

Trigger Warnings: drugs; addiction; bullying; panic attacks; swearing

mentions of: depression; self-harm

I have never taken any drugs, so I apologise if the mentioned effects are not accurate.

Part One: Forget

Whatever life might have promised me, it must have forgotten about me.

Because here I am, lying on my back, watching the stars laugh at me.

They are laughing because I had actually believed that life owed me something. Well, how naive that had been.

Life doesn't owe me anything, nor anybody of us. Life is as cold as a blue mountain lake, beautiful and deadly. It's as cruel as the sun, shining on us relentlessly like a constant spotlight, burning every thought. And it's as weak as our minds, craving everything that destroys our bodies and as fragile as said bodies, breaking eventually.

I am craving to be up there, floating between the stars, smiling at mother earth and laughing at all her children. I want to be free, I want to race a shooting star, want to cross the sky with the wild hunt, raiding bodies just like my own, lost and forgotten by their souls.

A bright smile is forming on my face as I am lying here, arms spread widely, waiting for the sky to hug me, for that silent embrace of comfort that I am hoping the night might grant me eventually. The world is spinning above me, beneath me, within me, and I am spinning with it. I am blowing bubbles of smoke into the midnight air, watching them dissolve into nothingness, filling my lungs with life.

A deep calm fills me, and I don't care that the stars are laughing, because they keep me company anyways, and I don't care that all the voices inside my head are laughing, because right now, as I am swept into space, colours tucking me in peacefully, nothing can hurt me.

Then suddenly it strikes me. I flinch, startled, suddenly anxious, nerves and muscles tensing immediately. I gasp for air, as memories flash through my mind.

"You're disgusting. Such a freak!"

"Look at him! What does he look like, all dirty like that? Don't you think some beating might do him good?"

"We're here for you!"

"You think you're funny, you dirty rat? You really think you're funny?"

"You know we love you! You can be yourself, Joe, you know that, right?"

"He's such a coward! Look at him, running away from us! Yeah, just run away, you fucking pussy!"

And then they were laughing, in my head, all around me, in a million different voices, laughing at me because I am such a freak, a coward, so lost in this world, so broken, barely holding on. I am such a fucking mess.

And the stars are laughing at me too, laughing the loudest, and suddenly they aren't my friends anymore, nor my allies, but are screaming at me in the voices of my own thoughts. They are millions of miles away from me, yet they're haunting me, always right on my step.

I can't escape them, never would be able to. So I just curl in on myself, arms wrapped around my legs, head buried between my knees, holding onto everything that doesn't slip from my grasp, rocking back and forth and letting the tears drop onto the grass beneath me in agonising silence.

Part Two: Remember

When I wake up my head is pounding, my stomach twisting and turning, and my eyes feel heavy. When I open them carefully I see the bottle of cheap vodka lying next to me, along with the remnants of a few joints. A few too many, I guess, and a few too many sips of vodka as well.

I sigh, open the half empty bottle and take a careful sip, praying that my weak stomach could handle it. And then I close my eyes again, shutting out the scolding gaze of the morning sun above me.

I don't know how my life got so fucked up. I don't know how, what had started as slight disgust, had evolved into something so complex, so fatal. I don't know if I even care that much anymore. About being a woodwalker. But the hate is anchored deep in my stomach now, and there is no way I'll be able to get rid of it. At least without those helping substances.

I'm honestly not entirely sure when it all had started. Probably somewhere all the way back in kindergarten. I had always been different but I didn't really understand what it was that made the other children stare at me and giggle when I walked by. My dad being an animal as well as a human was nothing special for me. I didn't really realise that other children didn't have animals as parents.

I fucked up from time to time. I grew ears or a tail or just a little bit of fur. And that is when the other kids would start pushing me, calling me names, laughing at me. I was the lonely wolf – well, coyote- and I hated it. I really just wanted to be normal. And I guess that's when I started despising that part of me.

I didn't know who I was - still don't know, actually. I wanted to be someone I couldn't be, no matter how hard I tried. And I actually tried. I tried to rub it off in the shower, tried to cut my tail off, tried to be a vegetarian...

Nothing worked, obviously.

Then my dad wanted me to try turning into a coyote for the first time. It took him over a month to convince me. He told me the sensations were overwhelming, that you could hear and smell so much more, and that it makes you feel safe.

Well yeah, it was definitely overwhelming. I could smell the pile of dirty clothes in the other room, and I could hear the soft voice of the elder lady next door, who was talking to herself. And then I could hear the faint rustling of a mouse in the broom closet, and my hunting instincts kicked in. And I panicked. Because I was an actual animal, a beast, who wanted to hunt down and kill that mouse. My prey.

Within seconds I changed back, rushed into my room, then rushed to the bathroom to throw up but couldn't, instead fled through the front door and slammed it shut. And then I ran. I ran as far as I could, until I was panting, gasping for air, and my legs couldn't hold me anymore. I sat down under a lonely oak tree, head between my knees, breathing much too fast and much too shallow. After a few minutes I passed out.

I went home afterwards, but I couldn't look at my dad anymore. I knew what I would see. I would see disappointment and confusion, the face of a father that didn't know his son anymore. I couldn't be mad at him though. I didn't know myself either.

From that day on, I started spiralling, continuously getting worse. I started skipping school, not bearing to see the other students, and started having regular panic attacks. I stopped eating, stopped sleeping, stopped doing anything, really. Until I found the drugs.

The first night I got drunk was a disaster. I don't remember much, but I've heard stories of deconstructing furniture and then shamelessly flirting with the door lying on the floor. But it felt great. For the first time since I remembered, I felt like an actual human.

That's probably what got me addicted so fast, too. It made everything bearable. I was able to sleep and to eat and to make my parents believe I was doing well, at least for a few weeks. It was only when the school called and told them their son hadn't shown up to class in the last three weeks that they realised what was happening.

They took me to doctors, therapists, and even camps for addicts. And I've learned from it. I've learned to conceal my real state and to make people believe I was doing better. I've learned to play 'happy child'.

Until the day it all got too much.

My dad was shouting at me, pacing through the living room, my mom was shouting at my dad, then started crying. They couldn't look me in the eyes, couldn't look at each other, could only look at the floor and at the empty bottles they had found under my bed. At least only the bottles, I thought to myself.

"Don't you know how much you're hurting yourself? How much are you hurting us? Look at your mother, Joe! She is crying because of you! She loves you! Don't you REALISE what you're doing?"

"It's not the drugs that are hurting me. It's that goddamn THING that I am! And you know whose fault THAT is? Well, not mine, that's for sure!"

My father looked at me with a horrified face. *"So now you are blaming me? This is who you ARE, Joe, and I don't know what else we can do to help you understand that. WE HAVE DONE EVERYTHING! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE?"*

"But that's the problem. I don't WANT TO BE WHAT I AM! I DON'T WANT TO BE THE FUCKING MONSTER YOU MADE ME!"

And with that I grabbed a half full bottle of rum, as well as my shoes and jacket, and stormed through the door. It slammed shut behind me, and the sound echoed in my head as I ran, as far as my legs were able to, leaving my life behind.

It was this moment, the moment in which I decided to run away, that had changed my life forever. It has led me to the very situation I am in right now, sitting in the middle of a field, just trying to get by.

Part Three: Survive

Tears are softly running down my cheeks as I take another sip. I just can't help it. I can't bear reality without the relief the alcohol brings me.

When my tears are dried and my mind fuzzy enough to stop remembering, I turn to the bag lying next to me. Inside are a few clothes, my stock of different drugs, an old mobile phone without battery, and a purse. I count my money. About 5\$. It could be worse. At least I should be able to get something to eat.

I pack my stuff, then get going, in the direction of the small village behind me. On my way I pass a stream that runs along the side of the field and wash my face and hands with the cold water.

In the local "supermarket" (it's really just a tiny store with all kinds of junk) I am able to buy some bread and fresh water. On my way out I see a job offer on the bulletin board.

"Help me renovate my garden. 10\$ per hour. Hard, physical work."

A smile creeps its way onto my face. There is a phone number written beneath it and I quickly copy it onto my arm. I guess I'll just have to find a place to charge my phone now. I will be fine. I am a sixteen year old drug addict completely on its own, without money or possessions or a home, but I've managed so far. Now that I've survived two years like this, there is an iron will to keep going, to prove them all wrong.

And I will. One day, I will stop trying to get lost between the stars and accept the light of the sun instead. One day I will be able to see my parents again, and I will be able to tell them that I managed, that I freed myself of self-hatred and self-destructing habits.

One day. Just not yet.