

Zeus must have been having a field day, watching me suffer.

I thought the storm would've ended by now, that the earth-shaking thunderclaps were the everlasting torture's last hurrahs. That Zeus in all his sadistic glory would've descended from the sky to bask in all the fallen trees and power surges, splitting his sides at the corpses and crying children.

Hiding under the covers of my bottom bunk, I'd been sweating buckets for the past five hours, wide awake, listening to the rat-a-tats of the rain against the windows that reminded me of distant gunshots. The pelting of hail pounded against the roof and the frozen-over windows, and my gutless heart, which seemed to want to tear through my chest every time it so much as rained, beat in my throat like a kettledrum. I wished it would stop altogether, as I did every time it stormed.

I hated how I lost my stupid mind at the sound of thunder or the sight of lightning and longed for the time when I didn't. The time when I wasn't afraid. It seemed like a past life; an alternate reality to which I couldn't return if I had a time machine.

During the time I wasn't afraid, nothing phased me. Not the monster under my bed, not the dark, not even the Boogeyman, who could've been a conquistador who'd started an entire colony of monsters and clowns and poisonous spiders in my closet and still not frighten me one bit. I was the kid at school who turned their eyelids inside out to scare the other kids out of their minds. I was the one who jumped off the rickety swing set at recess and didn't slow down when I went too high. I wished I could have stayed that way forever, but that fateful afternoon came a-knocking before I understood how fortunate I was to not be feeling the way I was feeling now.

I'd went to go play outside in the rain that fateful afternoon, making chocolate pudding in the backyard. My parents would've scooped me up and took me inside if they had known. If the reality of their failing marriage hadn't been devouring them from the inside out, they would have seen little me skip right out the back door.

I sat on the grass, humming a nursery rhyme and sprinkling parsley over my chocolate pudding. Carefree and calm.

It happened all at once.

The sun latched onto the insides of my eyelids, hanging on for dear life. Maybe it was trying to escape from those dark, terrifying clouds. It was afraid, just like I was. But little did the sun know, hiding behind my eyelids was a bad, bad idea.

And maybe the sun led the lightning to me. Maybe the lightning was right on the sun's tail and the sun flew down from space at the speed of light to get away from the lightning's wrath. Maybe Zeus was angry at Apollo.

But that wasn't what happened, and I knew it.

The sun didn't move, and if it did, if it really hid behind my eyelids, it would've burnt me to a crisp in a slow and excruciating manner. And my mom and dad would have come outside to find their daughter's ashes in one enormous pile, like leaves on a warm autumn day.

When my vision cleared, I lay flat on my back, gaze fixed on the concrete sky, the burn so agonizing that it burned into every inch of my brain and built a dam of bricks to keep me from thinking about anything else.

About a minute later, my parents realized I'd gone and rushed outside, and when they did, my mom stepped on the lump of mud I had made with little pieces of grass sprinkled on top.

When they called my name and shook my shoulders and I still didn't move, they'd called 911. God knows many minutes or hours or days later, I regained consciousness. When my eyelids drifted apart, I didn't see the sun. I was in a hospital bed in a dull, lifeless room staring at the dull, lifeless ceiling listening to those melancholy beeps and breathing in those horrible hospital smells I knew all too well. My arms burned and stuck to my clothes, and I hated the feeling.

After roughly two months of living through days that blended together, two months of melancholy beeps and stupid children's shows they'd play on the television in my room on the pediatrics floor, I could finally get away from the humdrum of the hospital. My mom and dad never argued when they were with me, but I knew behind closed doors, they still fought about whose fault everything was. I hated the thought that they would argue over something like that. It wasn't anyone's fault. Why couldn't they see that?

Some of my friends at the time had visited me at the hospital. I had been afraid they'd bring my math assignments with them, but they didn't.

I couldn't really use my right hand to write anymore, anyway.