**Night Walking**

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Tocka is something that none of my American friends will understand. It's the deepest, most painful emotion that one can experience. It's a dull ache of the soul, a longing with nothing to long for, and a vague restlessness.  
  
I was tossing and turning in bed with the blanket already thrown across the room. The sticky warm blend of sweat and stale air was all over my body. My office struggles were on my mind. Over and over, I ruminated the changes that I'd make to the ad design to get it approved. The co-worker with the balayage that gave me attitude, I hated her but had to be nice. In the midst of all of this, my mind was too fatigued to make my body take deep breaths and calm down, but it all gushed to the surface and broke the careful compartments that I built in my head.  
  
It was July 2020, the midst of the covid pandemic. I was stuck in a tiny East Village studio with no air conditioning. Day in and day out the heat besieged my body and mind. I had no release. Being from the Ukraine, I love bars and hard drinking, but the pandemic shut them all down. So I was stuck alone, no human soul to laugh with and cry with. A relentless flood of ad assignments coming into my laptop every day. Somewhere, your soul dies. And only at night, it comes out to haunt me, to remind me that I'm more than a machine made of ice melting.  
  
2 am in the middle of the night. I threw a black dress over my body. I have a tall Eastern European body, and black long hair. My body and face falls into a beauty ideal, and it sometimes gives me more attention than I want to. I slipped into flip flops, put a medical mask over my face, and slipped out of the apartment. I climbed down six flight of narrow stairs that would become an inferno in a fire. The buildings in this part of Manhattan were from the prewar days.  
  
And then the balmy air embraced me. It was warm all over, but only warm was a relief from the hot hell in my apartment. A little motion in the air picked up and shuffled the hot air away from my skin. The sheen of sweat got tricked into evaporating a few water molecules to settle down my feverish body a little bit.  
  
The street was empty. There wasn't a sole. This wasn't the Manhattan that I have moved across continents for. Even the windows were dark. A lot of the neighbors were NYU students who had left when NYU shut down. Then the youngsters left to move back with their families. Finally, anyone with enough money for a security deposit fled the city to move into the suburbs where there was more space. Whoever remained seemed shut inside for fear of catching the corona virus. The city that never sleeps had fallen into a sleeping beauty slumber.  
  
I walked a block down and a block east. And then cooler but still hot summer air just kicked the frustration out of me. Being Ukrainian, I tend to have tempers. I yanked the black dress over my head. There I was bare naked under the night sky because I had rushed out from bed. The air hit my skin better to cool me down. I could feel the heat evaporate off my body. I let out a guttural sigh of relief.  
  
There was nobody to see me. Safe in the knowledge that I could strut around naked with impunity in the center of America's most packed city, I strolled through the streets. I felt a jolly joy lifting in my heart as I drank in the combination of freedom and heat respite. I almost started dancing. The flip flop steps started getting a little skip to it. And even my Eastern European resting bitch face almost betrayed a light smile.  
  
Something happened to me unbeknownst until it was in full bloom. My sex got wet. The erotic thrill of being naked, of being a dare devil, and of dancing on the nose of modesty tingled me. I had almost forgotten in the endless drudgery of churning out ad designs that I was a woman, that I was an erotic being, and that I have all this neurological wiring that's waiting to light up and dance. My sex got so well lubricated that with every step, I could feel the left and right pussy lip rubbing together a bit.  
  
I walked home. I lay naked in bed. I touched my silken hand between my thighs. The nectar was luscious. My pussy was as wet and slippery as the juiciest mango, cut up and fallen into slippery pieces. I circled my clit. There was such an erotic charge in my body that I could feel electric current sparking between my finger tip and my clit. It was the nakedness. It was being exposed. It was having my innocence revealed. It was the submissive pang of being helpless to someone being able to take from me without being able to hold back. That's when someone would be able to stare at my naked beauty without me being able to do anything to stop. Ugh, it was such a lovely charge. When the release of orgasm came, my whole body lit up. I glowed bright for a moment in the dark apartment and then fell into a deeply restorative sleep for the rest of the night.  
  
It was only natural that the next night, I waited, a little giddy, for the middle of the night to come and to find myself turning and tossing again. It was 1 am. I threw over the black dress. I ran down the stairs. When I was a block away from my apartment studio, I threw off the black dress. I walked through the black night bare, but I got no satisfaction. The little heat differential between inside and outside didn't provide as much respite anymore. I knew too well that nobody would see me in the street. For a moment, I tried to dare myself to walk past the homeless encampment on 2nd avenue and 5th street, but I didn't. I got home angry. I touched my sex and nothing. It felt dry. It felt more irritated than wanting to be fingered. At some point, heat exhaustion overpowered me and pulled me into a terrible sleep.  
  
During the day, I couldn't focus on making pizza ads for seniors in Florida retirement homes. I needed to up the charge. I needed to feel the risk. I needed to feel my pulse quicken. I needed to feel alive. The only way to get that jolt was to put myself into real risk. I had to be smart to pick something that felt real to me but wasn't a real danger.  
  
The solution came to me when I was watching user research videos about retirees. They tend to forget things. So they put keys into all kinds of hiding places. A little magnet will help make a key stick to the inside of a car's tire well. I watched an old man with checkered shirt and a walking cane walk circles around his car because he not only had forgotten the car key, but he had also forgotten which tire well the key was hidden under. The colleague with the balayage sent me a sticker of a laughing turtle. I silently hissed at her, just wait until you are a retired grandma.  
  
The thought took hold. After the user research review meeting was over, I went for a little walk. I walked into the middle of Alphabet City. It's a little rough. It's a little poor. It has a few addicts. It always makes me a little uneasy as a woman to walk in there. It's not as bad as it used to be the purse snatchers have long been pushed out of the neighborhood. I checked up and down the street that nobody was there. Then I put a key under the right back tire well of a blue impala.  
  
I walked back. I could already feel the thrills in my bones: What if someone followed me and would come into my studio at night? Good, good, I was on the right track to get the emotions up. And nobody had followed me. I had carefully checked the street and the windows. Worst case, a random person would find a random key not knowing where it belonged.  
  
I went back to work. I enjoyed a glass of wine after the office hours were over. The minutes moved slowly until the deep dark night came. A midnight I couldn't bare it any longer. I slipped off my dress. Only dressed in flip flops and a medical mask, I skipped out of the apartment. I pulled the door shut with the lock turned so that the only two keys were the key inside and the key under the tire well. I would have to go all the way to the car to retrieve the spare to get back in. My heart was pounding so hard when I rushed past my neighbors' doors. They could have caught me so badly. They would know who I am. As I got out onto the street I almost laughed out loud because I flaunted the gauntlet of half a dozen neighbors without either being any wiser.  
  
I felt free again. I felt the childlike freedom of being naked. I felt that calamity feeling of doing something that would bring burning social consequences. I felt my heart shaped breasts jiggle freely with my movements. I let my hands float through the air like a dancer to feel just how much I could open up and let myself be uninhibited. I almost sang, but that would have woken up people.  
  
My heart was pounding so hard that I had so much energy. My muscular legs were moving me swiftly through the streets. I reached that blue Impala almost startlingly soon because I was so energized. My eyes must have been glowing. I squatted and reached under the tire well. There was the key hanging from the white board magnet. It was almost easy. And then I heard footsteps.  
  
The streets were so quiet that I could make them out from quite a distance. I quickly moved between the cars in a crouched position. I was hiding my naked body. I had never made a plan what to do in case I got caught. All the playing was over. I was panicked for real. I had been foolish. The heat had lulled my brain into making dysfunctional decisions.  
  
I moved the side of my face past the bumper to see down the side walk. A man was walking down the street towards me. I couldn't make out his face or what he was wearing. He seemed middle sized. He seemed some kind of ethnic. It wasn't the clean look. It wasn't the thug look. It was something in between that I couldn't estimate. The man moved a bit slow like he had nowhere in particular to go.  
  
I could wait for him to come closer and see me fully naked. Or I could ran for it hoping that as little as I could make him out that he wouldn't be able to make me out. My calculation wasn't driven by reason, but by my nature of favoring quick flight to dealing with a problem. I bolted forward. Within three steps, my flip flops wanted to fly off my feet. I grabbed them with my hand and ran off barefoot.  
  
I kept running and running. I never turned around. I must have lost the guy for sure but I kept running driven by the emotion of panic. I turned around the last corner onto my block. I almost ran over another woman who was walking her little pug dog. I felt like an iron anvil hit my chest when she saw me full on naked. It was like we were both caught under the same cone of a street light to get a clear look at each other. I kept running. She kept walking her dog.  
  
I ran up the stairs. I must have been so loud. All my stealth was gone. I was covered in thick sweat. My heart was pounding. To my astonished delight, my pussy was so wet that the juices were running down my inside thigh. At first, I thought that it was sweat, but I tasted it. The front of the thigh was salty wet. The inside of my thighs was musky and slippery wet.  
  
I lay down naked in my bed. I touched my pussy. It had never been that slippery. It had never been that sensitive. Each gentle touch was received with a tingling. I felt like a fairy that touches of golden sparkles on everything she waves her wand. I didn't rub my pussy furiously to chase an orgasm as I usually do. I'd touch down my fingers gentle like a butterfly. And a molten, goose bump sensation would roll out into my body from there. I explored my entire pelvis area with gentle touches to see what kind of rolling tingles it could send spiraling into my body.  
  
Then I felt like my whole body was glowing. All the rolling sensations started to reach parts of my body and echo back from there. My skin felt alive. I could feel all the gentle sensations of the mattress on my back, the air on my skin, and the hair on my shoulders. It turned into an outer body experience. I started seeing colors.  
  
Naturally, my fingers settled in to make circles around my clitoris and the sensual experience became more and more erotic tones. The horniness was gushing through me. At one point, I felt the sheet on the mattress under my butt. It was wet as if I had peed in it. Eventually, all the singing lights, the crawling tingles, and the aroused clitoris burst into an orgasm. I convulsed into being unable to breathe, and when I could breathe again, I didn't want to breathe because I wanted this to last longer. I wanted to feel one more rolling orgasm coming out of my clitoris. I passed out before I even remembered sleeping again.  
  
The next morning, my mouth had a sweetness. My muscles felt sore, but my body felt happy and light. I felt like I had touched heaven. I was in a good mood. When I saw my balayage colleague, I could only feel warmth to her. I told her that she was a wonderful human being and had taught me a lot. When her face looked at me in disbelief, that old bitterness came up in me. The thought crossed my mind: "Yes, she deserves to have such an ugly, clueless face."  
  
But in the afternoon, I felt restless. The blissful memories of last night became haunting. I needed to have that feeling again. I felt desperation. The summer heat helped to let reason escape. I wanted to be caught again. This time, I wanted to be caught by a Soho fuckboy. I wanted him to look me up and down before I ran off.  
  
No, I couldn't run. I couldn't run. The man last night probably didn't even see me. Maybe, he barely noticed me. I was too fast. Those track and field days in college had made me fast. My bare feet were probably silent on the hot summer pavement. I had to be seen. I had to be caught. There was only one thing to achieve that. There was only one thing to make the danger real again. I pulled out the clear container with all my extra shoes, the shoes I only wear for special occasions. They were all thrown into that foot by foot storage box and mixed into a tight tangle. I dug deep in the old shoes. And there it was.  
  
Five inch, black patent leather high heels. They had platform at the front with closed toes. But the back had only a skinny strap around the angle with a tiny gold buckle. I always walked in flats. I could barely walk in the high heels. If I'd go naked in them, I'd be forced to strut slowly no matter what happened. I could already feel the horniness in my mind. It didn't make it to my pussy yet, but in my mouth, I got that umami sensation of biting into a savor steak. That's also how my mouth feels when I get turned on.  
  
This time, I ventured down to Soho during a work break. I found a silver Mercedes on Crosby to hide my key. The weekend was coming closer. I had to wait for ten minutes for the street to empty out. I was super careful to make sure that not even in the distance anybody could see me. My fingers were shaking when I pulled my hands back. My plan was so daring. I felt scared. I closed my eyes. It felt so good to be scared, to feel these shakes. They were like a wake-up from a slumber and from monotony.  
  
That night, I left the studio apartment at 11pm. I knew that it was earlier. I knew that people were more likely to be out. And that's what drove me to leave earlier. My fear was numbed by some kind of heat demon, and I only longed for the danger. I couldn't wait to be caught for real. I was chasing that moment of being exposed, but I still wanted that deniability. I still wanted that deniability that the night was simply so hot that I had to cool down.  
  
Those five inch heels were so hard to walk in. I struggled to get to the door. When I stepped down a stair, I had to hold onto the railing with both hands and carefully go down side ways. What had I done? I had made sure that I'd be stuck without a fast escape. Even if I changed my mind at any time, it would be a long way to get out. The door had shut locked behind me. To get the spare key, I would probably be walking for an hour in this slow pace. I would be an hour naked in public without escape. That felt heavy.  
  
I started the walk down the street past the cars, past the trees with the little garden boxes that neighbors had built around the tree, and past all those stores closed for covid. Every once in a while I heard a car pass a distant intersection. I walked slowly. Having to walk so high on my balls, I had to lift my feet in front of me. I had to swing my hips around. My calves curled higher to give it that sexy look. With tiny steps, I advanced down the Bowery. It's a wide street.  
  
A couple came across a corner. They were walking a white mutt dog. They had their arms around each other. He saw me right away and smiled. She looked at me upset. She must have pinched him because he started looking away at the street, still smirking. I was upset with myself because as soon as I had seen them, my left arm had shot around my boobs and my right hand covered my sex. My chest caved in to hide myself. I felt shy. I felt embarrassed. I covered up. I wanted to show myself but couldn't no matter how hard I tried. I kept walking like that --all covered up -- but it was frustrating me.  
  
When I crossed Houston and entered the little Soho shopping streets, I heard a young man's voice calling out to his friend: "There is a naked woman." My blood curled. I looked around. He was at the intersection behind me, standing high on his bike to get a better look in my direction. I dug into the side street where the library is as fast as I could on the high heels. It was a short block. I heard him call out to his friend to hurry up lest I get away. I managed to quick step and tiny step my way out the little library alley. I made a right because there was a covid closed hotel with big bushes. I crouched behind the bushes naked to hide. I didn't want to be caught by the young men. Young men have something nasty about them. Young men have something uncontrollable about them. They do not know how to act decent yet.  
  
I heard them bike around me up and down the street: "I swear I saw a naked woman. She walked really slowly. She must be around here."  
  
There is something to the feeling of hiding, to being embarrassed, and to be passive to getting caught. It was too real to be horny in the moment, but I could feel a dam of pent-up horniness for when I would be safe, to see myself from the outside, squatting naked on high heels, it was such a turn on.  
  
When I hadn't heard them for ten minutes, I carefully looked around, and then went to retrieve the key who was only a couple minutes away. I made it safely home.  
  
The young men, never even having seen them, stimulated my fantasy. I'd imagine them in all detail: a jaded mouth, looking at me like an object, not knowing how to handle a woman, but eager to get their little dicks inside of me. They'd be rough. They'd be unwanted. However, they'd have an unrelenting way of advancing on me. They'd become more and more daring in what they'd say and do to me. They'd team up on me. I rarely put a finger in my butt, but that night, I put a finger in my pussy and my butt. I imagined them fucking me as a tag team. I'd imagine their faces beaming with pride about how they'd fucked the hot Ukrainian woman from the street. I'd imagine their bravado of how they'd fuck me pathetic and inexperienced but believe that they'd be the god amore himself. I fingered my pussy and anus in and out. I left my clitoris untouched because they wouldn't know how to find it. And so it took a long time for me to get off, but my imagination of their bodies on me had become so vivid and intense that I was satisfied that way, too.  
  
They say that the summer heat drives people crazy. It's the nights when sleepiness and heat mix that really gets you. I had to bare myself. I had to display myself. I knew that I would not be able to stop myself from covering myself with my hands. So I got on my hands and knees to get under my desk. I pulled out the cord to my desk lamp. It was black and a good six feet long. That would work. I proudly put it on the chair next to the door while I went back to churning out ad visuals for fruit drinks for people in Idaho.

That night, I knew that I was ahead of a major project. The backup key was in the tire well of a plumber van parked next to Gramercy Park. I was wearing the black high heels. I had the medical mask on my face. I had managed to get three wraps of electric cord around my wrist behind my back. My hands were clenching the opposite elbow behind the back when I relaxed, but I was trying to get a loop of cord over my shoulder. I wanted to tie my arms behind my back in such a way that I had to strut out my chest and bare my boobs high and proud. It was really tricky being so confined to get the cord to go anywhere and to pull it tight.  
  
Between the high heels and the arms tied, I was really constraint. Each stair step was a careful balancing act. I got second thoughts on my sanity, but I kept pushing them away by telling myself that the only way to get out of this situation was to make it to the plumber van and back. And so, as much as each step was a fight, I fought on.  
  
I walked the street proud. A woman walking her dog passed me. A delivery messenger on a bicycle whizzed past me. He turned around a couple times. I was daring and cross Astor Place instead of staying to the shadow of the sides. Two young men with their skateboards stopped their loud clattering stunts to point at me and to make appreciative faces. I walked past another couple. One of the things NYC is that people don't really give a shit about what you do as long as you don't slow them down. It was almost a moment of embracing that it's okay to be naked in a healthy body relationship kind of way. Their peaceful reactions made me feel more peaceful as well. It's okay to be naked.  
  
As I arrived at Gramercy Park, I looked around for the plumber van. That's when I saw him. He was sitting on a park bench in the middle of the park basking in the moon light. He was tall, dark, and handsome. He saw me. I must have paused to stare at him. He walked towards me. He locked the park behind himself because Gramercy Park is a public park but only open to local residents.  
  
He smiled at me. I felt disarmed. There was something carefree about the way that his dark curls rested on his head. His skin was ivory and smooth, but the structure of his jaw and cheeks spoke that he also had experience. He offered me his elbow as for a stroll invitation, as if it were the most natural thing to offer when encountering a naked woman in the street. He noticed the restraint arms behind my back, he made an "oh" noise to indicate that he now realized, but he wasn't the least perturbed by it. It was like asking someone to climb out of the car, but then realizing that the seatbelt restraint had to be loosened first.  
  
He motioned me to walk with him for a stroll. I don't know what it was about his face. There was spring. There was happiness. There was the promise of I'm going to lead you to a good place. He also had an innocence about him like the world hadn't had any worry, like there was no job in the morning, there was no heat fighting the sleep, there was simply this beautiful park that he had just discovered in the moment and was enjoying.  
  
I motioned him to come with me to the plumber van. I squatted down in front of it with my back to it. I searched the tire well blindly with my hand behind my back. He watched me intently like I was teaching him something in school. When I got the key, his face lit up like I had gotten what I needed. I almost wanted to scream: "Why are you so blissful."  
  
We started walking together side by side. There was something about the strength and calmness that he carried. All the emotions, panic, and neurosis inside of me felt like it hadn't encountered anything like that. All I could do was marvel at what it felt to walk next to him. As we passed the Dutch bakery, he waved me to pause. He apologized for being insensitive.  
  
Then he pulled his pants down, unbuttoned his shirt, and took those white Calvin Klein's off his butt. He was circumcised, shaved down, there and well endowed -- not too long, but nice and of good girth. He was all soft. His pecs were strong. He definitely lifted five times a week. His belly muscles painted a faint six pack without him even flexing. We walked down the streets naked side by side like it was the most normal thing in the world.  
  
We passed a few people. When we reached my apartment building, he took a knee to gallantly wish me a good night and walked off naked. I saw those two butt cheeks twitching alternatingly as he walked away. They were firm, juicy things to bite teeth in. I felt like a lamb, too timid to call out and ask for his number. And he seemed to have such abundance in life that he didn't feel a need to hold onto me. It was like he lived so much in the moment that he probably already found the next marvel to get lost in. A naked woman in the dark of the night was simply one of many marvels.  
  
I wasn't horny that night. I had found peace. I breathed the memory of him in and out. I reconnected with that calm feeling of strength that I had next to me. It made me feel stronger and stronger. I simply faded away into sleep at some point.