Putting on a Face at the Ritz

I wanted to escape. So I turned to what I knew best: booze and bumps.

April 9, 2018 By JMV

I wish I could continue with the rest of the tale of my brother and my relationship, but more happened before I spoke to him about my diagnosis again. I had to get back into my every day life. That meant doing what I knew how to do.

The water was pouring over me with Lady Gaga blasting in the background. The thoughts in my head were drowning out “Marry the Night.” I just let the water run, trying to feel something other than grief. I was in the shower, getting ready to go out. I knew I needed to be around people, or maybe I needed to be around the right people. The club is all I understood back in 2011.

I arrived at the Ritz in Hell’s Kitchen. I entered and scaled the bar, I stood against the brick wall just beyond it, staring into emptiness as a crowd swam around me. I didn’t notice anyone or want anything other than to just stand still. I wanted to be seen, but a part of me wished I could go unnoticed.

Photo by Spinkick Pictures

Within a few moments that silence was broken by some friendly faces. I still felt empty, blank, just not knowing how to act. It used to be so easy. I did what I knew best and ordered a drink. I continued about my business as usual, and while outside having a cigarette, I bumped into Dallas Dubois who was openly HIV positive. She had a pink wig and looked bright and welcoming. I confided in her, and she went from bubbly to concerned and told me that we should get lunch soon and talk.

About an hour passed and I had a key up my nose; for a moment, I was fine. I could get through the night if I just kept it simple.

When I look back, all I wanted was to feel better. I wanted to escape. I wanted to be out of my body, and I was chasing something in the booze and the bumps that just wasn't there. Instant gratification was my answer for feeling better. I surrendered to the night and self-loathing. What was the quickest way to feel normal? I wish I could recall the events from the rest of the night, but I drank so heavily that I couldn't remember a thing. This would be a cycle that I would repeat for a few years to come.

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