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I Don't Cry

You tell people that you don't cry,
well except during certain movies and tv shows,
and also the songs that understand you too well. So maybe you do cry.

However, you don't cry when you see something sad.

You would feel the tears starting to slip when others have let them fall,
but your feelings surmounting from deep inside rarely threaten to expose themselves.

I should feel more, cry more, suppress less.

But am I suppressing?

When cancer finally took Grandma, I felt more anxiety being around my grieving family
than sadness from having finally lost her.

But then again, she was already gone.

For years now, she had not been the same, her mind gave out before her heart did.

Have I just mastered clamping down the rising anger, sadness, wanting, joy,
or is there something wrong?

I see others who understand themselves to the fullest,

they are not ashamed to say that they in fact do cry, they cry a lot,

they cry once a week to keep in touch with the emotions they experience.

This is healthy.

It is good to cry.

But when I cry

I don't feel happy after,

I don't feel the weight of the world lift off my shoulders.

I suppress and suppress until it all boils over

and I can't stop the water from streaking down my face.

He makes me cry though.

Not from overwhelming joy or sadness but
anger, frustration, hopelessness.

I know when the words are coming out of my mouth
he does not hear me.

He waits until I pause and interjects his unwavering opinions.
Immediately any ground I thought I had gained has vanished.
Wiped away.

It's clear my presence in this lecture is unnecessary.
It is *never* clear to him.

I would walk down the aisle for mass,
pass the various stories depicted in colorful stained glass.
We searched for a row that would fit us all.
When the smell of the wood was a comfort,
now seeing the lined pews every Sunday has become confinement.

Gradually, this became another place where I could only sit and listen.
I was never given the chance to share *my* thoughts,
my words,
to say that no,
this is not right,
I don't agree with the words you are saying.

He says that I like mom more, why does he think this?
Is it because I don't fight with her?
Because I do not cry mid conversation with her
which only serves to show my emotions as a weakness?

Because I confide in her my thoughts and emotions?

I will always love them both,

but maybe I do like her more.

She makes me feel like a human.

When I speak, I know she is hearing the words I say;

she doesn't make me cry.

I don't find myself repressing my beliefs when I'm in the comforts of her home,

surrounded by the animals which have never caused me anguish or anxiety.

I tell him about my classes and the research I have been able to do,

about a topic I am really becoming interesting in

and he remarks:

"but all men aren't bad"

"women should advocate for themselves, they are the ones not asking for more money"

"Men are discriminated against too,

we have it hard, same as you."

"You never have conversations with me"

he would complain.

Well, when we speak,

they aren't conversations,

not when he already knows

every

single

thing

he is going to say.

I know that whether or not I have a "conversation" with him,

his mind will not change.

So why would I want to keep having them?

I hold my tongue and don't say what my heart is yearning to finally release,

because when I did,
he became so angry.

“How can I ever trust you again, you are clearly just using me for my money.”

He hears me more as the distance progresses,
so here I am
in this quaint little town where the colors on the buildings express more than I ever could,
where the canals are connecting more than we ever have.
Will he hear me now, will my words make it past his preplanned responses?

I came to Italy not to cry less,
but to cry different,
to be so overcome with joy that I can't contain myself
and to not feel rage that has too often consumed your heart.

Sitting on the grass among one of the few patches not occupied by stone or water,
I notice that I had been in a daze,
looking at the sky,
at the clouds that had been painted by the gods.

The sun is blinding in the most relaxing way;
the warmth of it engulfs me,
seeps into my very soul.

The streets are filled with color,
blues, pinks, oranges, purples, dark, light, pastel,
but all bright,
all demanding.
I see green the most,
green houses,

green glass in the shop windows,
even some green of the grass in the few spots with gardens on the island.

I see green and I feel refreshed,
I feel reborn into this new world that is now my life.

I spend my days by the water,
on the grass,
in the sun,
under the sky,
at complete and utter peace with myself and my wants.

When was the last time I could think about myself
before making sure my actions would not upset him?
“you never spend time at home” “your actions speak louder than words” “family should come first”

I read more now.
I always yearned for the time to be able to,
and now I have it.
I have even started writing;
in my journal I recount the events of the days:
the thoughts in my mind and plans for the next.
Not that I could ever share the thoughts within those pages with him,
not when he continues to take up more space than deserved.

I open my worn copy of *Pride and Prejudice* and begin to read its opening pages.
I feel a brush against my left leg;
hours of sunlight seeped into the softest of fur made contact with my own sunbaked skin.
A black cat rubs its face against the corners of my book in my hands.
There is a faint mark above his left eye,

as though his little brow was in constant raise,
like he is constantly questioning that which is around him,
always interpreting.

Will the cat run before I can convince it to stay?
I left before he could.

I cannot recall why I never took in a cat in the time I have been here
I have loved cats since one crawled into my stroller at the age of two.
Looking down at the animal with joy I decide that yes,
I think he deserves to have a name.
He is black, so he shall be Kuro.
Mom likes to name the cats after Japanese words,
so why don't I?

I scratch his warm head,
he has been in the sun
like I too have easily succumbed to.

He fits right into the space between legs without managing to disturb the visibility of my pages.
We sit like that for an hour,
two
three
Time pass without my constant awareness.
I don't have to keep track of how long I have been away here,
I am never away anymore.

I stay sitting and petting until Kuro decides to venture into the gardens.
While I wish he would stay,
he should explore

Let him see whatever he feels inclined to observe.

Who am I to impede on his wishes?

I get up, collecting my book, bag, and blanket and head over to the corner café.

The aromas of the fresh pastries invade my nostrils and make my mouth feel empty.

I choose the croissant filled with jam.

Who I am to deviate from my usual routine?

Walking along the streets I look to the sea,

the vast body of water that contains more than we will ever know.

The green walls of my house,

so stark against the blue backdrop of the sky,

welcome me back from my day's journey.

I look to the garden hoping to see Kuro's head peaking behind a bush.

I see only the thorns from the flowers.

He'll come back.

I hope he does.

It becomes the new routine:

come back home,

look for the familiar swish of tail that means Kuro has come back.

It saddens me more than I realized it would when I don't see any flash of black.

I feel a tear slip down my face.

I reach my hand up to gently caress my cheek,

welcoming this show of vulnerability,

rather than hurriedly wiping it away like I have done so many times before.

If I continue to wait

surely I'll see him again,
feel the warm embrace of his fragile little body.

Why don't I just go and get my own cat?
Why do I feel the need to wait around for this specific one?

I have an issue letting go.