

## LOST NIGHT

A rumbling bass line that vibrates the spinal cord. Heavy, shallow breaths. Aching eardrums. Large pupils in the dark. A smoke machine drowns visibility. A creeping sense of unease and hope. A slowly increasing crescendo ending in a repetitive, restless melody, which then disappears into the rest of the sound.

Sweaty people with cigarettes in their hands, I cruise between them and try to avoid being pushed so I don't spill the contents of the glass I'm holding.

Black painted walls and low ceilings. I've been here so many times before but never alone like this. Soon it's my turn to play. This DJ that is opening for me is completely useless. He plays vinyl like all the others and does it so damn obviously that I'm ashamed of him.

Moreover, he can't mix. I should be home.

I know I promised to come home as soon as I can but I can't. I have a pretend job and I have to be here among people who pretend they know me and I pretend like I know them. The music I love is just a sound effect for them to lose consciousness to and find someone to go home with. Suddenly, I caught sight of her.

Bright eyes, deep dimples, bitten nails. Her thin neck, her hair in an unruly ponytail that reflects the strobe lights and absorbs the only sweeping, golden spotlight that slowly moves across the dancefloor. Then she disappears into the crowd. I can't follow her. She will ask for an explanation.

Why do I always end up here?

This place has slowly begun to penetrate my skin and it makes me feel heavy and empty. I smell it. The spilled beer, smoke machines, oxygen depletion. I remember when I still loved it. It was forty degrees Celsius and everything shone in the heat, sweat glistened over everyone's lips and chests. Someone handed out ice from a plastic bucket, they melted ice cubes on people's skin and in their mouths. I remember the fresh November air outside Rökrutan was a relief and how alive I felt when it closed for the evening. Then we had just met and I was still head over heels - head over heaven-storming heels - in love with her. Now, this place just a dirty fucking office to me. Every time I play records have palpitations which get worse and worse.

I can't get air and it feels like real life, what is going on in the daylight, there where people have obligations toward each other is so terribly far away and out of reach for me. I HAVE A HEADACHE. I've never played in a band but the DJ booth is my stage. It digs a hole of emptiness in you while it fills you with awe every time you step on it. Now I begin. I see how they all blend together into one big boiling mass movement. An adrenaline rush because it is I who make them move at the same speed and hear the joyous roar of recognition. The record player as a shield, something that separates me and the party.

This may not be noticeable now but I was the fat guy who made mixed tapes for the prettiest girl in class because I was so hopelessly and irrevocably in love with her.



She thanked me for it and never talked to me again. She probably never listened to it. Those parent-free parties in residential areas where people threw up in the sink and went to sleep in the bathtub. I always carried at least thirty CDs with me, I was the only one who cared about music. I remember how much I wanted to share it with anyone but everyone thought that the music I listened to was too complicated and strange.

Why have I not grown up yet?

Everyone else has. Is this the only thing I can do? My childhood friends with office jobs say they are jealous of me because I can make my own schedule. I can travel when I want, I can sleep however long I want. My job is a party. My job is to create the party and get people to have fun. But I'm not even particularly good at this. And I can't keep up with the bookings anymore. Why do I stand in this damn basement with a bunch of Swedes who ignore the dance music? It smells bad here. It smacks too many drunk and high people in the same place who don't even know why they are there.

On the subway home I'm almost falling asleep with my head against the train window. Suddenly, the train comes to a stop. A bunch of girls in high heels and bushy clothing fall in through a pair of doors. They hold the door for their friend to catch up. There she is. The same careless ponytail and small involuntary curls at her neck.

I'm moving up a few seats. Her group of friends sit a few rows away. Go up to her. Come on now. What if! What if she is my soul mate? I have to talk to her. Please go up to her. She is just a few meters away but she hasn't seen me yet. Her friend says something funny and she chokes with laughter. She glows right now. At the next station, she gets off. If I got her I would probably hate her vocabulary, her tics, her manner of dress and her clinging to me. There is no point. Stark fluorescent lighting in the tunnel outside the window. I follow them with my eyes and let them pass. I'm sitting there. I'm not going to

move a millimetre.