

## DO A DOUBLE TAKE AND ALL WILL BE CLEAR

She sat in the waiting room for longer than expected. It was hot. The backs of her legs started to get damp against the shiny white leather chair she chose to sit in. Her thighs would slip and she would have to readjust from time to time. The shiny patent leather that adorned the room perpetuated the nervous energy this place naturally creates. These rooms seemed eternal, always the same every time.

All you could hear was the faint rumblings of the dusty buses going by outside and the familiar clamor of young kids playing in the park nearby. School was out and the city felt free. The receptionist had a terrible habit of chewing her gum with her mouth open. A fan hummed somewhere, moving from left to right. These sounds became incessant, rising over the soft radio perched by the door. She tried to focus on the music. Eventually she could ignore the damp old woman and realized one of her favorite songs was pumping out of those dusty speakers. It was "Believe" by Cher. That song changed everything. It had power, real deep pulsing power... She tapped her toes to the club beat. This song was the first auto-tune song ever. It was the first time an artist chose to cheapen and embellish her gift in order to enhance her own voice. The song became catchier and stronger than Cher could have been on her own. It was her comeback.

She finally got taken into the next room. Again the sweat against a creaky leather sofa. The constant reminder of skin against fake skin. The evaluation was about to commence. She answered the questions correctly, spoke of her feelings at the right time. She allowed the prodding and the poking, the scanning and the testing. The doubt, the uncertainty made her ache and panic. Her fingers and toes tingled with fear. She slowly sang Cher under her breath ("but I know that I'll get through this 'cause I know that I am strong...") to the other's dismay. When she stood up to leave she saw a small pool of her sweat left on the plastic seat.

It all began to be a release. A sense of relief took hold, maybe a shedding of things she hadn't known existed. In these heightened moments she is nothing but a shell of herself, moving on autopilot. When she looks back at these times it all seems rehearsed, fake, surreal. All she knew was that she wanted control. She wanted a thicker skin.

A week later she was informed she had passed her test. Give it some time and she will be back here again, waiting to see if she made it. Her shoulders slowly sank into their proper position and the deep creases on her forehead between her eyebrows began to fade. Yet, this calmness only lasted for a fleeting moment. It was obvious. She was completely and utterly insatiable.