

STILL LIFE

Written by

Rebecca Levy

Rebecca.levy@uga.edu
678-218-7069

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INT. BEDROOM - MORNING (ONE MONTH AGO)

Soft light streams in from a window, illuminating a half-made bed. The curtains are open, the blinds behind them open too.

A pillow floats through the air and lands plumply at the head of the bed. A woman's HAND pats it in place.

JENNA (V.O.)

I'm solid for two weeks. Two weeks
and I'm unstoppable, no ones ever
had their life more together than I
do in my once-every-while two week
intervals.

Pull back to reveal JENNA, a 20 year old girl wearing a plain T-shirt and sporting slightly unkempt hair. She shakes out the bed covers and pulls them up to the pillows.

She drinks a glass of water, then sets it down on her bedside table.

She picks it up again, places a coaster, then sets the glass back down, wiping the water ring on the table with the end of her sleeve.

JENNA (V.O.)

Structure, routine, habits, they
say that helps. Clean room, clean
mind.

CUT TO:

2

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Jenna lies on her now-disheveled bed and stares at the ceiling. She mindlessly holds a hand out above her. Her fingers are stained with a multitude of colors.

JENNA (V.O.)

I like feeling clean. It makes me
feel like a person.

The more she looks at the ceiling, the more she notices the lumpy popcorn texture. It looks like cottage cheese. The ceiling fan rotates s l o w l y.

3

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING (ONE MONTH AGO)

Jenna smooths out the covers to rid them of wrinkles.

She walks over to her desk, picking up a lone sweater and putting it in her hamper on the way. The floor is spotless.

JENNA (V.O.)
I deserve to feel clean.

A plastic BAG sits on the corner of her desk. She reaches inside, taking out a pack of blank canvas. She dusts off the desk with her hand, then sets one down.

Next, she pulls out an apple. It's large, round, blindingly red - perfect.

4 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Jenna vacantly focuses on her colorful hand, then shifts to the popcorn ceiling. Her fingers become blurry.

It's like a game: hand, popcorn, hand--

5 INT. BEDROOM - MORNING (ONE MONTH AGO)

Jenna delicately places the apple atop a sort of display - a melange of books, a vase, a watch, jewelry. The apple reigns over the other objects. It practically sparkles.

6 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

We see Jenna from a farther distance now, the entirety of her bedroom a sea surrounding her island of a bed. It's messy, really messy. Clothes, books, papers, used dishes - everywhere.

JENNA (V.O.)
If only I could make it last.

TITLE CARD: "STILL LIFE"

Jenna sighs and sits up. Across the room on her desk is the canvas, barely painted, adorning the same colors as Jenna's hands. She stares at it for a beat.

She gets down from her bed and wades through the mess towards the bedroom door.

7 INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

A small pot bubbles aggressively on a stove.

SLAP. Jenna's paint-stained hand drops a square of instant ramen into the pot.

She picks up the ramen packet and shakes it over the water to dislodge any left behind noodle pieces.

MADISON (O.S.)

Hey.

The voice penetrates the quiet. Jenna flinches. She turns around to face MADISON, her 21 year old roommate, standing comfortably in the living room.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You're not gonna be home tonight, right?

JENNA

Oh, uh, why wouldn't I be?

MADISON

Oh, I just figured - Friday night, you probably have plans or something.

JENNA

Oh.

Jenna shifts.

MADISON

I thought usually you go to what's-her-name's house. Mia or something...

JENNA

Maya. No... not anymore. I'll be here. I have to, um, finish an assignment for my art class.

The sound of boiling increases.

MADISON

Oh, okay.

(beat)

Blake might come over. Some other people too.

JENNA

Oh, coool...

A beat of awkward silence. More boiling sounds.

Madison leans to look at the stove. She points at it.

MADISON
Your pot is overflowing.

JENNA
Shit-

8 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the desk chair, sitting knees to chest, Jenna cradles the steaming ramen bowl and shovels noodles into her mouth. She's face to face with her unfinished painting - it's nothing more than outlines and messily painted background color.

Next to the painting, a few scattered PHOTOS are pinned on a bulletin board. One of Jenna as a young child - clean, innocent, perfect - holding her favorite stuffed bear. It's crooked on the board.

The display on her desk is an anomaly of order and perfection amidst the chaos of the room. Well, near perfection... the apple looks a little less sparkly and a brown splotch grows sneakily on it's side. This bothers Jenna.

The painting makes her lose her appetite. She drops the fork into the bowl and puts the dish on a SHELF above her desk.

The sound of a door opening and voices greeting one another seeps in from the living room.

9 INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jenna lies upside down on her bed, zoning out. Light from the living room shines through the bottom crack of her closed door. Shadows disturb the bright beam as people move around. There's sounds of laughter and talking.

10 INT. BEDROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Tucked under her covers, headphones on, Jenna sits at the corner of her bed with her computer in her lap. The room is dark except for the sterile blue light from the screen. She stares at it, drowning out the liveliness in the other room.

JENNA (V.O.)
I know every step and movement it
would take to fix the mess. I can
see myself do it in my mind a
million miles away. But... I don't
do it. I can't.

11 INT. BEDROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Jenna walks across her bedroom, into...

12 INT. BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

SWISH. The toilet flushes.

Washing her hands in the sink, Jenna tries to scrub the paint stains off her fingers- it doesn't work.

13 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As she crosses by her door on the way back to bed, Jenna can't help but hear...

SOME GUY (O.S.)
Is there someone in there?

MADISON(O.S.)
(whispering a little too
loud)
Dude she's always there - barely
leaves anymore. It's pathetic.

SOME GUY (O.S.)
Weird.

Jenna freezes. The semi-rotting apple on her desk mocks her.

On her floor lies the stuffed bear from her bulletin board photo. With a drive that approaches something like anger, Jenna picks up the bear and places it on her bed, ferociously shoving clothes off to make space for it.

She can't stand to be in her room anymore.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Jenna's door bursts open and she plows through the living room. About EIGHT PEOPLE, including Madison, coolly lounge on the furniture, conversing with one another.

They look at Jenna as she goes, but she doesn't meet their eyes - she's on a straight path to the front door and refuses to stray from it.

CLICK. She leaves. The front door shuts behind her.

15 EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A CAR pulls out of the apartment complex with clumsy urgency.

16 INT. LIVING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Jenna walks quickly from the front door through the living room. There's a plastic bag in her hand now. It's limp, mostly empty, with a round shape swinging at the bottom.

17 INT. BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jenna drops her keys on the bed, slumps her jacket to the floor, and shoves the bag on her desk. She pulls out a lone object: an apple - fresh, round, bright... beautiful.

She tosses the bag aside to the floor.

Compared to the new one, the old apple looks dull. Imperfect. Worthless. Jenna throws it in the (overflowing) trash can. A few tissues tumble to the perimeter of the bin to make room for it's newest member.

She puts the new apple atop the still life display, restoring it's shiny perfection. She exhales.

On a mission, she sits down at the desk and takes out her paints and brushes. She dips a brush in a bright red color and approaches the canvas...

PAINTING MONTAGE - (OVER SEVERAL HOURS)

A paintbrush dips into a red-orange color.

Jenna's hand swirls used brushes around in a jar of water.

The apple still life display sits, the perfect muse.

Jenna sits crouched on her chair, looking at the painting intently. Voices speak farewells from the living room and the door opens.

 SOME GUY (O.S.)
 (muted, from afar)
 See ya.

 SOME GIRL (O.S.)
 (muted, from afar)
 Bye, Madison.

The sound of the front door shutting.

Jenna furiously scrubs at her hands with a paper towel to try and clean the paint on her fingers.

Stained napkins collect on the desk.

Using a smaller brush, she gently adds detail to the canvas, although we cannot yet see it.

END MONTAGE

Jenna leans back in her chair, stretching and wiping the tiredness out of her eyes.

She taps her phone: 4:08 AM.

The plastic BAG on the floor crunches under her feet as she gets up and stands back to look at her masterpiece. It looks... pretty decent, actually.

She sighs relief. Jenna and the painting stare at one another for a few seconds.

She looks down at her stained hands. So many colors have been caked on, they've now blended into a murky gray.

She walks over to the collection of crumpled, paint stained NAPKINS on her desk and tries to find a clean-enough one. She picks one up. It's soggy and heavy from the weight of the paint. No use.

Her eyes scan for the location of her roll of paper towels - aha, the shelf above her desk.

There's not a square inch of open surface area on the shelf. It's cluttered. She stands on her toes and reaches...

As Jenna goes to pull the towel roll down from the shelf, her hand KNOCKS something...

The sound of plastic sliding,

and then-

SPLAT.

The BOWL OF RAMEN falls onto the finished painting. Old broth blends into the not-yet-dry paint, and noodle remnants coast down the canvas.

Jenna is paralyzed. The towel roll drops from her hands and unravels across the floor.

A curly noodle limply falls on the desk.

The time on her phone changes to 4:09 AM.

Silence.

JENNA (V.O.)
I... it's my own fault. I hate
myself for being this way.

She sinks to the floor, joining the mess, becoming part of it.

THE CAMERA PULLS OUT, REVEALING JENNA AMID THE MESS. THE SHOT BEGINS TO BLUR; AS IT DOES, THE CLOTHES, TRASH, PAPERS - ALL OF IT, BEGIN TO MELD TOGETHER IN AN ARRAY OF COLORS. IT'S ALMOST BEAUTIFUL, LIKE AN ABSTRACT PAINTING.

FADE OUT.

17A

18 INT. BEDROOM - SOME DAYS LATER

The shiny red apple sits in the trash, which isn't quite emptied, but no longer overflowing.

The display on the desk is gone.

The paint napkins have been cleared, the bulletin photograph is straight, and the desk looks slightly more organized - not perfect, not even clean, but a bit better.

Jenna sits, BACK TO THE CAMERA, in front of a canvas. The frame of her body blocks it from our sight.

With the clutter removed, we see that there's a small tabletop mirror on her desk. She catches a glimpse of her reflection.

Jenna gets up from the desk chair and leaves frame.

We see what she was blocking now - a painting, a new one, a beautiful one. It's apple-less; A still life painting of her room - messy floor, dishes, trash - everything. The colors are mesmerizing.

FADE TO BLACK.