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Creative Writing

Mr. Sispera

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### The High Life

“Gina! Gina wake up!” a shrill voice shouted, invading my peaceful dreams.

I reluctantly rolled over to find my fiery red-haired best friend, Sadie, staring down at me with her familiar death glare. She was wearing a questionably short gold dress that shimmered slightly in the dim light that seeped through my sheer black curtains. If there's one thing you can count on Sadie for, it's looking absolutely flawless regardless of her ugly attitude.

“What are you doing, Sadie? Can't you see I'm trying to sleep?!” I growled from under my plush white comforter.

The last thing on my mind right now is getting out of my deluxe California king bed. I try to listen to Sadie's persistent complaints, but my head is still a little fuzzy from the night before, and the continuous pounding in my skull does a pretty good job of drowning everything out. I finally pull myself together and ask what she wants.

“I can't believe you forgot! My art gallery is opening today, and you said you would be there!” she said harshly, but I could still detect a hint of sadness in her voice.

“Oh my gosh I'm so sorry, Sadie! What time is it?” I ask frantically, suddenly feeling like the worst friend in the world.

I jump unsteadily out of bed and quickly glance at the blurry clock; 1:50 pm. The opening is at 2:00 pm. Shouting my apologies to Sadie, I scramble to the bathroom and attempt to make myself presentable. Somehow I manage to pull on a blue summer dress and throw on a pair of designer pumps. I walk outside to find Sadie waiting patiently next to her private limo. Being a wealthy 18 year old in Manhattan definitely has its perks.

As I slide into the soft leather backseat with my forgiving friend, I try my best to recall the events of last night. No matter how hard I try, all I can remember are flashing lights, loud music, and overly-friendly strangers. I'm relieved that Sadie doesn't ask any prying questions, but I know she is wondering the same thing; What happened last night? I decide that it's better to just forget about it and pretend that nothing is wrong. After all, that is a very important trait to have on the upper east side of Manhattan. As long as I can convince everyone else that I'm alright, then perhaps I'll eventually believe it myself. However, I know that's not the truth. Why is it that everyone around me makes it look so easy to maintain control in their lives and I'm such a wreck? The only time I seem to escape the overwhelming pressure and stress of my life is through some kind of mind-altering substance. It saddens me to come to that realization, but if I'm ever going to turn my life around, I have to accept that I have a problem. If only solving it was such an easy task.

“Is everything okay, Gina?” Sadie asks tentatively, already anticipating the answer.

“Yeah, I'm fine.” I reply with the most reassuring smile I can muster.

Those three words seem to be dominating my vocabulary lately. No matter what is going through my head, whether I'm sad, confused, angry, or lonely, I always take the easy route instead of opening up to those around me. Even my family, consisting of my over-powering-business-woman mother and my usually absent father don't bother asking me what's wrong anymore. I think they have finally given up trying to be involved in my life. Although that may seem like every teenager's dream, I honestly envy the kids who have concerning parents, because at least they know that someone truly cares about them, and that they will never be alone in their daily struggles.

My depressing thoughts are interrupted as we pull in at the extravagant art gallery. From the car I can see numerous familiar faces: Other kids from school, their parents, business owners and some photographers capturing the moment enthusiastically, as if there is no better place to be than here and now. We walk into the show room just as I'm pondering the concept of the Latin term, *carpe diem*, when an aspiring photographer bombards Sadie and I, blinding us with unexpected shots.

After making our rounds and mingling with each social group, I spot a table with crystal glasses of champagne placed in neat rows atop a lace tablecloth; my salvation. As I zone in on my bubbly prey, a man taps me on the shoulder. I spin around to find another photographer grinning at me from behind thick black glasses. Normally I wouldn't be flustered by such a gesture but this particular photographer seemed more like a Greek god. He was the image of perfection; tall, dark, and handsome. Needless to say, we started talking and I soon realized that this wasn't just any photographer. His name was Vincent, and he had traveled the world, knew four languages, and now does photography when he isn't busy painting or sculpting. As I was listening to his story about his exciting year spent in Tuscany, I realized that he was everything I've always wanted to be; A carefree, fun, outgoing person who isn't afraid to express themselves and follow their dreams. I know that I could never pursue a life like that, because my parents basically have my whole life planned out for me already. I am supposed to attend Yale in the fall, and start an internship at my mother's company. Now, most people would say that I'm very fortunate to have those opportunities available to me, but knowing that my entire future is predetermined makes me feel as though I'm missing out on something extraordinary. Almost as if I'm missing out on life itself. The thought suddenly brings me back to reality, and I realize that I've downed four glasses of champagne before the cute photographer has even finished his story.

Saying my reluctant goodbyes to Vincent, I decide to flag down a cab and call it a night. Though I know it's probably not the best idea, I give him the address of an apartment on the outskirts of town. When we arrive, I climb up the crumbling concrete steps and knock hesitantly on the door. The excitement and anticipation of what lies behind the door makes my heart skip a beat. The door finally opens and my flamboyant friend Elena embraces me in her signature rib-crushing bear hug. Elena and I met at a party last year, and we've been close ever since. She's not exactly similar to my other friends, mostly because she is a notorious pot-head and doesn't really follow the unspoken social rules of the upper-east side. Elena is essentially my escape from reality, and right now all I want is to drown my relentless thoughts in liquor and pharmaceuticals.

“I figured you'd stop by after that dreadful party full of snooty, over-privileged business men.”

Elena laughs in her lighthearted manner that just makes you want to join in even if it's not funny.

“You know me well,” I reply, knowing that it's probably the only truthful thing I've said today.

She doesn't waste any time as she lays out an assortment of illegal substances on the table. I instinctively reach for a small bright yellow pill and pop it in my mouth without thinking twice.

“Bad day?” Elena asks, sensing my urgency and frustration.

“Is it ever a good day?” I ask, not bothering to hide my “I hate everything” attitude.

Elena just nods and sighs in agreement. I relish in the fact that she is the only person that I can be myself around. She listens to my ideas and gives me feedback that I know is genuine, not just what I want to hear. I lay down on the black futon that doubles as her bed, and wait patiently for the calming effect of the drugs to kick in. Elena reaches into her bag and pulls out a bottle of clear liquid.

“Absinthe.” She declares proudly and pours me a generous glass. I take it instinctively, though I've never tried it before, and I've heard horror stories of its lethal effects, especially when taken with other substances. A voice in my head offers a weak argument, but at this point, I honestly don't care. I just want to escape, and if this is what it takes, then so be it. I choke down the first sip, and I soon realize that tonight is gonna be a very good night.

I'm sure how much time went by, but I find myself stumbling to the bathroom, suddenly feeling like death itself. It feels like the world is spinning so fast that I can't keep up, and even holding on to the wall doesn't steady my inconsistent steps. I turn on the fluorescent light and instantly I have to close my eyes because of the intense brightness. The last thing I remember is turning on the faucet, then falling helplessly to the hard tile floor.

I open my eyes to find myself lying face down on a soft pink blanket. I try to lift my head to determine where I am, but it feels like it weighs at least fifty pounds. I then realize how awful I feel, and how thirsty I am. Using all my strength I manage to mumble something, not knowing if anyone is even near.

“Oh thank God!” Elena's voice exclaims with a tone of fear that I've never heard before.

Her concern is alarming, and I open my eyes just enough to see her sitting on the edge of a chair nearby, looking at me as if she has just seen a ghost.

“Gina, you have NO idea how worried I was! I didn't know what to do!” Elena said worriedly.

“What? What are you talking about, I just went to get a drink from the sink.” I said, trying to comfort her, although I was still immensely confused.

She then explained that I had passed out on the bathroom floor, and had been unconscious for the past 19 hours. She didn't know what to do or who to call, because she was in pretty bad condition too. I couldn't believe that it had gotten so out of control, and that something really bad could have happened to me. It suddenly hit me; I could have died. Overcome with emotion, tears began to well up in my bloodshot eyes. I didn't even try to hold them back, I just let it all out. All the frustration that has built up over the past few months came crashing down on me like a waterfall, and I just gave up. I've never felt so helpless and confused in my entire life. “What am I doing?” I thought to myself. This can't be my life. I don't understand how I got to this point, and how deep I've dug myself into this pit of despair. In that moment, I realized that I have to turn my life around. I can't possibly continue on this path, because next time I might not be so lucky. Next time I might not wake up. In the end, the foolish, temporary escape isn't worth the price that I could potentially pay.

After a while, my mental breakdown came to an end, and Elena somehow managed to force-feed me three whole glasses of water. I gathered up all my belongings and thanked Elena for everything she had done. Some how I think she knew that I wouldn't be returning anytime soon. After my revelation, I knew that in order to make a positive change in my life, I have to resist any and all temptation. It's going to be a hard habit to break, but that experience opened my eyes to the fact that I can do better. I don't want my life to consist of binges and nights I don't remember, doing things I know I'm going to regret.

As I climbed into a cab, I tried desperately to sort out my thoughts and new revelations. I sat back in the seat, and thought about my future. My parents are dead set on me attending college in the fall and following their footsteps to become a successful part of society, but I know in my heart that it's not what I want. After all, it is my life and I'm entitled to make my own decisions, especially when it comes to my career. After my eye-opening experience, it has become shockingly clear to me that tomorrow is not promised, and that I can't allow people to control my life. I want to enjoy each and every day, and not get caught up in the relentless cycle of going to a job I loath.

With a new sense of purpose, I dialed my mother's phone number and held my breath. This could either go very well, or it could cause a major rift in our relationship. I decide that the risk is worth the reward, and I brace myself for the conversation that is to come. At the sound of my mother's stern voice, I struggle to keep my strength, but there's no turning back now.

After a grueling 47 minutes of arguing, yelling, and crying, I hang up the phone and collapse onto my feather pillow. I know that I shouldn't really be surprised that she didn't fully support my decision of taking a year or two off to travel and find myself, but hearing her bluntly state that I was ruining my life was quite disheartening. She had also said that I wasn't old enough to make life-changing decisions such as this, and that she knew what was best for me. In some ways, she might be right, but who knows what is best for me than myself? I know now that I can't waste another day of my life allowing others to influence me as drastically as I have in the past. Although I haven't earned my mother's blessing, it feels good to finally take control of my life for the better.

