

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

EPHEMERAL

Written by

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Draft No. 1

Contact
information

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INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

Soaked in fading twilight, MEG (19) gazes out of her bedroom window, hunched over in a childlike manner. The skyline stretches out, other apartment blocks minuscule from ten floors up. A hum of traffic punctuates the silence.

As we follow Meg's gaze, a longing envelopes her face.

INT. MEG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meg opens the fridge door to discover what she does every evening: a barren shelf containing only long-gone onions.

She grabs a packet of noodles from her cupboard, tearing the bag open. Her FLATMATES potter about, not acknowledging Meg.

From behind appears ROSIE (19), dragging string lights to the kitchen's Christmas tree, which she begins to dress.

ROSIE

Hey! Meg! You alright?

Meg can only offer up a halfhearted smile in return.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg's bedroom feels cosy, yet cold. Shelves are adorned with hardback novels and faded photographs in wooden frames. There is one of a six-year-old Meg and her MUM, beaming near a Christmas tree. Days-old crockery is stacked on her desk.

Mindlessly eating her noodles, Meg scrolls through wellness articles on her laptop. 'How to Be Happy'; '25 ways to feel happier now'; 'Money can't buy happiness: but you can'.

Her eyes flit past suggestions to 'get outside', 'regulate your diet' and 'socialise frequently', unsatisfied.

A phone buzz. She glances over: Rosie. An invitation to dinner. Instantly, Meg types out 'no, can't sorry' and resumes scrolling, laughter seeping through her door.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

An essay is slammed on Meg's desk. Face up. 33, circled in red, screams out at Meg, who's eyes hardly flicker.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Pushing into the room, Meg is too self-absorbed to notice the letter she tramples over. Only once her bag is tossed on the floor does she acknowledge it on her foot- a handwritten Christmas card from Rosie. It is flung onto her desk.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Woozy from lethargy, Meg has dissolved into her duvet, melded to the sheets and her family-sized bag of crisps.

A sitcom plays muffled from her laptop, but she is fixated on messages on her phone. With her mum. Meg refreshes the page, however, her September messages remain unanswered.

Her attention flips to her laptop, opening YouTube. Wellness videos flood her page: meditations; yoga: unsatisfactory.

Suddenly, a headline captures her attention: '*BlissX: fix your life instantly!*'. She clicks.

Meg is led to to an advert, clips of jubilation flashing up.

ADVERT NARRATOR (V.O.)

(overenthusiastic)

Are you unsatisfied with your life?
Perhaps your boss is a dud, your
friends bore you to sleep, or you
cannot *stand* your spouse? Well- fear
not! BlissX is here to take all your
worries away! In one simple pill, we
guarantee your life will be
transformed, from flop to top, stress
to success! Re-find your joy for only
£19.99 if you purchase BlissX **now!**

Giddy, Meg clicks through to BlissX's website, bold and white. She places the pills into her online basket.

As she begins to enter her card details, a flash of hesitation. Fear, perhaps. However, trepidation is quickly replaced by a steely determination. She clicks 'order now'.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tentatively opening her door, Meg finds a small, white box on her doorstep, 'BlissX' inscribed in Centauri lettering.

Bringing the package into her room, Meg rips it open to find a clear bottle of rose-coloured pills. Taking the bottle into the bathroom, Meg downs a pill with a glass of water.

Something in the air lifts; brightens. The bathroom fan's whir fades, as Meg's harsh LED lights lighten. A moment of panic before Meg welcomes the warmth: an overdue embrace.

INT. MEG'S KITCHEN - DAY

Meg creeps into the kitchen, carrying dirty crockery. As she opens the door, her previously impassive flatmates beam.

FLATMATE 1

Meg! So good to see you! By the way,
I love your outfit! So cute!

FLATMATE 2

Oh my god yes, that style is so in!

Meg glances down at her grey sweatpants and stained hoodie, bewildered, before grinning at her flatmates. As she washes up her dishes, rare hope envelopes her- finally, change.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Meg is sat in the same seat as before, eyes drooping as another essay is slammed upon her desk. Face up. 91.

It takes a second for the number to register in Meg's mind. She flips the paper over to ensure it is hers. It is.

CLASSMATE 1

(leaning over)
Hey, well done.

MEG

Oh, uh, thanks.

Meg grins to herself- in a trance. This had to be fantasy.

LECTURER (O.S.)

Okay- dismissed! See you on Thursday
for a dive into Yamada's 'Strangers'.

A group of GIRLS (19) sat behind Meg lean over her.

GIRL 1

Hey!

MEG

Oh- hi.

GIRL 2

It's Meg- isn't it? I feel like I see
you *all* the time!

MEG
Yeah, yeah it is.

Beat. Meg is taken aback.

MEG (cont'd)
Wait how did you kn-

GIRL 2
We should *sooo* hang out all together!
These lectures are such a drag, I
just need to get out of here.

Meg grins- apprehension tinged with slight excitement.

GIRL 1
Yes! Oh- Meg! I'm hosting a little
gathering tomorrow night- I'm over at
Castle Point, if you fancy coming?

MEG
Uh- okay, yeah alright.

GIRL 1
Yay! See you there!

The girls stroll out, giggling and chattering. Meg's heart thumps, but tentatively swells with a newfound joy.

A phone buzz: her mum. Meg's eyes widen. She swipes away a text invitation from Rosie to read the message.

MUM (O.S.)
Meg darling! I'm so sorry I haven't
replied back in so long- check your
post for a surprise. I love you xxx

INT. MEG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Meg bursts through her apartment like a child at Christmas. She looks outside her door- a large, wrapped parcel.

Ripping it open, she finds a typed note from her mum and exuberant gifts. Handbags, jewellery, shoes. Meg is elated at the glimpse of attention, yet there is a hollowness; no true thought for her bookish, introverted daughter.

INT. GIRL 1'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Neon lights pulse through the kitchen as Meg slumps in a corner chair. A gentle euphoria washes over the room: couples tipsily giggling, a few swaying to indie rock music.

Meg gazes towards them, not engaging, but smiling softly as she observes their comfort in this space.

Weaving through bodies, Girl 1 staggers towards Meg, her silver shirt a mirrorball throwing colours into infinity.

GIRL 1

Meg! So good to see you!

MEG

Hi-, thank you again for inviting m-

GIRL 1

Come and dance with us! You *haveee*
to- come on!

She grabs a reluctant Meg's hand, dragging her into the makeshift dancefloor.

At first, Meg moves like a duck out of water, jagged; uncomfortable. But as the song continues, she allows it to flow into her soul, her body. Her hips move as if controlled by external forces, swaying into the room's ecstasy.

INT. MEG'S BATHROOM - DAY

Staring at her reflection, Meg tosses two BlissX pills into her mouth, a steely resolve in her eyes.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Surrounded by her new friends, another essay is placed on Meg's desk. A glance- 98. Meg's eyes fill with glee, her friends embracing her farcically.

INT. MEG'S BATHROOM - DAY

The same position. Meg now tosses four pills into her mouth.

INT. MEG'S KITCHEN - DAY

Chatter erupts between Meg and her friends as they pass wrapped gifts to each other. Meg's hands lie empty- where is her contribution?

Girl 1 passes Meg her gift- yet another piece of jewellery- to rapture from the other girls. Meg offers a slight smile.

Rosie enters the kitchen from behind, her presence ignored. A pang of upset flashes across her face.

INT. MEG'S BATHROOM - DAY

Eyes fiery with intensity, Meg takes five pills one by one.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Meg hunches over on her bed, gazing at the contents of a Christmas card from her mum: a typed message in a cursive font, strewn with kisses and complete with a wad of cash.

A phone buzz. Meg's eyes glance over to see Rosie's name, before flipping her phone to continue staring at the card.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sprawled over her duvet, Meg is meticulously counting out the remaining BlissX pills. The bottle is almost empty.

A harsh knock, startling Meg. She is not expecting anyone. She pads over and opens the door-

MEG

Oh, Rosie.

An uncomfortable beat. Meg's coldness is palpable.

ROSIE

Hey Meg- you alright?

MEG

Yep, fine.

The awkward silence drags out. Meg crosses her arms.

ROSIE

So, uh, listen. I just wanted to check in with you, because I know things haven't been easy, and we haven't seen each other in forever-

Another beat. Meg simply stares at Rosie, unflinching.

ROSIE (cont'd)

But as much as I know you want things to get better, and I want that too, are you sure this is what you want?

MEG

(defenses up)

What's that supposed to mean?

ROSIE
(retreating)
I just mean- what I meant to say- was
that, those girls, your friends, they
seem absolutely lovely and all-

MEG
They are. They are lovely.

ROSIE
-but are you sure they're for you? I
know those girls from school, all
they want is status, boys, parties-

MEG
What? What are you saying?

ROSIE
-and Meg you like books, you like
reading and hiding from clubs with me
to stay in and get takeaway and watch
terrible films. I know you take those
pills, and this isn't you, Meg. They
are not you, and I'm just worried-

MEG
(snaps)
Just stop, okay. Please, just stop.

Beat.

MEG (cont'd)
Rosie you don't know what I want. I
have known you for three months. You
are a flatmate, a friend of
convenience perhaps, but you do not
know me. You don't. This is what I
want. And I feel good about it, okay.
For once I feel fucking good about my
life, so what are you saying?
I have everything I could ever want.
So if you want to judge that, I won't
stop you, but I don't want to hear
it.

A pang of remorse lodges itself in her throat.

MEG (cont'd)
I won't do it. I just, I can't.

Meg slams the door on Rosie's bewildered face, stunned into
silence. A wave of guilt washes over her, and she darts
towards the pills, tipping the rest of the bottle into her
hands and tossing them down.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that night. Meg lies on her bed, woozy from the pills and mindlessly scrolling on her phone.

Suddenly, a buzz. Then another. Messages from friends and her mum explode on Meg's phone, overflowing with heart emojis. Blinded by the glare, Meg slams her phone down.

Now- a knock at the door. Two more, harsher. A cacophony of raps erupts. Girl 1 opens the door and people spill into Meg's room: friends; classmates; flatmates, faces contorted in grins as they bestow Meg with gifts.

MEG

Hey guys, come in, come on in, good to see you, woah-

The saccharine mob babble excitably, yet incoherently. They encroach further into Meg's space, eyes locked on her face.

MEG (cont'd)

What's going on? Guys? Why are you here?

The mob edge closer. Meg's heart pounds.

MEG (cont'd)

Please, stop. Just, back off, please.

The mob begin to engulf Meg, their chattering crescendoing.

As Meg begins to succumb to the mob and the pills' haze, a ricochet of light catches her eye. Rosie's card, strewn on her desk.

Heart sinking, only then does Meg realise the shot at genuine happiness she discarded. Rosie flashes into her mind as her eyes well with tears.