

## **A burnt out Princess**

His Princess was fuming. So was he.

Come on honey.

Come on.

He never stopped.

You'll be late.

She was always late. What did he want: a five minute shower? He was a father: surely he knew how long it took a fourteen year old to get ready.

Ten minutes to departure.

She had to dry her hair, sort her eyes, choose her clothes. Was he serious.

Come on Princess. Need to hurry up.

Her father could be such a pain.

And she knew she wasn't a princess. Never had been. But it was nice to imagine, and her father had always called her one. She had the local park as her palace gardens, her neighbors as armed guards, the taxi to dance class as her private limousine. Being a Princess had its advantages. Having a father who wasn't a real King was a pain in the hole.

She didn't live in a palace of course: it was a flat on the tenth floor. But she did have a room to herself which was something. Her brothers had to share. She had her mirror, her internet connection, her hair iron and her music. Maybe she was a Princess after all. All she missed were the photographers waiting for her to leave the flat.

Come on honey. Time running out.

He was always in a rush.

Appointment is at six sharp.

Why did they always have to be so sharp. She liked blunt. He could be so annoying. That was what Pappies were for she supposed. What a pain. She combed her hair again. It still wasn't straight.

Honey! We have to go.

She knew he was getting wound up when his voice changed. She could sense him starting to bounce from foot to foot and wander the corridor and start opening the door and call the lift with a defiant ping that made absolutely no difference at all. She tried to hurry up but it was difficult. She felt sorry for him but wished he would relax. That fringe wouldn't work. For fuck sake she thought. She didn't say it: didn't want to lose her pocket money again for cursing, but her hair just wouldn't sit straight, it just didn't seem to understand. Nobody did. All her father needed to do was take out the rubbish: she had her image to convey, making it up as she went along while he wandered around in public, oblivious to what he looked like beside her. God, fathers were so embarrassing. If he hit that lift button again she'd kill him. The constant pinging was making her hair even frizzier. How could she go out like that.

Another dentist appointment. Was there really a rush? Calm down a bit for god's sake father.

I'm coming she finally replied.

Just to keep him pacified. She was nowhere near ready.

He couldn't hear from under the noise of her hair dryer.

Come on! We've got to leave now.

I'm coming she repeated, trying to decide which boots to wear, forgetting to turn off the dryer. In another socket her hair tongs were beginning to smoke: she'd left them on top of her make up strewn tissues. These boots were just not right. There was a smell of burning. No time for that.

I'll wait for you in the car.

Thank God.

Just a minute she called out desperately. Her mobile was buzzing.

If only he knew. But father's weren't supposed to know. Ignorance was their bliss. That was why all daughter's remained princesses. So many things he didn't realise and shouldn't, and a few she wished he did. That was called conflict: the school psychologist had said something like that. Growing up. Fuck that for a game of cowboys. She hung up. The bastard could find another girlfriend elsewhere. She'd had enough.

The car was cold and sticky, recently cleaned. Her father forced a smile. She knew it was a fake. He was trying to calm down but she knew he was stressed, capable of scratching the car door on the concrete pillar of a parking lot. So was she. Her hair was curling back into its natural shape: that wasn't allowed. She checked her phone again, but that particular fucking prince still hadn't replied.

They walked up to the first floor dentist's room in silence. Her father kissed her on the head as she entered.

They were late. Her father was fuming. So was she. They had missed their turn. Had to wait in the clinical confusion of fake plants, nasty posters urging dental hygiene, the ear splintering buzz of a drill sucking nerves, and the tinkle of the doorbell as clients hustled together in need of a brace or a good filling. And then she had homework, and exams next day and her brothers would start picking on her. Life was cool, wasn't it. She wondered.

She would always be his Princess. She knew that. But sometimes it was difficult to smile with braces strangling your teeth. And right now she couldn't remember if she had remembered to unplug the hair iron she had left smoldering under the table by her bed. Difficult being a princess: she couldn't

decide whether she should rush him home to put out the fire or divert his attention until it was all over. It was all so grim sometimes.

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