

Marylynn

I laid in my bed and imagined all the ways I would do it. I could grab a belt and hang myself in the closet. I could slit my wrist and lay down for a bath. I could take a bunch of pills that were left over from my wisdom teeth surgery. I could shoot myself in the head—it couldn't be that hard to buy a gun. I could leave the gas burners on until I couldn't breathe, but none of these ideas really spoke to me. Instead, I thought maybe I could go for a walk into the lake, and keep walking until I drowned.

When I finally got up, I was wearing grey sweatpants and a black shirt with some arbitrary logo on it. I couldn't remember where I got those clothes, and I thought maybe that wasn't so good. Lethargy shuffled my bones out of the door, and the sun was so bright it almost seemed to be mocking me. *Hey there, Marylynn, what a fine day to kill yourself!* it seemed to say. I squinted my eyes to hide from its gritty comments. The lake was only a couple blocks away. Well, it was more of a pond than a lake, I guess, but I was never good at distinguishing those kinds of differences. At what point did a hill become a mountain? At what point did a creek become a river? The differences seemed about as arbitrary as the weird stripes across my shirt. It was just tall dirt and gathered water. It was nothing special.

Walking down the street, many of my neighbors waved to me. I guess it was normal for them to be outside, watering their plants and mowing their grass. Each one greeted me in the same robotic way: hand stretched in the air, slight flick of the wrist, pseudo-enthusiastic yell of my name, "Marylynn! Good morning!"

I didn't wave back. I didn't know any of them. None of them knew me, either. They were all just cogs in this outdated machine trying to perfect a manufactured happiness (two kids, a dog, Sunday get-togethers, white picket fence, all that). I'm sure, deep down, each one of them

wanted to kill themselves, too. If we all got what we wanted, I'd have a crowd following me to the lake that morning. That's all humans are good for, you know. Killing themselves.

I made it to the end of the street before I was stopped by Ms. Walker, a friend of my mother. She was a real busybody. "Marylynn, my darling! How are you on this beautiful morning?" Ms. Walker threw her hands up in an uncontrollable fit of excitement (one can only assume) before capturing me in her thick, musky embrace. I obligatorily patted her back three times, and she released me.

"I'm fine."

"Oh, my, what time is it, dear? Shouldn't you be at the office?" She knew my schedule from my mother. The two of them were real gossips.

"I called in sick."

"Oh no! Well, you shouldn't be out of bed dear! Your mother would never forgive me if I let you be up and running around while you're feeling under the weather," she placed her hand on my back and began to push us back towards my house.

"No, Ms. Walker, it's okay. Really, I just wanted to go for a walk."

"Nonsense! I'm marching you straight home, and I'll make you my special chicken noodle soup." Her 'special' chicken noodle soup was a can on Campbell's made with milk instead of water. It was disgusting. I felt my chances slowly slipping away, so I did the first thing I could think to do, and I crouched down, out of her grip, and ran the other way. No, it wasn't subtle. She would probably know something was wrong. She would probably call my mother. But I had enough time if I ran the whole way. So I did.

I ran all the way, and I stopped right at the lake's edge. Panting, I leaned over, resting my hands on my knees and I almost threw up. It had been years since I ran that fast. Ever since I

stopped having time to exercise, between my full-time office job, and the part time telemarketing job I picked up to supplement my student debt. I went to school to be a writer, but in the year since I graduated, all I had to show for it was a barely-written novel and \$50,000 of debt.

Bukowski worked at the Post Office for 14 years while he wrote. I don't know how he did it.

I stared into the murky blue-green water, and noticed a heavy, defeated, wiry frame looking up at me. She looked sick, slowly drifted down into the water. She needed help, but what could I do? Then, tears started streaming down her face and she reached out for me.

“I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I want to help you, but I don't know how!”

She was screaming at me now.

“No, no, no. Please don't be mad. I'll help you, here, grab my hand! We can do this!” I reached my arm into the cold water, and she reached hers up to me. I leaned as far as I could, and we finally touched. A smile spread across my face. A spark ignited in my stomach. Then, I plunged head first into the lake. It was deeper than I thought—lots of gathered water—and I sank through it like a brick. *Where did she go?* Frantically, I searched, but my eyes burned from the water. I closed my eyes, and felt my lungs tighten. A pain grew in my chest, and I opened my mouth. I sucked the water in.

I woke up in a hard bed, squinting at the beaming fluorescent lights above me. My vision blurred, but I noticed my mother. She looked horrible. “Oh, honey!” She was crying.

“Where did she go?” I asked.

“Who?”

“The girl in the lake... the girl...”

“Honey... you were the only one by the lake this morning.”

“No. No, there was a girl in the water. She needed help...”

“Okay, hold on. Let me go get the doctor. Just hold on, I’ll be right back.” My mother kissed my forehead and walked out of the room. I felt my chest tighten again, and the pangs of disappointment now flooded my lungs. I was too late. Defeated, I let my head fall to the side.

Then, on the metallic surface of the machine at my bedside, I saw her. Laying in a hospital bed. Smiling at me.

“I did it,” I whispered, “I saved you.”

And I saved you, she mouthed to me. I reached out my hand to the machine, and our fingers touched.