

Trinity

by Honora Wood

Part I: Fox

Damn alarm. I hate Mondays. I hate school. I hate mornings in general. As I roll over to reach the evil invention blaring into my dreamless sleep, my head starts to spin. What time did I stumble into bed last night? Or was it this morning?

“Good morning.” That is the only acknowledgment my mother gives me as she looks me over, taking in the black, the piercings, and the red streak in my hair. Bless her little Betty Crocker-wannabe heart; she made me breakfast. I grab the toast from the plate brimming with food and head out the door. No need to be in that house any longer than is absolutely necessary. Home Sweet Home, yeah right- the place is a cage. My mother shouts something about not forgetting my therapy session after school. How could I forget? Doctor Horton, the instrument of my misery. She has come to the conclusion that because I don’t prance around like a carbon copy of my Stepford mother, there has to be some wires crossed in my brain. Something talking can cure. What my mother and Doctor Whore have never been able to grasp is that talking doesn’t do anything.

Walking into school is my favorite part of the day. Everyone stares at me as if they’ve never seen me before in their lives. And despite the fact that we live in the wealthiest part of town, the new principal set up a metal detector at the entrance. Don’t ask me why. Our new principal is a psycho. I walk through and, surprise surprise, set off the alarm. As the security guard is removing my jacket, a crowd gathers.

“Hey boys,” I shout, winking as I’m being wanded. When it goes off, I lift my shirt so the prison warden we call a security guard can see my belly button ring. No sense pointing out to the pervert that we’d gone through this exchange for an entire semester now.

“Hey Fox,” one brave boy shouts back. I walk over to him after I get my jacket back. Several girls glare as I go by. The kid who shouted, Matt, is a hot commodity, and all the girls know that I’m every boy’s favorite in the school- that is, when I even bother showing up for school.

“Hey Matt, how’s it going?” I ask as I playfully flaunt my ability to do what every other girl in the school secretly wishes to do, but no one else has the guts to. Keeping my hand on Matt

at all times, I see the envy burning in everyone’s eyes as they walk past, and I relish it. All these people, all these soulless faces conforming to each other’s meek standards, are weak. They’re all victims. Like caged birds looking out to see an eagle soaring past, they see my freedom and they react with disgust, hiding their envy so that I’m the freak. I’m the one who has ‘issues’. I’m the whore.

“Listen, what are you doing tonight?” Matt asks, gulping with the insecurity that only I can bring out in him. I inhale slowly, pretending to think about it. My eyes focus back on him as I say with a smirk, “What did you have in mind?”

“And how does that make you feel, dear?” Doctor Whore asks, scribbling on her clipboard as if she’s translating the Rosetta stone. I wriggle and lay back on the couch.

“Well, Doctor, I guess it makes me feel like this *place* is a joke!” I’m shouting by the end. “Can I leave now?” I plead. I need to get out.

“If you would like to,” she says in that dulcet tone that’s like nails on a chalkboard. She doesn’t need to tell me twice. My phone goes off as I’m walking out. Oh Mattie, like a faithful puppy dog he waits. I almost feel bad for all the other girls vying for his attention; especially considering the fact that I refuse to submit to Matt’s wishes to make our ‘relationship’ exclusive. But he knows perfectly well that I don’t do exclusive. It’s one of the few rules I have.

“Hey Sexy,” I answer, even though I know he’s waiting by the curb to pick me up. He smiles when he catches sight of me, shutting his phone and shouting for me to get into his car, an amazing blue convertible Shelby GT. Damn I love this car. I hop over the door and sit in the passenger seat as Matt takes off.

“So where are we going?” I ask as we’re at a red light, my restless nature causing me to squirm in the seat.

“Well, I thought we could go see a movie...” he suggests, but I quickly cut him off.

“No. Not just the two of us,” I state.

“Come on, Fox, please can we just talk for a minute?” he tries to grab my hand. That’s it.

I open the door and step out into the gridlocked street, walking down the yellow lines away from him. The light turns green and everyone honks, but I keep walking.

“Come on babe, you can’t be serious,” Matt says, as the cars pile up behind him, waiting for him to go. “As a matter of fact, I wasn’t serious either. We’re going to meet up with Tommy and the gang at Box. I know that’s your favorite club, come on,” he pleads pathetically, and I can’t help notice how adorable he is when he begs. I smile widely.

“Now that’s more like it.” I say as I hop over the door back into the car. “What are you waiting for? Let’s go.”

At 3 am I climb back into my room, thankful I convinced my mother to let me sleep on the first floor. Also thankful that I had a mother who wasn’t at all concerned by the fact that I wasn’t home when she drank herself to sleep. Tonight was great. My added phone contacts are proof of this night’s escapades. I love that club. Unfortunately for me, Matt decided that tonight was a prime opportunity for him to take over his self-assigned role of my ‘protector.’ He keeps me on such a short leash, refusing to let me drink even though I always have my fake I.D. with me. I managed to shake him off for a while in the middle of the night, though, and that’s when the fun really began. Some people might stay up, reflecting on everything that happened on a night like tonight. But that’s not for me. I go straight to bed, not thinking twice about anything I’ve done.

No regrets.

Part II: Leila

6:00am: the alarm goes off. This alarm is not set for the purpose of waking me; I’m already up and finishing homework by this point. This alarm is meant to keep me on schedule.

Six o'clock means its time to lace up my tennis shoes, pull my hair into a strategically messy ponytail, and go for my run. I step outside the door, breathing in the sunny, crisp morning air. I love mornings. Everything's quiet, still; I can work, with no one getting in my way.

The first five minutes of every run are torture; my body aches with fatigue as it tries to slough off the last remnants of sleep. Once I hit my stride, however, nothing is more invigorating. The rhythm of my feet, the calm strength I get makes me feel as if I could do this forever. But I only permit myself to run for a half hour each morning. There are simply too many other things I could be doing with my time than merely running. Speaking of which, my watch alarm just went off: 6:30. Time to head back.

After showering, dressing and blow-drying my hair, I head down to the kitchen, noticing the perfectly coordinated window drapes, chair cushions, and barstools. I smile to myself; a year and a half ago my mom hired a professional decorator to come and redo our entire house. Within three hours of the consultation, the decorator was so sick of me hovering behind her and making comments that she left, giving my parents their money back. Afterwards my mom thought it best if I do the decorating. And the house looks amazing, so my mom made the right call.

My mom looks up from the eggs and bacon she is frying and, ever the critical type, glances me over, smiling at my perfectly pieced together ensemble. Living in the upscale part of town affords me nice luxuries, like the ability to get away with wearing my white Marc Jacobs sleeveless collared dress and wide yellow belt to school. Everyone's parents are rich, and everyone wears designer labels to school.

My mom hands me a plate full of delicious breakfast food. I take it to the table and eat it quickly, smiling and saying good morning to my dad, who's reading the paper. I don't have much time, however, because I like to get to school early. I grab my jacket and my mom reminds me that I have to go see my therapist today. I don't really understand why I have to go to therapy, but a lot of kids at school go to Dr. Horton, so it's no big deal.

“Hi there,” I say to a boy with his back to me, once I get to school. My adorable boyfriend turns to me and smiles. He greets me and starts a conversation but I stop him; I have to get to class.

“Well all right,” he pouts, “but it’s good to see you back, Leila.” He leans in to try and kiss my cheek, but I pull away. PDA is *so* not my thing. I smile apologetically as I hurry off to class, even though he really should know this about me by now.

Yawning, I step into my house at eight o’ clock to the aroma of warm chocolate chip cookies. Wow, they smell good.

“Hi Leila, how was your day?” My mom has a plateful waiting for me, just like always. We take our seats at the table as I discuss the one hundred percent I got on my human physiology presentation. I tell her how my private tennis coach says my serve technique is flawless, and my piano teacher thinks I’m more than ready for my solo concert in two months.

“And how did your therapy session go?” She asks apprehensively. I mutter that it went fine.

“What did you and the doctor talk about?” she pries. I elaborate that we discussed mostly the same things that I just mentioned; school, tennis, piano. After my mom is satisfied that she has received enough information from me for one night, I head up to my room to get a head start on next week’s homework. I check my phone and see that I have three missed calls, one from my best friend and two from my boyfriend. I meant to call him; I just never got around to it. Oh well, I’ll call him later.

As I’m doing homework at my desk, the weight of the cookies sits heavy in my stomach. I can’t believe I let myself eat them, especially with all the junk food I’ve been eating lately. There is a truly heinous bulge around my midsection that needs to go. I can’t take this anymore; it feels like there is some sort of deadly illness in my stomach. I have to get it out, one way or another. But I can’t let it get absorbed into my bloodstream, so I get rid of it the way it went in. There, now I feel better; more in control. I brush my teeth and get back to homework. How silly of me to ever let something as petty as food get the best of me. I hate feeling like I’m not in control. I manage things better than anyone else I know, so it makes sense that I should be able to handle everything. And as long as I stay in control, I can do it all; be the smartest,

the prettiest, the skinniest, the most charming, and the most talented. That's all I need to do:

Stay in control.

Part III: Sara

Ah, Saturdays. The alarm next to my bed reads 1:17pm; the perfect way to start my day. I throw my hair up into a ponytail, put on a white tee shirt and some sweatpants, and trudge down

the stairs to the delicious smell of chocolate chip waffles- my favorite.

"Good morning, Dear," my mom says after she surveys me quickly. I know that look of relief she tries to hide so well. Though she'll never say it, inside she's thinking 'at least today will be a good day.' She glances over at me again and, noticing something odd, asks, "Whose pants are those?" Her eyebrow lifts in a teasing way. Prompted to look down, I hadn't even realized that the sweatpants I'm wearing didn't originally belong to me.

"They're Matt's." I shrug, eager to drop the conversation as a gently steaming plate of waffles is handed to me. My mom smirks to herself as she turns away to load the dishwasher.

She acts as if me having a boyfriend is something new. I mean, Matt and I have been going out for over a year for crying out loud. We started dating after...but I didn't want to think about that right now. Today *was* going to be a good day. I would make sure of it.

My dad walks in and notices my attire in the same apprehensive way my mom did, and the identical look of relief flashes across his face before he can hide it. He smiles at me, mutters a 'good morning, kiddo,' and pours himself a cup of coffee. This is why I love Saturdays; they are so calm. Nobody feels rushed on Saturdays.

"Don't forget, Sara, you have your appointment with Doctor Horton. She will be very eager to see you." And just like that, any thoughts I had of having fun, hanging with friends, are thrown to the wind by the wonderful therapist whom I have to go see. I mutter that of course, I hadn't forgotten.

“Good afternoon Sara.” The ever calm and cheerful Doctor Horton greets me as I step into her office, still wearing Matt’s sweatpants. I’d ditched my slippers for flip flops, but that was the extent of my attempts to make myself presentable. It *is* Saturday, after all. I smile at her and take my seat on the couch. It’s weird, but I always feel a sense of guilt when I walk in here for some reason. Like a sleepwalker who fears what they could have done while they were unconscious. But the doctor smiles at me reassuringly.

“Where would you like to begin today, Sara?” I understand what she really means. Whenever I walk through the door, she knows I always have the same opening question.

“How long was I out for? Who came instead?” Yup, the guilt is definitely settling in.

“You have been gone since last Sunday. Fox was here starting Monday, and then Leila came starting Thursday. And now here you are again.” I sigh. That made sense. My mother and I had gotten into a fight Sunday night, and exams at school were on Thursday and Friday.

“Anything out of the ordinary happen when Leila was here?” I ask quickly, eager to find out what had transpired in my absence.

“Nothing out of the ordinary for her, although she expressed disgust at waking to find herself with a belly button ring and black nail polish. She is still getting up at 5 am and is constantly anxious about school. She claims to know that your mom likes her best, out of everyone; even you. I could tell she was stressed, and she was manifesting it physically. I am guessing that she is still struggling with her bulimia, though we didn’t talk about it. You should continue to consult with your health specialist about what you should be doing to counter Leila’s destructive habits.” Doctor Horton read all of this off her clipboard, glancing up every so often to judge my reaction. What she was telling me was nothing new. I had expected as much from Leila. Now was the time for me to ask the question I always asked and always feared above all else.

“Anything happen when Fox was here?” I shift my feet around as I wait for her reply. She flips to another page of her notes.

“She wasn’t here for long, though while she was here we discussed how frustrated she was that Matt still wanted an exclusive relationship. She has been manipulating

people more often, and I am noticing some behavior that implicates the possibility that Fox is a sociopath. She refuses to acknowledge your father's existence, and she kept repeating how your mother got worse after 'the divorce.' She talks about your mother's alcoholism. Neither you nor Leila ever mention your mother drinking, so I gather that your mom only drinks when Fox is around." I feel queasy by the time she finishes. My poor mother. It must be so hard for her when she sees Fox come down the stairs in the morning.

I sigh as I walk out of the office some time later, feeling heavy with all the things that are my fault. I can't stand coming to Doctor Horton's when we talk about the alters. I hate knowing I'm hurting people and I can't even remember doing it. I smile though, when I see the familiar car waiting to pick me up. Matt must have talked to my mom and found out today was a good day. The adorable smile he gives me as I walk into the sunlight washes away all the guilt I feel.

"Hi babe," he says calmly as I climb in the car, then asks me "Where to?"

"Let's just drive. Somewhere. Anywhere." So he takes off, and I look at him apologetically. Then I remember what Doctor Horton had said.

"What happened when Fox was here?" I press, feeling annoyance build in me.

"Nothing. Honestly. We drove around, went to Box..." he says sheepishly.

"You did what?!" I know I'm really not the one that should be getting annoyed right now, what with all Matt puts up with, but I can't help myself.

"You're still letting that tramp pull you around by her pinky finger, aren't you? Even though you know you're no more special to her than some oaf she meets in a sleazy bar. Just because she wears short leather skirts. God, all men are exactly alike. You know she loves it, too, you know she loves the fact that she can snap her fingers and all the guys, including you, come to heel like pathetic puppy dogs. But you're better than that, Matt, please don't let her order you around anymore!" By the end of my tirade tears are leaking out and my jealousy and annoyance and guilt all turn me into an embarrassingly sloppy mess in the passenger seat. Matt pulls over into a nearby parking lot and turns off the car. He pulls me into his arms without another word and lets me cry. He doesn't try to defend himself, angel that he is. Because truthfully, he knows that I'm not crying over the fact that my stupid alter is a whore, or the fact that I'm jealous of her. I'm not crying for

any of the stupid petty things that happen between me and my parents. I'm crying because of Jamie.

Jamie, my sweet, loving big brother. My best friend. My partner in crime for the whole of my life, up until a year ago when Jamie decided that he didn't want to live anymore. I'm not the reason my mother drinks, Jamie is. But she hides it from me because she's afraid I'm going to end up like him. I was already teetering on the edge, in her eyes. Typical Sara, running away and hiding behind her alters whenever things got rough. Nobody understands, because nobody was as close to Jamie as I was. We were inseparable, so much so that when we were younger my mother got our names confused almost constantly. Jamie was always the first one to whom I told anything important. And now he was gone. He would never come back.

The thought of Jamie alone is enough to keep me sobbing for longer than I'm aware of, but all the while Matt is there, quietly rocking me back and forth. He doesn't say anything; doesn't try to placate me. I wipe my tears and sniff as I move to look at him.

"Can I ask you something?" I don't wait for a reply, "why are you still putting up with me? I mean, the idea of a psycho girl with a dead brother doesn't exactly appeal to most guys." I choke on the words 'dead brother,' hiccupping as I wait for him to answer. He pauses.

"Honestly?" he asks, and I nod. "Because I don't care about anything besides being with you. Because no matter what, you are the girl I fell in love with last year. Because I can put up with any amount of craziness as long as I know that at the end of the day I can still call you, Sara, mine. Because I love you. And," he takes his eyes away from mine for the first time to glance down then quickly back up again, with a grin on his face, "because you look adorable in my sweatpants."

I laugh through my tears. "I don't deserve you." I state.

"I can't agree with that," he says, "You don't realize how amazing you are. Now buckle up, let's go."

"Go? Go where?" I ask. He laughs and kisses my forehead. "Who cares? Anywhere, it doesn't matter. Today is going to be a good day."

