

Creases 2022 Revision

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CONTENT WARNING

This work of fiction contains scenes and discussions of mental health illnesses, self-hatred, depression, self-inflicted injury, and a detailed account of suicide.

Treat each other well. Look after yourself.

5:00am

As I lay here, as I have through the entire night, I know my alarm will soon start making a racket. There was little point in setting it when I finally got myself into bed just a few hours earlier. Sleep has been shy as of late, and I cannot remember when I last slept a full night. It's an odd feeling; insomnia. I am so tired I can neither move with haste, nor think with precision. And yet, I am also incapable of resting. Too tired to sleep. I despise how it has become an uncomfortable familiarity. Insomnia continues to be just another side effect of the depression, another symptom to add to the long list of weight bearing unpleasanties.

It's been 15 years, this battle. A dozen different antidepressants, a sharing of secrets with half a dozen therapists, and countless self-help techniques. How I desperately wish I could tell you of how helpful the help had been. Alas, it has not been so.

That's right, you've tried it all, and it all failed. Failure for a failure. And nobody will ever believe you. You know that, right? They will all think you just want to be special. They will all think you're lying and exaggerating for attention.

I should get up. Staying in bed will offer me no advantage, and it will only give it the silence it needs to shout louder. Plus, sleep isn't coming any time soon and I once read that staying in bed when struggling to sleep is not good for you—something about associating the bed with lying awake instead of sleeping. If that is true, more fool me for failing to get up three hours ago.

It sounds so easy, though, to just get up. It's not easy. The depression crushes my chest, just as *he* did when he would pin me to the ground and beat me, or do worse. Fighting that feeling now takes just as much energy as it did back then. It has become so exhausting to simply take a breath as of late.

Ah, there it is, the self-indulgent pity that you turn to so often.

It's not a self-indulgent pity. It's my truth, and I get to speak it if I want.

Speak your truth then, and continue to do what you always do; lay in bed and do nothing. Like a pig, like a sloth ridden pig. You're not even trying to help yourself. If you know it's bad to stay in bed, then why not move? If you find it difficult to breathe, then why have you continued to eat like a glutton and grow fatter by the day? The reason you can't breathe is because you're a fat pig. You're a failure. You fail at life.

I finally manage to swing my legs out of the bed, and swivel my upper body to where I am now sitting on the edge. My head is hung low, staring at the carpet. No, not the carpet, just the space where the carpet occupies. I stumble my way into my bathroom, piss, and walk over to the sink. Above the sink, attached to the wall is a mirror. I have pinned up a towel to hide my own reflection. The sight of my own face makes me feel sick at times.

Not just you—everybody feels sick when they have to look at you.

I know there is something I must do now, but I'm not sure what, exactly. I came into the bathroom, pissed, flushed the toilet, and now I'm at the sink, staring at the taps. Why? What next?

Go on, figure out Mister I'm So Smart.

Shut up. I close my eyes.

You can't shut me out. I am you.

Shut up. Give me a second, I'll figure it out.

Most people would have figured it out by now. Not you, oh, no, you need a second. Like a child.

Wash my hands! That's it. That's what I need to do next. I pump the soap into my palms and rub them together before rinsing them under the cold water. I like cold water. I like the shock it gives to the skin. I like feeling... anything else.

Oh god, I would roll my eyes so hard if I had them. You're such a pretentious little prick, you know that right? This is why nobody talks to you.

I walk back into the bedroom and sit in my armchair. It rocks and creaks under my weight. I'm just going to sit here for a moment, for no particular reason. I'm just wasting time. This is what I do now, I sit and do nothing. I sit and wait for the days to pass, so I can crawl back in my bed and wait for it all to start again.

It's not all you do though, is it? Speak your truth.

I look down, to my forearms. Criss-crossed with scars from the times when I gave in, the times I was weak, the times I needed a release. Many of them are flat or slightly raised. The newer ones are still red, the older ones faded to a pale white. Three large scars, ones formed from deeper cuts, and made worse by my piss poor attempt to sew myself shut, are covered with a thin layer of wrinkled tissue, red, and traversed with bright pink veins. They stand out from the rest, serving to easily grab the attention of any unfortunate onlooker. Sometimes I think about cutting my arm off just so I don't have to look at them anymore. And yet, I know that soon enough, I will add yet another line, or three.

They're disgusting. You're disgusting. Nobody will ever love you with those scars, nobody will ever hold your hand, or gently, stroke your arm to give comfort. They will recoil in horror. They will go to great lengths to avoid you.

I'm not looking for anyone to hold my hand or stroke me. I have no interest in that.

Just as well.

I grab my iPad—partly as a way to distract myself, and partly out of habit. I click on the Twitter app, again out of habit.

You're addicted to Twitter. You're an addict. You think because you don't drink or smoke or do the drugs that some of your family members do that you're better than them. You're not better. You're an addict, just like them. Your drug of choice is Social Media, food, and cutting.

The usual tweets, nothing of too much significance. Sometimes I find it helpful to see people going about their lives as it serves as a distraction from my own. Other people live, they spend their days with moments, moments they deem worthy of recording. I can live vicariously through them, allowing myself a moment or two of fooling myself that my own life is worthwhile when I see something relatable. I think the same, and you are worthy and valued, and so must I. Right?

Wrong.

It is World Mental Health Day, and many of the trending hashtags are mental health focussed. I know I shouldn't, but I still click on them. I can't help myself.

You are weak, and lack the self-control to do what is right.

It's pretty much what I expected. Some people are sharing their story, some people are lecturing others on how they shouldn't let their illness become them, and many people are tweeting general messages of support. The all too parroted quotes, 'You are seen, loved, valued, wanted.' I don't think anyone has ever told me, directly and sincerely, that I am seen, loved, valued, or wanted.

For good reason.

I am only ever in the You.

In addition, there are other statements thrown around. Quick sound bites that serve to ease the insecurities of the tweeter rather than the audience looking on. 'Look at me! I say nice things. I am kind to strangers so please like me. Please give me moral credibility.'

There are the statements that I don't like, such as, 'Think Well, Be Well,' and 'Life is what you make of it,' and other nonsense that serves to paint the sufferer as just not trying hard enough, or not thinking their way out of their illness.

I can't blame these people, they think what they are told to think, as are we all. As a society we are talking more about mental health now than ever before, and that is something I want to celebrate, but it's not always easy to do so. The term, 'Mental Health,' is just a little too vague for me. It's an umbrella term. There is a difference between emotional wellbeing, mental health problems, and having a mental health illness. Statements about thinking and being well, creating one's own happiness through perception, or recommendations to go for a ten minute walk, may help with emotional wellbeing, but they serve to simplify, trivialise, and overlook the complexities of serious mental health illnesses. Psychiatrists and psychological therapy would cease to exist if it was as simple as just thinking oneself to good health, no?

And this, is where you try and make it about being special. Oh, you're so deep, so complex, so intellectually damaged that you need more than other people. Nobody else could ever know what it is like to be you. Boohoo, boohoo. Get a fucking grip.

The worst of the bunch, in my ever so humble opinion...

Your opinion that counts for nothing!

... is the statement, 'It's okay to not be okay.' It's the most popular empty buzz phrase. It raises its ugly head every Mental Health Awareness Week, World Suicide Prevention Day, and

World Mental Health Day, as well as randomly during any mental health (emotional wellbeing) discussion. I hate it. I hate the subliminal message it conveys to the collective unconscious.

Nah, you're just playing the victim.

I am a victim.

Saying something is 'okay' is another way of saying something is acceptable. I've never heard or seen anyone saying, 'It's okay to be suffering from treatable cancer,' or 'It's okay to die from treatable kidney failure.' It would be a foolish thing to say. But if one is unfortunate enough where their illness is mental in its nature, then that is okay? It's okay to live miserably?

Yes. Mentally ill people, just like yourself, are broken, often beyond repair. You are a heavy weight that other people must drag along. You take up valuable resources that could be used by more deserving folk. If you are mentally unwell, then that's okay, because soon enough, you'll put an end to yourself and the problems you create for others.

I'm not a fool,...

Ha!

... I know people are trying to say that it's okay to ask for help if you are not okay, and that there's no shame in not being okay. I agree with those sentiments, but then why don't people say that?

Because they are saying exactly what they want to say. You are ill, mentally unstable, broken beyond repair, and that's okay, that's what you deserve in life for being such a worthless, pathetic, piece of shit. It's perfectly okay for scum like yourself to not be okay.

No, it's not. It's not okay to not be okay. Something must be done for those of us who are not okay. Saying it is okay will just serve to fuel the culture of complacency we have for those suffering. It is why we can't get the help we need, why governments are not funding appropriate research or treatments. We must step up, and say, it's okay to ask for help if you are not okay, there's no shame if you are not okay, but it is not okay to leave those suffering. It's not okay to not be okay.

Oh great, here we go again. Holy fuckballs. YAWN! Come on, give us the self-pity. Lecture us like you lecture those who lecture others. You know what, maybe you should just get it done. Kill yourself now. Nobody will care. Sure, some people will pretend to care, some will sit at your funeral and force out a tear and say how tragic it was that you were not in a place to accept help, and so you took the easy way out, but it will all be fake. It'll be a show for their own selfish

needs. They will do it because it's what is expected of them, it's what you do when someone you're supposed to love dies. And then, they will get on with their lives. Their better lives. Better for not having you in it. You will be dead, and that will be okay.

I close the iPad cover—I've seen enough. Maybe there is something in what people are saying, though. Maybe my self-pity is getting me caught in a state of depression. What if I just tell myself I am okay? What if I act as if things are okay? Maybe, just maybe, things will start to feel that way. What if I could trick myself into feeling okay? It would give me the leg up I need to start getting back to normality.

Or, you could just give up.

Speaking of normality, I need to get ready for work. It's the same routine; a quick three minute (cold) shower, followed by brushing my teeth for exactly two minutes (thirty seconds per quarter), four seconds of deodorant under each arm, and to finish, a pea sized amount of moisturising cream across my eyebrows and eyelids.

It's at this point that I dare to move the towel that covers the mirror to one side. I hate what I see. My hideous fat-rolled body looks like a melted candle. I feel disgusted.

An appropriate response, for, you are disgusting. Think about the poor sods that have to look at you all day long.

My eczema is flaring up on my face again. My cheeks are red, and the skin has split above my eyebrow. The cream stings.

You look a mess. You look disgusting. People are going to be looking at you and thinking, 'What a disgusting, crusty, fat, ugly pig.' They are going to look at you and feel sick.

That's okay.

Getting dressed is as routine as the rest. I find having structure is important, it helps me on the days when my head is fuzzy, when my thoughts are slow...

You're always slow. A slow, dumb, fuck.

... I can carry on without needing to rely on them too much. I wear the same outfit every day. Five hangers, with five identical outfits; plain black socks and underwear, a pair of black chinos, a black compression vest,...

You're fooling nobody. Everybody can see you're fat.

... and a black linen shirt, long sleeved, of course, to cover the scars. I put on my black ring and my black Fitbit band. If I dress as a shadow, maybe I can remain unseen. I finish it off by

putting on my black boots, and grab my black backpack, and out the door I go, to catch the train, to do the same journey I hate doing each weekday to get to the workplace I don't want to be at.

8:40am

I hate that journey. The trains are quiet enough, and the bad weather held off, but still. Everywhere I go I see death. I look at a lamp post and think, ‘I could hang myself from that,’ or I look at lorry approaching on the road and I think, ‘If I step out in front of that, it should be enough to kill me.’ It never stops.

There is one way it could stop.

It’s okay.

The train was late, and I hate that. I’m now late at work, only by 10 minutes, but it’s enough to throw out my whole routine. Well, technically I am still 20 minutes early, but I like to get here half an hour early. I like to be the first in—it gives me enough time to get ready and prepare myself before the others arrive.

I don’t bother to check my calendar as I already know what I have on this morning. Our quarterly Key Performance Indicator and Business Planning review. Yes, it is as boring as it sounds. No doubt, everything we discuss today could be sent in an email, but no, instead we must sit around a table and go through endless charts and spreadsheets before all agreeing on a viewpoint that we already had, agreeing to actions we are already working towards.

Some of the other staff have already arrived in the office. I force fake pleasantries, and receive them in return. It will be another 45 minutes or so before anyone else arrives for the meeting. I want my presence to go unnoticed as much as possible, and so I make my way to the conference room. I mentally mark my chair—the one in the far corner that gives me a full view of the room, and of the door where everyone else will come in from, and has easy access to the fire escape just in case a quick exit is necessary.

Why not just stay in the room and burn to death if you wanna die so much? And why do you get the special seat? What makes you worthy of the comfort to choose your seat? You’re not better than your colleagues.

I prop open my iPad and check my emails. Quietly, in the corner of the room, trying my best to stay out of everyone else's way. Trying to be as unseen as possible.

Do you remember what happened when you started working here at this office? Do you remember when you started and everyone else went off sick?

Yes, I remember. The workplace was understaffed and the team had been overworked and struggling for a while. It's why I was asked to move here; to support them and to help fill the gaps.

But you started, and then they all went off sick. It's almost as if your presence pushed them over the edge. They were holding on, getting by, and then you served as the final straw that broke their backs. They couldn't stand to share a building with you.

That's not the case. They would have likely taken time off sick anyway. My arrival was just a little too late. That whole situation was just down to timing. There was no causation.

Okay, when did they return to work?

A few weeks later, when I went off sick.

Exactly! The thought of being in the same building as you was enough to force them out. Because that's what it's like to be around you. That's what you do to people. The thought of talking to you is enough to cause people major distress. It's why you don't have any friends left. How many of your 'friends' decided they couldn't cope with you and turned their back on you?

All of them.

Yes, all of them. Not a single person could manage being your friend. I don't blame them though, being your friend would test the patience of a saint. When people ask how you are, you are supposed to lie and act like you are okay. They don't like it when you tell them the truth, no matter how much you try to say it quickly and move on to asking about them. A problem shared is a problem doubled. You think you're being smart with it, but you're not. You're just making things difficult for people. You're just staining everybody with your negativity.

That's okay. They said they wanted the truth. They said I didn't need to lie and pretend I was okay. They asked me to be honest with them, practically begged me to open up to them. They said they wanted to help. They said they would always be there for me. They said they understood.

They thought I had low emotional wellbeing. They thought I needed to be told I was loved, valued, necessary. They thought I just needed to go for a walk. That was, until they saw what it was really like. Then they saw the stubbornness of a mental health illness. And then...

And then they turned their back on you the moment they realised it's not that easy and they were in over their heads. They simply threw you to the curb. And you can't say anything because you have me. Nobody trusts the crazy guy. You're mentally ill, therefore you have no credibility.

You're just a crazy guy who can't see how things are. You're just doing it for attention and you're not helping yourself. So why should they?

It's okay.

You won't find a way out of this. There is no way out. Your family hates you and the disappointment you grew to become. Your work colleagues can't stand to be around you because you're just the weird guy who sits in a room alone, never saying anything but creepily watching everyone. Nobody can handle being your friend. THIS is your life forever. Even the fucking mental health workers deserted you and they are paid to put up with your shit. Not for all the tea in china, eh?!

I guess not. It's okay.

10:25am

The room is now full. Eighteen people in total, which may not sound like a huge number, but it's about eighteen too many for my comfort. The Chair was late, which meant everyone else had to waste time making small talk. No one spoke to me other than to force out a 'good morning.' I continued to sit in my chair, avoiding eye contact, and wishing we could just get this over with.

Why? So you can go back home? Sit in your chair? Lay on your bed? Do nothing? Oh, you hate being alone so much, and yet you fail when you have the opportunity to be around people. These people hate being around you more, remember that.

It's okay. It's true, I do hate being alone, but I also hate being around other people. The two are not mutually exclusive. I get lonely when I spend my evenings alone, and I get lonely when I spend my days around other people.

Now the meeting is finally in full swing. Lots of dick-measuring corporate speak about performance and key indicators. Mainly it's people using buzz words that they don't really understand the meaning behind—use enough bullshit language and you can fool anyone into believing you know what you are talking about. It's a game that we all play, and we all know that we are playing it, yet we continue anyway.

It's okay! Fucking hypocrite .

I suppose some people find this game interesting. I don't. I find this mind numbingly boring. I'm not interested in playing these games.

Because you're such an intellectual, right? Because you're better than these people? You're not better than anyone. You're a shit. A worthless, pathetic, shit. An oxygen thief. A dead man walking.

Someone is rambling about the latest project they have been piloting in a random geographical area of the town with a targeted user base or some shit. I'm struggling to pay attention. The words fade to become a mumble of background noise.

My head is down, avoiding eye contact, staring at the empty page in my notebook. In the upper corner, there is a crease in the paper, and the crease is much more interesting to me than anything being said.

The crease reminds me of my scars. It is prominent, and pulls the eye to it. It spoils the notebook, makes it look ugly. I take the lid off my pen and try to iron out the crease. The paper lies a little more flat, but it can still be seen.

The thing with creases is that depending on what they occur on, they may never really be removed. No amount of ironing, squashing, weighing down, and attempted fixing will ever fully return the page to its previous unflawed condition. The page will continue to be fragile in that place. It will be vulnerable to bend again, with ease. From now on, it won't take as much pressure or force to bend that spot again. To damage it further. Sure, the crease won't always be visible to everyone, but if someone looks carefully enough, they will see it. The page will know the crease is there. I will know the crease is there, and I will forever need to be thoughtful in handling it with caution.

That's okay.

I close my notebook. I'm bored.

You know this is it, right? This is your life; forever sitting in rooms with people that don't want to be with you, pretending that you know what you are doing. They keep you around out of convenience. Your purpose is to take on the shit they don't want to deal with.

They shouldn't have to deal with your shit, because they are above that. You, on the other hand, well, you don't deserve the courtesy of not having to deal with shit.

We are all worth an equal amount.

Yeah, you keep spewing out that bullshit, 'cause it's going to get you nowhere. You're not fooling anyone with your peace and love hippy crap. People see you for who you are, a piece of shit. Kill yourself. Save yourself from the pain, and save these people from having to put up with you.

It's okay.

My eyes drift upwards to look out of the window. The building I am in overlooks some playing fields, a park, a little river and some rolling hills beyond. Some people like to remind me that I am lucky to work in a building with such beautiful views.

You've got everything and yet you want more. You have a nicely paying job, and you live in a pretty village in the countryside. Do you know what other people would give to have that? You ungrateful bastard.

I can tell myself this is beauty, that this is what people seek out in life. But to me, it just looks like grass. There was definitely a time when I would have been able to appreciate the beauty, a time when I craved long walks in the woods, with the birds, and the gentle sound of a river. Not anymore, not for a while. Now, it's just another thing over there that other people find joy in. I'm numb to it all. Indifferent to life.

It's okay.

"Have you even heard me?"

What? Shit. No I haven't. I wasn't listening to anything being said and now I have the Regional Director glaring at me from across the table. I look around, the other people in the room are looking at me, clearly waiting for me to answer the question I didn't hear.

"Erm, I'm sorry, I zoned out for a moment there, could you repeat the question?" I follow up with a light nervous laugh in a failed attempt to break the tension. A couple of colleagues laugh gently to themselves.

They're laughing at you, not with you.

Our Regional Director doesn't laugh. "Well, are you listening this time?"

"Yes, sorry, go ahead," I say, desperately trying to avoid eye contact with anyone. I look down at the notebook, at the crease hidden out of sight.

"I asked if we could get individual level data for all KP6 indicators?"

I take a moment of thought. Just long enough to make it look like I was really considering the question, but not long enough to piss her off any further.

"Yes. I think so. I might have to combine a couple of reports but we could get that together. It'll take the team a couple of days as they are still working through the KDD scores that you requested," I reply.

I don't know if this is the answer she was looking for as she gives very little away in her facial expressions. It's a technique she has mastered over the last twenty years. A way to control her subordinates.

Nah, she just can't be arsed putting too much effort into being polite to shitheads like you. You're not worth her time. You're not worth anyone's time.

"Why are they still working on those? I asked for that about a month ago. What is taking so long?" she barks at me. The public dressing down folds my creases.

What is taking so long is that you forgot to task the team with it. You spend all your time either staring blankly at the PC monitor or looking out of the window at the trees on the hill instead of getting on with what you need to do. You suck at being a leader.

It's true. I haven't been able to focus on any piece of work for a while, and I am not doing well in this role. But I need to give an answer, and I can't let on that it's because I am no longer capable of doing my job.

"We had a couple of unforeseen delays that we had to work through. Problems with the back end of the system not releasing the crystal reports in the way that we asked. It took some time for us to troubleshoot the issue and then we had to rewrite the SQL strings from scratch." It's all bullshit. It doesn't make any sense what I have just said, but hopefully it's an answer that will baffle her enough to not question anything further. She won't want to admit that she didn't understand what I was saying. She won't show any flaws.

What happened to treating people as equals? What happened to being an honest guy, different from the rest? You're a self-righteous shit.

"Fine. Just get me the KP6 info by Friday at the latest." She takes in a deep breath and sighs.

I say nothing, I nod silently before hanging my head low again. I think I sounded confident enough to fool the people in the room. The reality is, I have no idea how to get the data she wants, but I don't feel comfortable enough to say this. I don't want to show any flaws. She already has it in for me and I don't need to give her any more ammunition. Better to blag my way through and figure it out later than admit my own stupidity and lack of abilities.

Ha, dickhead. And when you can't figure out how to give her what she wants, then what? I guess you'll just deal with that later, right? A problem for future you.

It's okay.

1:05pm

The meeting ended before lunch. This is good. I don't like it when those meetings run over as we tend to be told that we are having an impromptu working lunch. I don't particularly want to be sharing a room with those people during my working hours, let alone during my own time.

It's okay, they don't want to be sat with you either.

I sat outside on a bench to have lunch. Well, I sat on a bench during my lunch break. I wasn't able to eat anything. My appetite just isn't there today.

No but later on you will gorge on sweets and chocolate like a gluttonous monster. Then you'll cry and whine about being fat. Boohoo, poor you.

It's early afternoon, and I have sat at my desk for the last hour, staring blankly at my PC screen. This has become my Thing. This is what I do. I sit here, and stare at this screen.

Doing nothing, because you are a nothing that does nothing all day, every day. You waste your time, and you've wasted your life. It's pathetic.

I have managed to open Outlook, at least. 2244 unread emails. I'd rather stick pins in my eyes than try and get on top of them. I just can't muster up the motivation to read through countless group emails with people discussing whether anyone has seen the tin opener that was kept in the kitchen drawer and now can't be found. In the time it has taken them to send the email, they could have just walked to the nearby supermarket and picked up a new one.

As could you, but you don't. You can't be arsed, right? That's the problem, wait, who am I kidding, you have many problems. ONE of the problems with you is that you hold yourself to a different standard than those around you. You criticise them for behaving exactly like you, but when you do it, it's justified. I remind you again, you are no better than anyone else. You are far worse.

Wanna know an easy way to not care about the kitchen cutlery? Kill yourself. Then it won't be such an irritant to you. And you won't ever need to read those 2244 emails. It'll solve all your problems.

It's okay.

Back to looking out of the window. On top of the hill in the distance are two trees. The outline of one tree looks like a large sheep. The other looks like a bison. They are facing each other, forever locked in a staring contest.

I wasn't the first person to notice this. I overheard some of my colleagues talking about it once. That's what people do, they view the world around them, and then create their reality based on what they wish was real. Those trees on top of the hill are naught but trees, and yet my colleagues want them to be more. A tree is a beautiful, wonderful, complex organism that serves many functions. But to my colleagues, they are a bison and a sheep because that's more interesting. I wonder if trees could think, would they feel sad for being seen as cattle? Would they cry out, longing to be seen as a tree? Or, would they simply carry on, knowing they are a tree, and giving little thought to what others may think.

I'm a hypocrite. I have used them, the tree bison and the tree sheep, in my latest novel. Well, it's just a work in progress. It's something I've been writing for the last three years and still don't feel as if it's anywhere near the standard of quality I would like it to be.

Oh, are we thinking about your failed project? Your piece of shit created by a piece of shit? We can deffo call it a failed project. You can't call it anything else seeing as you haven't made any significant changes or contributions to it in several months.

Yeah, I suppose it is a failed project. Another attempt to create something worthwhile. Another failure. It's okay.

A failure, producing a failure. That's kind of fitting don't you think? It has a nice ring to it. You should write that down.

Fiction is my fortress of solitude. It excites me, or at least it used to. Now, it still gives something more than anything else. It serves a purpose, you see, a distraction from the voice of hate, a distraction from the hardships of life, a distraction from my failures.

There is nothing in this real life that motivates me anymore. I hate living. I hate being awake. I hate sleeping. I hate pretending everything is okay.

Then kill yourself. The answer is right there.

I don't want to be here anymore and I haven't in such a long time. I don't want to have to wake up each morning and drag myself into this place. I don't want to have to keep pretending I am okay when I am not. I simply can't handle it.

Then kill yourself! What are you waiting for?

I could do that. I could kill myself, or I could ask for help.

You've tried that before, and it didn't help. Killing yourself is the only option you have left available to you.

No, it's not. I can go back to the doctor, I can ask for something more. I can tell them how difficult it is. They will listen. I need help, and they will help me.

They didn't help you the last dozen times you asked for help, what makes you think it will be different this time?

I don't know, but I have to try. I can't let you win.

If something could have helped you, it would have done so by now. You can't be helped. None of the antidepressants have worked. The counselling was useless. The therapy had no positive impact. You've been asking for help for years now, and yet nothing has gotten better. Give up. You are beyond help.

It's okay.

I go to pick up the phone and hover my finger over the speed dial button for my manager. Speaking on the phone has become a challenge as of late. My finger shakes. My chest feels heavy. I clench my teeth until my jaw hurts.

Can't even call someone on the phone. Pathetic. 'Oh, I'm gonna get some help,' but you can't even speak on the phone. Fallen at the first hurdle.

That's okay. I open a new email, address it to my manager, and quickly write a few lines explaining that I am not doing well and will need to take some time off. I let her know I'll be trying to speak to my GP today and I will login from home to delegate important tasks that can't wait. I press send before I can think about it too much. It's breaking our policies. I'm supposed to speak to her directly, but I can't right now.

Coward.

I close Outlook. The unread emails can wait. I can't. I pack up my things and head out.

"Is that you done for the day?" the receptionist asks as I try to make a quick and unnoticed exit.

I wish I was done. Permanently.

"Yeah, I'm going home," I reply.

She flashes me a smile. "Have a nice evening."

"You too."

2:50pm

I am outside my GP's medical centre. I walked straight from the office to the train, and then straight here, before stopping, unable to take any further steps.

Do you really want to do this? Do you really want to risk walking into this building and leaving in an ambulance, to be taken to a psych ward where you will be locked up like a common criminal?

I need help.

You need to end it.

That's what I am trying to do.

You know that's not what we are thinking about. End it. Carry on walking. Go home. End it.

I walk into the centre. I am fortunate enough to have a very good GP, and the support staff they employ are clearly treated well. They appear happy to be at work, and treat their patients with kindness and respect.

You'll never know what that's like. You'll never know what it's like to live happy, to have a job you enjoy, to be treated well. You're destined to be miserable forever, until you end it.

The woman on reception smiles when she sees me enter.

It's a fake smile. It's just politeness. There is nothing sincere there.

"Is there any chance I can get in to see my doctor today?" I ask even though I know it's highly unlikely. The normal wait to see the doctor can be anything from three to six weeks. The receptionist doesn't need to ask my name, or the name of my doctor. I've been in here enough times for her to know these details already.

She only remembers you because she hates seeing you. You're not special.

"I don't think I can get you in today, love. She's fully booked," the receptionist says with a sympathetic tone. She gives me the date of her next available appointment. Three weeks and three days away.

"I can't wait," I state. "I need to speak to her today. Please." The tears start to collect in my eyes and I desperately fight them back. My hands are shaking and so I grasp them together in front of me in an attempt to steady them. I don't want to stand in this open space in tears, looking ridiculous.

They already know how pathetic you are, you're fooling nobody.

The receptionist gives a slight nod. "I can get someone to give you a call today. I don't know who it will be, and I can't say exactly when it will be, but it will be today. I'm really sorry, but it's the best I can do."

"It's okay, I understand."

"Are you going to be okay until then?" she asks.

I'm not sure why she is asking. If there is nothing more she can do, does it really matter if I will be okay? I nod, take a deep breath and say thank you. It barely comes out as a whisper but it is all I can manage as I turn to leave and head home.

3:15pm

It takes less than half an hour for the call to come through. I had only just made it through my front door. I missed the first call, too nervous to answer.

Pathetic.

Fortunately, they called back straight away and I answered it before I could think about it too much. It isn't my usual GP, but a male doctor I have seen once or twice in the past, where I was impressed with his skill in not only hearing what is said, but also what goes unsaid.

We discuss how I am struggling. I try to explain how each day is becoming more challenging, how I can't focus on anything, and how I feel like such a failure. Most importantly, how those negative thoughts have become unbearable and all consuming. I finally say my biggest secret out loud and I tell him I want to die.

"Have you spoken to your CPN recently?" he asks.

"Not for a few weeks," I reply through sniffs and tears.

"Why is that?"

"He's currently off sick, I think. I tried to call him last week and was told he was not in work at the moment."

"Have you been assigned someone else in the meantime?"

"No."

"Okay. How would you feel about going into the hospital today to speak to someone there?"

He has phrased it as a question, but I know that he is saying this is what I should do. Hearing him say it makes the whole situation become very real. I can't fight back the fear any longer and I break down crying even more. The doctor's patience comes across as having no limits.

"Talk to me. What are your thoughts?" the doctor asks after a minute or so. He doesn't sound frustrated in any way. He sounds genuinely concerned and looking to offer help.

It's fake. It's his job to sound genuine. He thinks you're pathetic, because you are pathetic.

"I'm scared. I don't know what to expect from somewhere like that. I don't want to be locked up. I don't want to go there and be treated like some pathetic piece of shit like you see on TV and in films. I'm ill and I deserve to be treated better than that," I admit. Saying this out loud to someone for the first time was much more difficult than I expected it to be.

“You are not a piece of shit, and you won’t be treated like that. It’s not like it is on TV. You’ll be kept safe, and you’ll be treated with respect and care. I promise you. I can phone the hospital now and see if I can get you an urgent appointment. How does that sound?”

I am taken by surprise. This is the first time I’ve heard a doctor promise anything. From my experience they use open phrases, being careful not to make absolute promises.

If he calls them first, it would give them time to get the restraints ready. To prepare the sedatives ready to tie you to a bed and turn you into a vegetable. You are making the biggest mistake of your life. You won’t be happy there. You’ll suffer more than you think you do now. Just end it.

“Let me give them a call,” the doctor pleads. It’s also the first time I’ve heard impatience in him. He’s taking charge of the conversation and has started to direct the situation.

“Okay,” is all I can manage.

“I’ll give you a call back after I’ve spoken to them. Okay? Hang in there.”

Hang, you should.

I end the call without saying goodbye. It doesn’t really feel like a goodbye moment. Rather just a break in the conversation. A brief respite for me. And for him too, no doubt.

Did you notice how he started to get a little impatient towards the end there?

You know I did. I think he wanted an answer. Sometimes when I can’t articulate a feeling I just don’t speak and people don’t always know how to handle that.

He seems like the kind of person that rarely gets frustrated with people. You managed to bring that out in him. Is there anyone that can handle being around you for longer than a few minutes at a time?

No. It’s okay.

Fuck off. It isn’t okay. It’s far from okay to be that kind of person. You’re scum. A fat, pathetic, waste of time piece of shit. End it, now!

I’m going to get help today. I am going to silence you. I’m going to beat you.

You’re going to walk into that hospital and never get out. You are going to spend the rest of your life as a patient in a psychiatric unit. They are going to see just how fucked up you are, lock you up, and throw away the key. Then it will just be me and you. You can’t win. You can’t beat me. You are me. I am you. Without me, you are nothing. A nobody. There is nothing left. Everything you were, and everything you have been in the past, is gone. I am all you can be.

I can get things back. I can be better than this.

Ha! This is not make believe. We are not writing a fictional story here. People like you don't go through some redemption arc and come out a better person in the end. You don't get a happily ever after. You fail. And you die. You die a sad, lonely, helpless, pathetic waste of life. You die, and everything carries on the same without you. Nobody cries. Nobody comes to your funeral. You become nothing more than an anonymous statistic. Another pathetic lost man that selfishly ended his own life. That is your destiny.

Stop. Just stop!

I can't stop. I can't stop crying. I'm sitting in my armchair in my bedroom, crying to myself.

Pathetic. A fat lump of pathetic shit. Crying like a little baby isn't going to help anything. You know what you need to do. You need to end it. You need to man up, grow some balls, do the right thing for the first time in your pathetic life. Turn around, pick up the box, and end it.

Maybe it is the only way out. Maybe it is all I can do to end this. To find peace. Peace through death.

Death will give you peace. But you're weak.

The phone rings again. It's the doctor.

"Okay, I've spoken to the team at the hospital. If you make your way there now, they will see you. You may have a little wait when you get there but you will be seen today."

"Okay," is all I can manage yet again. It's quickly becoming my catchphrase.

"They are very nice at the hospital. They know you are coming. They will treat you well," the doctor says. Probably in an attempt to reassure me enough to get me there. "Do you need help to get to the hospital?" he asks.

"No."

"How are you going to get there?"

"I'll walk down to it. Should only take me half an hour or so. Do I have to go now?"

"Anytime today. They are expecting you."

"What... what if I go and they turn me away?" I ask. "How do I deal with another rejection?"

"They won't turn you away. That's not what they do. They are going to help you."

The doctor gives me the name of the Mental Health Nurse on duty and tells me to explain that I have an arranged appointment to see the RAID team. I thank the doctor for his help and end the call.

7:40pm

The walk to the hospital was far more difficult than I thought it would be. I've walked past this place hundreds of times, and yet, this time was different. It took so much will to keep going, to keep heading in the right direction.

The red Accident and Emergency sign blinds me as I stand here in front of it. I look around the small, dimly lit street within the grounds of the hospital. Sliding double doors are mere feet in front of me. Go in. I need to go in. My left leg starts to shake.

You walk in there, you may never come out again.

I think I will. I think I'm going to get out and live a healthier life. I think I'm going to learn how to silence you.

Well, one of two things is going to happen; you'll either get locked up and they'll throw away the key, or, you'll get rejected and turned away. It's no good. Just walk back home, and end it.

What if they do turn me away? Do I really want this? I could just go home, get in bed and try to survive the night. I could start a fresh tomorrow. I could try and continue as I have been so far.

I turn around and take two steps in the direction of home. I stop, close my eyes and steady my body. I must look like a freaking weirdo to anyone who can see me. This is the most difficult decision I have ever made. It would be much easier if I had someone with me right now. Someone to take my hand, and walk into the clinic with me. Someone to take me to get help. Someone to tell me I am doing the right thing and to ensure I am treated well. But I don't have anyone. I don't have family or friends. If I am going to do this, I have to do it alone. I have to fight this alone. One man, in a fight with himself.

People can't fight this alone. You would have to be a miracle man to fight this alone. You are not a miracle man. You are not even a proper person. You're a nobody. A nothing. The hospital is busy. The nurses are already overworked and stressed, and now you want to walk in there and take up their valuable time like you are some sort of worthy individual.

A tinge of guilt in my stomach.

You should feel guilty. You've already wasted so many people's time today. Every person you have had contact with has had their day ruined because of you. You can stop that. You can stop all of this by going home and killing yourself.

I take a few deep and deliberate breaths, turn quickly on my heel and walk into the hospital.

I follow the doctor's orders and explain the RAID team is expecting me. The receptionist takes some details from me and asks me to take a seat. She can see that I am struggling. She can see that I am fighting back the tears. She can see that I can't give eye contact or engage with my surroundings properly. She stands up from her seat and leans in closer to the glass partition.

"Are you going to be okay?" she asks with a slight nod.

No. I'm not going to be okay. I'm about to either be locked up, or rejected—and I'm not sure which is worse. What a fucking stupid question to ask me. If I was going to be okay, I wouldn't need to be here. I wouldn't have just told you that I was desperate. I wouldn't be standing in this reception area fighting the urge to break down and give up.

She can see you're weak. Everyone can see how pathetic you are.

It's okay, even if I'm not. I nod, turn my head away from her and find an empty seat to take.

Twenty five minutes passes before my name is called to see the triage nurse. She takes some vitals, blood pressure, heart rate, temperature. Then she asks me what the problem is.

"My doctor has asked for me to come in. He said he spoke to someone from the RAID team and they had agreed to see me as an urgent case."

The nurse nods as though she has heard this a thousand times before.

"They are quite busy today," she says. "You may have to wait a little longer. But we'll get you in and seen tonight."

Tonight. She is planning for this to take some time. I walk back into the waiting area and manage to get a seat in the corner of the room.

You're making such a huge mistake. But it's not too late. You can just get up and leave, they haven't put you in restraints yet. But they will, they'll lock you up, you'll never see the light of day again, and you'll spend your time sitting in an armchair in your prison-cell-like room, drooling over yourself, and wasting a whole bunch of people's precious time and money.

I'm going to get help.

No, you're not, that's not how this works. They'll lock you up, keep you alive, keep you miserable, keep you out of the way from the outside world, and you will be suffering for the rest of your pitiful life, unable to do anything about it. There is only one way out of this, only one way to give yourself peace. Leave now, it's not too late. Go home. Kill yourself. Be at peace.

It's okay.

9:10pm

I hold out for another fifty minutes, sitting in silence, hardly daring to move in case I walk out. I avoid eye contact with all the people coming in with swollen ankles, cut thumbs, and ice-packed heads. I wonder what they think of me. Do they look at me and think I must have a bruise, a scrape, a bump to my head? Can they see how I am broken? Do I look perfectly fine to them? Give me the option of a hundred broken bones and I will swap in an instant.

Finally, a nurse calls my name. A different nurse than the one I saw earlier, another person giving me the sympathetic, condescending, eyes. She doesn't look at me for long, turning her back to me, she leads the way through the white, empty, maze-like corridors to a small, square room with no windows.

There is little furniture in the room; two faux leather two-seater sofas, one across from the other and nothing else. The sofas are bolted to the floor. The walls are painted with a mural of rolling hills and countryside. Along all the walls, about half way up, there is a red strip of plastic. A panic strip, which if pressed at any time will sound an alarm.

This is the room they put the violent nut jobs in. The crazy ones they have lost hope with. They have already lost hope with you.

A woman enters the room. She is older, slim, with long greying hair that would have been dark brown at some point in her past. A pair of spectacles rest on the top of her head. She's wearing hemp clothing. She reminds me of an old school hippy. No doubt I would get on well with her if we were meeting in different conditions.

Nobody gets on well with you, they all just tolerate you.

She carries a notepad, a pen and a few pieces of loose paper with something printed on them. She appears to be a little stressed and to be rushing. After we take our seats, me on one sofa and her on the other (the one closest to the door,) she introduces herself, confirming she is the person who took the call from the doctor. She identifies herself as a mental health clinician and explains that she wants to go through everything so she can complete an assessment. This will help her determine how we proceed. It's all a procedure for her. A number of standard questions to ask and boxes to tick.

Nah, she just can't be arsed to deal with another fucking waste of space loser like you.

We spend the next hour or so talking through my medical history. I try to recall as much as I can, but I have seen a lot of different people over the last ten years. I've been on a lot of different medications. I simply can't remember them all and at what dosages. The conversation is difficult. I am desperately tired and my thoughts are less than cohesive which leads me to jump around timelines a lot and I never really feel like I say anything with clarity. The clinician is direct in her questions. There is very little emotion, sympathy or empathy shown from her side. At times, she looks bored.

She is. You're dull. There's nothing interesting about you. You live a boring life full of nothings.

"What kind of things do you do for hobbies?" she asks.

I shake my head slightly.

He does nothing. He's a lazy waste of space.

"I'm not really engaged in any hobbies at the moment," I explain. "I used to do lots of things. I was active in community groups, the local police advisory board, council meetings, meditation classes, badminton, astronomy, and writing clubs and the such. Every night of the week I had something on. But over time, maybe twelve months or so, I dropped out from everything. One by one, until I wasn't doing anything. Now I just... sit at home and read a lot."

Dwell in your own self-pity, more like.

"Why don't you try and get back into some community groups?" she suggests.

"I don't want to. The reason I pulled out of those groups was because I felt like I was starting to annoy the people there. I felt like they didn't enjoy being in my presence and so I felt guilty about ruining their social activities."

As you should. You ruin everybody's life.

"But that is what this illness does to people," she starts, "it lies, and it makes people think everyone is against them until they start to isolate themselves. It sounds like that is what has happened with you."

"To some degree, yes. But this is not an illness of lies. Those negative thoughts are not complete lies. There is honesty mixed in. Brutal honesty. It's what makes the whole situation so difficult to manage. It takes the small failures that we all feel and experience through the day and expands them to become... less small. This, in turn, feeds the depression until it oozes out of you, like a black fog, and stains those around you."

“I’m sure nobody feels that way when they are around you,” she argues. “And I’m sure you have nothing to worry about when it comes to fitting in. You seem like a nice guy to me. I’m sure you can do it.”

She’s just being polite. She’s rapport building. She’s telling you what you want to hear so you’ll stop wasting her time.

“Well you don’t know that. You haven’t been there when other people stop talking to me, or stop eye contact, or start to actively avoid me,” I answer in defence.

I often find it bizarre when people take this tact. It happens a lot. I’ve never quite understood how it helps to tell someone they are objectively wrong in a subjective situation. Discrediting someone’s beliefs by telling them they are wrong, or that they shouldn’t feel a certain way, is not helpful. Telling them their experiences and feelings are not real and just a result of their illness isn’t helpful. Telling people their anxieties are not necessary is not helpful. We don’t help people by just disagreeing and saying the opposite. We help by listening to what they are saying. Whether the clinician agrees with me or not is irrelevant. The important things here are the feelings I am experiencing, and by simply arguing the details or intent of others with me shows me that she has not listened. Just because she doesn’t see things the way I do, does not mean my reality is any less real or important. I’m not interested in playing those games. I’m not here to have an intellectual pissing contest with someone. So I stop replying. If she isn’t going to listen to what I am saying, I’m not going to put the energy into trying to explain. No doubt this will be viewed as me refusing to engage.

It’s you being difficult. When everyone else around you is saying you are wrong, you still have the ego to believe you have it all figured out and that it’s everybody else who is wrong. You’re a prick. A proper dickhead. The world is going to be a better place without you in it.

After several minutes of scribbling down notes, the clinician takes a breath and looks up from her notebook. There is a silence hanging in the room. I leave it there, and not because I don’t want to be the first to break, but because silence doesn’t bother me. I’m happy to sit in a room in complete silence for however long it takes for someone to have something meaningful to say. Over the years, as my friends and family deserted me, I learnt to accept silence. I am one with silence. I don’t like the idea of speaking for the sake of speaking. The clinician appears to be processing her own thoughts. No doubt she is considering how to move forward.

She's hating this. She's thinking, 'God, when can I get rid of this bore?' She's planning ways to end the conversation and reject your plea for help. I mean, why would she help someone like you? So you leave here today, kill yourself, so fucking what? You're a nobody. Nobody cares if you die.

"Do you think it would help to get a different job?" the clinician asks.

"I don't think so. I'm not sure I could. I don't think anyone would employ me based on my high sickness record. Plus, the workplace and job role is not the issue. My lack of interest in life itself is the issue. I can be depressed in my current job, or depressed in another."

"That sounds like another barrier you are putting up. Sometimes we have to take the plunge and do the difficult things we don't want to do in life," she lectures.

"I know how to do difficult things. Do you think it was easy for me to walk here today? Do you think it has been easy for me to fight to get some help over the last decade? Do you think I found it easy the last time I put a rope around my neck and jumped?"

And failed.

"I'm not saying that," she says as she engages her own defences.

"I think you are saying that. It may not be what you intended to say, but it is what you said. You have implied that when a situation is difficult I simply choose to not engage with it. I think you don't understand how difficult it is to get out of bed each morning and try to live something that nearly resembles a normal life. I'm not isolating myself, I'm protecting myself from harmful situations, and from the triggers that make my suffering worse. You don't get to tell me what my experiences have been."

That's right, you tell her! You show her how argumentative and difficult you can be. Let her see the real piece of shit guy that you are, mister peace and love.

"I can sense you are starting to get irritated."

There it is, she can see it now. She can see why you have no friends, why none of your family talk to you. She can see just how much of a scumbag you are.

Yes, I am getting irritated. Not because I am mentally ill, but because she is not listening to me. I am tired, and not just through a lack of sleep, but through the toll it takes to repeatedly speak my truth and have it go unheard. I am not a bad person for getting irritated when I don't feel like anyone is listening to me. She is trivialising my concerns and getting very close to implying that I could think myself better if I just put a little more effort into things.

I don't want to reply to her. If I agree that I am irritated, she will record that I admitted to becoming confrontational. If I say that it isn't the case, she will see it as another opportunity to disagree and will record that I was argumentative. I don't want to argue. I can't win this game, and I'm not interested in trying. It bores me.

"So what do we do now?" I finally ask.

The clinician sighs.

"Well, I could admit you to the ward, but..." she seems to get distracted by her own thoughts. I give her the time she needs to process them.

But you're not worthy of their help.

"The thing is," she restarts, sounding exasperated, "beds on the ward cost a lot of money, and they are in high demand. I've already had one in tonight before you and I've got another waiting in reception." She looks at her watch as she says this, realising how long we have been here. She rolls her eyes. Clearly she is running over on her government issued maximum waiting time quota.

I want to punch her in the face. I want to scream at her for making me feel like I'm nothing more than an inconvenience.

You are an inconvenience, but you are a lot more than just that. You're also a scumbag, you're pathetic, you're a waste of a life, you're a disappointment. Should I continue?

I don't do any of that which I want to do, though, instead I sit in silence and simply wait for her to say something else. I want her to give the direction. I'm out of ideas, that's why I am here. I need to be told what to do next.

Go home, kill yourself.

"You are already open to the Community Mental Health team and your CPN from that team should be seeing you more regularly," she says, shaking her head. "If you go home tonight are you going to try to kill yourself?"

This question takes me by surprise. From my experience it's usually a wrap up question. I've been asked this question, or variations of it, hundreds of times before. It comes at the end of a session. The answer everyone wants is a simple 'no'.

Can you taste the rejection? It's right there.

“I can’t say either way. It’s difficult to know what my thoughts will be later tonight. I can only say that if I had the means to, I probably wouldn’t kill myself right now in this moment. I would probably try to find a way to fight through, to see what tomorrow brings.”

Tomorrow brings more suffering, more misery, more of you diminishing the joy of everyone you come into contact with.

The clinician seems content with that. “Have you got any plans to harm anyone else?”

“No.”

“Do you think you are likely to harm anybody else if things get worse?”

“No.”

These are definitely the wrap up questions. She’s about to send me home. I’m about to be rejected.

Told you so.

“I want you to go home,” she says. “I’m going to speak to the Community Mental Health team and ask that a CPN takes on your case whilst your regular one is off work. I also think the Home Treatment team should continue to see you following today. I’ll ask for someone to visit you at your home tomorrow. In the meantime, here is a list of contact numbers for emergency help if you need them.”

She hands me a piece of paper, printed on it is a list of suicide prevention helplines and local charities that offer help to those in a crisis.

“If you start to feel like you will do something to harm yourself or anyone else,” she continues, “then you must ring one of those numbers immediately, or come back here, or call 999. I will send a report of what we have discussed to your GP, your CPN, and the Consultant Psychiatrist. It will detail how we have agreed for you to be treated from home instead of being admitted as an in-patient. Okay?” she asks as she closes her notebook, a clear sign that she is ready to end this discussion.

We haven’t agreed that I will be treated from home. I have been instructed that this is what will happen. I don’t seem to have a choice in the matter. But it’s okay. I get up, and leave the room. As I leave the hospital I notice the receptionist follows me with her gaze.

The night has taken control. It’s dark and cold. The energy is different, tense and on edge. I start the walk home.

1:25am

I'm back, sat in my armchair in my bedroom. Exhausted and rejected. On my bed is a small black suitcase. I packed a few changes of clothes before going to the hospital. If I had been admitted, I could have asked someone to pick up the suitcase and bring it to me. It just made things easier to be prepared. It didn't pan out that way, though. That's okay.

What do I do now?

You know what to do now.

I could pick up the suitcase, get the train to somewhere miles away from here and have a few days away from everything. But I can't escape the biggest problem. It moves with me. The job, the home, the stresses of everyday life are not the reasons I am struggling. That voice of hate is. The endless nightmares are. The feelings of worthlessness, guilt, and shame are the problem. The illness that has taken everything from me is the problem and it will follow me wherever I go. I can be depressed here, or in some hotel room overlooking a lake in the north, or in a B&B nestled amongst the rolling hills in the south. Either way, I remain depressed.

End it.

I don't know how many more times I need to ask for help, or even how many more times I can. How many more times can I sit in a room in tears and beg for something more than just pills and the occasional chat to 'see how things are?'

You can't do it anymore. You've tried, you really have. But what do you want these people to do? They can't work miracles, and you are not worthy of expensive treatments. You are too broken. You can not be fixed. You know what to do next.

I know what to do. It's okay.

I get up and shuffle the chair forward, revealing a cardboard box kept behind it. Inside, it contains a helium tank. I open the top flap and take out the tank. Attached to the release valve is a blue hose that leads to a face mask. These masks are normally used by medical professionals to administer oxygen to patients. I bought and assembled this equipment a number of months ago.

It's okay.

I pick up my iPod and bluetooth earphones in my other hand and head downstairs.

It's okay.

I walk into the garden and towards the garage. I lift the garage door and head inside, closing it behind me. The garage does not house any vehicles—I have used it as a workshop gym combo since moving here. It is full of dust covered equipment and workstations that I have not used in a long time. The central supporting roof beam has a rope wrapped around it. I put it there earlier, before going to the hospital. Before the final rejection.

It's okay.

At the end of the rope is a loop and a hangman's knot. I learned how to make them the last time I tried to kill myself.

“It's okay.”

It's okay.

The noose is set up so that it hangs at the same height as my neck when I stand on my tip toes. The last time I hanged myself it was horrendous. Not only did it fail, but the pain was intense. I wasn't going to feel that pain again. I wasn't going to allow myself to feel that level of involuntary panic again. I am going to die peacefully.

“It's okay.”

It's okay.

I have been doing some research into painless methods of suicide. The suicide bag seems to be a nice peaceful way. Using an innate, odourless gas causes the body to lose consciousness without inducing panic. But it's not considered a highly successful method of suicide as the bag tends to rip, or the mask falls off before death happens. Then, those poor souls are left with brain damage. No doubt continuing to live with their depression, yet not being able to do anything about it.

“It's okay.”

It's okay.

If I lived in the US I would simply purchase a handgun from the local supermarket and put a bullet through the back of my head. But, alas, I am in the UK and I don't have that option available to me. Suicide, giving oneself peace when all other options have failed, is still taboo. But not enough to give someone struggling an expensive and in-demand bed on a ward.

“It's okay.”

It's okay.

I put the helium tank on a stool next to the rope. I stand with my back against the wall, and put the noose over my head and around my neck.

“It’s okay.”

It’s okay.

The rope is a little looser than I had wanted, but it will suffice. Once I lose consciousness and drop, my body weight will be enough to tighten the rope and cut off the blood supply to my brain. There won’t be any panic this time. I’ve secured the rope properly this time. This time it will hold and I will be at peace within minutes.

“It’s okay.”

It’s okay.

I put in the earphones and turn them on. The tone sounds to confirm they have connected to my iPod. I set Do You Realize? by The Flaming Lips to play on loop.

“It’s okay.”

It’s okay.

I stretch my arm out, being careful not to move my body too much. The rope pulls tight, gently squeezing my neck. It’s okay, I can still breathe, I can still hold myself up. I pick up the face mask and use the attached elastic to secure it over my nose and mouth. It’s not a tight fit, but it should do.

“It’s okay.”

It’s okay.

I fumble to find the tap on the valve of the helium tank. I grip it in my hand.

“It’s okay.”

I close my eyes and listen to the song. ‘Do you realize, that everyone, you know, someday, will die?’

It’s okay.

I force out as much air as I can from my lungs.

It’s okay.

I turn the nozzle, and hear the sound of helium rushing through the tube and into the face mask. I can feel the cold breeze rush across my cheeks.

It’s okay.

I am not committing suicide. I am not dying by suicide. I am being killed by my depression. I am going to die from depression.

And it's okay.

Depression does not kill people because they don't ask for help. Depression kills people because when they do cry out, they face rejection. The actions of those around them tell them that they are not worthy, and they are treated as if their opinion is just a delusion. They get told to hang in there, and hold on to hope that things will get better. They are seen as difficult to engage with or being the cause of broken relationships. They are shamed by society. They are mocked by the healthy. But apparently, it's okay.

It's okay.

My chest starts to feel tight. Holding out a breath is much more difficult than holding one in.

It's okay.

'You realize the sun doesn't go down. It's just an illusion caused by the world spinning 'round.'

It's okay.

One breath in.

It's okay.

And out. Another breath in.

It's okay.

Another.

It's okay.

No more.

About Jack CJ Stark

Jack CJ Stark is a storyteller. They is grateful you took the time to read this story. They wants you to treat yourself and all others with peace, love, and kindness.

If you enjoyed this story, you might also enjoy its companion novella:

SEEN AND UNSEEN

Some things are seen. Some things are unseen.

After a failed suicide attempt, the patient finds himself trapped on a secure mental health ward. Forced to live with strangers, and without a purpose in life, he discovers he is capable of much more than he ever thought possible.

A magical tale of friendship, desperation, kindness,
and finding peace.

Jack CJ Stark also wrote the Ma Shen folk tales:

Torpor: Or, The Disquieted Vicissitudes of the Inchoate (Ma Shen #1)

The Fair Haired Boy: Or, The Sound of a Lost Voice (Ma Shen #2)

Red Mountain Man: Or, The Mighty Lessons in Hasty Exaltation (Ma Shen #3)

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