

This document is a supplemental document for the videogame Last Call, by Nina Freeman and Jake Jefferies. This poem was written for the game. In the game, each stanza appears on a separate sheet of paper, found in the below order. Each sheet of paper is contained in a box of things you are packing up for a move. Additionally, the game progresses by responding verbally to each stanza from a list of phrases such as "I believe you", "I hear you", "Tell me more" and others.

This document is intended for people who would like to read the poem outside of the game space.

The game can be downloaded for free here. Credits and content warnings are also available: <http://ninasays.so/lastcall/>

## Last Call

by Nina Freeman

1

i could barely see his face when we met in a dark, loud bar  
friends of friends, we were introduced  
not a care in the world, just small talk  
i drank a \$6 glass of red wine and tried to hear what he said,  
but the music mostly drowned him out, not that i cared  
he was cute  
and looking at his phone almost the whole time,  
which annoys me to shit now  
why didn't i notice it then?  
he didn't even care  
but i followed him outside anyways  
maybe only one cigarette later and i was in love

2

i downloaded line just to chat with him and  
we decided to meet up again  
at another bar, this one with an arcade and an infernal woman  
painted on the wall, tits out, genuinely lovely  
presiding over us, we made more small talk,  
something about intramural volleyball and pokemon go,  
he looked me in the eyes and said  
"since both of us have had trouble finding friends here  
maybe we can be each others friends"  
and i think: "yes, and then maybe we can fuck"  
i was quarter feeding, eyes locked to his like my life depended on it  
left my credit card at the bar when we left and forgot it  
crush is a weak word for a powerful drug

3

i was so desperate to visit him  
i'd sit on his fucking couch while  
he played a game and ignored me  
i was happy just being nearby, i didn't want to be  
annoying and take up *all* his free time  
i apologized constantly for wanting to see him, but  
he said not to worry about it

he wanted to see me

i went home and took too many selfies, just  
to find the perfect one for him  
i sent one and he sent one back,  
full of that special low-light iphone camera noise  
and i rushed back to his place because i *needed* to be there  
on his mattress on the floor

CUT IT

i wish i had a photo of us lying there together  
so i could burn it into a disgusting heap  
like later when i tried to trash that same nasty mattress  
under the burnside bridge  
the skaters there said they could burn it for me  
and i should have let them

CUT IT

4

we were out on a nice, normal date  
sat down at a table with little folded napkins and a breadbasket  
they gave us our cocktails and to my disbelief  
he fingered me under the table!  
i thought, this must be normal, i've seen it in porn

love should be full of surprises  
and i was sick of disney romance anyways  
what is romance without the horror of humiliation?  
we got up to leave and  
i thought about all of that for like one second  
and paid the tab

5

soon enough, i left the normal apartment where my  
last relationship unceremoniously ended--  
got carried away by the feelings of a fresh start,  
shoved all my shit into literal trash bags and dragged them  
down the block mostly (i hate driving)  
laid down on the carpet of this new place and hoped  
he'd lay there with me someday

we kissed in the rain a week later  
and then he moved in,  
simple as that

6

we went on like that for a while,  
sucking each others faces around various public firepits,

having a lot of sex without thinking  
related enough over childhood trauma to get closer  
felt like we grew up similarly troubled, similarly accomplished  
yes! i thought, horny and troubled, exactly what i am  
and what i need!

he said i love you

7

he said i love you  
he said it, he said it!  
i said it  
of course i said it  
again and again like i stood between two mirrors  
facing each other

8

he left his job with big dreams and a fresh haircut  
no plans to pay rent  
he said i was hot again and again  
and he said i love you!  
he said it!  
god i was happy

9

our romance had highs and lows that  
left me breathless and addicted  
i wanted to make him happy  
i paid for his cigarettes  
i asked him to never forget to kiss me

all we ate were pizza rolls for a while  
living off of frozen food and booze  
i got us takeout sometimes  
we'd unroll the pullout couch and share  
warm biscuits and cheerwine on the weekends  
but it didn't seem to matter--  
he stopped kissing me in the morning

10

the last time he told me he loved me  
feels like months ago now, and i told him that  
but he said i'm wrong, so i must be?

11

i ask him to tell me  
i love you again  
i need it, i really need it

he won't and i hate myself for it

shouldn't i just trust him?

i get mad and

ask when he'll start paying rent again

and i hate myself

12

i hate myself

and on a night no one celebrates,

i open the skylight and try to climb out

and he pulls me back in and he hits me

he hits me

and hits me again

the impact lands me on the couch

and he chokes me until i can't breathe

i remember thinking

it's weird how quiet screaming sounds

when you might die

can't scream if you can't breathe

i'm weak, but when i ran out of breath

i tore his hands off my throat, or maybe he chose to stop

either way, i lived

13

and i loved again

believe it or fucking not, i loved again

i got on my knees in the morning and hunched over

i cried and begged him to stay

when he'd hit me, he told me i'd die alone

i believed it and begged him to stay

he said ok and wiped my tears away

and hugged me and told me it'd be ok

and he touched the bruises on my neck

and he told me he'd stay

14

i wore a soft, grey scarf

around my neck

the next day i wore a red scarf

and another next day i wore a black scarf

with tiny stars like the other night

around my neck

which was hidden by scarves

15

i was too scared to bring it up--  
that he'd hit me and choked me--  
i slept next to him, but not with him  
i didn't have nightmares and not any dreams  
i bought him more cigarettes and  
we played video games near each other  
time went by slow  
i tried not to think about it

16

i stole some of the cigarettes i bought him  
and walked to work and smoked only one  
i listened to this song over and over  
it said this isn't what i deserve  
i want a love that's pure  
was this the permission i needed  
to hope for something more?  
i cried until i couldn't see the sidewalk

17

i sat on the couch behind his back  
googling "is it normal for a boyfriend  
to stop saying i love you?"  
i was surprised at the volume of results,

but validated that i wasn't alone  
and validated that there was no straight answer  
there are some questions google can't answer  
but where else could i turn?  
the shame of it kept me silent

18

i asked him to finally help with rent  
i'm not fucking rich, you know that  
i thought we understood each other--

he punched the wall next to  
my head  
and left a hole

19

i go to therapy  
i learn about anxious, avoidant and secure people  
i try to label myself and him  
and i go home and i tell him what i learned  
and he tells me  
i worry too much  
nothing is wrong  
stop bringing it up

i say

"you told me i'd die alone"

and he turns to me

"i never said that"

20

i cry every time i take a shower

because it's a good time to think

i try to talk to him about it and

he tells me

it's not a good time

21

i start to wonder why i need so much attention

and can't remember the last time we kissed

he won't kiss me when we have sex

23

i can't be with him

but i can't not be with him

all of my thoughts are contradictory these days

he tells me to figure it out on my own time

so i sit in the bathroom and clench a

sealed bottle of pills

by the cap in my mouth

i don't take them, but i do think about it

24

what was it about that last night?

out at a show, anxious as hell

i ask him to stay close

he wanders into the crowd

beaming blue lights

looks like water streaming from my showerhead

everyone is dancing and drinking

i'm perfectly still

no more crying in the shower

25

get home, he's trashed

i'm mad, he ditched me

like that time he drove drunk and i screamed for him to stop, pull over!

he did and i got out and stood in the highway, watching him skid off into the dark

like then, he curses me out tonight

he cracks my head against the corner of our hallway

he backhands me but i barely notice

my head hurts

he grabs my neck again and  
something in the deepest pit of my stomach lurches up through my fingertips  
and i tear his hands off my neck  
like footage of rotten fruit sped up  
the moldy crust splitting skin in the shape of a knife  
he whirls in a rage and yells something about a knife  
i don't remember my feet touching the ground  
but they were bare and i ran out of there  
with nothing except my long t-shirt and underwear

26

i'd never ran barefoot in a panic  
it was 4am and an old janitor i'd seen before was  
closing up at the neighboring bar  
i slapped the window until he saw me  
he gave me a booth, typical red leather and orange lighting  
very portland  
i shook like a blender and couldn't speak  
he called the cops  
they shined lights in my face and took photos of my bruises  
drove me down the block back home  
the cops said:  
  
you have a choice to make--

do you want us to take him in?

or do you want to be with him?

i stood at the front door and felt my whole body

pause

26

i picture myself inside the apartment, dusky, dead

the cops are slow-motion in front of me

my heart is beating so fast, the pressure,

the sweat and bruises swelling on my skin

fuck them for making me choose,

*for putting it all on me*

i let them take him

fuck him, fuck all of them

27

finally, i'm alone

surrounded by chunks of a busted table,

broken vase,

hole in the wall

i lay curled up in a corner of my bed

too weak to grab the covers

i didn't sleep

i watched the sun rise through broken blinds

and i knew, it was a morning to choose for myself--

and i never saw him again.