

I have always wondered what people do to overcome sadness. Some grieve and then forget while others are tormented every day of their lives, living in the memories of those who are no longer with them. We wake up each morning pretending to know how the day will float by us. We clean up, make ourselves look decent, and storm into the day prepared for what is to come. Certain individuals put aside some time to hide their true identity. In the end, we all have something to hide. Whether it's a secret your friend told you in kindergarten or something that could destroy you and tear you to pieces if anyone were to find out...we pray to God no one ever finds out.

My name is Delphine Woods, I am seventeen years old and I live with my mother, stepfather, and my "perfect", older stepbrother who is adored by everyone in the family. You can say that I'm the odd one out in the Woods family. By odd I mean average because every member of our family has studied in Harvard or Yale and have moved on to become successful philosophers or something of that nature. Our family expects the younger generation to be just as successful as everyone else has been which is where my stepbrother is headed. I do not care for school and important titles. I care for knowledge, I care for exploring and finding things that only appear in dreams and fairytales, and I care for how people will view me when I am gone. I try to explain this to my parents though they never understand. No matter how much thought they put into it, the last puzzle piece always ends up lost under the table and the picture is never complete. I wish my family would understand. I wish they knew who I was.

I find my boots, my coat, and my gloves and dress to go outside. I go on many long walks throughout the week. In my opinion, it is the only time you can be truly at peace with yourself and the only time you can let your mind be free and let it paint beautiful pictures with intricate details of your thoughts and feelings.

"Don't be out too late Delphine, don't forget your father has an important dinner appointment tonight and he would like both you and your brother to attend."

My mother often shouts phrases to me around the house but never to me personally. I do not understand why she cannot find me or walk to my room and tell me personally what she would like me to know. She always yells everything.

"I remember. I will be back in a few hours. Do not worry about me."

People often tell me I speak in choppy and unfinished sentences. Often times I feel uncomfortable around people, especially when they decide to create any sort of dialogue with me. Not everyone is a social butterfly, society has torn off my beautifully colored wings, leaving me alone trying to escape and fly away without any support. I am used to being an outcast now. It is calming and no one bothers you or asks you questions about your future or tells you how successful you will be and how they cannot wait to see you graduate, then go off to college and become a wise adult who carries the Woods name with pride. Not one member of my family has attempted to reach out to me. I can understand why, I am not very approachable. It really is best if I am left alone.

I walk out in the street and head towards Grand Central Park. It is always beautiful outside I think. Especially now, when I look up, the snowflakes fall towards me then slow down right before they reach me in order to gently brush my face with their chilly fingertips. They do not melt when they land on my cheekbones. Instead, they pile on top of each other, pasting themselves on my skin. I wipe off the snow from my face and continue walking. I can hear every footstep I take and see each breath I release. It is strange how I breathe out a vapor that fights the cold to only disappear several seconds later. We are very similar to vapor. Everyone struggles and fights until they cannot fight any longer. Until they simply vanish into the air without any warning. I often wonder if I am the only one who thinks of things that way. I imagine there have to be other people who visualize life as a game, one that can never be won.

I find the Balto statue and sit on the rocks beside him. It is odd to think that my only company now is a statue of a dog. I pull out a cigarette and light the end, waiting for it's short life to spark into existence. I sit alone for a while watching how the smoke dances through the wind and slowly fades. As I breathe out more and more smoke, it starts to swirl into shapes and creates scenery for me to watch. At first, it swirls into several people. As the picture forms, I start to make out characteristics of the smoky people and come to realize it is my family.

*How will she ever follow in her brother's footsteps if she cannot even pass a year of school? She is headed for a downfall and boy, will it hurt when she meets that cold, hard floor.*

The smoke starts to recite conversations that I have overheard my aunt and mother have at dinners I do not attend because I pretend to feel ill.

*She may be your daughter but you must do something about her mentality. She cannot continue walking around the city and speaking her nonsense to people on the streets. They will recognize her and shut her out. You must fix her in some way.*

My aunt would always try to tell my mother to fix me somehow. I guess she wanted me to be more like my mother and every other female that our family includes. There is not much my mother can do to change me. We are who we are. The only way we change is if someone takes a piece of us with them, because then something new must patch up what is leftover.

A cold breeze passes by and wipes away the scene creating a new, blank canvas for my smoke to draw on. I breathe out some more deadly vapor and it continues to paint. Next, I start to see myself sitting on an old wooden bench. The bench is dusty with age and is ready to collapse any minute now. I sit cautiously and anxiously, looking side to side as if I am searching for someone or something. I look scared and worried, it seems like I set myself up for an upcoming disaster. Another breeze of wind passes by making me shiver and pull my coat tighter around my little body. I am still in the smoke, sitting, waiting. Waiting for what? I keep looking and see another body starting to form behind me. I cannot make out a face or any features but I know it is a man. In the smoke, I am clueless that there is someone behind me. I try to scream at myself, only nothing comes out but coughs and smoke. I start to feel uneasy and try to mess up the smoke with my hands but it comes right back to the same exact scene. The man behind me does nothing but stand and stare. How can I be so clueless and not notice anyone behind me? What was wrong with me? When did I become so blind? With that thought the wind took away the scene and confusion somewhere else. I started to feel unsafe. Usually I do not feel this way when I am alone with Balto. Something was different about this evening. Something felt off.

I stand and start to walk towards a bench in front of a lake. I sit myself down and start another cigarette hoping to escape the images it creates. I always seem to see more than others do. I look out at the water and watch the wind create ripples on the surface. It is very calming to watch the small waves rise up into power and then die away once they reach a certain point. They splash out in anger and frustration trying to hold back from being destroyed by the current. If we were waves, we would act the same way. Watching waves reminds me of society and how it breaks a person down until they are nothing more

but a shadow. Everyone starts out weak just like a wave in the middle of a body of water. As the wave catches the waters current, we catch life's current and grow to be strong and powerful. We rush into everything and hurry to grow and become independent like a wave grows and rushes towards the waters surface. In the end, we all head for a downfall, similar to when a wave collides with the shore. After that, we disappear and cannot relive our short journey. We spend the rest of our lives wishing we had not rushed towards the end but took time to glide across the waters surface like the wind. We think too much and hang onto snippets of our life instead of letting go and starting on a clean slate of paper. That is why no one is ever just fine. We lie everyday by saying we are okay. If only we could let go of grief and sadness and forget. For some reason, our brains do not let us forget anything. What we want to forget, we remember. What we want to remember, we forget.

I have forgotten the last time I felt happy. Very little happens now that brings real joy to me. Once, I was content with the way things were playing out but I ruined that later on. It was with a boy. After I met him, things seemed to turn around and ameliorate. My mother started to notice me smile which made her happy as well, considering I had never smiled before that. I do not smile now either; I only smiled during that short term of my life. This boy, he toyed with my emotions, he made me fall in love with him, and when everything was stable and blissful, he tore it all down. It took me by surprise and I did not want to cry about it. I tried to be strong but the memories broke me in the long run. That is why I am like this now. Because of him, I shut out any living organism that tried to know me. Because of everything that he put me through, I can no longer trust anyone or enjoy what life brings to me. I spend every single day of my life now in misery and pain all because of one boy. It sounds ridiculous and cliché like, I know. Someone is always hurting while the others enjoy watching him or her fall. It plays out like a tragic movie that ends in silence and death. Do not worry, I have not considered death, I have only considered disappearing and losing myself in a darkness no one would enter. Instead I stayed at home and he left me alone.

Sitting on the bench, I watch my cigarette burn out. The ashes started to fall to the ground but never reached it because the wind swooshed it up and took it away somewhere far from where it was found. I stand up and throw away the remains of the stub and then sit back down starting a new death roll. I watch the smoke again and it repeats its dance

routine from before. This time it shapes itself into a crowd of people who are laughing, smiling, talking, and having the time of their lives. I look at the scene with envy. I wish I could be a part of this smoky world. As everyone continues on with what they are doing, I notice a girl in the middle of the crowd who is trying to speak but is not being heard. As the smoke zooms onto this girl, I notice it is me. I am standing in the middle of all these people and no one is noticing me. Why don't I do anything? Now is my chance to escape the darkness I am trapped in and try to break free into normality. I stand for a little longer, looking around at everyone. I watch myself through the smoke and see how miserable I really am. I realize what I have done throughout the years and what building walls around myself really does. It creates a world of isolation. It makes you seem invisible and people start to look through you like a ghost. Is that what I have become? A ghost? I start to walk through the crowd without any destination in mind. I try to run away from everyone once more, returning to my own world. As I sit and watch, I start to feel overpowered by the smoke and its puppets.

*Don't run Delphine. Stay with these people. Make them notice you. Don't run away.*

I hear a voice inside my head that is foreign and strange. I agree with what it says. The smoky Delphine does not agree though, she continues to walk towards the door. I start to reach out towards the smoke and try to grab my figurine and place her back into the middle of the crowd. I want her to know that she can be herself again and that there is still hope for her to be happy. I do not grab onto anything though, I only create a mess of the scene that the wind carries away once more. That girl had hope. She could have done something to save herself from the isolation I put her into. I start to cry. There were so many opportunities, so many things I could have changed. I chose the wrong path for everything. The last time I cried was when I was four years old and I fell off of a swing. I wanted to reach towards the sky and fly off into the clouds. I was so determined and excited to make it. If I had made it, I would have been free and could have soared through the sky without anything holding me down and without any worries. Instead, I lost my grip and fell towards the cold, hard ground just like my aunt said would happen. I started to cry then because I had failed. I did not reach the clouds, the stars, the moon, or the sun. I tried reaching towards my dreams and had failed. It should not have been such a disappointment to me as a child but as I said before, I am different. The same was happening now but the

only difference is that I have already fallen towards to the ground. Now I am just falling deeper. It was strange to cry. The cold breeze made my tears roll down my cheeks very slowly. This made me notice each and every tear that I shed. My tears took me on their journey of falling out of my eyes and slowly rolling down my face until they reached my chin. Then they fell off, landed on the sidewalk, and immediately froze. The wind did not take them somewhere else this time. The snowflakes did not land on top of them. My tears froze in place and could not be moved by anything. I started to cry harder and felt all the feelings that I kept inside throughout the years leave my body and be taken by the wind to be locked away somewhere so they could never come back to me. I could not stop my tears much like I could not stop myself anymore. I was in pain, I needed help, and I should have guided Delphine across the rough spots. Delphine was gone, lost, and she could never be found again.

I know I have done this to myself. I have hid myself from reality and have gotten lost in misery. I never tried to clean out the hurt, the pain, or the scars that others have left over. I left everything in its place, letting it grow and expand in my body. I may not have chosen death before, but now I realize I am killing myself slowly with loneliness and thinking. People say you can control your thoughts and actions but I cannot do that anymore. My thoughts have taken control over me and I have become a victim of my own imagination.