

from *Blood River* by Chloe Whitehorn

DIANE

It happens gradually. Like the light dimming so slowly that your eyes grow accustomed to the dark as it happens, and you don't notice the light is gone until you look up and realize it's pitch black. Sometimes there's a small sign, an orange-y-pink cast fading to a purple on the horizon, but it's pretty and mesmerizing so you forget that it's the sun setting and plunging you into the night. Like when he started ordering for me at restaurants. It seemed romantic, like he was some gentleman from an era long gone of chivalrous men. I thought it was wonderful that he knew me well enough to know what I wanted. Or he'd say "you've got to try this dish, you're going to love it," and I'd love that he was sharing things he enjoyed with me. And then one day I'm eating a half portion of bland fish and salad without dressing because he knows how I "don't want to have to hide in the back row of the photograph at the senators' wives luncheon next week". I wear the jewelry he gives me because I want him to know I appreciate his gifts, even if that means my favorite grandmother's dangly cherry earrings have gathered dust in the jewelry box because they're "cheap looking". My day is filled with social engagements for charities he thinks are the important ones to be seen at and teas with his friends' wives. All the pre-programmed radio stations in my car are music and news stations he likes to listen to. I don't notice these details on a daily basis because I've grown, I've changed, my tastes have shifted and ... and I don't remember ever saying no. So maybe, maybe this is who I always wanted to be.