

THE CRACKS WE FALL THROUGH

Written by

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EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

BLAKE SIMMS, 35, tangled hair, dirty clothes and jacket, and knotted beard, sleeps sitting on the ground against a tree with a tattered backpack in his lap.

His eyes open and squeeze shut again. He vomits.

He opens the bag and removes a half-empty half-gallon jug of vodka and takes a big swallow. A chest heave forces a pause, then another swallow.

He pulls a framed portrait from the bag. Under shattered glass, in the portrait, Blake stands behind a seated WOMAN, 30, long blonde hair, and a seated GIRL, 7, long red hair.

BLAKE

Morning.

He pulls another two swallows of vodka and puts it down. With steadier hands, he holds the portrait and strokes the glass.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

I'll have a place soon.

While he takes another swallow, a DING sounds from his jacket. He pulls out a battered cell phone and sees a calendar reminder: Sign Housing Program Lease.

He smiles at the portrait.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Next week, probably.

He kisses the portrait, packs the backpack, and leaves the campsite as the sun rises.

INT. SOCIAL WORKER CUBICLE - DAY

SHIELA WINTSON, 45, minimal makeup, heavysset, sits behind her desk and studies a computer screen. Blake sits across from the desk facing her.

He spies her crooked nameplate and straightens it. He tilts his head, adjusts it again, sits back, and hugs the backpack.

SHIELA

Anything new?

BLAKE

No.

SHIELA
You still got a government phone?

BLAKE
What's left of it.

SHIELA
Three months; that's a record.

BLAKE
(Whispering)
Yay.

SHIELA
Listen, they cut you because your
urine drop was positive for
alcohol. It's a sober community,
Blake. I can smell it from here.

He looks away.

SHIELA (CONT'D)
To get back on their list you'll
have to do inpatient rehab. The
rehab list isn't too long.

His head trembles.

BLAKE
Always a list. I never last long
enough to get in anywhere.

SHIELA
Blake, it's been five years.
Please, reconsider a psychiatrist.

He shrugs.

SHIELA (CONT'D)
How are the dreams?

FLASHBACK - CAR ACCIDENT

Blake drives as the Woman sits next to him while the Girl tickles the Woman from the back seat. They giggle. Blake looks at the Girl and doesn't see the stop sign.

The car runs the stop sign as Blake looks at the Woman. His eyes go wide as he sees the front end of a truck speed towards the woman's window. On impact, a flash blinds him.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Blake's head jerks sideways.

BLAKE
They're always there.

SHIELA
I'm so sorry. Think about the
psychiatrist, please.

He stands and shuffles towards the exit.

SHIELA (CONT'D)
What about the rehab list?

He nods and leaves. She watches until he's out of view.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - REGISTER COUNTER - DAY

Blake counts out coins and puts them on top of crumpled up dollar bills on the counter next to two pint bottles of vodka. Blake takes the bottles and heads for the door.

They CLINK together as he puts them in his jacket.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Blake stands in the center and surveys the area. It glows orange in the setting sun. He moves to his well-worn spot next to the tree and sits.

He hums a tune and unpacks the backpack. He places a pouch of tobacco in his lap and opens it.

BLAKE
Some glad mornin' when this life is
over I'll fly away.

He folds a rolling paper and spreads a pinch of tobacco.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.

Steady fingers roll the cigarette and he lights it. He swallows the rest of the vodka and tosses the jug.

He pulls out the two pints and downs half of one of them in two swallows. A distant Whip-poor-will whistles its song.

He stares at the portrait then hugs it to his chest.

FLASHBACK - CAR ACCIDENT

Bloody and unconscious, Blake sits behind the wheel. His eyes open and he scans the car. The Woman and Girl, covered in blood, lie still, contorted in seatbelts. He screams.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Blake sobs and rocks back and forth hugging the portrait.

BLAKE

I'm sorry.

He finishes the pint and grabs the other one. He puts the cigarette out and downs the entire pint.

He shatters the bottle against the other one and pushes the jagged glass into his wrist. He pushes deeper and pulls it up his arm.

He tosses it and holds up the portrait with a smile.

He hugs the portrait to his chest, closes his eyes, and leans his head back against the tree. His breathing slows. His head falls sideways and down. His breathing stops.

Blood pools in a puddle on the forest floor next to his motionless body. A breeze kicks up dead leaves as the Whip-poor-will in the distance grows quieter with each whistle.