

“Needs alliteration.”

That was my initial thought as soon as my fingers ventured around the lexicon lying on my lap. My mind was scouring through ideas: love, death, the love of death, the death of love. Indecisively, I keep writing anyway.

And while we walked and waltzed through the white snow,

Perfect. Too Shakespeare? No, too little if anything. I peered down at the screen with a paternal sense of pride of the words before me. Well, now what? I still need a theme, a purpose.

I stopped and stared at my hands for a second. They're calloused and bony, pale with an unpleasant flavor of hangnail. I watch as they tremble, unable to withstand the moment they aren't in use.

I slide my nails along the palm of my hand, I take another more considerate look and see they're jagged—years of anxiety-induced mauling certainly to blame. Continuing down from the molecular mountains atop my fingertips, I see them all. Pinkie, ring, middle, index, thumb. Despite how small my hands are, my fingers are rigid and tall.

My knuckles are sharp and protrude—no, I'm getting distracted.

As I look back down the same words I had previously been so fond of, now seem foreign. It has certainly been ages since I last wrote these. I'm sure that humans have evolved millennia just between these drafts. I'd have to get to shelter before our solar system collapses in upon itself and all life is—my screen darkens and a message is displayed: low battery... 7:04 PM. Damn it, no cosmic interference is going to help.

Kill me.

...

8:26 PM, I waltz out of the shower and dry off. After my hourly investigation of the scale in my parents' room, I return to my work and gaze at the empty space.

And while we walked and waltzed through the white snow,

Wondering why we wouldn't have waited,

We watched as the wind gave its unwavering...

Unwaveri—Unwavering what? I glare at the sentence, with an unreciprocated annoyance. Surely I'm stupid, is what I thought. The evidence in my hands mocked me during my frustration. There must be an answer to this.

A sudden pain jolts in my chest. If only the flame in my torso had singed my heart I'd be fine, but this wasn't the case. An unwavering inferno bit at the crucible of my body. After fifteen seconds, I let go of myself as the fire started to dwindle.

I look down at my malnourished body. I feel my ribs hit my computer when I breathe, I place my palm on my stomach. I trace the center of my concave skin. In middle school, I always wanted to be thinner, I would wish every single day for a weight that I wanted. This is the form that I want.

The shirt tarped over me was a royal violet, it used to be my favorite in seventh grade. Below I'm wearing what most people call "skinny jeans." But the way they fit isn't that bad.

As I—cadeaux. Perfect. My brain recalled a conversation in English 10 a year prior.

"I need a word for this villanelle."

"Try 'cadeaux,'"

“Cadeaux?”

“It’s French for ‘gifts.’”

And while we walked and waltzed through the white snow,

Wondering why we wouldn’t have waited,

We watched as the wind gave its unwavering cadeaux.

It’s sarcastic, it’s a rhyme, it’s perfect. It’s pretentious. That’s what it is. Damnit. I need a word.

A soft discomfort in my stomach arose to remind me to eat. I hadn’t had anything in days, so it might be a good idea. I walk downstairs to our freezer and wipe the white frost off of a bag of Tyson’s chicken. I heat the oven to four hundred degrees and wait.

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As I sit on my knees washing the barely-digested poultry wrapping my figure, I think to myself. This is disgusting. This is awful. This is what I need. As much as I hated the feeling of my own body trying to kill me, torture me, starve me, part of me loved it. Part of me loved the feeling of being thin.

People still jeered at me for being so skinny, but some sick piece of my soul thought it was better than when people made fun of me for the opposite. In just two months I’d be back at school again, and I honestly wasn’t very worried about it.

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Unwavering...

I'm in a hospital—or I was in a hospital. I've been here before, there's a white noise filling the halls, and the lights are dim and wavy. As I walked across the second floor I saw an open door—a white light beaming out. I walk in, it's a large room, filled with medical gadgets and screens I'd never understand. There's a giant window covered in small droplets of water. There's a thunderstorm, but you can really only hear it if you look outside. Someone is lying on a bed in the middle of the room, I look over.

The stranger and I made eye contact as if we'd met before. He was skinny—but not the kind people diet for. He was the kind of unhealthy that prisoners were, withered and starved. His hair was long and brown, with wilted eyes. I knew who I was looking at, but he didn't—maybe that was a good thing. He seemed complacent in this place, he was wintered in this room away from the cold.

Then I saw his hands, they looked weak. I saw each of his digits. Pinkie, ring, middle, index, thumb. They were pressed against his stomach, holding on without losing grip. He was tapping a rhythm against his skin as he waited for an answer I already knew. His hands shook, he was scared, he was anxious. Yet, he didn't recognize he was.

I looked with a worried wonder as I saw the whiteboard across the room, “CROHN'S DISEASE” it read. Beneath it was a diagram, the human intestinal tract with a giant space blocking the track. An arrow pointing at the blockage marked it as “inflammation.” It was disgusting, terrifying. I looked at the spot, waiting for it to disappear, but it didn't.

There were treatments and medications surrounding the diagram, but it might as well have been written in a foreign language. They all circled a label that read “90 lbs.” He was critically underweight from the illness. There was a word they used for it... I’m struggling to remember it. Chronic. It was chronic.

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Junior year was as much as I expected, is what I thought to myself three months in. Twenty-three weeks previously with a new flair of college anxiety. I trekked into my room and looked down at my abandoned work, nothing is covering my eyes since my surgery at Dead Men’s Hair seven days prior. I take a minute and stop. Lately, I had spent all my time focused on school, but now, second-guessing, I wanted to put it somewhere it mattered—artistic expression.

I picked up where I left off. Scheming, my fingers started to shake like they used to. My digits fly across the keys—mechanically. I crack a smile. The kind of smile that can call a desperate cause to craft a cohesive idea.

Winter

And while we walked and waltzed through the white snow,

Wondering why we wouldn’t have waited,

We watched as the wind gave its wild show.

Wanting warmth, we hid away with no time wasted.

I'm manic, controlling my words and cadence to try and construct a masterful creation. And while I calc—goddamnit. This is ridiculous.

I watched as the screen faded to black, the only thing remaining being the faint image of a person. I could tell he was average-sized, but not no more or less. He had a confident stare as I looked back. His locks were well-kept and swept back.

His hands? They didn't appear that significant, normal at least. They were bony, and his knuckles protruded through his hand like his hand was wearing a shirt that was a little too tight. But, they weren't much to talk about, they were just hands, nothing more.

He was calm and seemingly careless, but in the way a cactus is careless.

Cactus

A cactus, alone in a desert of white sands and cloudy skies. It stands alone, but not because it has to, but it is meant to. It stands there, yet a simple look around will reveal a caravan of cacti all around in their worlds.

A cactus is never forced to be more than a cactus, but sometimes they'll choose to be. With enough water and enough care, a cactus will grow something beautiful. On the end of an arm of the plant, a flower will bloom, a beautiful hand given to them. Every digit of the blossom comes in the most spectacular colors, orange and pink and blue and red and even white.

White is a funny color, since it isn't one, in fact, the absence. As beautiful as it is, it represents nothing, it exists in a world of wonder, as a statue of indifference.

I looked at it, conflicted. It wasn't my best work, a little on the nose maybe, but it doesn't have to be the best anything. I see my hands cower away from the backspace key as I accept the work. There could be countless additions made to any creation, but if it could end then it should. There are those who can and those who won't. After all, I'd rather not deal with any writer's block.

- Excerpt from my "Sick Writing Stuff" - 07.28.2022

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