

## Crashing into Coma

Sherilyn Connelly

2006

It was the third night of the Cronenberg Retrospective at the Alliance Atlantis Cinema. The movies had been “The Fly” and “Crash,” neither of which Vashti or I had seen in quite some time. When we left, Vashti seemed troubled.

Vashti says, “Admit it, Miss Coma White, if that IS your real name. You’re afraid, just like all the rest of them. You’re afraid of the flesh.”

“I am not afraid of the flesh,” I protest. “At least, flesh isn’t what’s scaring me at the moment. Can you please not drive so fast? You know I get motion sickness.”

Vashti points a finger at me which really should have been planted firmly on the wheel at two o’clock. “Bullshit! You’re afraid to dive into the plasma pool, aren’t you? You’re afraid to be destroyed and recreated!”

Extending my arm and gripping, I reply, “Yeah, well, when the word ‘destroy’ is involved, I think it’s understandable that I’d be afraid. I might even be very afraid. It doesn’t help that you’re doing eighty-five on a crowded, wet road, could you *please* slow down-“

Vashti grabs my shoulder. “You can’t penetrate beyond society’s sick, grave, fear of the flesh, and that’s why—CRASH!” She yanks me back from where we’d been sitting naked on the edge of the bed. “We skid and slam into the other car,” she says, pinning my shoulder with her knee and grinding in with all her strength. “You collide with the dashboard, and then into me, your head shattering the windshield.”

Vashti collapses onto me, running sharp fingernails deep and fast along my side, twisting a nipple with the other hand, biting along my chest and neck. She says, "Glass from the windshield rips into you, your blood spurting out and mixing with the scalding dark fluids flowing in from the smashed engine, creating something that never existed before, a mating of you and the car." Vashti moves my right arm, my gimp arm, rather awkwardly behind my head and whispers, "That pretty red hair of yours is scorched, and those expressive eyebrows are gone. We're smushed together, pressed in, our limbs twisted, the white of my bones mixing with yours."

She removes my glasses, with their overly expensive Martinelli Prime frames and thin lenses which bely the strength of the prescription, and the world goes blurry. As Vashti once put it, "Coma White without her glasses is like a girl who's constantly bumping into things because she can't see for shit." Presently, she says, "Your glasses go flying off in the crash, shattering like your teeth." I am aware of her putting them in the bedside table and shutting off the lamp. I feel her weight leaving the bed--I'm alone now, alone and blurry in the wreck--as she turns on the pile of Christmas lights on the dresser.

I'm told an ambulance arrives, and I feel a paramedic grasp my limp, twisted body. They pull me towards the wall, put my hands in the crack between the mattress and the wall, and stuff in a pillow. The smell of engine oil and smoke and burning flesh fill what's left of my nostrils, and that last, is it my own or someone else's? Vashti's? The other driver's? Is there any difference anymore?

"They strap you down," says a voice. "But you aren't breathing." Someone looked into my eyes, almost but not quite close enough for me to focus on theirs through the astigmatism and blood. They put their hand over the lower half of my face, the palm closing my mouth and the thumb and forefinger blocking my nose, stopping the flow of both oxygen in and carbon dioxide out. The voice counted:

“One, two, three...”

The grip is released, and my body instinctively exhales. Before I can inhale, I’m gripped again, my breath halted, the gaze never wavering all the while. The counting begins again, and the space between numbers grows longer:

“One...two...two...three...two...” The world becomes fuzzier and spottier. One time, a girl I topped in a play piercing scene fainted. Was this how it felt as she collapsed? Maybe I *am* going to die here on the side of the road. And where is Vashti? Did she die in the crash? Will we see each other one last time?

Release--exhale--begin to inhale--grip. “One...one...two...one...” She’s really gone, isn’t she? She was driving, there’s no way she could have survived. Tears start to well up.

The grip is released, but I keep holding my breath. My girl is gone, and I don’t want to be here without her. Not sharing my sense of emotional priorities, my survival instincts assert themselves and my body exhales, then takes in deep gasps of air.

The voice says, “They want you to keep breathing. They try to revive you.” My nose is shut while another mouth covers mine, inhaling deeply, sucking out the oxygen I’d just sucked in. They pinch my mouth closed and exhale over me. I can feel my own breath blowing across my skin, inaccessible. The mouth covers mine and inhales again, taking more of my air, making me wonder if I’m just going to deflate and crumple like the car, as my vision darkens--

Warmth on my cunt, within, a hand, the (alien? angel?) hand somehow knowing exactly where to go, discovering an intense arousal I hadn’t been aware of in a part of my body I’d forgotten about, thumb circulating on my clit and three fingers hooking around the inside, exploring, finding their purchase, gripping, pulling, pushing, as the mouth releases and I exhale, inhale, then I’m masked again, the

circulation extracted from my body as the unknown limb fucks me, and I'm getting closer and closer to the edge, to death, peace, to joining Vashti, to--

I buck and kick, and the Other leans back as I scream out, an intense orgasm ripping through me, their hand working overtime, riding it out, extending it, feeding it, their other hand having moved from my nose to a firm grip on my neck.

As it passes, the return of circulation bringing me to the primary physical world, I see my Vashti, very much alive. The surface tears turn into outright sobbing. She pulls me into an embrace on her lap, her own pieta, saying, "That's a good girl. That's my Coma. You're going to be fine."



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 2nd Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.