

## The Thing

They tell me that I'm very sick, but not that kind of sick. It's not a dire cold or a sudden rash; it's a sickness you can't see so there is no sympathy for me. It's the illness of the mind. But I'll get better in time. All I need to do is swallow these two small green pills and one large yellow pill and I'll be alright. At least, that's what they tell me.

The reason they lock me in this white prison is because I see a *thing*, but it's not real because no one else can see it. It's a *figment of my imagination*. A part of my brain went haywire. But even in all my drugged insanity, I still see it late at night.

*"Don't take the pills. You won't be able to see me again."*

I'm not quite sure if I want to see it again, but I'm not quite sure I want it to leave. It's like water, I need it but I'd like a cherry soda once in a while. It's gentle like a stream but can be as destructive as a tsunami. But the strange thing about it is that it's always so sad. Not the kind of sad that happens when you fail a test or lose a loved one, a different kind, at least when either of those happens, there's a chance to move along. But this *entity* is addicted to a constant hopelessness.

Its voice is raspy as a strict grandparent but as giddy as a five year old child. It's as thick as brick but as light as air. It's a floating paradox and it's attached to me as if it were an organ. I don't mind it all the time, just once in a while when it tries to tell me the *truth*. But I'd rather rest on sweet gingerbread house of fairytales. When I fell madly in love with Kelsey Simons in my senior year of high school, for example it told me that she's madly in love with someone else. It had to be wrong. Feelings this strong come for a reason. But one day, I saw her walking down those green-tiled hallways, with an arm wrapped around her shoulder. An arm, that didn't belong to me but rather Shawn Hughes.

In my junior year of college, I fell in love again with a beauty that went by the name of Betsy Drews. When I found out the feelings were mutual, I could not have been more ecstatic. But my fire was soon lit out; because it told me she was a no-good, dirty animal whose eyes roamed to look at others whenever I wasn't around. That couldn't have been possible either. Betsy was as faithful as a lost puppy. But I was right about one thing. She was a *dog*. And when I

caught her lip-locked with another, she whimpered and barked at me slurs I can't begin to make sense of. It only made me want to kick her and send her running away. *Get lost.*

But perhaps the worst of them all was when it whispered to me *the truth* about my own loving wife, Glory Carter Piers. Glory was exactly what her name entitles. She was my queen and I loved her with a strong affectionate passion. She made me feel alright as if I was normal. And most importantly, she made *it* disappear into thin air. She was the surgeon that dug deep and ripped it out of the shadows of my skin. I was free and I was so very happy.

But like a cherry blossom, happiness is beautiful but ephemeral. I guess that's what makes us value it so much. It's here one day and gone the next, like an ocean tide. And my ocean tide lost its roar and dwindled down into silent water. It happened to be March of that year, the month where it looks bright and sunny but when you step outside, the cold air bites at your face. I heard the raspy voice at exactly 10 P.M.

*"She's dying."*

The first frail, pink petal of my cherry blossom began to wither.

*"She's sick and she's dying."*

And now the petals decayed and fell like raindrops. I didn't feel anything then. In fact, I felt nothing for quite a while, just numb. I didn't want to believe it was true. *It couldn't be true.* But it's naïve for me to deny what's written in stone. When I saw her cough up blood the next morning, I still shook my head in disbelief.

*"Only a couple more months to go"* it said, mocking my pain in its giddy childish voice.

As the days went by she was withering away before my very eyes. My strong, beautiful woman was shriveled up into an old, feeble hag.

"The cancer has spread to her major organs. It's too late now." the doctors informed me.

It wasn't too late of course. It was simply fate. It was fate that always worked against me and gave me a taste of what can't be mine to keep.

When I saw her body in the casket, I was whisked away by a tsunami tide. *I couldn't breathe.* I was tossed like a rag-doll helpless against the over-powering current, helpless against *this thing* that dominated most of my life. It pulled me down and thrashed me against the rough ocean waters again and again. I hated it and I wanted removed from my body once and for all. It only brought me down and made me as pitiful as it was. But I was not going to spend the rest of my life catching cherry blossoms only to have them decay into a brown mush before my very eyes. *This was not how it's going to be.*

I'm not sure how I got the idea in my head. Maybe it was the inflow of hopelessness that drowned my senses or maybe it was my insanity taking it a notch further. Either way, I wasn't thinking right. I just knew that I couldn't let *it* show me the bitter side of things all the time. It was the things fault that sadness had become a familiar feeling.

I tore my eyes away from her tired body and walked away. But I wasn't leaving; I just wanted to join her. I'd find my cherry blossom again, in a place where they don't wither away. They stay precious for an infinite amount of time.

I found myself walking along a beach shore. The tidal waves were high at this time of the night, especially with a full moon. They were powerful and merciless. I crunched my toes into the sand and felt the grains seep into my nails. One step at a time, I inched closer and closer to the shore. One foot in, I felt the icy water splash against my feet. *I hope it was warm up there.* It was up to my knee now and each wave pulled me in closer and closer. I was surrounded by the dark fluid and it just got darker and darker until it turned pitch black.

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I'm not sure when they found my limp body, but I heard a fisherman nearby spotted me. I was woozy and I remembered bright lights overhead me and a constant beeping sound. But most of all I remember it's high-pitched, giddy voice, echoing in my skull.

*"You'll be all right now."*

I didn't want to be all right. I wanted to be gone.

*"You can't get rid of me."*

But I wanted it gone more than anything.

*“I am you.”*

No you aren't.

*“Do you know why I'm so sad?”*

Why?

*“Because nothing beautiful is here to stay.”*

Why are things always so damn hopeless?

*“They always have been.”*

It giggled once more and then the bright lights overhead faded away into darkness once more.

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The nurses came in and delivered the pills along with my lunch. This was my life and this was how it's supposed to be. I didn't understand then but now it makes sense to me. I'm not insane. I just can see what's real and what's not. I crumpled the pills into my hands until they turned to dust and I went back to drowning.