

Self Dissection

Hannah Wise

Editors' note: This piece contains descriptions of self-harm.

Sometimes I wish I smoked cigarettes. I'd like the rattle of a box in my pocket, the slight outline of rebellion daring to show through my clothes. I'd like the satisfaction of flipping the box top open to reveal a clean array of cigarettes waiting for me inside. I'd like the shape of a lighter, the orange glow on my face as I tilt my head towards the flame. Actually, I think I'd like a whole collection of lighters. One for good days. That one would be red. One for quiet days. Lavender. One for sharing with friends. That one would need a pattern of some kind. And one for just flipping open, simply to stare at that fragile little flame. That one would be antique, a heavy brass lighter with detailed engravings. I'd like the feel of it all, of emulating one of those movie scenes with a teenager leaning against a brick building to light up a smoke in the dark.

But I have to admit, I haven't been completely honest. There is one small detail I've left out, one main reason why I wished I smoked cigarettes.

I'd like to put them out on my skin.

Let me paint a picture for you. A family of five crowds around a computer screen, scrolling through years' worth of photos and home videos dating back to 2004. They laugh as one, howling at close-ups of a child's teary face after her first bee sting, or the sight of a blonde-haired boy

sandwiched between two red circles of construction paper, his homemade m&m Halloween costume. Dinner is cooking in the kitchen. The smell of homegrown rotisserie chicken fills the family's noses and the sound of crackling asparagus on the stove makes its way into the living room.

The mouse clicks. The family lets out a collective "aawww" in response to a photo of two girls swinging their younger brother between them through a pumpkin patch. Click. Gasp. A teenager with braces grins, showing off her cuts and scrapes after sliding 50 feet down a steep rock face. Click. A proud seven-year old boasts her catch, dangling a rainbow trout from a stick. Click. The family is mesmerized by a trio of siblings giving their best performance to Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger," complete with eccentric air guitars. Click. A boy's wide-eyed smile as he holds up his "Mr. Sunshine Award" trophy from preschool graduation.

"Okay, dinner's almost ready," interrupts the fun. The computer screen goes black. The family separates from their tight huddle only to see one of the five's bodies shaking with quiet tears, her face red from stifling her sobs. Nobody had noticed when the laughter of five became the laughter of just four, her giggle slowly fading and smile deepening into a frown. That's me. I'm the girl who can't help but cry looking at old albums. Who can't stand to see her old self, the little girl without a care in the world, the girl who smiled because she wanted to. It's confusing—how did the girl with confidence for

days, the girl in the pictures, turn into the girl who drags razor blades across her skin?

Call me sensitive, call me nostalgic, call me what you want, but before you do, consider what I'm about to say. Then you might understand why I long for the times shown in those photographs.

One. Two. Three. Go. It's like a countdown before the gunshot signaling the start of a race, but with a couple key di

the shark strikes Selah as queasiness. After all, this class does follow lunch. "I can finish this part," she volunteers. I nod, barely registering her words. She continues, only to be interrupted by Nathaniel, who wants to see if we can show him how to get started. Selah follows him to his bench, leaving me alone with the shark. And the scalpels.

And now there's one in my hand. The cool, clean metal is dense. It feels good in my grasp. I run my fingernail through the cross-hatched lines etched into its handle. I look for a spare alcohol swab to sterilize it before bringing it with me out of the classroom and into the bathroom. Found one. I flip the scalpel in my hand to slide it up into my sleeve. "Yeah, you should do the next cut," Selah says. She's returned from helping Nathaniel. The scalpel falls back into my palm, lying horizontally like it's supposed to.

My previously calm surface had started to ripple. I used to be able to sway in the surf, jumping over waves and landing with my toes in the sand, safe on the other side. I could keep myself afloat, my head bobbing in the water without going under. But it didn't take long for the sky to darken and the water to turn choppy. Waves rose on the surface, high enough that I could no longer ignore them. They were too tall to jump over and too big to dive through. They left me paralyzed, standing in place as the tide pulled the water out from beneath me. My toes remained in the sand, burrowing down while I braced for impact and stared straight into the heart of the wave that towered over me. My staredown was short-lived. The water crashed on top of me, directly on top of me, pinning me down against the ocean floor, helpless against its weight. I tumbled blindly, waiting for the tumultuous ride to end so I could have a breath.

But I was breathing! To everyone else, I was sunbathing on the beach, dry on a towel with a book in my hand. It was as if there were two of me. One was drowning in sandy water, screaming only to

realize that she hadn't made a sound, only bubbles. The other was with everyone else on the beach, raving about Cheryl's chocolate chip cookies. She had held up a billboard saying, "I'm fine!" in front of their faces, effectively blocking everyone's view of the disaster happening in the ocean.

Selah had unknowingly plucked me from the water and given me a birds-eye view of my battle against the waves. The battle I was destined to lose. Then I knew that life could not resume as usual. Selah is the one who told me that I wasn't fine. I put the billboard away and showed my friends and family the other girl, the one in the waves. The day after dissection #6 marks the day I asked for help.

I don't think about cigarettes as often anymore, and I no longer keep a set of razor blades stashed in my closet. But catch me looking at photos of my younger self, and you can bet I'll be blinking back tears. I can't help but feel like I've let down the little girl in the pictures. I let her down, I

Midnight Rain: The Paradox of Eating Disorder Recovery and Type-1 Diabetes Management

Claire McFadden

Editors' note: This piece contains description of disordered eating and mentions self-harm.

3:33AM blinked the boxy red numbers of the CD player clock sitting on the shelf above my head. I'm hunched over, squaring on my bedroom carpet in my soft pink pajama set, pricking my pinky finger and squeezing out a tiny drop of blood onto the test strip of my glucose testing meter. As I wait for the five seconds it takes for the meter to read my blood sugar to pass, I anxiously look beside me at my bookshelf and see the tattered spine of my copy of "The Doll People." I'm 11, and this is my favorite book.

The pitter patter of rain trickled out of the CD player's speaker. An hour before when I'd woken up from the sweat of a low blood sugar, I'd pressed play to start a CD called "Midnight Rain." The recorded

management, and how these two words entangle themselves into a heavy knot of the paradox of eating disorder recovery and type 1 diabetes management, which begs the question, how can you stop obsessing over what you eat when you still have to count the carbs you eat and calculate your insulin doses? How do you let go of control while staying in control? Where's the line between control and management?

Today I can tell you how I wish someone had guided me to ask myself why I found comfort in an eating disorder as it destroyed my physical and mental health. Now I can tell you how I ended up in an ER psych ward three days into my first semester of college because I couldn't take care of myself, and how this rock bottom experience made me realize maybe I didn't have perfect control of my life.

Miriam Webster defines the verb "to control" as "to exercise restraining or directing influence over; to have power over or to rule," while "to manage" is defined as "to handle or direct with a degree of skill, such as to treat with care." I can now tell you how managing my T1D is hard, but not nearly as hard as it was to value controlling myself over respecting myself. Now I can tell you how therapy and positive connections saved my life, but only because I chose to let go of the shame and guilt that came with the initial sense of letting go of control of what I ate.

But back on my bedroom floor in 2013, I couldn't tell you any of that.

After one or two rounds of Midnight Rain my blood sugar finally rose above 70 mg/dl, and I was able to sleep, in control.

The Mustard Sandwich

Claire McFadden

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of New York. In *Call Me By Your Name*, Elio deals with the feelings around growing up and seeking independence, while also fighting against a never before experienced longing for his father's guest. Eventually the two give in to their feelings for each other, and experience a sense of connectedness and unity incapable of being replaced. The name of the story, *Call Me By Your Name*, comes from Oliver telling Elio: "Call me by your name and I'll call you by mine" (Aciman 134). One's name represents the culmination of one's identities. To achieve the level of intimacy that Elio and Oliver had, to the point where they would call each other by the other's name, merged the gap between them, effectively fusing their separate "buildings" into one.

The beauty of this story, both the cinematography of the movie and the intriguing language of the novel, left me pondering the ideas it contained for months. Being in Northern Italy in the summer, with the sound of insects buzzing, people lounging and chatting in groups, faint Italian music drifting from a nearby radio, brought forth from the depths of my conscience a metaphor from the novel called the "San Clemente Syndrome."

The Basilica of San Clemente in Rome was once a refuge for persecuted Christians, then was the home of the Roman consul Titus Flavius Clemens before being burned down, then became an underground pagan temple, on top of which two Christian churches were built, one being today's basilica (Aciman 192). Aciman states, "Like the subconscious, like love, like memory, like time itself, like every single one of us, the [Basilica of San Clemente] is built on the ruins of subsequent restorations, there is no rock bottom, there is no first anything, no last anything, just layers and secret passageways and interlocking chambers..." (Aciman 192). We as humans are just as complex as the oldest and most historical buildings. Buildings are burned, destroyed, laid to rest, as it is determined what should belong there. As architecture is a

construct created for and by humans, it reveals parts of ourselves that we often ignore. The parts that lie within us are the parts that Aciman compares to the unseen passageways and chambers that are hidden deep beneath even the most recognizable landmarks.

Rarely do we grasp the little things. As humans we are programmed by nature to search for the big details, possible threats, overall view, and fail to look deeper into the crevices of life. Our lives often feel in fast-motion, trying to balance school, jobs, hobbies, friends, and practically everything in between. We rush from place to place, from person to person, often only approaching the exterior, for we do not have the time nor patience to explore beneath.

Self-reflection may seem to be most convenient during the minutes spent wasting away under a hot shower, but it's surprising how much one can find when time is dedicated to it elsewhere. Judging from the disorganized nature of my brain as I entered Villa del Balbianello, I expected the whole day to go that way. There haven't been many times where I've felt fully immersed in where I am. This moment, surprisingly, turned out to be one of them. As I reflect on this moment in time, this tiny "chamber" within my memories, I remember feeling my feet on the ground, my hands on the banister looking out on the lake, my eyes straining against the sunlight that reflected off the water. The air smelled of moss, freshwater, and faint limoncello that drifted from the soda bottle in my dad's hands. There was no other time that I had felt more myself, and more grounded in nature. It was like all aspects were coming together, everything was making sense. I was making sense. Paying attention to the small details of the villa, trying to fathom how it's changed over time, was like looking into myself.

I had struggled more the past year than I had in my life. I had missed over a month of school

based upon, yet transcending those foundations, to create a new whole greater than the sum of its parts” (Ferrer-Wreder & Kroger 8).

The main quest that fills much of our lives, and in some cases, all of them, is the discovery of the layers that lie within, and the pursuit to build upon them. Overlooking Lake Como, reflecting on its history as well as my own, feeling whole and warm and a part of the world, I could only just begin to see myself coming forward—the sum of my parts fusing as one, after learning to build upwards from my past struggles instead of demolishing them. The pillars of my building are my roles as a daughter, sister, friend, student, piano player, and tennis player. Everyone’s list—everyone’s building and its subsequent restorations—will look different. Adolescence is the golden era for self-discovery, and “Nature has cunning ways of finding our weakest spot” (Aciman 224). All of our experiences are there to help us grow in one way or another.

As I’m writing this, I’m sitting in the Center for Community Dining Center at the University of Colorado Boulder. The wind is drifting through the trees as my gaze wanders out the window to people walking below. The cafeteria is full of conversation. I hear people talking in another language behind me—could it be Arabic? I push away the intrusions. Part of Halle Hall is framed in the window to my right, so I start to analyze its elements: red-tiled roof, even windows, jagged bricks. The same as every other building on campus. CU Boulder is idolized for its architectural uniformity, after all. As I finish my hibiscus tea and return my mug to the dish rack, I head out the doors back to Smith Hall. Walking under the bridge, I notice Kirkredge Central Hall straight ahead of me, and can see more details of the building as I approach closer. I realize that these structures, made to look uniform, are anything but so. Each brick laid to form the walls is slightly different—varying in width, length, color,

and texture. From afar, it all looks consistent. Only looking close was I able to realize the individuality of the building and the separate parts that sum to its whole.

Is the most authentic view of campus seen from above (the one we all see in pictures), or from close enough to the buildings to see every detail? Like looking into ourselves, like me from the recent past at Villa del Balbianello, or me from the not so recent past reading about the Basilica of San Clemente, only from a close-up, interior gaze can authentic understandings be reached. An eagle’s eye view of CU’s campus simply does not provide a full account of what it’s like to live and work here, as the classes (at least the ones I’ve taken so far) have not been held in the sky. One can only see from close up that no two buildings are identical, nor, comparatively, are two people identical. After all, architecture is made for humans, by humans. We can see reflections of ourselves throughout all eras of architectural history. CU Boulder’s students and faculty, like the buildings we call home, all appear to be uniform, but are actually mosaics of unrelated elements, joined together to become one. The people at CU come from all over the world, bringing with them their own identities and foundations, and