

## **Life in a Vial – Lauren Bush**

It never took long for the feeling to kick in, the rush of euphoria and the pure shock of adrenaline. It soaked through my clothes like a sticky substance that even if I wanted to rub off, I couldn't. That's why I liked it. That's why I stuck there with it. Because it seemed the only thing that could stay still and stuck in this fast paced world, even if it only was ever for short bursts, I knew I could always get it back when I really needed it. That's why I held the vial tight around my neck, that's why he had to pry it out of my fingers. Because it became the only real thing. Nothing else was real. Nothing else is real. It was all a lie. It's all just a lie.

It began with a single drop on my tongue. An unknown liquid waved in my face by a stranger at a bar. He said things about how good it would make me feel and how gorgeous I was.

I was gullible. Yet, what he said about the feelings was true.

I opened my mouth willingly and let the beginning of the end of my life flow throughout my body. It felt like a worm was inside my veins coursing its way through me, searching for my heart so it could beat alongside it. I let it find its way there.

I said thank you. He said you're welcome.

I stumbled away. I stumbled all the way back through an alley to find myself at the edge of a cliff. I jumped. It wasn't a cliff.

It was only a sidewalk.

I picked myself up, checking for vital signs of injury from my adventurous jump. I had yet to realize it was a poor choice. I regret to inform you that I never realized it was a poor choice.

I found myself again, now at my own doorstep, knocking for someone to let me into an empty room. I was alone, I lived alone. Nobody should have been in there.

A man opened up, tall and angry. He mumbled for me to enter and I tried my best seductive sashay into my entryway.

I didn't question his being there. Why would I?

He told me a story, a story of the future. A story where I did as he said and I wore a beautiful little vial of a beautiful unknown substance around my neck. I asked why. He told me it was because I was special.

I liked being special then, with a worm in my heart and a coursing in my veins.

I wasn't special. I never was.

I wore it. I wore it for weeks. Still caught in an unknowing cloud

I finally came out of my haze. The worm had died. I felt empty. Like I lost my best friend to a fire that was still blazing in front of my eyes.

I pictured the original thing. That the strange man had dripped into me. I tore the vial from my throat and bit into it, without hesitation, without acknowledgment for the glass casing now piercing my lips and gums.

It felt terrible. It felt beautiful.

I waved away another piece of myself goodbye as the cool breeze of liquid and glass found itself into me. I felt everlasting. Like the world was my own to keep.

The first time it had felt eerie, like I belonged to someone else who I loved deeply and I allowed them to freely take over my body. This time it felt I was me, with someone watching, hovering just above and out of reach. It felt like an angel on my shoulder as I walked into the bathroom.

I flicked on the lights, too bright. I turned them off. I turned on the hot water, so hot.

I walked beneath it, the stream of running lava from the tap. It felt endlessly painful at first. But it cooled me down as well. I believed I was a shining ice sculpture looking for a forbidden love within the heat

That night Tall and Angry arrived on my doorstep, placing an even more beautiful vial around my throat. It shone gold and silver like an engagement ring. I felt devoted.

It hadn't been a month before I had no feeling left in my mouth. Each time I had torn my teeth into a vial, it had torn me. Like a twisted version of payment from the cage holding my delicacy.

I got worse. I imagined myself as a ballerina. Dancing in a theatre. Living for the melodious applause after every step. Yet, I was standing on my apartments rooftop. Spinning amongst the city dwelling pigeons.

By now, I sound crazy. But, when the disgusting world we live in suddenly changes into such beauty, it's hard to say no.

We live in a world with no idea if there is a tomorrow, always living in fear of what is to come. Rarely living in the moment. With just a little help I was able to see the world through heaven's eyes. Seeing the great ecstasy of there always being a present, past, and future.

I felt like God.

I was God. In my own mind, that is.

Tall and Angry became a regular in my stuffy palace of an apartment. He stayed with me many nights. Watching over my reactions. He told me more stories. Of other girls with pretty little vials. I thought they were tales. Just things to make me unhappy and less unique than the princess I was.

He wasn't lying though, there were thousands like me. Lives being taken away by a strange man at a bar one night.

He made me stop. Tall and Angry held me down. Whispered that I had gone too far. I didn't believe that killing someone was too far. He had been born to die and I was only helping him reach his inevitable goal.

I screamed as Tall and Angry tore my life from its string around my neck. I sounded inhuman. I was special. So special.

I needed that vial more than I needed a body for it to enter. I needed it in my possession. I needed to be possessed by it.

I kicked. I growled. I rose and fell, holding as tight I could without cracking the cage.

Then it snapped. The cutting glass piercing my fingertips. It hurt. More than anything I had ever felt. It was the only thing I had felt in months.

Like someone had splashed cold water over a sleeping person.

I awoke. Drawing back from Tall and Angry. Cowering. Wanting to crawl out of my own skin at the embarrassment. What had I done?

I had killed myself. Killed others. Killed the very essence of what a person should be.

I still am unable to figure out why I was chosen.

Tall and Angry ran away as I cowered. Not looking back, letting the liquid and my blood run amongst his own fingers.

I went through withdrawals. Still go through withdrawals. Periods where I can't see straight as my mind tries to find that spot back into a shady world.

Now the worm is dead. For good. The fire is out. My best friend is gone and will not be coming back. The world is a surfaced realm of hell that I will never learn to cope with.

It's all a lie.

I am special.

Everything is a lie.