friend is coming over to say goodbye to me tonight, they're leaving for a new city soon and last Saturday we had our first kiss. I have all of this pent up sexual energy but am not sure that I want them to fuck me so we'll see what happens. I suck it up and prep for my Trader Joe's interview which ends up being a can of shit. I spend an hour and a half walking through the store checking out thein-your-face-enthusiastic handmade signs that I'm applying to co-create, I know somehow I won't get hired because I'm not an ass-kissing camp counselor blonde girl type, and at least three of the people working at this ungodly hour are blonde. I watch them fill up on the sample coffee and subsequently pee it out in fifteen minute installments. I drank a decaf mocha and a Thai iced tea plus some water today and barely peed but I guess I already knew that my body is pretty much shutting down at any given moment. I don't know if I should shower and answer the door in a robe; I think I may want a kiss but I don't want my hair pulled and I don't want my bed to smell like them—I just washed my sheets.

III.

I keep thinking about M which is odd because we have had one night together and she's leaving for law school soon and is out west right now checking it out but is still texting me anyway. I think about the cool blue accents on her glasses and the way her hair stands on the nape of her neck, sexy and boyish and dreamy. She looks everything and nothing like R. She's small, small enough to have her straddle me. Her mouth is wide for smiles and warm kisses. When we slept together we held hands with our fingers wrapped around each other and in the morning she pulled on her pants to go to her coffee shop a block away but made sure to give me a kiss on the shoulder first. I dreamt that I stayed in her house so long her mother and sister came and tried to shoo me out. In the morning when I'd pulled back on my tights and my yellow knee socks with the embroidered eggplant on them I went to her coffee shop to see her but she was doing chores downstairs. I wanted to

see her. It felt like a movie, going to my girl's coffee shop after a one night stand. I like how her skin smells clean and that her tits feel like mine. I like that she wants to ride me and that I'll show her how to fuck with essential oils. I worry I'll fall in love with her. I liked how she said of her and her friend V "we're both into femme girls". I hope we have a threesome together and it's sticky and tender. I think of when I asked M how she liked to be kissed. "Softly and sensually" she said but we left marks anyway. I like that she likes crystals and doesn't wear a bra. I like that I sent her the lavender lullaby my mom sang me as a little kid and that it put her to sleep, or so she said. I love that she puts her fingers in her mouth after touching me. I love her soft brown hair. Perhaps we're better off as friends.

IV.

I feel myself missing J of all people. Not for sex, just for companionship. I spoke with him on the phone when I got out of the hospital, a kind of research survey. I asked him what he remembered of me five years ago, in the throes of depression, sludging around suicidally on meds that put my brain into overdrive. He was kind and aloof, just like he used to be. I think I just want a hug. It's some fucked up conspiracy of the universe that now as I'm trying to be a self-actualized lesbian I find out that the love of my life was a teenage boy. I feel disappointed that I'll never get married. I think about attending relationship addicts anonymous but the truth of it is that I think I'm better than everyone at support groups even though I'm not. When I went home to Cleveland after the hospital I matched with someone on tinder because their song was "K." by Cigarettes After Sex. I sent her that song over and over. I need to never date again but then how will I find my retirement wife—my dyke on a bike, my butch service bottom, my one earring for one earring type girl? I need to go because now I'm meeting some other girl with a boyfriend to kiss in the grass because I don't want to be alone. I need some discipline and to break up officially with my therapist. Springtime always makes me want to fall in love, but it's always when my love is ending. My old favorite songstress is playing in this café and I think about how her music is rather ruined for me after living with her twin. "Do you have sex to my sister's music?" they once asked. 'Do you?' I said back.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This is an excerpt from a longer memoir piece. Honesty is what informs my work, and most of what I write centers around disruptive queer love or sex. I wrote “Do You?” shortly after being hospitalized as I was struggling to reconnect with my life in the outside world. I was thinking a lot about the themes of longing, loss, and poetic justice. It’s important to me that queer and mentally ill people see a place for ourselves in literature, and I try to do that as frankly as I can through a stream-of-consciousness approach. I like to make painful experiences beautiful, or at least darkly humorous. Writing is a coping mechanism.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: *L Scully is a queer, nonbinary American emerging writer and artist currently based in Madrid. Their work focuses mainly on sexuality, gender, and mental illness, as well as love on occasion.*

EDITOR'S BIO: *Aimee Nicole is a queer poet currently residing in Rhode Island. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University and has been published by the Red Booth Review, Psychic Meatloaf, and Dying Dahlia Review, among others. For fun, she enjoys attending roller derby bouts and trying desperately to win at drag bingo. Her poetry appears in this issue of FOTD.*