

The First New Yorker

The last thing I saw was the lights of the Bay Area sneaking through the clouds as I sat looking out the plane window. The last three thousand miles were a blur and I was grateful I slept through most of it. I never really liked Mondays. I just felt this particular Monday would no doubt drag on, but I knew I had to endure every second of it. I was the type of person who could never express my emotions properly but I had to keep my head up and stay strong about all the changes and unfamiliar surroundings that now were a part of my life.

After gathering my bags from baggage claim, I headed outside. What a fucking cold day. My sweater drowned in the rain along with everything else I was wearing. The buildings were so tall that I couldn't see the top. I swear they were touching the clouds. I could feel every drop race down my face and remained emotionless until I reached the new apartment. Crying, sick, and tired of smelling the polluted air, I lay down on a mattress on the cold hard floor. Through my blurry vision, I could almost make out the sight of my swollen hand. You're turning into him. Stop. I could feel my ears filling up with water. It's the middle of the damn day. Screw going out. Why would I want to go out in the fucking weather? What crazy ass person would roam the city like this.

I woke up at 12AM with dried stains of whatever the hell came out of my face that night on my bed. Hmph. The sun usually wakes me up. I stare at my reflection through my phone as it buzzes with notifications. I couldn't bring myself to open my phone; for there were only questions I didn't have the answer to. An unusual pattern of footsteps approached my door and then came two soft knocks after, as if they weren't trying to wake me up.

"Hey Kelly, you awake yet?" she said.

Well I mean of course I am now. Why would you knock if you knew I was?

"Yeah, I am." I said in the most monotone voice I could.

“Great. It’s a beautiful day outside. The weather finally picked up. Do you mind stopping by Key Foods and picking up groceries?”

What the fu.. The hell is Key Foods? And the weather picked up?? It’s like 60 degrees?!

It took her about ten seconds until she realized I had no idea what she was talking about. She proceeded to tell me it’s about two blocks away and that I could walk through Central Park if I ever wanted to check it out. I felt so obligated to go. I mean, she used the “newbie” card so of course I told her I could. I typed in my computer: “weather for san franc” Wait.... Right. “weather for nyc”.

There were people outside with just a t-shirt on and even worse some were just all in all shirtless. Trying to avoid eye contact with anybody, I quickly found one of the entrances and I swear to you, it’s almost indescribable. I couldn’t bring myself to enjoy my experience walking through the park. It’s so surreal, I mean, from the buildings to the park itself. Who knew there would be a park so damn big that they built a street in it and not even for cars. All the hype I was told before I left all drained away so no, I didn’t like how there were hella people. I didn’t enjoy hearing the sound of cars roll by and I didn’t like how the buildings were still visible through the trees. I sat down on one the the rocks poking out from under the ground. My eyes capture every inch of the park. There’s just so many people. Everyone seems like they’re in a rush. They’re like the buildings here. Nobody wants to take a second out of the day to realize where they are? It’s New York fucking city!

I took out my headphones and blast music hoping it would help my mind run away for a while. One song in, I spotted a man approach me from my left.

“You know, you make it very obvious that you’re not from around here.”

“Do I?” I say as I pull headphone out.

“Yeah, you do. And from the looks of it, you’re not even from a city.”

“Do you always go around questioning people?” I say, realizing how rude and mean I

sound.

“Not always. You just seemed a little lost.”

I looked at him with an uncomfortable smile. I tried to put my headphone back on but he continues the conversation as if he was interviewing me. I let it be and gave him the benefit of the doubt that he was just trying to be friendly. We ended up walking around the fields for a while as I try to catch an impression on him. Wearing formal apparel, I assumed he was traveling home from work. I usually never talk to strangers as long as I did with him but I thought this might the vibe here and so I went along with it. We had finally reached the end of the fields while I hoped he ran out of questions.

“Maybe I can see you later. Same time tomorrow?” he says.

“Sure..?” I said.

He smiles and walks back the way he came. At that point, I didn’t care what just happened. It all happened so quick. I got the groceries and walked to the apartment in the bright night. I ring the doorbell to see my dad answer the door.

“How was your walk?” he said.

“I’m fine.” And I really do mean it this time.

The next morning I find myself a little more excited to wake up. I finally had something to look forward to. I rushed out of the house so quickly that I forgot to check the weather.

It’s 30 degrees? How the hell is it possible to reach such temperature???

It took me an hour to walk to the place I met him.

“You didn’t bring a thicker jacket?” he said.

“I didn’t know it was going to be this cold. The sun is out isn’t it?”

“Haha yeah. That’s not how it works here.”

He takes off his jacket and hands it to me.

“Here. Use mine.”

What a show off. Now you’re just wearing a T-shirt. Are you trying to prove something?

I took it. I was cold and I didn’t know him so if you’re going to risk something like that, don’t expect me to deny it and consider your feelings. And what a day it was. I believed in something. I believed in someone. It’s the happiest I’ve been in awhile. I finally let myself open up to another and doing so leaves you really, really vulnerable.

The night arrives quickly as time ran by too fast. He took me out to eat and let me order anything I wanted. We left the restaurant loud and reckless. It was dark and my eyes felt heavy as we get surrounded by three walls. Suddenly, I get slammed with both shoulders held against the wall. My hands could feel the sharp pain of the brick wall while I tried to keep my balance. I look up and catch the eyes of a monster. I felt a warm feeling all around my body. Along the spine of my back, along the veins of my neck..damn.. Nervously smiling and laughing while fighting is such a bad defensive move. My chest made it so hard for me to breathe like a weight was holding me down. My eyes wander, trying to look for a place other than trying to realize what’s going on. How could I have been so naive? Oh what did I just do. What do I do..this is all my fault. This is all my fault...it’s all my fault. I lay down in my bed looking up at the ceiling for the rest of the night. I trace my hand down my bruises and scars and realize I’m still wearing his jacket. The jacket really did do its job properly. I’m not cold anymore.

Nine months go by without me saying a word to anyone. Talking to someone wouldn’t help, probably just make matters worse. I don’t want someone to feel burdened of my feelings and I wanted to know I was strong enough to get through it on my own. I didn’t realize how much something that happened so long ago would still affect me. I refused to accept it and doing so is exactly what kept him around. Fear is one of the few emotions that change your immediate and logical reactions. I found out that it’s really me who’s letting this affect myself so in a way, I was feeding the monster. With all the destruction he left, his monster left scars and



lessons how to never get them again. I will learn how express and project myself. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting because if you do, they'll all come back as a mistake instead of a monster you can chase away.