

Finite

by Emily Smith-Miller

She placed her hand on my arm after the exam. This was not a good sign, comforting gestures from strangers were bad omens.

"This is not a reflection on you or on your sexuality," she said matter of factly, but with the perfect amount of strength and sympathy, that made me want to believe her. It was a moment before I realized that I'd begun to cry softly, in an off hand way.

"Is this the end of my life?"

"No, not at all," again the assurance and confidence, it almost made me think she did know what I was going through, but I knew that it was just her well rehearsed speech and kind nature that lent the real authenticity to her words.

I could pick up my medication in the front office, with the unfortunate chairs and other patrons of industry. We could be easily separated into class groups by the quality of our clothing, the people who sat along the wall and me. I was clearly from a higher social standing, that's what happens when you go to free clinics on the east side, but they had suddenly jumped floors above me in real self worth. They did not have my stigma, they were not waiting for their medicine, the medicine they would have to take daily forever. No cure. That was one of most terrifying ideas. Not so terrifying as what it really meant for the rest of my life though. No more love. The faces of the people I would tell, judgement and disgust. Would they even regard me anymore? I was toxic, an illness, a disease, a virus. If something ate me it would get sick. They called my name and I picked up the white bottle of pills and threw it in my bag with the other prescriptions constantly lurking in my blood stream. But manic depressive is not contagious.

It didn't matter now that I'd rear ended a BMW on my way to the clinic, I had been given my life verdict in there, with the posters of happy trees and pamphlets about chlamydia and family planning. I'm surprised there wasn't a kitten holding onto a rope with a cheery "Hang in there!" slogan floating around somewhere. Driving home

was autopilot, I could see the car swerving off of the overpass, just let go, it's all over now anyway. Game. Set. Match. You're stronger than this. My fists clenched white knuckles around the steering wheel, and my stomach knotted with a sense of finality. I kept the car steady and pulled into my house. I asked my little sister if she still loved me, if she was afraid of me, afraid to touch me. I was scared of never being touched again. She lay beside me and we watched the Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

Lately I've been looking at the scars on my arms from where I used to drag razor blades, some of them were so deep they will probably never fade. Their raised shape frightens me, I wonder how close I'd really come all those times to just letting it fall away like glitter in a whirlwind. Let the sparkles surround and blow away. I knew I was somewhat lackluster, dull and sickly, with vaguely permanent mascara streaks outlined on my cheeks. I cry so often it feels like a waste of energy to remove them now. I don't know if there will be many things that I will miss out on or if it's just in my mind. I've lived to the extremes. Doing drugs with the punks in Washington Square Park. Drinking on rooftops with the models and photographers of magazines that people live by. Running on the surf line with someone I just met and making them believe that we were magical. Sex in the bathroom with a boy from a band who loved me for a little while, then they played their next song. I turned to a green pill marked 80 mg and began chewing it as the memories of those I loved returned to me. They were lucky, they escaped the hurricane, they would love again with women who were not just half a person. They would grow old with a girl who was not less than. Their minds would only know me as something intangible who once captured a whole heart and ran wild in the streets on adventures of the soul. There would be no more adventures for me, I have now to hang up my sweet party hat, my leather chaps, my six shooter gun, my bottle of indestructible. Because I know now that I am finite.

I swallow the pills again.

