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White Scars

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white scars

brad bierdz

Dedicated to a white family, a white community, and a
whitened life



Introduction

I grew up racist. My parents were racist, my family was racist, my community was racist, my school was racist, and my country was racist. Everything in my life was built to make me racist.

Everything in my life was constructed to make racist, hegemonic, sexist, heteronormative, and ableist people, yet how did I come to question my whiteness... Something I didn't even know I had, something that I had never questioned... How did I come to realize, to see, to partially understand... Surrounded by structures that were built for my coloring and my racialization, surrounded by people that continued to uphold such ideals of hegemonic power, taught by institutions that spout the same nonsense, surrounded and controlled by parents that believed in the same hegemonic structures, how did I begin to realize, begin to understand, begin to question my own skin – the layer on top of my own skin? How did I come to see the white layer over top of me, how my skin started to turn white with age, how my mind began to turn white with age, how my interactions began to turn white...

Everything around me was a structure that was built for my creation and the consequent oppression of others... they were built to create more me's, more of these whitened pieces of flesh that could help uphold the status quo...

And so, I wanted to know how that happened... I wandered through my memories, trying to pick out experiences, things that happened and things that didn't happen... I wanted to form a picture of how I became whitened, what things happened to me to make me white, and those experiences make up the bulk of this book... Racist experience after racist action fill this book, and for the vast majority of them, I was a part of them – I contributed.

The main character of the book is just as racist, just as self-absorbed, and is no closer to understanding his whiteness than he is at understanding the universe... He is beginning his path of understanding whiteness, he is

beginning this transformative experience, and throughout it, he is continuously racist, he continuously hurts with his words and with his actions. It's no surprise that he might even hurt the reader: he might show you something that you didn't want to think about, he might bring up feelings of exclusion, memories of experiences in your own life (maybe you were the one excluded, maybe you were the one doing the exclusion), the character might bring up the pain of racism (either as the subject of racism or the co-creator of racism). As you work throughout the book, you're bound to come across sections you don't agree with, that you hate to the very fiber of your being; however, I would urge you to embrace that part of yourself... feel that betrayal of reader and author and character, try to understand why you hate it so much without instantaneously calling the characters racist and idiots, try to feel what you feel, because that is the point of this book....

I want you to read and to begin to question ---- or to continue to question...

Question your own racialization and see how this story differs with your own.

Question how the main character is going about this redemptive and self-denigrating path of whiteness and understanding whiteness.

Question, think, feel, try to understand, and if needed, throw away this book.

You may be just beginning, you may already have come to understand your whiteness; it doesn't matter. Take this book and begin, start over, continue to think about your life and your place in it....

Is the book over when the words stop... or is that just the beginning... a bump in the road, or a curve on the street?

Question, think and feel – don't be afraid to go too far... Don't be afraid to feel things that might hurt, that might scar.

Of course I should have done this or that. Or course, I should have been or acted like somebody else entirely... forgotten everything that happened and everything I did and they did. I should have just forgotten and been someone else.

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The officer brought me in, and he told me another one was going to be with me shortly. And so, I sat down... (I didn't really have a choice)... He shoved me onto this little bench outside what I presumed were the offices...

I had been brought here by the black man that had arrested me..... he slammed cuffs on me almost immediately, and I hardly had time to do anything let alone say goodbye to my family or let them know what was going on.... He kept saying that he was going to bring me back to them.... My family I mean, but I hardly believed him.... He didn't really have a believable demeanor... he just looked like a liar.



I sat on this bench near the outside of the main offices. It looked as if it had been re-painted a million times over (the bench); it looked worn and beaten. It had chips of paint missing here and there, and the grey beneath the red was showing in multiple spaces, multiple large swathes of the bench.... Before I was placed on the bench though, I watched the black officer write down my name and gave the piece of paper to the other officer behind the main desk.... He had my wallet, and he still misspelled my name (I didn't really care). I thought I would correct him, but then again, correcting a police officer that held your arms in

chains and your future in the sway didn't seem like the best thing to do.

I sat with my hands behind my back, and my eyes (on their own accord) started filling with water. It wasn't the first time that I had been arrested and stuck on a bench with a few other guys. One of 'em, named Carl was here for stealing a car, and the other named Gio was here for something but he just kept shaking his head, telling us over and over again that he had no fucking idea.... He just kept telling us that he wasn't supposed to be here... that he hadn't done anything.... He was confused and delirious... and for a few moments, I thought I might have been hallucinating.... I still do...

The man's head was shaking and tears were dripping over his bleeding face. Snot was running down the sides of his mouth, and his lips were splayed out in this pattern of confusion and pain. He rocked back and forth on his haunches, his feet hitting the ground again and again, yet after he spoke his couple of words, he didn't say anything else. His lips were splayed before us, opening that gaping chasm of red and pink, yet no sounds came out of it except muffled remnants of pain and stifled sprints of fear.

I hung my head down and the rivulets of water that had formed flung themselves down to the ground.... For some reason, I wished that I held the power of those tears, that I was those tears. I wished I wasn't where I was, that I wasn't who I was. All I wanted was to go back in time, to be what I could have been,,,, should have been,,,, what my mother and father wanted me to be. ---- and hours passed....

During that time, I kept wondering if this was a strategy that they were using

or if they really needed all this time to fill out paperwork, find the next of kin, and get the interrogation room ready (or whatever they did with prisoners like me.... Like me – as if I know someone like me... as if I know what I am)

I sat on this red and black bench... more men came and went.... All men.... We all talked for some time, but eventually everyone became deadly silent; it was gruesome and depressing, and with every new prisoner, I was left to myself, wondering again and again how long I would have to wait for these detectives to come back from those doors and to pull me up from my new place of crying and existing.... I was becoming those red and black planks, and my body was sinking, melding into those planks.

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You might not think there'd be much crying in a place like this,
But, you'd be very wrong.
Almost all of these men, in their blue jeans and tee shirts, come in bawling for their mothers or
wives
All of 'em stop their crying eventually... they get angry and start pounding on the metal of the
bench. (that's prolly why they've had to repaint the bench so many times, but I didn't ask... I
didn't have anyone to ask anyway)..
They beat their hands together, bash their heads on the walls, or stare meaninglessly at the doors
placed directly to the right of us.

There was a black, handcuffed man that came in about twenty
minutes ago. I didn't know whether to be impressed by him or
frightened or scared for my life..... He sat to the right of me, and
for the ten minutes he sat beside me, he stared directly in front of
him. No sound was made from his body, and his arms were
motionless. For all intensive purposes, he was dead in this
painted, off-white prison. His officer came and got him, took him
to the other end of the room, and he exited just as silently as he
had been throughout the time he sat beside me. he was the only
one to not say a word... to remain still and refuse to speak.... To
refuse the urge....

I don't know whether
you've ever worn real
handcuffs around your
wrists before, but they have

this tendency to dig into your skin when they're behind your back and immovable. After a few
hours, the feeling in your hands starts to go, and all of the blood is gone, but you begin to feel
this tinge in your wrist. It's the skin starting the break open to the cold metal of the steel
handcuffs behind you, out of your sight, yet so painful and blinding,,, because it's the only
physical sensation of reality that you have....

After the first few hours, I started to rock like the man I saw in the beginning.... Back and forth,
back and forth. The rhythm had a soothing effect on me and the perceivable passage of time.
Every up signaled a new thought in my mind and every down signaled its death. Every full back
and forth was a few seconds, and the time started to compound upon itself.

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[The black man came and sat down next to me, but at first, I didn't notice him. I didn't see him or his face. He was an invisible man to my rocking. My eyes were closed, and my mind was pinned on the door in front of me. I was trying to open it with my mind, but every time I peaked through my eyelashes and under my forehead, I could see the doors fully sealed... but then, a hand appeared, waving itself in front of my eyes.... It was a black hand. I black wrinkled hand and white cracks throughout the palm. It seemed like a dry palm, but I didn't know the anatomies of black people. I didn't want to think about it and decided not to say anything it.... I just continued to rock myself.]

He touched my chin and tried to force my face towards his own, and at first, I refused vehemently. I threw my face back in the opposite direction and tried to act indignant. (This man, this black man, was not going to force me head to face anywhere... he wasn't going to force my attention, and he wasn't going to have my sympathies.... He was not going to control my face or my body or my future).

“My name's Charles,” he said.

His voice sounded like a wispy, deep, and phlegmy thing. I hadn't seen his face yet, but I began to picture this penciled poster of a black man: big lips, bulging eyes, and a receding hairline. I started to make his life story in my mind.

His name was Charles – that I knew -... named after his grandfather (A farmer in the south and the patriarch of the family). Since then, his family had moved to the city and now resided in Memphis. They lived in South Memphis. His father still worked as a mechanic, and his mother was the lover of the family, having five kids and 12 grand children so far. Charles was the youngest of the family. He was routinely beat up and made fun of in school. His brothers and sisters didn't help him either, for they all kept their heads down during school. His mother continuously got onto him for getting into fights with the older kids, and even though he'd tried to convince her that it was the other kids who were fighting with him, she didn't believe him or rather didn't want to believe him.

After years in that school and surrounded by those same gruesome kids, Charles joined them. As he reached high school, he and his new friends started to pick on the middle schoolers that rode their buses and hung out in their neighborhoods. Charles and his friends would hang out in the parking lot behind the nearest Wal-Mart. They threw bottles against the building, smoked cigarettes, and drank enough alcohol to kill something. Charles didn't mind though, he was one of them now (forced to become something he didn't want to become). The kids he was beating up now had all earned it somehow. They had sat in his seat on the bus, looked at him the wrong way in the hallways or gone too far when they were joking around.

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Charles' father was a strict man. When he came home, he was usually tired, and he expected his children to put in the same amount of time and energy he had at work into their own schoolwork. He expected them to succeed in ways that he didn't. He wanted them to have something more... like all fathers, but every time he laid eyes on Charles, his temper would inexplicably rise and his fists would start having a mind of their own. He would beat Charles senseless if he came home late or smelling of liquor or cigarettes. Charles' father had very little patience for disobedience and Charles had very little time and energy to be obedient, and so, what ensued was a battle for manhood, for skin, and for place. What they continued to fight about was their own identities in this world, and Charles sooner rather than later learned this. He saw that his father was trying to force something upon him --- a vision for his future, a hope for something that Charles abhorred... a life beyond the black neighborhoods and liquor stores, a life beyond the immediate concrete jungle of panthers and buffoons, a possibility beyond his father's own limited gaze.....

.....but Charles knew that he didn't want this life, this path, this shit-infused shedding of his own skin, of his own life. Charles wanted to stay beside his friends and his mother. He did not want to leave the people that surrounded him day in and day out. He didn't want to give up the convenient store down the street run by a man named Jamal or the furniture store a little ways down run by the Thomas family. He didn't want to give up his own identity for something entirely different that his father was trying to force on him....

He didn't want to leave the neighborhood, the city, that had done so much for him, given him so much, made him the man that he is today. He didn't want to turn his back on that and live the life that his father wanted him to live. He didn't want to leave Memphis for something else, something better as his father would say... he wanted to help Memphis, make *it* better, make his life, their lives, everyone's lives better here in South.

His father still calls him a failure when they get together over the holidays and on select weekends. The whole family lives close together, within a ten or so mile radius, and even so, Charles hates to see his father. He looks at the old man during the holiday dinners or during the barbecues and all he can remember are the beatings that he endured in that house only ten or so miles away. Sometimes, Charles even has nightmares of his father. His mother sits in the corner of the room and rocks back and forth on her wooden chair (even though they never had a wooden, rocking chair in their home); his father comes closer to him and his body, but his hands are empty of anything malevolent. Charles knows though, he knows how his father's fists feel and taste like steel... hot steel barely ran under running water and sprung into your side... Charles knows that his father always has a belt around his waist--- not because he needs it for his pants to stay up, but because he always needs a tool for teaching children lessons, for teaching Charles how to act and be. He would begin by using his index finger as a jabbing tool, and Charles' chest would start to bruise and weaken. After a while, Charles would stay silent, hoping that his father would ignore him, but that never worked. After Charles had closed his mouth, his father would start to slap him. Moving from his body to his face, his father would attack again and again and again. His hand would start to look like a fist and his eyebrow would begin to bleed. All the while, his mother would sit in the corner, yelling out the same questions that his father would be asking, "What were you doing . . . Where were you . . . What did you *do*?" Charles arms would begin to feel weak, for all this time they remained tense and strong yet unmoved. He kept his arms at his sides and his head down.

.... The nightmare and the beatings only ended when Charles lay on the floor covered in his own blood or if Charles luckily passed out near the beginning of the beating.

I kept picturing his life, but when I finally looked up to hopefully, or not so hopefully, meet the man that I had envisioned, I only saw a foreign face. I saw a face that I had never seen nor thought of before. It was a black face, and I was far, far away from it –it had to be somewhere, but somewhere painful and dark. It challenged me, and in response, I challenged it. I met the black man's face and gave him the eyes of a man beyond my eyes and experience; I looked as if I had a death sentence given to me by the man in front of me, sitting beside me on the red and black bench that had taken over my sight, hands, and feelings.

Charles' mother says that she doesn't remember the beatings, but she continues to sit in the corner of the rooms that Charles and his father inhabit together. In the end, his father stills beats on his body, and he still comes to work with black and blue eyes, scars near his eyes, and his lips cut like they met corrugated metal during family get togethers, the boys always get rowdy and Charles is always drawn into the mix... he never brings anyone home to distract them, and so they pounce on him and beat him to a pulp in football or basketball or even ping pong if given the right moment.... yet he stays himself..... he has himself...hopefully

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Don't get me wrong, he had a completely normal face, but it was somehow completely different than what I had envisioned. His cheeks were hollow; he was bald; and his lips were thin and red. He opened his mouth to speak, yet nothing came out. He looked at me confused, stood up, looked back once more, and went back through the doors he had come. --- ---- -0--

--- I wanted to go after him, to stop him, to maybe talk to him about my situation, but my hands were cuffed to the bench, and I was in no position mentally or physically to walk anywhere.... I had just looked at a stranger with intent to kill, yet I had no idea why..... maybe it was the day I'd been having, maybe it was because he was a police officer, or maybe it was because of the story I had made for him.... But no matter what the reason, I had felt this intense pity, shame, and guilt. I wanted to apologize to the officer,,, to the man... but he was gone, and I had treated him like an animal..... They had treated me like an animal.... Tied to a pole for hours... not given any water or food.... Not given a call.... Not given fresh air.....—they had treated me like an animal... so in turn, I had treated him like an animal... like a worse animal... like a killer, a barbarous creature, a dark, evil beast. ----- I did, and I always regretted it..... but understood....

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I sat there on that bench for the next hour without word or movement. The only sound I made was the rhythmic breath that I had to draw in and push back out. By this time, my wrists were bloody, and my hands were numb (I kept wriggling them, moving them and scratching them... they were a bloody mess, but what did they expect from a kid,,, what was I gonna do.... take out a whole office of cops and then make my escape.... Nope,,, with handcuffs, they were completely safe from that possibility))))))

; I actually thought that my hands,, my fingers had died, fallen off of my body or had become completely immobile from the lack of blood and oxygen.... Yet the human body is extremely resilient to pain ... extremely

I spent the night in a solitary holding cell. I was a minor, and so they couldn't put me with the adults----- scared of rape or assault or something.... but, they could still hold me against my will, chain me to a chair, and stick me in a room with only a bed and a can..... they treated me like an animal.....

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I couldn't get to bed right away. I had such a long day, such a hard day, and my mind was still going. I kept thinking about the black man I saw in the holding area.... The one in the woods.... And the black man I knew in my own mind. I kept thinking about the story I had made up and the way he reacted to my eyes.

I started to think about my own troubles, my own crimes,, or what they called criminal, and started to drift off. However, once my body started to drift off, the pounding of metal on metal jerked my mind awake. My off-grey door was shaking slightly, and a slot open up. Two words were spoken, and a plate was forced through the opening, "Dinner, Shithead." ----- Not to be confused, the man was shoving dinner through the newly opened whole in the door, and I was the shithead for which he was referring. I was the shithead, and he was the one holding the keys.... The keys that could have been used to free me from this....

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I didn't know I was hungry until I saw and smelled the slab of Salisbury steak and corn. I didn't even realize I hadn't eaten in days actually until that food slide through the opening At first, I felt like a beast or a wild animal; I looked around me, checking for competitors and then pounced upon the metal tray that lied on the little piece of metal jutting out, I scarfed half of it down within twenty seconds, and after, I immediately stopped myself.... I didn't know what I looked like at that moment, but I felt like a pig or a monkey, simply controlled by animalistic desires and needs..... I didn't like it.... Or rather, parts of me didn't like it... and they made me stop eating all together.

A few minutes later, I was passed out on the ground...

We were all drunk. Some of us were high too, but most of us just drank. We got together at least once a week, lit up and drank for nothing. Or, at least, it looked like nothing to me. I came to this house, I guess..... to get away from something, to get to nothing... to achieve nothingness in my brain.... To forget shit... pretty simple actually...

Escape

I escaped one family for another

I escaped the gazes of my parents and sisters

I hoped for something besides what I had at home

..... Maybe I was punishing my body for something I didn't realize... I had no idea

I huddled around these people, because they were different than my family, than my normal friends....

I drank and smoked because it made me different than what I had been.... It made me something I didn't want to punch... something I didn't hate...

I changed, and I liked the change.

Who doesn't pain
Who has that luxury
Those invisible knives and swords
Those cuts, those phantom bruises
I feel them across my body, my brain
I feel them until an otherness enters my veins

Until tools temporarily take my
Until I force liquids down my throat
Into the individual parts that form me
Start to numb my lungs and memories

See....
We add to take away
We multiply other things to fix our selves
Change ourselves

But we never feel the problem
We just hide behind the alcohol
The drugs, and numb our minds to
Ignore, deaden and quicken
We change,,,, but always to return

A few of us sat around a white-spattered coffee table and looked into each other's faces like animals missing that piece of humanity that made humans. We sat around ourselves and talked about random shit.

We never talked about real things, but the alcohol and the drugs helped a little to open that portal...

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Harris: Did y'all hear about Johnny's brother?

Hope: Yeah.... super sad... he hung himself in his parents' room. He hung himself with one of his father's ties.....

Me: Why do we keep talking about it.... It's fucking morbid to keep drudging up a dead kid like this? To keep discussing the minutiae of his death, what he used, where he was..... we're fucking animals.... Don'tcha think?..

Harris: Whatever, man..... if you don't want to talk about..... just leave

Me: It's like you guys are eating this shit up, you keep feeding off of his dead corpse for your own benefit... for your own shit..... stop trying to masquerade it as something that's altruistic or some shit... because it's not

.....

(he started to think, but then the alcohol or the smoke shoved him off his path, off of his train of thought and sent him gliding, spinning towards something else)

Harris: Shut the fuck up.

Hope: Calm down, Harris.... He has a point.

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[I started to walk away. I started towards Johnny's corner of the room, but the silence was still raging. The looks of incomprehension were everywhere and no one moved. ...Really moved... it was silence among white zombies.

I sat by Johnny, but he didn't move either. He stared into thin air and twenty or so minutes went by, but eventually, Johnny's hoarse voice rose above everything else, and he looked me in the eyes. His face was all shadows and crevices filled with bruises.... and his eyes were made into raisins... dried from his tears.....

“Do you know cough* cough*..... (trying to clear his throat)... Do you know why he did it...?” he said.

His body emitted muffled sounds of frustration and tears. “Don’t you think he should’ve left a note?? Or something. At least for me, at least for me, ya know... He should’ve cared... right???” he pleaded.

“I think he cared too much about everyone else, John, everyone except himself..... For instance, I remember one time I was talking to him, and he started going on about not being able to be himself. He kept repeating that he was forced to be something that he didn’t want to be....this was a few months ago..... but we were never really that close, and so, I thought it was nothing, just an identity crisis or something, like all of us.... But I guess it got to him...” I replied.

Johnny’s silence continued. He stared at the beige carpet and started running his hands through the pieces of fringe that were lifted and tufted on its surface. After a while, he moved his head, and he looked directly in my eyes for a moment or two and began, “So my brother came to you, and you didn’t think it was anything.... You never thought he came to *you* for a reason.... You told a suicidal kid to shove off, because what, because *your* problems were too big to handle.... Because you felt shit about your own self...” he continued, “Now you’re telling me this shit, because what??? Because you feel bad about it???? Because you feel guilty?? Is that it??”

I stared into his eyes, “that wasn’t exactly it, John..... that’s not exactly how it went down.... How was I supposed to know.....” But that was exactly what I wanted. That was exactly why I came over here: why I was pissed at Harris and Hope..... I was guilty.... I didn’t say that to Johnny.... I removed my eyes from his darkened face.... Got up and went to the bathroom across the room.... I looked over my shoulder, and he was still sitting there.... Rocking his body back and forth... apparently not able to come to terms with his life.... With the death of his older brother...

... He looked like a balled up piece of dirt... rolling back and forth....

In the bathroom, I broke down. I sat in the bathtub and looked at the faucet for what felt like hours with a constant stream of water coming from my eyes. To be honest, I wasn’t crying for Johnny’s brother or his pain.... I was crying for my own pain. Again, I only cared for myself.... I only cared what happened around me and to me.

I drank more from the bottle I was still holding... a bottle of rum... and passed out in the same bathtub where my tears resided... where they dried... and where they fell into the drain...

A banging woke me up from whatever had happened. It was coming from the metal door again. I wasn’t exactly on the cot they provided, and I found myself on the concrete floor, curled up into a ball under the bed...

After a moment of hesitation, I looked up towards the door and found it slung wide open in front of me. It couldn’t have been morning so soon, and so I knew this wasn’t an ordinary visit. A

large, white man stood at the door and looked into the cell. He saw the half eaten tray of food on the other side of the room, me curled up on the floor, and the rest of the room undisturbed. Then, he looked at my face, and without any flinching or change in tone, he said, “Get up. Why are you just laying on the floor like an animal? You do know what beds are for, right?”

I looked him up and down and said nothing. I refused to say anything. I refused to notice him or anyone else here.

The police officer came and picked me up off of the floor and flung me forward. I tripped and fell on the floor outside of my cell. I wanted to scream for help; I wanted to beat my fists against the man’s face, but my body was useless. It just lay on the floor immobile and helpless. All of the time that I hadn’t slept, that I hadn’t eaten, that I had been dehydrated... it was all coming back to me,,,, and it was keeping me from doing anything... I was trapped inside my own mind, and there was no getting out.

The big, white man picked me up again and threw my body forward... This time I stayed on my feet and started walking in the direction he obviously wanted me to go.

The officer smelled like nothing. It surprised me. For a second, I actually thought I had lost my sense of smell, but a little way down the hallway, I began to smell the brewing of coffee, and then I realized that the man behind me smelled of nothing.... I had no idea how to react to that, but it was as if he wasn’t human. He didn’t smell of sweat or cologne. He smelled of nothing, and while I was walking in front of him, I had nothing to remind me of his presence. His footsteps were soundless upon the concrete, and his body cut through the air without sound..... he was a ghost behind me and I didn’t know what to make of it.

We had made it into a room on the other side of the department, and I had completely forgotten the past five minutes of walking. I mean, I knew I walked here, but I totally forgot the movement of my legs, the things I would have seen if my eyes had been conscious, and the worry I would have felt. I had completely forgotten where the big, white man had gone, and now, all that was in front of me, was the black detective I had seen before. The cracks on his hands were still there and his eyes were gauging my own and my face. He had a folder in front of him. It wasn’t my name on the front, and so, I started to wonder but my eyes were taking most of my energies, and I didn’t have the time to wonder. My entire body was focused on keeping my eyes open... I didn’t want to look weak. I still didn’t want to fail after everything I had been through... everything I had done....

He pulled out a picture from the file. It was a picture of a young, white teenager. He had brown hair with green eyes, and he looked beaten up,,, he looked like shit.

In a deep, almost accusatory tone, he questioned, “Do you know this boy, this kid?”

Just the way he said it, I was on edge.... The word boy. It was as if he was demeaning his memory, this kid's image.... His history. He said it as an indictment of immaturity and adolescence. He said it like he was calling him a boy, not a human yet, a thing.... Not a man, something lesser than... something that wasn't worth as much as he was...

[I didn't say anything for a long time, and the officer slapped the picture on the table to snap me out of it]

“Do you know this boy, I said?” apparently trying to reason with me.

And I sat there and looked at him....

[[[[He lived there. He learned there....

It was a place trapped between other places. He never really questioned any of it. It was his reality; it was fine.

He actually lived down the street from a high school and a middle school, yet he didn't go to those schools. He passed them everyday. He went to a school 20 miles away from his house.

His parents wanted to give him a better education, and so, they sent him to the other school; they sent him to the school in the next county over, with students and people he didn't know, with teachers that lived in way off places.... It was always foreign to him, and he would have to get up at dawn just to get there on time with his mother and sisters...

To go to the school in the next county, his mother actually taught there....

His mother was a geometry teacher....

The school he went to was filled with white farmers and their families, while the school down the street from his house was black and brown.... City dwellers

He lived in that school, yet he never noticed.... He grew up in that school yet he never questioned. He drove miles upon miles to that school yet he sat in the car and waited patiently for his classes to be over, his mother to be done, and his tutoring to come to a close...

He was there,,, in that school, but he never saw anything... the reasons why he was there, and more importantly, the reasons why he wasn't at the other school. It was blindness, and his parents wanted that.... His parents saw nothing as well....

They wanted to live in that reality, their reality...]]]]]

As the black man looked behind him towards the two-way mirror on the other side of the room, I started with one word, "yeah...."

He jerked his head back around, and a smiled spread across his face...

"Good.... For a while there, we thought we might have lost you," he returned. He spun back around; gave his partner a look of knowing, and the big, white man walked in with a pile of new folders, a cup of coffee, and one donut.

Charles, the black detective, looked me up and down and shook his head to the sides. "Can you just take 'em back to the cell until morning? We're not gonna get anything out of 'em until he gets some food and sleep."

"Yeah, all right. Let's go little guy," the big, white man said as he turned to me.

We walked back down the hall, but I remember nothing except a falling onto concrete. I think, as I entered the cell, my body collapsed and the big, white man left me on the floor not knowing

what to do or where to go. I faintly heard a metal door slam closed and then immense silence before all the lights went out in my world.

I was sitting near the back of the room in my desk.
The teacher glared in my direction, but I refused to look back.
As she began to speak, I looked the other way.
A girl in my class named Anna was on the other side of the room;
She had brown hair and bangs.
She had green eyes that made you think of pastures.
I always liked her.
When I got in trouble, I did it for her.
When I disobeyed the teacher, I, again, did it for her.
I wanted to show her courage, my manliness, my heart, but she never acknowledged it.

My teacher did however.
She'd scream,
"Here we go again."
"Can't you sit still and pay attention for five minutes."
"Stop messing with Allison's hair"
"Stop disrupting your friends back there."
"Watch your mouths back there."
"I keep hearing words I don't want to hear."

It hurt me to know that Anna ignored me.
She wanted to be a good student.
Yet I just wanted her.
The teacher of course continued to try to train me.
But I continued to refuse training.
I wanted something besides this, whatever this was.
The training camp of goons

It was second grade, and my teacher's name was Sister Lisa.
She was this older nun;
One that would want to slap the shit out of you,
But would be rebuffed by the rules of the school.

I always sat near the back of the room.
Anna was near the front,
But I wanted to show her my fearlessness and coolness.

--

Sooner or later, she'd notice me, and we'd develop this banter
We got to the point where we'd have unspoken jokes and play-things.

She would sometimes laugh at my outbursts,
And I'd look towards her corner of the room with newly found happiness and glee.
I'd start all over and do it just for her.
Anna was my first love, and I like to believe that I was hers,
But who could be certain.
We were so young,
But what does age have to do with love.
When I looked at her, I saw peace,
And that's all that mattered to me.
That's all I wanted.

Our teacher, however, had different plans for me.
She wanted to pound rules into my brains
She wanted me to abide by written and unwritten ones
She'd get onto me for every little thing I did or didn't do.
I was the bad kid,
And she molded me into that title.

Everyday, she said we started with clean slates,
But I knew that was a lie.
She hated me.
I never stood up to her standards, or the school's standards.
Every dream she had of her class I ruined.

She had this perfect student.
Her name was Anna.
My Anna.

Maybe that's another reason why I loved her.
Maybe that's another reason why I was constantly and unrelentingly drawn to her.
She was the thing I couldn't be.

She was this white angel in the eyes of the class,
And I was this darkness that invaded and took over

I was this blight that my teacher was scared of spreading.
She was scared that I'd rub off on the others,
And she was rightfully scared.

While she was putting on airs with Anna,
I was acting up in class: clowning around, disrupting the class, being a "nuisance," and acting like a "rotten" thing.

One of those days within her classroom, I went too far.
I acted in ways that my teacher wholeheartedly disapproved of.
But those actions were just for Anna.
They weren't for everyone else.

]]]]]]]]

I walked into the room like every other day.
I strutted in, taking all of my classmates in.
I started socializing, getting louder and louder, until the Sister slammed down her hand and called our attention.

We started out with reading, but I did not like reading,
And so, I started talking with my friend, Carl, across from me.
We talked and talked,
And then the Sister came to the back of the room.
She asked us if we had read the reading.
When we answered that we had.
She began to smile.
She raised her voice so that the entire class could hear and said that since Carl and I were done with the reading so early, we would lead the class in reading it aloud....

When I said, I didn't like reading,,,
It was obviously because I was terrible at it, and the Sister knew this.
She wanted to embarrass me in front of the class....
In front of Anna

And so, after everyone else had finished the assignments,
Carl and I read the section aloud....
It did not go well.
Carl did fine,
Which pleased the Sister
However, I was skewered in front of the room and forced to read each line again and again until I got them right.....

I was pissed.
I knew the class had been giggling at me because of the Sister, and I wanted revenge.
For her forcing me to do something I didn't want to do, I wanted her to pay.

For the rest of the day, I raised my voice at her....
I disrupted class and the students around me.
She forced me to sit in corners, in closets with posters of Jesus.
I was supposed to ask for forgiveness and then come back to the room when I was done.

I was told that Jesus was the King almighty; however,
The Sister was the only one with power
She dictated our movements,
Forced us to act in certain ways,
Tried to make us to be white angels,
Angels like Anna
And tried to remove what darkness she found in us.

By the end of the day, I had been sent to the closet three times and to the office once.
My mother had been called, and the Sister looked pleased with my punishments
I was practically powerless against her.
Even more important, Anna didn't look at me that day....
All I wanted was a glance from the white angel in the room
From the girl I loved.

But I was never going to receive that.
I was never able to love in that sense, because of my mind.
It had not been cleaned.
I was the "dirty" kid, the "bad" kid, the "troubled" child, the piece of shit.
I did not change....

By the end of the day, I was finished.
Spiritually, mentally, I was exhausted.
However, the Sister was not finished.
When I refused to pay attention, she pounded me again,
She took me to the office and beat me with a paddle
She forced my eyes to look forward over and over again.

She told me to read and read again.
She had me as this puppet of hers,

And my rebellion was waning.
I was forced to become this wretched and sad angel
This off-white angel of the classroom...

I didn't want the title...
I didn't want her attention, at least not this way.
I wanted her anger.
I fed off it.

Finally, when she put me in the corner the last time that day.
I was done with this giant poster of Jesus, hanging in front of me and taunting me.
I got up, stepped up on a stool near the board and jump at the corners of the poster.
I grabbed with all my strength and energy, and I pulled the poster to the ground, ripping it in two whole pieces.
I threw half of the poster on the ground, and I started to stomp on it over and over again.
I kicked it, and threw it.
I wanted it destroyed.

Bewildered for just a second, my teacher stared at me in horror.
She covered her mouth, and then,
She started running towards me.
She grabbed my arm in an iron grip and threw me forward like I was getting used to being thrown.
I tripped and fell over a desk, busting my lip in the process.
She drug me to the principal's office, yelled through the door what happened and sent me sprawling into the office with stars in my eyes and blood running down my neck.

I looked up and found my mother standing over me.
She wasn't mad at the teacher or my bloody face.
But rather, she pulled me forward and took me out of the school.
She signed me out and took me to the car.

====

She looked under the seats and found it.
She pulled out the ice scraper and started beating me with it.
A sliver of the poster left in my clenched fists fell to the ground as I screamed out in pain.
Yet she still continued to beat me.

After that day I had bruises all over my body.
My lip was swollen. My legs were battered and my eyes were clear or clear enough.

I was to mirror Anna, if i didn't want that to happen again.....
I was to be silent.
I was to be good.
I was to be an angel in the classroom

ANGELS flying

They had started to
they wanted me to
They started to
place of conformity,
My love was fading
The purity of her, of
The brilliance of her
turning into a
I wanted no part of
At least, then I didn't.....

However, I would always, secretly want her, love her, and crave her body.

break me into what
be.
force me into this
and

me, was fading
white angel skin was
disease, and
her infection.

Eventually she became something I couldn't have
Someone standing there, but I could never have her.
I could never be with her.
I was different then, and she was not
I had to change to be with her
I had to change to be normal
I had to change to be accepted, to be.

The metal slot through the breakfast, but I still felt the urge to rules, but my mind

My mind kept course, I didn't lose I did lose my mind. kept thinking about pain that was still in

I tried to focus in on corner, but after I bend on the metal look at. It only took of the bowl, and that piece of metal.

There was the cot, interesting. It had this film of dust covering it that I didn't want to disturb.....

....

.....

I had consciously been ignoring it beside me, but one could only ignore it for so long in a cell so small and diminished.

The guards must have slipped into the cell last night, because a new desk sat on the opposite side of the cell, and a pad of paper and few pencils sat on the desk.

[It felt wrong that the officers came in my room when I was passed out on the floor;;; it felt wrong that they had that power over me. I felt violated in a way. I felt that my life wasn't mine, and they were trying to control it, live it, and push me out of my own body, take it from me.]]

I looked at the desk, and I was surprised when I made it to my feet. I stumbled for a little bit, wary of my legs and the weight that they were made to hold.



opened again, and more food came opening. I'm guessing it was didn't care. I ate it mindlessly... I scarf everything down, to forget the wandered elsewhere

trying find where it lost itself.... Of *it,,,,,* my mind, I mean.... Or maybe I don't know how to put it. But I just the pain I felt now and then... the my head.

the shiny metal bowl in the opposite looked over every crevice, every surface, there wasn't much else to a few minutes to study the entirety then my mind drifted away from construction, that lifeless piece of

of course, but it wasn't that

I stood there for a few minutes, swaying on my new legs and looking down at them... They were

The home I once was,
Was gone and I with it
Everything was gone
And I was nothing
An object to be used
And a shell to be filled.

pale, and my shorts were the same ones that they had brought me in with. The pockets were empty, and now, all I had was pencil and paper...

They gave me concrete, so I would be concrete
They gave me metal, so my heart would be steel
They made me hard
And I continued to be hard
Until the metal rusted and the concrete crumbled in agony

And I decided to attack everything that threatened that reality

The concrete encasing me was my skin
My shelter

The shining bowl in the corner of the room was my weapon

They only gave me concrete and metal
And so, everything I killed... with concrete and metal

The entire room was concrete,
And all I knew was concrete

It wasn't long after I had finished scribbling on the piece of paper that the metal clanged again with a new and stronger resonance.

I couldn't tell if it was morning or not, but it felt like a new day. It was that feeling of newness, or oldness, that you

felt in the morning, where your body felt old and withered, while your mind felt groggy and new.

The big, white man stood in the doorway, and I began to wonder if the big man had ever not been here. I wondered if he slept here, how long had it actually been since I last saw him, and if he was real.... If I was just imagining him.

He took me by the shoulders, turned me around, and handcuffed me against the wall. He said something about it being a matter of precaution more than anything, but I wasn't listening anymore. I was in my own head, thinking about how to get out of here... This was a nightmare, a reality, and a memory, and I hated all of it. Every time he turned me around to face a wall, I wanted to bash my head against its hardness. I wanted to break my head open and spill its contents on the floor. Whenever they turned my body around and made me submit to them my hands and self, I felt like an animal without will or choice. I felt like a piece of garbage being thrown from one person to another without thought or query – to one day find myself someone else entirely.

He put his hands back on my shoulders after he had finished with the handcuffs and started to guide me out of the cell and to the right – (I thought this was the opposite direction they took me last night, but for the life of me, I couldn't remember if that was real or if that was imagined).

We walked by the bench I had sat in the other day... and it seemed like someone else entirely different from me had sat there... It seemed as if I was living another's life, and someone else had stolen mine...

.....

We passed another couple of desks and assistants until we came to a purple room... It was wallpapered and the background was purple while softened pink flowers were randomly set throughout the purple backdrop. A desk sat in front of a door; there were magazines and a TV displaying the local news.

The woman behind the desk, set into the corner of the room, looked up at the man behind me. She ignored me. She talked with the man behind me, and I stood there like an object for which the rest of the office had no use.

“Hey, Don.”

“Are you here for the session with Dr. Johnson?” she began.

“Yeah, Charles wanted ‘em to see the Doc,” he returned.

She told the big man behind me that I could sit next to the magazines, which he looked towards and motioned his head for me to go sit down.

...

I followed my directions.

I sat there... not looking around, not really breathing, and showing only minor appearances of life.

The two of them in the room – the big, white man and the small, pale woman behind the desk – started talking with each other in more relaxed tones now that I was taken care of... They started in hushed tones that I could barely hear, but eventually, the big man reverted back to speaking with a thunderous echo, and I could clearly hear what was being said.

“Where did you find ‘em? I’ve been hearing stories all around the office, and it seems crazy.... Jill even said that his mind was broken; She’s a gossip, but is it true?” the small woman asked.

“Well, we got a call in the other day of someone wondering around the fields behind this farmer’s house... Well Charles and I went to check it out, and when we initially went, we couldn’t see or find anyone trespassing. We talked with the farmer, and he acted like he had no idea what we were talking about. When we asked who had made the call a day before, he seemed genuinely surprised and wanted us to leave, telling us that no one had been on his property and that it was probably a practical joke or something,” Don replied.

“Did you believe ‘im?” She replied.

“Yea, but at the same time, it felt funny, ya know... We actually started to leave, but then Charles didn’t feel right. He didn’t look too right either.”

“He told me that the old man was losing his mind... He distinctly remembers talking with him on the phone about a kid wandering around his property for the past few days. Right then, Charles knew it wasn’t a prank, but Charles also had this pit feeling he kept talking about. He kept saying that it didn’t feel right... He kept asking questions but the old man was getting tired of us and the incessant questioning,” Don continued.

“Yeah,” the woman countered.

“Well, we get to the car, and Charles is done. You know how he gets. He gets something into his mind, and he can’t get it out.”

“And after we made it to the car, he started pacing back and forth along the car’s edge.”

“He kept worrying, and I couldn’t calm him down. So, he said he was going for a walk and he was gone, out-of-sight, for like 30 to 40 minutes.” Don returned, starting to calm himself and lose the initial excitement that was once there....

“Is that when it happened? When he was gone in the woods?” she responded.

“Not really, we didn’t find ‘im then, Charles came back even more pissed off than before, but he didn’t really talk about or anything.. He’s a quiet guy...” He continued.

.....

...

A woman came out of a door on the other side of the room, and the two near the desk went quiet like school children about to be reprimanded.... But all she did was call me into her office with a wave of her hand. I was hesitant at first, and then, I knew that I didn’t have any options. I either cooperated with this scheme, or I would be forced to cooperate.

I stood up (wobbly because I couldn't use my hands to help lift myself), knowing that my legs were weak and tired. I started towards the door, and then the doctor saw my handcuffs behind my back.

She looked towards the big, white officer in the corner, and immediately demanded that my cuffs be taken off.

I didn't know if it was rehearsed... it might all have been rehearsed, and I was just entering the scene as a spectator, but Don came up from behind me and unhinged the handcuffs.

I took my wrists in my hands, rubbing them, and it was only then that I noticed that my wrists were bruised and bloodied. Not even when I was writing had I noticed the marks, but now, they were all I could see. I stared at them, and so did the doctor. Her mouth was slightly open in shock, and I eyes went back to my hands.

I kept rubbing them in between my fingers and palms, and then, there was movement around me. The doctor advanced beyond the door, came up behind me, and started to coax me into the doorway.

There was another desk inside the room (this place was full of desks), and this couch thing on the other side of the room next to an armchair....

The middle-aged woman pointed her hand at the couch-thing on the other side of the room and said, "Well, you could sit wherever you like, but the couch is the most comfortable."

I didn't move. I stood there like an electrical pole in the ground and gave silent disapproval....

She continued to her desk, got out a notebook and pen, and then proceeded to her armchair.... She hadn't noticed that I wasn't sitting down.

She took out her pen, opened her notebook, and began to write....

We stayed like that for about five minutes.

She continued writing line after line. I guess, she was putting her thoughts together or learning about me from my silence.

I stood there in my skin and moved only slightly to get out of an uncomfortable position from time to time.

...

There was a window on the other side of the room, and I wanted to go to it. I hadn't seen leaves or grass in a while, and I missed it. There was a tree, a Japanese maple, right in front of the

window... It was beautiful, but I couldn't touch it, feel it, smell it, or hear it... A woman and a window separated me from it.

They might as well have been iron bars instead of glass panes. She might as well have been my keeper instead of a therapist.

I was an animal here, and this was their zoo.

I was made to do tricks, complete tasks, and to be diminished....

All of this was going through my mind, and then, the doctor interrupted my thoughts, "So do you like the outdoors? You keep looking out the window. It's a Japanese maple by the way... maybe we can go out there in a little bit....?"

....

I stood there and said nothing; a good animal keeps their mouth shut.

.....

She continued to talk, and I continued to stand near the doorway, looking through to the other side of the room.

"What's your name," she asked.

....

"Do you know where you are," she inquired.

...

"Do you remember where your hometown is," she probed.

And then finally, she started to give in, "If you don't want to talk.... we could just sit here if you like."

“The worst thing that has ever happened to this country was the desegregation of schools,” my grandmother began.

[An awkward silence came over the room, but no one stopped her from saying anything. My mother was a teacher, and she didn’t say anything. I wanted to be a teacher someday, and I didn’t say anything. It was death by silence, agreement by implication. It felt wrong, but in a whole other sense, it felt right... It felt empowering; it felt relieving. It felt wholesome.]

“You know they should’ve had their own school and we should’ve had our own. That way they fail by themselves or succeed by themselves. It’s this mixing insanity that makes our schools impossible. Joanie, you now what I’m talking about. You deal with this crap day in and day out. Wouldn’t it be so much better if we were supposed to teach the kids that wanted to be there?” She continued.

“Of course, but there’s always kids that don’t want to learn.” my mother quipped back.

[Here, I saw my future and my present. I couldn’t change what I had done in that place, in that space, but I thought about my future in school.]

[I didn’t want to become that, that thing in front of me, the things that were already here, but was it too late.... I was probably already that thing... those people... I didn’t say anything.... Even worse, I noticed that I was shaking my head in some kind agreement.]

[I wanted to think that I was just socialized to shake my head when others spoke, but part of me knew that I was shaking my head because of something entirely different... I knew that part of me agreed with her....]

“We don’t need to speak to get to know one another... I already know you like the outdoors. Also, you apparently like standing rather than sitting down,” she mused.

Silently, I stared at her face for a few moments. She had brown hair, short brown hair. It came down to her neck, and it was put into a nice cut around. It framed her face well, and she continued to play with it for the almost the entire time I was in the office (maybe a new haircut). She also had these tiny little ears on the sides of her face.

She would pull her hair back, and each time, she would slightly caress each of her ears. Her nose was small, but her lips were straight and full. Her eyes were big globules of green and shaped like two gigantic ovals. Her eyebrows were neat and orderly, and her teeth were imperfect.....

She didn't have pure white teeth, they weren't all straight either. Each tooth had its own place within her mouth, and they came together to tell her story...

She wore a skirt that came down to her knees, a blouse, and a cardigan that hid her figure.

She continued to look at me as I watched her, and her eyes began to watch mine.

I didn't say anything, but I knew that she was trying to make eye contact;;; we were both looking into each other's eyes and faces, but my eyes were vacant and empty, while hers were searching simply too hard and too long.

"Do you know how old you are," she asked.

....

"Do you know where you attended high school," she asked.

.....

"Did you have a pet growing up," she said.

She seemed determined and resilient, and I liked that about her. It spoke to her character, her unwillingness to give in... her voice stayed to same volume and tone, yet she kept asking question after question. She didn't get impatient or rude; she just continued to ask questions whether I acknowledged her or not.

After thirty or so minutes, my legs were beginning to give in, and she could tell.

She tried, again, to get me into the couch across from her, but I refused to move from that spot.

Instead, I sat on the ground where I stood, and I looked up into the blue sky across the room, searching for something beautiful and unknown.

She came over and sat next to me, leaning her back against the table in between the chair and couch. She looked me up and down, again and again, and then asked, "What would you want to talk about..."

My eyes glanced towards her face, and my mind started to think about some night... it subconsciously thought

I continued to look into her face, and I saw pain. She was hurt; it looked as if she wanted to help, but her body was in the way, her skin impeded her process, and her eyes were downcast...

I remained still, and my voice whispered at first, "I don't know, and I don't want to know."

She looked up, confused, asking in her own mind if that was hallucination or real. She heard a whisper, yet she didn't know if it was real or what the words meant.

She immediately locked the words onto her piece of paper.

She turned the pad around and looked at me in the eyes... She asked what those words meant, and I sat still and was quiet...

I don't want to know, was the answer to all of her questions, but she didn't put that together until later I guess.

We continued to sit on the floor, and she continued to stare into my face.

Every once in a while, she would raise her voice in question, but then her voice would go silent once again. Every free moment, she looked around herself, trying to follow my eyes to see what I was seeing, but she never saw me, understood me, in the room.

She would always use a blank tone that struggled not to convey displeasure and authority.

Her office was like a reflection of herself. She had little pictures all around the room, displaying her children and whom I assumed was her husband. There were books all around her office, on shelves and stacked in piles, but I somehow doubted that she had read all of them, even half of them. I got the feeling that she just liked being around books, the enclosure, the trappings, the caged feeling.

She had this one picture that I couldn't stop staring at. It was a picture of her and her family on the beach... on some white sand beach. They were all wearing this white linen fabric, and they were looking into the camera as if they were wax figurines... Everything seemed so structured and planned. In the picture, they all looked as if they were paining from the beach and the sun and themselves... The woman in the picture looked slightly off cue and was staring at something behind the camera... I couldn't find out what she was looking at, but she looked dispossessed. She looked depressed and empty. Her smile was shaking and her cheeks seemed so strained that her ears were coming around to the center of her face.

Her image seemed as if she was about to cry, while her husband on the other side of her looked on with a blankness that would make any sane person scream. His eyes were empty, his face was devoid of life, and his body was slouching over his children and his wife. He was trying to hold himself up, but sadly, something was pulling him down. It wasn't gravity alone, but something else that continued to weigh heavily on his chest, on his back... he wasn't happy. That was obvious, but his eyes were yelling something else. His eyes were blank, white pieces of flesh that denied him.

The picture was black and white.

I looked at the picture again, and then looked at the doctor, sitting on the ground. She was staring off into space.

When I opened my mouth, I began with, "You could've told me you're struggling."

For a second, she looked back and then forth. It was the first time she had heard my voice above an indistinguishable whisper, and she seemed as if she didn't like my voice... or my statement. She looked at me with her eyebrows scrunched together and her arms now folded. She took a quick glance at the photograph I had been studying, and she curtly remarked, "I'm fine---- what would make you think that I'm struggling?"

My eyes had fluttered to the top of my head, and my arms threw themselves up slightly. "Well, you're obviously in pain since you surround yourself with such elaborate distractions.... Distractions from yourself and your job.... do you not like your job, or rather, is this the only thing you like about your life?" I said, guiding my arm to encompass all the pictures and books and folders..... all the things

She looked at me again. This time, anger brimming in her eyes... She acted as if this was a breach of privacy, yet she had the pictures out for anyone to see. She had the books all over her office.... Even more, she was a therapist and wanted to do the same thing to me, and she was angry about my doing it to her.... It seemed hypocritical even....

She kept silent for another minute. I guess digesting the information I had just given her.

....

..

“I am troubled,” I said..... (Her temper dying out, waiting to hear the words I had to say.... It was strange; somehow, so easily, she had become the patient, sitting on the floor alongside me, and I had become the therapist – a strange but intimate reversal – a knocking and then nothing....)

...

“It’s hard.... It’s disturbing,” I charged.

“It feels bad. Doesn’t it? Everything is off, but then again, it always feels like you’re supposed to be fine... Everyone thinks you’re supposed to be good, that you’re made to be good.” I replied to myself.

...

“I was a white angel once,” I continued.

I thought back, and I questioned whether I would ever stop being an angel; I thought back to some classroom I could hardly remember; I didn’t want to be an angel. I didn’t want those white wings.

The whole time I spoke, her body started fidgeting, and her hands were red and sweaty. Her eyes were still but they weren’t looking at me; they were looking at the floor in front of her... She seemed like a schoolgirl that got into trouble by the teacher ----- I didn’t want to do that to her. I didn’t want to make her feel lesser.... Maybe I did. I don’t know.

I just wanted to know.

Her eyes searched my face, and her palms were flayed out in front of her. She was picking at them, irritated and uncomfortable. But at the same time, she began to soften, even become approachable.

Her hands still raveled together, her green eyes started to slowly rise to mine. She obviously didn’t know what to say...

Her face ranged in emotion, from anger to hatred to depression. Everything was painted across those eyes and lips, and yet, she said nothing. I said nothing. We just sat there for the rest of the time I was there.

I wanted to hurt her.... Maybe I didn't. I don't know.... I didn't even know that the question would have that kind of reaction... I thought she'd just blow me off and continue with her own questions.

I hated her black and white family photos that showed their perfect little children and their pure white teeth.

...

It was all such a lie.... A lie for themselves as much as for other people... It was a façade; it was something that others didn't.

.....

The big, white man opened the door hesitantly, obviously unaware of the power dynamic between himself and the doctor sprawled out in front of me. (She had sat still for the rest of the session, and her eyes rarely, if ever, moved. She had made sounds, but they were hardly audible to me. (I tried to tell myself that I was just asking a question, but deep in my mind, I knew that I had wanted to make her weak.... She began the session so confident in herself that I wanted to break her, just a little bit... I wanted to make her question herself....)

The big, white man saw the doctor sitting on the floor, but as suddenly as he had seen her, she moved into herself, "Well, that was a good start; we'll see him tomorrow? Yes??"

"Yeah, I think so. Charles wanted to make sure he had someone to talk to other than us while we try and figure out where to go from here," he returned.

"Good, good.... Let Charles know that I might have to refer him to one of my colleagues that specializes in childhood, psychological trauma, Dr. Murphy. He would benefit more from her than from me," She finished.

(More conversation ensued, but my brain had taken me away, somewhere else entirely).

I love how she said childhood trauma. She said it as if she knew me.

[A voice in the back of his mind kept repeating and repeating, "But they.... They trained you."]

I didn't want to pay attention to the voice, yet all the way to the holding cell, my mind kept thinking back to his childhood, back to his parents; I kept remembering, and I didn't want to remember. I didn't want to remember the first time he and my mother passed a poor black man on the street. I didn't want to remember the stories that his grandparents told him. I didn't want the shit to spew out of his father's mouth.]

I grew silent, not consciously, but I grew silent. My face was pale, and my palms were covered in sweat.... It had been such a long time since I had thought about any of this (or had it), and I didn't want to think about it anymore. I didn't want to think about myself anymore.

When I finally arrived back in the concrete-walled cell, I smashed my head on the metal bowl in the corner of the room. I waited for the big, white man to leave, and I fell to the ground, slid over to the bowl, knowing how much it would hurt. I slammed my forehead on the metal around the rim of the bowl.

I passed out cold on the ground, and my mind went somewhere else entirely.... I was relegated to my subconscious.... I didn't want to think about what I was thinking about.... I didn't want to ask those questions,,,,, think them.

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