

# **I WANTED TO BE BRITNEY, WHITNEY & JLO**

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My mom had this compulsion of placing superheroes in my hands. For a long time I just ignored it but eventually that refusal turned into a surrender. I couldn't cope with constantly disappointing her. I wasn't strong enough to be anything but her child so I gave up and played the role, put on mask and costume and there I was: a five year old child actor with Action Man in hand. He always made her happy when I wasn't enough.

Like that time she wanted a picture of me and Angela and told us to kiss, to hug and to hold hands. Later, when I did the same thing with Anton, she removed the camera before turning around and leaving me all confused and embarrassed. I didn't understand what happened. I did exactly what she instructed me to do but with another person. By the look of her back as she walked away there was something seriously wrong with that and I tried to make up for it by fetching Action Man. I thought the sight of him would make her forgive me but she just smiled at him before turning to the other parents and saying something I didn't understand. That's my first memory. How mom put the camera away when I took Anton's hand. How she smiled at Action Man but never at me.

I would have easily preferred staying inside during playtime but unfortunately there was this rule saying "you have to go outside!" and out there was dominated by kids reenacting Titanic. As if it wasn't torture enough to have to engage with the products of emotionally dysfunctional city parents, guess who never got to play Rose? Who always had to be a musician or the captain? Or Jack. I fucking hate Jack. I'd rather play the ship than him because you're expected to be so incredibly grateful. "Omg, really? Thank you guys! I'm super happy about dying and never seeing the love of my life again." As if it's nice to sacrifice yourself for someone else when in reality it's them sacrificing themselves for you because everyone knows that Jack wouldn't have survived Rose. But Rose knew how to cope with things. Like me. We cope with things, Rose and I. Adaptable chameleons with a will of steel.

That's why I wanted to play her but they wouldn't let me. My revenge was to die a very dramatic death and worry the entire school yard to tears.

"Those who refuse me Rose shall feel a pain just as strong as I!"

I then proceeded with playing dead for so long that the kids had to call for adults who came to shake my little body but didn't find any signs of life since it was a lifeless child's body and they screamed "stop it, it's not funny you know!", but I already knew that. That's why I was dead. Because life is harsh and unreasonable where nothing ever goes your way, least of all playtime in primary school. They begged and pleaded with me but it passed me by like the dream of Rose on the boat of survivors. At the end the teachers cried as heavily as the kid playing an ice raft. When it dawned on me that I could bring them to tears I felt a little better.

My room never had any wallpapers, it had my dad's hobby on display. Philadelphia flyers. I hate Philadelphia flyers. Do you know how awful it is to look at posters in black, white and orange when you're longing for purple, coral and pink? Do you know how ugly those hockey mullets are? They're ugly to the point of making me suicidal at 11. Aesthetics will kill you. Words will kill you. Just listen to it. Hockey. Does anyone reference that to softness and warmth? HOCKEY. Hard as stone like my role model my father. Hard as stone like the one I've been trying to be. But I'm delicate like velour. Saying it feels like gargling in holy water. Velour.

Or Juicy Couture velour tracksuit. Do you hear how beautiful that sounds? When dad watched the World Cup I was up in my room recording music videos from MTV. My collection consisted of Britney, Whitney, Christina, Mariah, Jessica, TLC, Destiny's Child, Janet and JLo. I'll never forget

the music video for I'm real. Canada took the gold but I won a dream of a pink Juicy Couture velour tracksuit cut low enough to peak my stomach's skin. Cause I'm real...

There's a scene in the music video where JLo is walking in front of Ja Rule on a basketball court. The walk lasts for about 2 seconds and is the most beautiful, gorgeous, amazing thing I've ever seen. JLo in her pink fabric and white sneakers in front of Ja Rule who's only a background figure, a soon to be forgotten, a not-at-all-as-important-as-her. She leads, he follows. I kept rewinding that scene over and over again to study the rhythm of her steps and the zipper with the little jewelry dangling just above her pockets. That's how you know where to leave the zipper. The pockets should reach just below the breasts and the little jewelry should rest on the pockets seams. And the walk should look like JLo's.

The way you stare, the way you look, your style, your hair

One, two, three, four steps...

Cause I'm real...

The hips, earrings, necklaces. Her eyeshadow. Gold and pink. Pink Juicy Couture.

There's a ball game going on in the background but for once I didn't have to pretend as if sports are important. For once velour was standing front and center on a pair of white sneakers. As if she saw me. As if she carried me in her movements, threading her skin over my yearning body, getting me higher and higher: shooting into coma, straight out of loneliness, back-bending, free, full and as

beautiful as I'd ever been. She took me up, over and on top of my ugly ass carpet. Straddling, captivating and capturing me. It was sex without sex. Just the release. Daydreams dipped in gold.

When Christmas came I wished for a Juicy Couture velour tracksuit but got game tickets for the third year in a row. My sister on the other hand got exactly what I'd hoped for. I asked if there'd perhaps been a mistake since she likes hockey and I wanted the tracksuit but my parents said no, no mistake, the tickets were for me and the dream outfit for my sister.

"Are you sure you didn't mix the packages up?"

"Hockey is for boys, velvet is for girls."

"It's not velvet, it's velour."

Then came a terrible fight and I was the Grinch ruining Christmas so no one cared that I started crying. My New Years resolution that year was to stop wishing for things. It's easier that way. No disappointments, no regrets, no wiping off the snot on a stocking.

But when a desire has been awakened it's really hard to control it. So I started sneaking into my sister's room when she wasn't there. The plan was to just give it a little peak but then I had to feel it and then I had to try on the oh so desirable fabric despite the fact that she's two years older than me meaning a lot taller back then meaning the jacket fell down to my thighs rather than resting beautifully above my belly button. But what was I supposed to do? That soft tracksuit behind closed doors was all I had. My New Year's resolution went from stop making wishes to becoming a better borrower slash thief.

Sometimes I kept the clothes on over night. Slept in them to dream about being anywhere else then alone on the second floor of a cold and lonely house. It was pure magic. It was fresh, exciting and unknown. I let my finger nails travel up and down my legs, resting my nose against the knees, hiding a set of closed eyes in all the softness while my roots was being pulled full force from the ground. Same roots that had never found attachment in anything before. Who had always been wishing for something else. Who had never been home-sick as they'd never known a home. Juicy Couture velour tracksuit planted them close to Britney-Whitney-Jennifer-Christina so I'd always be close to Britney-Whitney-Jennifer-Christina and I followed their movements like algae in water. Drowned in them without taking in any water. Nothing had ever tasted as good. Piercings, group choreography, glitter, camouflage, monochrome costumes, short shorts, leather, lipgloss, laughter, rhinestones, school corridors and green screens.

Dad found me though and that marked the end of that. I was alone again, deprived of the small amount of happiness I had finally found but of course he didn't get that. Doesn't get that. To this day I still don't understand why he keeps refusing everything that's me. Or why I care.

I was devastated and mom tried comforting me even though she was just as mad as dad but at least she tried to hide it. And that's how she taught me how to lie. To smile when I'm sad and to hold my tongue when I'm angry. To be like her who never reveal any truths. Not like Britney who sings about everything including the big, all-encompassing loneliness.

This is a story about a girl named Lucky.

I tried to have straight sex in High School under the premiss that the one I really wanted to be was Ja Rule. Ja Rule who walked behind JLo with the purpose of watching instead of learning. Forgot I knew the steps better and hooked up with the one who knew them almost as good as me. I was

hoping the closeness to her would feel like the Juicy Couture tracksuit in my sister's bedroom but it just felt wrong. Like decorating a wall with hockey posters. But I faked it and we went out to her family's summer house where we fucked as if we knew what fucking was and we were the first ones to do it amongst our friends which gained me a bit of status for the first time in my life.

Best actress and the winner is: Lucky!

I don't know what I did with that status but it's gone by now. Here's a secret: I'm a failure.

I see it as a phase similar to the one Britney had with the paparazzi photographer. Society has drugged me and here I am hiding in the bathroom with all my kids. The paramedics are on their way but I'm barricading the door, enjoying my last moments of freedom. Before the rehabilitation. Before my father takes over my assets. Before they attach my extensions again. I only wear wigs, I've said.

Like Whitney. The giant. It's not right but it's ok when everyone can see that it isn't. But she knows and I know that if you repeat it with enough conviction they forget about reality and happily transition into talking about how strong we are for overcoming all the difficulties. For surviving and announcing that it's ok. We're gonna make it. It's ok. We will make it. They harm us but we'll be fine. They hurt us in so many ways but we'll be fine. It's ok. It's ok. It's ok.

I'd rather be alone than unhappy.

I met my first boyfriend senior year. He was short and tiny. Obviously not what I had expected but all of the sudden he stood there in front of me asking if I wanted a blowjob and I did so we became a thing and continued to be so.

It was fucking great.

His jawbone, his groin and curly hair. My index finger in his tiny, tiny belly-button. The slide down his spine. If I'd been talented enough I'd paint him. Not just the concrete parts of his body but the sparkle and greed that shot through my body when he embraced me with his arms. Everything rised

except for the abyss in my chest which sucked me even closer 'til he sucked the senses out of me and I screamed and I screamed and I vanished. That's what I'd want to paint.

I didn't lie about the relationship but I also never informed my parents about it. My neighbor John on the other hand received the news quite unintentionally on an early morning with the curtains up. Later that day, by the dinner table, dad asked me why John had seen me naked with a man and I answered that it was because I'd been naked with a man and dad turned quiet. Mom had a second plate of pasta and then we all watched TV.

American Gladiators was on and my parents got uncomfortable as soon as the guys entered the scene. Not knowing I'd fallen for someone short and tiny they probably thought I'd start jerking off to Turbo-Cowboy later. Let's be clear. Turbo-Cowboy is a really, really cool name but my parents had absolutely no reason to worry about any arousal on my part. Looking back at it though, I actually wonder whether they worried or hoped that I'd be into that. Because even if my parents don't particularly enjoy the thought of me as gay it's the dreams of softness that hurts the most. The wish lists. The clothes, colors and music.

If I'd been interested in hockey and jerked off to gladiators at night, this gay thing wouldn't have been as big of a deal. But I looked up to pop divas and got myself a short and tiny boyfriend. There was a lack of masculinity in the relationship, no real man for dad to relate to or mom to see as her son. That was the ultimate betrayal.

Look into the mirror who's inside there

The one with the long hair (yeah)

A hockey mullet is one thing but wigs are something completely different. Right? Action Man is validation but My little pony is humiliation. Right? Black, white and orange is success but purple, coral and pink is a shipwreck. Right? The dream of a child became a nightmare about a feminine boy. Maybe it'd been better if I'd wanted to be a girl, I don't know... But I just want to be girlie.

It's sick to think about, me sitting there all in love for the first time in my life but feeling like shit. I just wanted to be happy. But they wouldn't let me. Won't let me. Everything I've ever wanted to do has been met that way. No laughing, no asking for help, no painting the fingernails, no piercing the

ears, no wearing pantyhose, no trying out corsets, no pretending to be someone I'm not even though the entire human race do so on the daily, no playing with dolls, no holding Anton's hand, no being sad, no being funny, no walking like JLo, no wishing for velour, no feminine breathing, no feminine walking, no feminine sitting on the bus, no feminine thinking or drinking or ...

No existing.

Be in the position to make me feel

So damn unpretty

Even though I'm incredibly beautiful.

During commercials the new Pepsi promo came on and like "bang!", oxygen returned to the room. One after another Britney, Beyoncé and Pink enters the Colosseum dressed like warriors. The arena screams and king Iglesias expects to have his slaughter served but the girls just look each other deep in the eyes and throw their weapons to the ground. They sing and scream happy screams because they've just won endorsement money and the audience's love. They're warriors, goddesses, queens. Like me. I am a queen. You have to accept that. If you don't, I'll die. In more than one way. Drag is life and without life I've perished so it's time for me to do some living.

I told short and tiny who loved the idea but made me promise to keep it classy and not go overboard on the makeup before fucking my brains out.

And one day just like the other he stopped touching me. And we who didn't need anyone else became him who needed someone else and me who needed him and everything ended faster than John could find his glasses. I didn't understand a thing. Then I understood that he was an asshole and promised myself to wear too much makeup and to always stay over the top fucking fabulous.

Take a deep breath and say it loud

Never can, never will, can't hold us down

But I'm lonely and I'm dancing to the same old songs over and over again like a broken record full of scratches and grease. Can't he see how cruel it is to just disappear?

Take a deep breath and say it loud  
Never can, never will, can't hold us down

But I'm lonely and it hurts and my legs don't know where to go when he's not resting against my chest and my thoughts make no sense and my words have lost their meaning, my efforts are pathetic, my hunger is pathetic, my dreams are pathetic, I'm pathetic I'm pathetic I'm pathetic I can't do this anymore.

No I can't forget this evening  
Or your face as you were leaving  
But I guess that's just the way  
The story goes

I can't live  
If living is without you  
I can't live  
I can't give anymore  
I can't live  
If living is without you  
I can't give  
I can't give anymore

I'm just kidding. He came, he left and I moved on. Found myself a more beautiful, older and better man to have sex with in front of John's window. Not because I'm an exhibitionist or anything but he was bedridden by then and we were basically the only thing he had to look at so I thought we owed him that. He never mentioned it to my parents again, just turned off the lights and hid in the darkness while my more beautiful, older and better man got my blood pumping.

When I moved out John died. My sex life was the only thing keeping him alive and somewhere in the South Pacific Beyoncé is crawling on a beach singing about survival. I survived my first home because I'm a survivor who refuse to give up and I'll survive coming back here to sit at a dinner table and eat so called nutritious food. I'll survive looking my sister's husband in the eyes after he

calls me a homophile. I'll survive dad not looking at me at all. I'll survive mom eyeing me up and down as I step through the door. I'll survive my sister looking so terribly unhappy. I'll survive every hint about my clothes and their constant, never ending nuclear family reproduction. I'll survive because I'm a survivor. Even if they don't think so. Even if my brother in law lectures me about how I really have to boycott Pride since it only ruins things for "people like me". I ask what he knows about that but mom says that he's right, "you can't get behind such a gimmick".

"I'm going to perform this year", I tell them.

"Like hell you are!", dad screams. It's the first time he's addressed me all evening. Mom puts a hand on his thigh and he continues in a calm manner even if I can see the heart attack pounding in his neck artery.

"You will under no circumstances become a poster boy for that spectacle. I accept that you are the way you are but that requires you to show us some god damn respect too."

"How do you accept me?, I ask him. "Because it really doesn't feel like you do."

"You're invited to dinner, aren't you?", mom snaps at me.

And I'm just... I don't know what to say. They will never understand how I was hoping to make them proud. How I want to relax like they do and not sit on needles, waiting for the next punch. How I don't want to be afraid of laughing inappropriately or saying the wrong things. That I dream of being all of me and loved at the same time.

"We're just saying it would be easier if you tried to be a bit more normal. There's plenty of homosexuals with regular lives you know. That's what we're trying to say, that there's good examples of that."

After all of the darkness and sadness  
Soon comes happiness  
If I surround my self with positive things  
I'll gain prosperity

I'm a survivor (what?)  
I'm not gon' give up (what?)  
I'm not gon' stop (what?)  
I'm gon' work harder (what?)  
I'm a survivor (what?)  
I'm gonna make it (what?)  
I will survive (what?)  
Keep on survivin' (what?)

I'm a survivor (what?)  
I'm not gon' give up (what?)  
I'm not gon' stop (what?)  
I'm gon' work harder (what?)  
I'm a survivor (what?)  
I'm gonna make it (what?)  
I will survive (what?)  
Keep on survivin' (what?)

I grew up and it hurt and you saw that and it was magical, it was something completely different, it was everything and I became nothing and I became whole at the same time. I became a dream and a longing. You were my oral, verbal, esthetic saints. My goddesses in exile.

Now I've locked myself in the bathroom waiting for them to break open the door. They don't understand why I have to stay here. That outside it's cold and lonely but in here it's warm and safe. In here it's glitter and velour. In here it's answered prayers, opportunities and hope. Here's pride. Here's a home.

Hovering in the spotlights to the loud music. Nails sharp as spears. I'm too much, I'm too ugly, too serious, too dramatic. My movements are monstrous, my makeup too hard, I'm too much of everything that's me until my body explodes and stretches over these walls and your clenching bodies. Loving me, screaming for me, applauding me knowing that nothing's ok but I'll survive

because I'm a survivor and I'm gonna make it anyway cause I'm real, I'm real and you never can  
and you never will, you can't hold me down. Not when I'm in my bathroom, my paradise.

Tonight I'm Eartha Kitt. And you're free to adore me.