

FREYA

A KIND OF WEAPON

She has just finished putting her clothes on again when he begins to stir.

—Hey, he says blearily. —You want to go out and grab some breakfast?

—Nah, she says. —I gotta get going. There's some shit I need to get done today.

And she's out the door before he even really gets a chance to protest. Early morning pigeons circle overhead as she walks the gray streets towards home. The light seems too bright; she has to squint. She wants a shower and her toothbrush.

She's skipping the assessment over breakfast this time, because she feels like she's already made up her mind about Joshua. She doesn't think she'll fool around with him again. It was fun and all, but—well, it was just a thing. A thing she needed at the moment, sure, but there's no long-term potential there. She's the store manager for fuck's sake. There's something unseemly about sleeping with one of the clerks, and if word gets out that she's doing it as a regular kind of thing her credibility at the store is going to be totally shot.

And then, of course, there's Jakob.

At the mere thought of his name, the morning-after guilt comes crashing down. *You cheated on your boyfriend, she thinks. Good move. Way to go.*

But a voice in her head talks counterpoint. *Yeah, I did, I did cheat on my boyfriend. And you know what? It felt good. Better than anything in a long time. Better than anything since before Texas.*

It was impulsive and frantic. They wrestled their way right out of bed, ending up among the water bottle and alarm clock and books that they'd knocked to the floor earlier. She ended up with her head pressed into the corner, digging her fingers into a fallen pillow, moaning—Joshua's roommate, whatever his name was, could probably hear her, but frankly she didn't give a shit.

She checks her reflection in the glaring window of a parked SUV, just making sure she doesn't look too shameful. She fluffs her curls with her fingers, wipes a crumb of makeup from the corner of her eye.

Sometimes she worries that she's losing her capacity to feel emotions deeply. Passion, grief, sympathy—any emotion. She can't remember the last time she cried. Even anger, her anger, which, for a long time, has been the emotion that she could always rely on, the one she could feel even when it hurt too much to feel any of the others, even that seems boxed up within her nowadays, tidied away. She wonders what it is, exactly, that she's becoming. An armored robot, walking the streets, affecting people with her actions but not being affected in return. Like a kind of weapon. There was a time when that was exactly what she would have wanted to become, but now—now the idea frightens her.

So, yeah, it was good to fuck on the floor last night; it reminded her that it's OK to have feelings. It *justifies* having cheated, she thinks, if this is really the beginning of getting back to being the Freya who feels things. But if she's really getting back to that, then she has to feel remorse for having cheated. It's an elegant bind. She fits her key into her lock and steps into the apartment. She shuts the door behind her, relieved to be out of the light.