

Joy

*This story is very dark, morbid and detailed.
It was written with regard to Borderline Personality Disorder.
A mental illness resulting in extreme emotions.
Details are for dramatic purposes.*

Looking at that blank, blanche paper no inspiration hit his mind. ‘Joy’ Brother Ramon had said. Could there be a wider subject? What on earth was he going to write? He glanced around and saw his classmates looking hopelessly at their sheets. Brother Ramon gave a very stern eye, suspecting Jerome of copying. He looked back at his paper and decided to start writing something. But what was joy? *Joyous...* he wrote down. He closed his eyes and thought about being consumed by happiness. *Joyous are those all around Jubilant, to the ringing sound.* He was alright. Once he had started it wasn’t hard at all. *The atmosphere, like flaming air.* He was rather good. The words flowed naturally as if they were from deep within him, words he was always meant to write. After finishing two quatrains of effortless composition Jerome was the first to stand up and hand in his poem. He sat back down with a new-found passion for poetry. He was going to be a great poet; he just knew it.

All throughout the rest of the day, the words to the poem were in Jerome’s head like a tune that gets stuck on one’s mind. It was a masterpiece that he had created. *Him*, of all people. He was incredibly proud of himself. This was his gift that he was meant to give to the world.

When he got home, he decided to start a book of poems. The first one being *Joy*. His second poem was called *Passion*. It was about his passion for composition. But nothing was as good as *Joy*, his masterpiece. He would *surely* grow into an amazing poet. One who’s poems, years after, school children would study as classics. People would say he was big headed, but he just had a vision. For two days, he lay over the collection of his abecedarian work. When at last, it was time to publish. He approached the problem of: *Who on earth would publish the work of a juvenile?* He simply must get it out, must start giving the world his gift. By any means! He spoke to the town newspaper, even if it were in the children’s art submissions. Surely, someone would see it. *Someone* would then be able to appreciate his work! This he was going to do, many times if necessary, to get noticed. Eventually someone *must* publish him.

On Monday morning they got their assessments. Why did Brother Ramon give every student their poems before Jerome? Was he trying to kill him? Of course, Jerome knew that that wasn't true. His paper *had* been the one at the bottom of the pile. But why were the odds so cruel to him? Jerome was the *one* student in the class that cared about the result so deeply. Soon he would get his first review as a poet. Very, very soon. As Brother Ramon approached, Jerome's hands shook violently. He had drunk ten dozen cups of coffee. When the paper landed on his table, flipping it over was a spinal reflex.

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His heart sunk.

For a moment he died.

Time stood still, for even time was dumbstruck.

The bell rang. That bell that always was so loud it left a ringing in the ears, belonged to the background now. Jerome gathered his books with half a mind. He felt surreal, ghostlike. On his way floating out the crammed door Brother Ramon tugged his collar. 'Listen here, Stanza,' He waited a moment for the rest of the class to clear out. 'Take me for a fool, do you?' Jerome looked at him without really seeing him, looking through him in a way. With a slap to the cheek Brother Ramon got his attention. 'I said, do you take me for a fool? You really are something you know, Stanza. What are you playing at? You know, always peeping over other pupil's tests is one thing but to claim one of John Ridgedouso's poem as your own is outrageous!' Jerome was rendered speechless. How dare someone accuse his poem, his masterpiece of being plagiarized. His masterstroke. His greatest achievement. *He* had created it, he had!

This stung like piercing blade. Never would he forget this, never.

There was a heaviness at the back of his lungs, a cloister of misery, a cancerous tumour. When he breathed it felt heavy. It was a ubiquitous presence, shackled around his heart. This feeling lasted all throughout his day. When finally, he got home, he slackened his resistance and let the depression wash over. Pain and misery shone on his face in an agonizing grin that was lapidified on his face. Tears began streaming down as though his eyes were sockets of a water feature. He couldn't move but just stood there, leaning against the door; drawing long, deep, silent groans. He stood there for a long while. That facial expression like a mask that he was unable to remove, although he didn't try, for that would require strength he couldn't be bothered to find.

The night passed; it was timeless. Through it, Jerome had lain on his bed not having changed clothes. He would cry for some time and then his body would die for a few minutes from exhaustion, no time later the pattern would repeat itself. This continued long passed daybreak. Jerome felt the incipient sunlight pass his face and longed to be one with it. Longed for the light.

His father came to his room just before noon. ‘You lousy, old whimper. Be a man for once, huh?’ He said. ‘Get up, go to school. Your mom and I ain’t paying them so as you can be lying here all day.’ His father soon became annoyed and began shouting. He yelled and shouted every insult his simple mind could find. At long last Jerome got up.

Jerome walked into the class. People looked, they whispered. Some even looked scared. Jerome remained expressionless. The blackboard was a void which he stared into the depth of. On Jerome’s way home from school two guys, Richie and Cormac ran into him. They were a year older, of the senior year at St. Frigus’s. Cormac held up the town’s newspaper. ‘Oh Richie, hey come look at this.’ ‘Now what do we have here in the kiddie section, let me see. Oh,’ He said. ‘Lookie what we have here. And by Jerome Stanza, why, isn’t that you, little boy?’ Jerome looked between them and attempted to carry on walking. ‘But oh, no, we aren’t done here are we Richie?’ ‘Afraid I can’t say that we are.’ He pushed through them and started walking on. They caught up with him and tripped him so he fell. Cormac then kicked him. That should have come as a shock to him, but Jerome had been expecting it. He had wanted it. Now he smiled vaguely and lay there. This was the first time he felt alive since his life had ended. They kicked again, and again. He wanted colour to his black and grey world. He longed for red. Soon enough, he got his wish.

A trail of blood lead to the home of the Stanzas. Jerome sat on his bed again. He thought about depression, and about life. ‘The only way to rid yourself of depression is to conquer it, they say. That doesn’t even sound like a possibility. I don’t even remember what happiness is like. I can’t live like this. I don’t even want to see tomorrow. How come there are such few suicides?’ He stood up and walked down the stairs. ‘A lot of people are suicidal. Am I weaker than them?’ He reached the door of the basement, opened it and glanced about the room in search for a rope. ‘I’m weaker than all those people.’ The rope he found lying on a shelf amongst some car items. ‘I just want the sadness to end. I have soot in my eyes. I have no eyes. They are the black void I am leaving behind.’ He found a plank in the ceiling worthy of the job. It was strong. He would not fail. Somehow tying the rope came naturally. It looked beautiful hanging there, like a Christmas decoration. It was meant to hang there. Jerome adjusted the stool and stepped on it. ‘It’s too painful to live, maybe someday I could feel better but it isn’t worth it. Just living for a few more minutes

is more than I can bear. The pain is too much. I Just want to die.’ He closed his eyes and jumped into the light.

The ceremony was held in Our Lady of Sorrows. The whole town showed up and no cheek was dry. This was a tragedy like no other. The church had never been so crammed. People even stood outside and mourned. Mrs Stanza was a mess, even Father Joseph couldn’t keep his voice steady, as he read from the Romans 8:26. He closed the book. ‘A sadness of the worst kind has entered our hearts. The death of a child. Jerome Stanza was a remarkable young boy. He was explementary and what a privilege it was to have him amongst us. We shall remember him that way.’ He then read out the poem by John Ridgedouso that Jerome had submitted in the papers.

Joy

Joyous are those all around
Jubilant, to the ringing sound.
The atmosphere, like flaming air
That wills you to hear
That ringing, singing sound all around.

Not a thought left behind
Joined the crowd to find
An ecstatic, jolly feeling
That only is found in believing
That Lord above is kind.

At the sound of this poem lady back in the furthest row gave a whimper. A distant aunt who had been the boy’s babysitter as an infant. Oblivious to the recent events she whispered to the person next to her. ‘I used to read that to him all the time’.

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