

In Short:

What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.

-Freidrich Neitzsche

Humankind can only bear so much reality.

-T.S. Eliot

**This is my letter to the world, that never wrote back to
me...**

-Emily Dickinson

Then there's the long version...

Introduction: A word to the reader

For decades, I have mulled over my story and the right way to tell it, as well as the reasons for telling it at all. I've gone through numerous phases, from the ever popular "poor me" to the "wish I'd never been born," as well as the "show my wounds to the world." Nowadays, what I once considered a wound has been transformed into an experience, a chance to develop and alter perspective. These words are here because all experiences teach us something, and because all journeys have a point and a meaning, even if that point is to have no meaning at all. I took the time to bother you with these pages because there might be something in my path that you hadn't seen before, just as there is much in your path I may not have known before.

You may soon notice that I am no gifted author; instead merely a person with a story. I will do all that I can to tell that story with accuracy and integrity, but I too am hounded by selective recollection, and an ego that always wishes to paint me as a hero. You will see in these pages my flaws and errors, and perhaps even my charms and achievements, but above all you will see my darkness and my lightness. It is in between these that I hope you'll find something useful, some piece to take away and make your own.

Like many of us, I want to make a difference, to offer something of value to humankind. Though I don't know what you'll think of it by the time you finish these pages, in my mind my story is the most valuable thing I have to offer. So I will tell you all that I can, while protecting secrets that are not mine to tell. As I'm no skilled writer, I shall talk to you as a friend, and offer my honest thanks for taking the time to know my life.

I write this from the cover of anonymity to give privacy to those who have experienced enough difficulty and grief. If you know who I am, or piece it together from the experiences I

share, I beg you to keep it to yourself. Some may be concerned with the authenticity of the tale (a somewhat common problem these days), but I'd rather have you think me a liar than bother my family with things they'd rather forget or keep hidden. If you cannot accept the truths of my life, then fine. Call it a piece of fiction if you need to, as all stories have truths to share and lessons to learn. As long as my story makes some difference, no matter how miniscule, I'm not so concerned about those who challenge my honesty. I know the truth, and that is enough.

I have two younger brothers who have their own stories and secrets to tell, and so will not be found consistently in these pages, instead appearing in particular moments that can't be shared without description of them. Though many of us may walk a similar path, what we take from that path can be vastly different, and each decides on their own what to take.

Lastly, an Adytum, if you are not familiar, can be defined as the innermost sanctum of a temple, where only the sacred and revered are allowed to tread. The religious connotation doesn't quite fit, but the rest of the term seems appropriate to what is contained in these pages. Not only do I invite you to my inner most places, but I consider you, another person struggling to get by and someone I may one day call friend, sacred.

Welcome to my Adytum.

A Moment of Anger-

Screams. Loud, piercing, frustrating screams that rip through the child's eardrums without mercy. The child is a small boy, about six years old, standing before his deaf, screaming mother. She signs at him and screams simply because she has frustration that needs to escape. She is not coherent or patient; she is angry. She is simple and impulsive and something is wrong, which is bad, and it's his fault, the boy's. She glares at him with a hatred that has no real basis, just the energy of the present moment.

The child isn't even looking at her, instead focused on something outside. She slaps him, attention; he doesn't turn. It doesn't matter, she knows he can hear her. Smoke. There is smoke now, from the cast iron skillet resting on the stove. He did this. The boy made it burn. All this work and he did it, made it wrong. Hit him. Get the skillet and hit him. She moves, lumbers, strides. The child is brought back from the window, senses something different, and notices the now-wielded frying pan.

The child runs, goes for the storm door and fumbles. The skillet hits, glass breaks, body falls, and blood spills while screams pierce and violate and tear. She wants to hit him again, one more because he did this, caused all this. He hears this; the steps and screams are for his soul alone. Run. Run, run, run. Get up and run.

She comes for the boy and he is gone. His legs carry his small, awkward body away from her, but the screams follow and clutch at him. They grab him and sink their fangs into his thoughts, into his fears. The last shriek is like a fist in the gut, brings water to his eyes. All from a sound. A sound from a deaf person, with one solitary target, one set of ears. Breathe. It's over.

The boy keeps running, on to the forest next door and down a familiar winding path to a fallen tree that is his most

trusted friend, and collapses on it. He wraps his arms around the trunk, squeezes as tight as he can. His body burns and he wants to cry, but his mind does not. He will never give her the satisfaction of a single tear upon his cheek. Instead, he screams.

The child lets sound come forth. It is not the guided voice of reason, and not regulated by the concept of intelligible. Instead, it is the desperate howl of frustration and rage and sorrow found in the abused sides of humanity. It is a call to all the other unheard voices in the world, and the only responses are the rumbling of motorists on their way to a tourist trap, and the slowly dying echo of his own madness. His sound fades while his thoughts grow weary and thick. Sleep comes quickly, bringing with it dreams of a field far away.

Foundations-

Both of my parents are deaf. Their hearing was lost due to physical damage during the course of life, as opposed to a genetic defect, and so my hearing remains intact. My mother had Spinal Meningitis by the age of two, which caused not only her hearing loss, but mild brain damage as well. Official tests of her faculties came back as borderline, or inconclusive, as her impaired hearing left results questionable. Her schooling went up to high school level, though by the time I met her she was essentially illiterate. My father, as the story was told to me, was once leaning back in a chair during his middle school years, and had the chair balanced on the two back legs. He and the chair fell, and my father lost the use of one eardrum from the impact with the cement floor. Years later, in high school, he did the exact same thing and lost the remaining eardrum. Though he finished high school at a local institution for the deaf, he never went to college and couldn't be defined as an "educated man."

My parents met at a party for the hearing impaired, arranged by or somehow affiliated with that same local school for the deaf. Alcohol was involved, my parents did their thing, and when they sobered up in the morning, they decided they didn't actually like each other very much and parted ways. A few months later both families were pressuring my father to "do the right thing," as I was conceived and soon to be. I saw their marriage certificate at one point, dated one month after my birthday. They fed me a story about the ceremony taking place before my birth and perhaps this is true, but it's my guess that I'm a bastard in more ways than one. This is most of what I know about my parents before I was born, though some of it I still question.