

## Ideal Thoughts

The evening was brisk. Not cold, wet or uncomfortable, yet the slight chill would keep you alert. The creek roared triumphantly, tumbling down the mountain chaotically. Trees lay fallen in the water--changing the flow. Jonas thought the fallen trees must be good fishing holes. He solemnly regretted not bringing his fishing pole. Who is he kidding, though? Jonas hasn't fished, or been happy about breathing, since childhood. Birds sang and the air smelled of rain. *Everything about rain feels wholesome; the only place I belong is in the--pain* the voices said. *No, the rain*, he contested. His greatest enemy was his brain. A constant battlefield where he consistently won but lost bits and pieces of his soul every time. When will he not have enough of himself left to claw his way to victory?

The purpose of his walk wasn't pleasant; like his life, it was tragic. A meeting had been made with a very dear part of his soul--the reason he cared enough to not cut too deep. Her name is Luna.

The leaves crunched beneath Jonas' feet. He hated fall. Halloween mocked him. In his opinion, joy derived from fake terror was a slap in the face. He was always terrified: the presence of people horrified him with constant paranoia, leading to a lack of safety, and feeding the voices slaughtering his self worth 24/7. He didn't fare any better in isolation, but there, he could be worthless in peace. Paranoia, depression, and anxiety controlled his life; they had him by the neck. Maybe that's why she left, he pondered but knew the drugs drove her away. The wind whistled through the trees. Now, halfway to Luna, Jonas noticed shadows elongated around him.

"Lonely like always, isolated--hell I don't care anymore. I'm immune to it." He muttered to nobody. Sure he felt numb; he wasn't immune though, just experiencing the pain of total

indifference. The lack of leaves on the trees gave the shadows a bar like nature. He would never admit it, though he pictured them as a cage. Trapped and walking in circles. As he continually does in life, so he ignored his mind's assessment. He knew he lost it awhile ago--the day Luna separated from him. In reality, he never had control of it, before, with, or after losing her.

The path finally bent, revealing the bridge in the distance. Luna sat there silently, with no tears left to cry and wanting to die. Jonas didn't see her yet and immediately assumed she'd be a no show. Why would she come after what'd he'd done? The voices taunted, tore, and tainted any positivity the heart-shattered Jonas could muster. He breathed faintly, then quickly, then uncontrollably--fumbling through his jacket pockets, he found Vicodin and Klonopin. Swallowing two Vicodin and setting two Klonopin under his tongue, he wished he had Valium and Oxy. What he truly wanted was to feel safe and steady his shaking hands. *God disapproves of your actions*, they said. *Your mom's disappointed in your weakness*, they tormented.

"I don't give a damn!" Jonas proclaimed to the whispers. "They gave me this pain and suffering, they have no right to judge when I seek relief." He whispered to an audience of me, myself, and I. *My mom left seven years ago, and I left god a year after that. They don't exist, get over it.* He thought. The voices didn't listen; they kept up their constant stream of torture, kicking him while he's down, gnawing away at the numb sack of bones that he has become.

\*Crunch\* \*Crunch\* \*Snap\* His movements echoed mutely in the evening's suffocating stillness. At last, he set eyes upon his other half, that sweet girl from his past. For a moment, that void in his chest didn't seem so vast. Instinctively he anxiously lit a cigarette, releasing a gasp.

"Hey, Jona." His heart fluttered like a dormant volcano rumbling. Only Luna called him that--only in her presence did his life have purpose.

"Uh-hey, Lu. Been a while." His voice faltered. The frozen water lying in the cracks of his stone-cold facade began to melt. Her aura tended to mold him like clay at her whim.

"Did you ever find what you were looking for?" Jonas insisted. Luna sank down, sliding her legs under the lowest of the four guard rails. Her chin resting on the second highest one.

"I found some answers, I think. I'm done with life." Jona regretted not bringing wine, or weed, or coke, or a knife. Her words cut him deeper than he would. How could she, the half of another being, be selfish enough to contemplate ending it all? Then he breathed. How could he judge a being debating the same idea he's thought about every night for half a decade?

"Would you stay if I asked you too?" His eyes cowered, fearing her answer.

"It's not about you. I don't exist anymore. The drugs have withered me away. Yet they're the only reason I was able to stay here for as long as I did. Ironic, isn't it?" Biting her nails, she sat stiller than life. Jonas began actively contemplating what constitutes irony. It didn't matter. He agreed with her in a way words can't say.

"You can restart, we can start all over. Sober up. I'll stop the drugs with you." Much easier said than done; those who can't do preach.

"I know *we* could. *I* don't want too. Eventually, I'll be back at the bottom of the ocean, not needing air, and taking continual blows from the pressure. You know that more than most. No matter how much progress you make, you always end up back here--craving oxygen and not knowing why."

"That's just how life goes, but you can't leave me behind. Without you, there's no point. I'll be inescapably numb, void of emotion, lacking a reason to wake up in the morning. You can't do that to me." Her eyes met his, conveying a level of pain only the stitch scars on his wrists could reciprocate. She reached for his hand. His knees gave, and he fell into her arms.

"Your my emotion, my joy, the art of my life, the aesthetics of everything I see--you make life beautiful--your memory endows the world around me with beauty." He prayed to an idea of form and order; he couldn't give the force he praised a name. It wasn't god, Zeus, the holy spirit, Hermes, Jesus, or Apollo. His prayer was for tears, but none came. Enraged by this, he put his cigarette out in the center of his left wrist. Unsatisfied, he craved for his blood to flow and grew annoyed at the absence of it.

"Don't do that, I hate seeing you this way. I knew you never meant to give me pain or harm me in any way. You'll always have my memory." He'd never be sated by her words or believe them, and she knew it.

"This isn't a final decision. If you kill yourself, I'll do it with you. We can do it together. I'll cut deeper this time."

"No, you won't Jona. Because I have a dying wish."

"Why are you speaking like your already committed?"

"You won't kill yourself Jona. Promise me."

"How can you even say that when you're telling me--"

"Promise me Jona."

"Fine."

"Say it."

"Fine, I promise not to kill myself."

"Thank you. You have gifts this world deserves to see. Show them. For me." Her eyes watered. Not from sorrow, from satisfaction, she found peace.

"Now you promise me the same."

"I can't. I love you Jona." Her voice was stern. Jonas' face drained. Immediately he fell ill, suppressing the urge to vomit.

"What'd you do. Tell me you didn't take a handful of pills." He couldn't get air--out, in, in, out, out, out. He reached for pills. He never got any. Luna kissed him. Not briefly either. Longer than a reassuring peck, longer than a fervent impulse, longer than normal...

Her lips stopped moving. She fell limp in his arms. Jona was flooded with too many emotions to express. He just moaned and howled inhumane sounds. Then sat still, silently stunned, believing he was in a sick twisted nightmare.

Lu's pulse stiffened, breathing ceased, and skin began going cold. Jona, unsure of what reality was at this point, screamed at her.

"How could you? I need my other half! How can a being live with half a mind and soul?" The tears finally started to flow; little did he know, they wouldn't stop for days.

A group of joggers came up exploring the heart-piercing screams that Echo carried through the trees. They turned around the bend surveying the scene.

"Hey, are you okay? Who are you screaming at?"