

The Lot

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Fiction

Mentions of sexual violence

The lot was the place we'd go to piss off our mothers. On any given night, the parking lot would be filled with cars owned by the no-good boys and girls of our suburb. The lot always had a distinct split down its center. One side pristine silver and gold sedans emblazoned with seaside bumper stickers, the other red and black modified early 2000s sports cars, engines revving any time the world fell silent, the boys just begging to be seen. The girl's would pop their trunks and squeeze inside, legs hanging over the back bumper. Our polished feet silhouetted black against the brake lights onto the parking lots chipped asphalt. After a night swinging our legs over the trunk, the backs of our thighs would ache. Shortly after a line indicating where the car's metal ran through our skin would show, making the back of our young, smooth thighs look as if they'd just been slashed through and sewn back together. My car became the trunk of choice due to its already decaying interior. It was a car my step dad "gifted" me on my fifteenth birthday. It was not much of a gift and more of a hand-me-down, a stick shift, 200,000 miles abused. I didn't care, I was a fifteen-year-old with a slightly aged silver sedan. It felt like I was living in affluence.

After smoking a cigarette, the girls would ash the butt into my trunk's torn cloth, leaving little black smoking holes. At the end of the night, you could see the outline of where the girls' bodies stopped and the cigarette burns began. I wonder if they did this on purpose. So that every time I opened my trunk I would see the delineation of their bodies, forever imprinted by the burns. It was like a chalk outline of a dead body on a sidewalk that followed me wherever I went.

As for the boys, they'd usually have nothing more than jumper cables and cases of stolen beer in their trunks. Except for one night when a group pulled in and called us all over, popping the trunk to look inside. It was filled with fireworks.

"We know a guy," they said when asked how they got them since they were all underage. This guy, we eventually learned, was a homeless man who lived beneath an underpass on the I-39. Earlier that night, the boys were fearlessly hotboxing in their car two towns over. After, the boys sped down the highway, going fifty over the speed limit with the windows down to rid of the smell of stinky pot and tobacco. As they were speeding, shitty trap music pulsing through the subwoofer, the homeless man rolled his shopping cart full of trash bags into the middle of the street. The boys just nearly missed him, swerving the car to the right onto the highway's shoulder. By the grace of God the car didn't flip but just scooted forward some feet before coming to a full stop, completely unscathed. The homeless man tapped on their window with the end of a branch, one end carved into a point so sharp it scratched a tiny dot onto the driver's side window. Before the man could say anything they offered him ten dollars in cash as hush money. Before he wheeled off, ten bucks richer, a kid in the back saw a pile of fireworks at the bottom of his shopping cart and asked him how much for them. Apparently, the man said nothing but,

"You can have them. Go blow yourselves up for all I care."

As the boys carried stick after stick into the lot's center, they placed the fireworks in a large circle, organizing them with caution, worried their mere presence might scare the fireworks into eruption. Eventually, the circle was completed, and in a trivial second, the boys lit a match and quickly dragged it from firework to firework like a game of duck duck goose. The spirit of fire ignited a kind of credence in those boys. The way the tip of the match's flame spread down into the stick gave them a power unbeknownst to us innocent girls watching them. When the

fireworks exploded, their light shone a multicolor hue over the entire lot, trapping us no-good teens in a moment of pure ecstasy. Sparks fell atop one another, each explosion only having a split second of viewing time before the next shape or color took over. That night, the parking lot was the brightest thing in our suburb.

At the start, everything was normal. The lot was the place you'd go to understand the happenings of growing up. Sedan back seats conducted the moments I can't help but remember. The first kiss, the first smoke, the first fight, the first heartbreak.

My first night at the lot was innocent. I had a cigarette in the backseat of a 17-year-old boy's car. It was me and two other friends; we were 13 at the time.

"Y'all smoke?" he asked, sliding his pack of Marlboro Reds out of his jacket pocket, pulling a cigarette out with his teeth. I didn't answer.

"Sure, we do," my friend said, extending a hand, waiting for him to place a cigarette between her pink polished fingers. Once she passed it to me, I inhaled long and deep, rarely giving myself a chance to take a clean breath. The car quickly filled with smoke. In the haze, I could only make out the faint red seatbelt light on the front console. I started to think of English class. We had just read *The Great Gatsby*. Looking at that light, I couldn't help but imagine the greenlight at the end of the dock. Just like for Gatsby it was untouchable, and no matter how much I breathed, the air would never clear. The smoke, once in my lungs, now consumed my body and cemented me in this place in time: to the memories made in the backseat.

The lot became the place that it forever remains in my mind, the night of my 17th birthday. His seats were bound in a black cloth that had rough patches of gray, insinuating the many people that had once sat here before me. The seats belonged to a boy just one year older. I knew him from school, but really, I knew him from the stories I'd heard of him.

“He kills,” they’d say. “Not literally, but it sure feels like it.”

“He’s the oxygen thief they all talk about. He’ll take your breath away, sure, but he’ll never give it back. He’ll just leave you there, unable to say anything, completely breathless.”

I ended up in his backseat due to the pull of curiosity. The days in which we first spoke are blurred. Unfortunately, all I can remember now is that night atop the torn cloth of the backseats.

“Happy Birthday,” he said, drawing out the words in a way that made me anticipate him handing me a gift or a note, but he never did. I said thank you shyly, looking down at my hands as they played with the denim frays of my mini skirt. We sat in cowering silence, only glancing at each other every few seconds, quickly diverting our gaze when the other was looking. Soon, the cold of his finger tips grazed the side of my cheek, pushing my hair away from my face and behind my ear. At that point we locked eyes and neither one of us looked away. Before I could realize what was happening he used his other hand to forcefully pull me closer. His hand tightened around my fingers, my silver ring digging into my skin, the metal penetrating my flesh. From my thighs to now my fingers, it felt like a recurring metaphor of this place, metal piercing through skin. I could feel the edge of the ring welding itself into my flesh, leaving a red line soon to be remembered. I sat with the pain in the hopes he would drop my hand, realizing he was hurting me, but the hand never dropped, and that time never came. I knew this was *the time*. I knew this was the thing they had all warned me about. He began to become more aggressive. I tried my best to look out the window and observe anything around me—anything that wasn’t this.

I first noticed a streetlight. It was flickering. I could see the remains of rising dirt and dust floating underneath the light giving the debris a sort of glittery sheen, like sparkles in the sky. I

wondered where that dirt had come from. Where had it been before? What would it do now? All I could do was pick up and put down time. Time was like a hot kettle, I couldn't look straight into the boiling water; it would fog over my thoughts and make me think that what was happening to me was okay. In the middle of my daze, I suddenly heard the car door slam. As I adjusted my eyes, I saw the silhouette of a boy pulling up his pants and walking towards the woods, away from me. I slowly lifted myself until I was fully seated, my hips and groin aching. My thighs and lower back stinging and raw from the fabric beneath me. Opening the door, I kicked my legs over the car's edge and quickly began to walk. My dragging legs took me past the street light, away from the dancing dust. In a startled motion I swiveled my head back to the car, slowly blinking as it came into focus. The polished red exterior was so stark against the black asphalt, like a drop of blood on a slick body bag. I started to feel like something remained of me in that car, like I should run back and make sure I hadn't left a part of me behind. Turning back around, I started walking again only to soon remember I did leave something behind. I left my imprint. I was now a part of the grey patches on the backseat.

The lot was a void more than a place. It's liminality, an illusion to what was thrilling, to what was exciting. Like a parasite, I cling to what I think feeds me. I fed off of thrill and delinquency. The night of my 17th birthday, as I walked away from that car, glittery grime floating around me, I started to realize I wasn't the one feeding off of the lot, it was feeding off of me.