

I woke up on the hard and flat sheetless bed, sweat coating the back of my neck and forehead. My eyes opened lazily, and stared at the floor as I lay on my stomach. After some long moments of trying to capture the ever sweet but ever fleeting bliss of ignorance that comes with a groggy morning state, I began to sit up and collect myself as much as I could. I started to wipe the sweat off of myself, making my palms wet before I would wipe it on the blanket they felt generous enough to give me. I sat back against the wall, sitting up in bed, looking at the simple plain white room around me. It was so colorless, so devoid of character or creativity. It made me as unfeeling as I thought the people who made this room were. The window was secured so well that you could barely see through it, or allow any light to come in at all. The only things out of place in my room were the piles of clothes and hygiene products on the shelves, none of which was much use to me, since I still hadn't showered in days since coming here. There were a couple books on my night table, a paper cup half full with water, and a simple flimsy notebook with a pen that doesn't work and some scribbles which make no sense inside.

That's when I looked over to the doorway, and saw the familiar sliver of light coming from the hallway that was ever present. It reminded me of the knot in my stomach, of knowing that I could never get a moment of privacy or being alone. Reminded me where I was, and how hazy my thoughts were when trying to deal with my greasy hair and flaky skin, making my chest tense up. I turn to the right and hang my feet over the bed, the same thing I've done for the past 3 mornings, so I can put my shoes on and go to the bathroom. As I shuffle around in bed and slip my shoes on, I can feel the person at the door detecting my movement. I can feel their unease, their tensing. They don't know what they might have to deal with coming from me, and I guess I can't realistically blame them, even if my cells want me to be angry and scream at them for treating me different.

Going to the bathroom is even more disconcerting, as even though there aren't eyes on me, I can feel that every one of my movements, every noise is accounted for. It almost felt dehumanizing, having to look at myself in the mirror and ponder how I wound up here, now, looking like this and constantly on display for everyone to see or make fun of. I take a deep breath and sigh involuntarily when coming out of the bathroom. The person at my door, wearing their navy blue uniform and holding their clipboard, stands up from their chair in order to let me out of the room. They wait for me though as I awkwardly head back over to my night table to grab my book and water before I head out into the lobby. Part of me just wants to lay in bed all day, and try to go back to sleep, like I have for most of my time here. Ever since I heard that that can be considered "not complying with treatment", though, I think its just best for me to try to survive out in the open.

I still feel hazy and groggy as I walk past the counter where more personnel are working, while the one from my room follows me. I catch a look over at the phones,

where some people are talking, some crying, some laughing. I try to imagine what kind of relationships they have, if its friends or family, maybe someone they didn't want to get a call from. Try to imagine how someone could seem so happy here, or find something so funny, how they could laugh so hard. I imagine all of the things that might be making someone sad. Are they feeling misunderstood? Maybe they just can't handle talking to the person, maybe it hurts. Maybe it hurts because they're alone. Or scared. Or all of the above. Maybe they cry out of joy, or maybe it is out of sadness. Maybe there is desperation in how they're feeling. Maybe they just want comfort.

I stop thinking, before I can sink.

I feel that familiar empty sensation in my chest as I obstruct everyone's view of the TV so I can get to the pitcher of water. As I freshen up my cup, everyone is sitting in rows of uncomfortable chairs, eyes glued to the screen in front of them. Every so often one of them complains, or moves, or gets into a disagreement with someone else over the program channel. I feel awkward and annoying so I just finish pouring and then head over to the seat farthest away from anyone else in the room with my book. I ignore the TV and simply just sit in the lobby, with my book open and my legs crossed, and try to read. After enough focus, I am able to lull myself into not thinking about the world around me. I get lost in scenes fantasy and adventure, of heartfelt connections and characters that I unrealistically desired to be real. For a time, I forget about my surroundings, and I feel some version of what people might call happy, though a better word for it might have been tolerance or interest.

Its at some point when I'm tearing through the pages, when I finally get into a rhythm, when I'm so absorbed in the reading that I forgot where I was, that someone calls out that it's time for breakfast from the long hallway behind me leading to the cafeteria. This snaps me back to reality, and I forget which part I was at in the book, lose which words I was reading. I stare at the book, unmoving and think. As others shuffle out of the room and file to get food, I just sit and try to resume reading. All I can think about though is how scheduled everything is, how everything is wrong. How they're all robots and listen to when they're told to eat, when they can sleep, when they can use the bathroom and when they have to watch TV. When they can call their loved ones.

Then I realize I'm just like anyone else, and I sink.

Now I try to focus harder to read, but its too difficult to concentrate. Every time I try to pick up where I left off, my eyes glide over the words but absorb no real meaning. I start over again and again, expecting, hoping, desperate for something or someone to take me away before the pang of sadness can creep in too deep. It's already too late, I realize, as I fold the corner of the page and close the book in order to save my place. I internally chastise myself for that, as I know some people think its disorganized and disrespectful for you to doggy ear books and mess them up. I just like the aesthetic and I think it gives them character. In any case, I just sit back in the now completely quiet

room now, since there is nobody, and the TV is off. For a while I just sit back, letting my neck rest on the top of the poorly cushioned chair. I stare at the ceiling, or at the floor, or the walls, trying to find something that could possibly distract me. All that I see are more books and game boards on a shelf, none of the games which I could play by myself. And since I have no friends here, and don't know how or want to know how to play solitaire, that's out of the question. Everyone else here is so much older than me, and almost all of them are just recovering drug addicts or homeless people looking for a place to stay. I don't even know how crazy some of these people are, how easily they might snap, or be triggered, or otherwise. I just make a mental note that it's too risky to socialize, like always but with much better reasons, I think. So I keep to myself, and wallow in the feeling of being completely alone in the universe. Maybe not completely alone, since I at least have my brother, but even he gives me the cold shoulder a lot of the time, and I would rather just not associate with someone if we were just going to act like that with each other.

I think of all the stars out there, of how big our galaxy is and how insignificant it is compared to all of what else is in this expanding universe. I think of cosmic dust, then of a giant rock falling through space, held together only by the pull of trillions and trillions of electrons working together to create a force we call gravity. I think of world problems, like hunger and disease and political strife and the environment. I think of big cities and all the people in them, of how no one person is ever that much different from another. How we're all just overpopulated animals all driven by the same impure and selfish motivations. How I'm just one of them, one among many in a city so run down and old nobody ever pays attention to it anymore. They would rather pretend it doesn't exist, as I would with a lot of things. I think of everything that goes on, of couples kissing, businesses being run, kids failing school, and of families in shreds.

Then there's me. A nobody, with nothing, from nowhere, with not even an interesting last name to give to anyone I could ever hope to call mine. Me, from a family of weirdos and crazies who couldn't give less of a shit about anything. Me, who's useless to anyone, even myself. I think of my future being a homeless person, being too depressed and lethargic to move or do anything. Of just letting myself starve out on the streets, too embarrassed even to ask for help or beg or try to build anything for myself.

What's the point?

Of anything.