

Backwashed

By Supernova

Bouncing her leg in the over the hospital room's cold, white floor, Michelle struggled to scan the lines of her chemistry textbook as she attempted to thumb in the answers to her homework on her phone. Darting her eyes up every few seconds to see how her younger sister was doing, the consistent beeping of the machinery suggested that she remained stable, despite the various tubes and bandages scattered across her body.

An electric pain gripping her chest at all times, Michelle was in near-constant fear of losing her, though the doctors in the ward insisted she'd wake up in less than a week.

Rushing between the hospital, the university, and her job at the coffee shop every day for the past several days, Michelle only went back to her apartment to shower. Barely able to even lift a pen without quivering, her emotional state shifted between anxiety and rage, having been given no time off work, nor any assignment extensions for her classes even in spite of the car accident that nearly claimed a family member's life. Having no recourse, with her finals only a week away, Michelle simply had to forego a normal sleep schedule, electing to take quick naps in the chair next to her sister's bed.

Her frizzy, unbrushed hair in a ponytail, she wore no makeup and skipped her skincare routine, causing her to look as she felt: an exhausted mess. A breakout of zits below the left corner of her mouth and massive, dark bags under her eyes, Michelle's normally glowing ochre skin now looked flat and greasy.

As she tried to press the solutions to a redox equation into her phone, the annoyingly obtuse software marked it incorrect due to an extra space. She lost one out of three tries because her shivering fingers entered in (aq) as opposed to (aq). She grit her teeth, pursed her lips, and exhaled slowly as she clicked each button on the phone individually to make sure that the notation was exactly right. Michelle squeezed her toes together as she looked at the corner of her phone. Work was in thirty minutes. God damn it.

She twirled the pink ring her friend Maggie gave her after her sister's accident. Finding relief in both how she could use it to fidget and the fact that it could be used as a weapon of near-unfathomable power, she found it to be the only thing keeping her grounded during this stressful time.

Slipping her phone in her pocket and clunking her fat textbook into her backpack, Michelle hesitated in the doorway. Looking back at her sister, she began to feel the familiar anxiety she always felt when they were separated from each other. "She'll get better if I'm there or not," she whispered to herself as she stormed out the door, trying not to stop again. Michelle, practically forcing herself to put one foot in front of the other, walked out of the trauma ward down to the parking garage. Upon finding her car, she couldn't help but feel a sense of

hopelessness as she saw her crumpled-up apron and stupid-looking forest green visor laying there in the passenger seat.

She sighed, put the car in reverse, and tried her best to be kind to the worker at the toll booth. Paying for parking at a hospital was an undeniably toxic grift, but she knew better than to take it out on the person stuck in that booth all day.

“Have a nice day,” the guy muttered.

Michelle wanted to say something snotty like “I’m not... but whatever,” but instead elected to smile and say “You too!”

After pulling up to the coffee shop, Michelle felt her jaw quiver and her heart palpitate. Resisting the urge to put it in “R” and just speed back to the hospital to skip her shift, she squeezed her teeth together, grabbed her apron and hat, and put on the wrinkled accessories in the parking lot. Tying her unkempt hair in a ponytail, she didn’t even want to look in a mirror. She knew she looked like shit.

After setting up the play with her coworker, she felt a pang of rage as she noticed the slobs from the morning shift didn’t even mop the floors. Michelle pursed her lips so hard she felt as though she may bruise them. She grabbed the cleaning supplies and, across just fifteen minutes, did an intentionally half-assed job, leaving piles of coffee grounds beneath shelves as if it were some impotent form of power reclamation.

Her coworker was highly distracted, as she had to restock the pastries under the glass, so Michelle took the first few customers. A reasonably polite young lady, a short-spoken older woman, and a matronly woman wearing an ugly pantsuit.

As her coworker went into the rear area to thaw some frozen pastries, Michelle’s blood ran cold. Having worked at this place for years, she could tell just by the way a customer opened the door that they were going to be a bitch.

An older woman, possibly mid-forties, walked quickly through the shop with a poised, confident gait. She wore her short, black hair in a bob-like style and had on a sleeveless turquoise top with an elaborate golden pattern on the front. Attractive, Michelle looked into her dark, brown eyes and saw lifelessness. A scorn. She could feel the muscles in her shoulders tense up.

The woman hustled right up to the counter with almost uncanny speed, leaned forward far enough that Michelle could smell her toxic patchouli-esque perfume, and sputtered, quickly and loudly.

“I’ll have an iced white chocolate mocha. Venti.”

“Coming right up. What’s your name, ma’am?” Michelle responded politely, as per her training.

“I’m the only one in the store, what do you need my name for?” The woman responded tersely, looking down at her smartphone, one of the new ones with a foldable screen.

“I apologize for the inconvenience, ma’am. Your order will be coming right up. The total will be five dollars and fifteen cents.” Michelle tried to sound as much like a GPS robot as she could, though she couldn’t help let her words be tinged by the venom she felt for this woman.

Without making eye contact, the black-haired woman slipped her black credit card out from a slip in the phone’s case and tossed it on the counter in front of Michelle without even looking. As the card stopped its skid, Michelle picked it up, her hand quivering, and ran it through the card reader on the register. Forced to put in a name for the receipt, Michelle just entered in “mam,” not thinking that she should have put “customer” until the receipt was already printed.

“Here you go!” Michelle extended her arm, the white, curly receipt pinched between two fingers.

The woman continued looking at her phone, ignoring her.

“Ma’am?” Michelle said, trying to keep her arm from shaking.

The woman, after pressing a few buttons on her touch screen, wordlessly snatched it away from Michelle’s hands with a little too much force without ever looking back up. Michelle hesitated for just one second before she stepped over to the preparation area.

Having all the recipes memorized by now, Michelle pulled her espresso shots over the white mocha, then added milk. The synthetically sweet aroma was sickening to her. She promised herself that she’d never drink coffee again after working there. At this point, the sputtering of her nearly empty whipped cream canister was enough to shatter her focus. Even the scent of coffee outside of work forced her to feel a sense of stress.

Sighing, wanting to get this bitch out of the store immediately, put the plastic cup on the reception counter. “Here’s your order ma’am!”

Picking up the plastic cup, the woman pursed her lips. Her voice changed from low condescension to squeaky, high-pitched anger. “Uh, excuse me, but what the fuck is this?”

Michelle felt a pang of anxiety. Did she fuck up?

“It’s your order.” She said, meekly, knowing that arguing back always escalated situations with these types. The last thing she wanted her to do was hit “Record” on that fucking phone.

“No. It’s not my order. You know what it is?” She slammed it into the garbage can next to her with such force that the lid broke, spilling a few lines of whip cream down the side. Another thing she’d have to wipe off later. “It’s trash. That’s what it is.”

“I apologize. I thought I heard you order as a Venti iced white chocolate mocha.” Michelle’s heart was pounding, every cell in her body was screaming at her to yell at this cunt, but she wouldn’t let those impulses take over.

Her hands shaking, she already started taking out the plastic cup.

“What are you doing? I didn’t even tell you what part you fucked up!” With emphasis on the word “fucked,” the bitch put her hands on her hips and stared at Michelle, as if she wanted to kill her.

“What was your order again, ma’am?” Michelle smiled, clenching her jaw so it wouldn’t quiver.

“I obviously said cold foam. No. Whip.” She squinted.

“Again, I apologize. I’ll fix your order for no extra charge.” Placing the cup under the various nozzles to make this awful-sounding concoction, Michelle forced herself to work slowly. Both to keep herself from screaming and to prevent herself from making another mistake.

From over the counter, the woman screeched. “And you look extremely unprofessional. Sort yourself out.” She looked down at her phone, pressing the touch screen hard enough for her nails to clatter against it loudly. “Most people can do this job without fucking up, y’know. They hire anyone these days, I guess.”

The pink ring.

Michelle froze, staring at it. This bitch could be gone in a literal instant and no one would know where she went. No one even knows that shrinking is even possible in modern engineering. People disappear all the time. In a moment, Michelle pierced her inner veil into the realm of insanity: She’s gotta go.

Slowly letting the coffee pour into the plastic cup, she tried remembering the shrinking ring’s settings her friend Maggie went over with her when she was gifted it. There was absolutely a setting for “Delayed-Onset: Radiation”. She could just shine the ring’s lazer into this bitch’s foam. She’d drink it and she’d just disappear into thin air in a split-second. Perfect. Exactly what she deserves.

Thumbing the ring, she knew that the settings were programmed via a series of tactile patterns “rubbed” over the outside of it and the center jewel was “clicked” so it’d activate.

Having practiced the patterns a few nights earlier, she hoped she wouldn’t “fuck up” this one. Three rubs left, one right, and then activate.

Looking over the counter again, the woman was still staring down at her phone. Letting the pink ring’s radiation illuminate the foam a bright pink color, she let the radiation sink in for five seconds. With no true confirmation, Michelle wouldn’t know if it worked until the actual shrinking process took place.

Letting the pinkness fade into the pure whiteness, she knew it was time. As soon as she slid the drink on the reception counter, she’d hit the activation jewel.

With a smirk on her face, Michelle almost slammed the drink on the countertop and clicked the activation jewel on her ring.

She was swimming.

Michelle didn’t know how, or why, but it felt as though the floor fell out from under her and she was now in a universe of lukewarm, wet whiteness. Kicking her legs and thrashing, her heart now pounding within her chest, she tried to breathe through the shock, but the white substance that surrounded her kept being sucked into her mouth. She coughed.

“Wh-what’s happening?” She screamed, in desperation. Craning her neck and scanning her environment, she appeared to be covered in a milky-tasting substance underneath a transparent ceiling, beyond which is an immense, hanging light fixture with a forest green lampshade. Kicking her legs to stay afloat, she ran her fingers through her hair, finding that she was completely covered in this strange, almost sticky substance.

Oh, fuck no.

It was foam. Michelle screeched as the reality of her situation sank in. She was in this bitch’s fucking cup!

“Fuuuuuuck! Help me! I’m down here!” She flailed her arms.

“Took you long enough.” A loud voice boomed from above as the ocean of foam shifted from side-to-side, forcing it to pour over her again. Attempting to splash was useless, as the bubbly surface muffled all of her activity, weighing down on her and absorbing any sound she might make.

Wait! The ring! It could change her back! Wiping off her hand, she saw what was once a bright pink band was now jet black. Pressing the button itself did nothing! Fuck, fuck, fuck! Trying all the patterns that she was taught on the ring in quick succession, Michelle found that none of them worked! She could hear her heartbeat in her ears, her blood was rushing so quickly that she could feel an aching pain under her tongue. She bit her tongue hard enough to draw a speck of blood.

A jerk upward. Fuck! No!

Through the transparent lid, she saw the bitch's face approach so quickly her brain couldn't comprehend it. In the split-second it took for her to raise the cup to her pink lips, Michelle could make out every detail of her face. The pale skin, the roundness of her head, the soft wrinkles that betrayed her aging.

A harsh current pulled her forward, ripping her through a threshold and forcing her into a world of soaking warmth. Dragging her fingernails into the flesh below, she could feel herself being pulled over this awful woman's wet tongue. Her foamy, slick tastebuds were almost impossible to grip, but Michelle tried, feeling the soft lumps slide under her palms as her visor washed away with the current. A soul shattering "gluck" sound vibrated Michelle to her bones.

She couldn't believe it. This woman was, in her mind, the epitome of evil. Someone she didn't even want to share a room with, but now she was going to be spending the rest of her life with her. Becoming one with her. Tears flooded from her eyes as she coughed up a hot mixture of coffee and this bitch's mouth slime. Tasting like mocha with an aftertaste of rankness, it was as if she were being forced to make out with this extraordinarily rude stranger. To be intimate with her.

Saliva clung to her hands as she tried to crawl up the dark center crevice of her tongue. Squinting her eyes as she watched light peek into the darkness, Michelle's heart bled with the false hope that she could somehow make it out. Somehow free herself from the prison of this bitch's body.

She couldn't die like this.

Watching her lips part, Michelle saw cords of saliva stretch between her palate and her tongue as the spit continued to soak into her hair.

"No! No! Fuck! No!" She screeched, her voice cracking, as she saw the opening of the cup's strawless lid enter her field of vision, framed by the back of the woman's teeth and her pouty lips.

It was like watching an avalanche head right for her. In a reflex, Michelle stupidly used her last moments of resistance to crawl backwards, towards the waiting throat, but was blasted

by a tempest of foamy coffee anyway. It slapped her face mercilessly, forcing its way in her mouth, into her eyelids, and up her nose. She experienced the harsh, painful “drowning” sensation as the mouthful of coffee swiftly washed her down the woman’s throat.

It felt like falling straight down. The entire trip through the stranger’s esophagus took less than one second. To Michelle, it was as if she were struggling in the woman’s mouth with a glimmer of hope to being literally splattered into her hot, mucus-filled stomach instantaneously.

Heat lapped at her from every direction, the stranger’s chunky vomit immediately soaking into her clothes, making each of her movements itch with an intense chafing. Hit with an enormous shock as she landed in the ocean of chyme, Michelle exploded into a sense of animalistic panic.

Punching and kicking in random directions, she found the snot-lined floor of the bitchy woman’s stomach. Pressing off of it as hard as she could, Michelle found an air pocket of rancid, humid gas and immediately filled her lungs with it. Her work apron weighed her down as she attempted to stay afloat, warm coffee splattering from above, coloring the aroma of the hot, slithering chamber, which would otherwise reek of pure vomit.

Michelle knew, in her heart, that she was doomed to be digested alive by this cunt. To sink into the depths of her body and never return, to become... Michelle furrowed her brow, not wanting to think about what happened after digestion.

The thick slime oozed on her body from every direction, clinging to her skin like melted plastic. She cried out in pain as her eyes began to burn heavily, unable to see in the hot darkness. A wave of vomit splatted Michelle up against the wall of this woman’s stomach, she attempted to pound, but her hands only slid against the slick lining.

Spitting out mouthful after mouthful of the stranger’s puke, Michelle realized this was all there was left for her. She’d be feeling, smelling, hearing, and tasting this bitch for as long as she drew breath and there was nothing she could do about it. This was both her present and her future. The taste of true despair stained her heart, having never felt true hopelessness before, not even after her sister’s crash.

Oh, fuck. Michelle wailed as the mucus continued to coat her body as it was ejected from the stomach lining, treating her as a foreign object it must protect the organ from. Her front now covered in thick snot and her back covered in vomit, Michelle gripped her hair thinking about how she’d never see her sister again, screeching as she felt a chunk of it easily peel away from her scalp.

“AAAIYEEEE!” The sense of her own body deteriorating shattered her internal sense of identity. She was truly melting into this rude, awful woman. Being digested with the very drink she was given grief over. A final few squelches from above echoed through the chamber as the stomach entrance ejected a few foamy globs into the churning pool.

Michelle scratched her face in an expression of pure grief, feeling her skin peel away under her nails. The stomach wall she was just pounding against churned forward, pushing her into the mixture of whatever the fuck this bitch ate for lunch. She couldn't make peace with this death. Every cell in her body longed for escape. An electric fury kept her invigorated, slamming her fists into the mucus, though they only made pathetic, muffled plopping sounds.

Conflicting thoughts stormed through her mind in a tempest of angst, confusion, grief, and despair. The chunks of this stranger's stomach contents now scraping against her, it was almost as if her sense of smell intensified as she lost her sight. The sourness of the acid peeling away the inside of her nostrils matched the attitude of the woman she was consumed by. Why did it have to end like this?

Losing all track of time, Michelle now felt as though every inch of her body was on fire. A supreme agony that overrode all other physical sensations, including her ability to know where her own limbs were. In the blackness, she felt as though she existed as one throbbing sphere of pain. Her outer layer of skin now having dissolved away, her eyes now leaking their interior jelly down her cheeks, all Michelle could do is gurgle bubbly, gravelly shrieks.

A true sense of exhaustion began setting in. Her mind was still intent on survival, but her body could not physically sustain its resistance. Scraping her foot against the fleshy wall, her toes hyperextended before they completely detached. Widening her mouth to let out another rough scream, the corners of her mouth split, leaving ragged cracks where her cheeks should be.

The foamy liquid bubbled as Michelle's head completely submerged, fully stifling any sound she could make. She was now flooded, both outside and inside. Mentally and physically. Despite the intense pain, she had never lost the will to live. To survive. To see her sister again.

As she sank further into the acrid slurry, her last breath filling her lungs with the liquid vomit of some bitchy fucking Karen.