

Without glancing out of the window, I knew it was raining. Water had been haunting my dreams. Rain at dawn was something I'd always adored. My senses, especially the hairs on my arms, were attuned to the weather. But I rose from my bed to confirm my suspicions. With the curtain opened slightly, the pattering of raindrops suddenly amplified.

She woke up as she heard my movement. The rainfall caused her to sigh.

"Gosh, the garden is drenched already" she muttered. I smiled at her, finding our difference in perspective amusing.

"It's the flood" I asserted. I had confidence in this conviction. Why else would the water be stalking my dreams? Why else would He be giving me signs that no one else could see? I had experiences that anyone else could only imagine.

But they worried some.

Her face moved into the natural frown I seemed to keep causing. Maybe I should stop saying my Truth. Maybe the world wasn't ready for it yet. I looked back at her features. They now wore dismay.

I couldn't think how to reassure her.

For some reason it was now that I noticed the similarities in our faces. The dark, almost black but still brown, hair. The irregular splattering of freckles. The chocolate brown eyes that seemed to see everything.

As we went on a walk in the flat countryside; as we baked a cake in the kitchen; as we watched a repeat of Poirot on the television; we acted. We both spent the rest of day ignoring the big worries on our minds. I felt some urgency, but then a strange sense that All Will Be Well. Enacting a casual home set-up seemed to be the easiest option for both of us.

She seemed to not be working at the moment. I wonder what her excuse was. But it didn't really matter to me. I did enjoy spending time doing things I could remember from childhood. Recently, every strange face, even every familiar face, treated me as a child. My 22 years didn't seem to count at the moment. Perhaps it was the difference in perspectives. It could be that I didn't align with what was normal.

Which thinking is accepted by society.

As we walked along the river, it seemed like it would burst its banks soon. This knowledge filled me with joy. It was what I expected in this new narrative.

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The whispers woke me. It frustrated me that I hadn't yet learnt how to make sense of them. I could feel their mood though, whether they were excited giggles or conspiracy mumbles. From what I'd learnt growing up, I had an idea of what they could be. Maybe He'll give me the patience and grace to listen to them. Understand them. Understand His doing.

It was the time of night that would normally scare me. I associated this period of time, when the sun was hiding, with the devil. Criminals, dark deeds, societies' angels were quiet.

But the Angels were now alive in my consciousness.

I felt them now guide me, summon me to the river I had strolled past in the day. The dark must now reveal the best secrets.

A practiced expert at sneaking out, I avoided the creaky spots on the stairs. Picked out trainers, a comfy jumper, I didn't bother to change out of my pyjamas. I knew it didn't matter what I was wearing, in the scheme of things.

The creak of the cupboard, as I picked out the key. Click, clack, click. That was the least noise I could make with the lock in the door. It finally opened, allowed me in on it's secret.

The still air hit my face. It rejuvenated me. I now felt the urge to run. Just like I used to do in cross country races. Add a kilt, minus five rollercoaster years, and it was just like running for the bus to school. 7:20 sharp, departure time.

Senses alive, I felt like one of God's other creatures. Every instinct made sense. For the first time- Probably since I was a child- I could pick out the buzz of the creatures in the grass. I was one of them. Designed perfectly. Within His big plan.

Beautiful. It hit me how gorgeous this landscape was. The old me would have thought of the aesthetic, how photogenic it was. Instagrammable. These fields barely touched by society. The colours of the riverbank slowly lighting up, merging to paint a perfect collage. Everything the light brightened seemed to blush with the attention.

Ironically, in marketing my life, the old me would have brought society to these virgin lands. Eyes on a scene that preferred to be undiscovered.

This new me was about the moment. Feeling what is right. What I'm meant to be doing. No care for how things appear to other people. Maybe that concept will be the next downfall of me.

An idea dropped into my consciousness.

I should jump into the river. I should be baptised, with just Him watching. There were delighted giggles around me. This was the thing I should be doing. I imagined stripping naked, free of the self-consciousness that seemed to be growing every year that I grow older. I shouldn't be ashamed of these flaws that He graced me with.

Our bodies are something trusted to us. We are stewards of these mechanisms. We should delight in their abilities. Not weigh them every week as if they are something to be constantly bullied, monitored, prodded, improved upon.

But there was still some part of me questioning. I reluctantly entered into an inner argument. Part of me was so sure. What should I be doing. This other part of me seemed to be silently screaming.

No notion of time. A blurry few minutes, few hours.

She carried me home whilst I laughed as though it was all a bit of fun. Her relief as her tired body grabbed me.

My response to all this confusion was to instinctively laugh. I'm not sure why I did.

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One of the other girls was drawn to my confidence. We spoke of silly things. We played immature games. Coloured in, painted glitter on our creations, did a jigsaw. As someone with slightly more experience of this place, I told her which of the staff I liked. Which could go to hell. The ones we favoured were in on our discussions, one of the gang. They smiled at our abstract concepts. Laughed WITH us. Instead of giving us deadly stares. Accusing us of being dangerous, a strain on resources, at fault for our realities.

We discussed the best sandwich options for dinner. How we go about organising a bath once a day. How the shower is absolutely awful, avoid at all costs! and the towels are thin and scratchy. I warned her that if she could here footsteps

approaching, especially the ones that are heavy- likely men- she should shout to stop them from opening her curtain. They invade our small, assigned space.

Yes, we do have to share a room with five others. Yes, a lot of us clearly can't sleep.

My kind family brought me fruit teas, kept in the locked kitchen. No one seemed bothered to bring me one. I had to make do with the shitty decaf coffee we were provided. That's okay for a day. But dire for a three week sentence.

I tied my curtain to the one framing the window. A bit of fun. Add my touch to this tired décor. Yet. Someone told me that knots look a bit dodgy here. Give staff the wrong idea. Whatever that means. I love plaiting my hair, playing around with my laces. They got confiscated. Anything to fidget with seemed to get locked away.

I told my small friend that there is one woman, a bit older, who seems to live here. ForEver. Like a gang leader, she would search the possessions of the newbies. Asked me direct questions about things I'd doodled into my notebook. My sudoku book. Random connections like Bi-Polar, Bi- Sexual, what other Bi's are there. She laughed at me and asked if GOD would approve. Said it slowly. Suggestively. How could someone throw that at me so disdainfully?

Later, this oldish woman seemed to soften. She saw the lost in me. Stared at my eyes so long that she could see the changes, various states of confusion. She could tell I didn't know who I was.

We sang along to the eighties music constantly blaring from the TV, fixed on the music channel permanently. She found solace in the idea that I would be a long-termers like her. This new perspective on me seemed to accept my impulsive sayings on religion. We both laughed at my predictions, my ideas. I couldn't tell how much humour I agreed with there.

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The chaplain came over to accompany me to Sunday's Holy Eucharist. I had shown an interest in the services to one of the staff. It could be interesting to share faith with others. It would be a change of scene at least.

Casually conversing with her, I mentioned the Lincoln Imp. Weirdly, that was the only thing of interest to the child me. Our visits to the cathedral were mainly to spot it. Instead of the unbelievable LOVE STORY of God and Us. All the religious people

that walked in that building. The history, the worship, the person that brings us all together. The truth that would console this life.

Oh, and the story about the Bishop and the swan. That was intriguing. From what I recall, the swan approached one of the Lincoln Bishops one day. Then followed him the rest of his life. They died about the same time.

I wonder why the angels only spent time with me for a matter of weeks.

As we sang kum ba yah in the sad little group we were, I realised I was wearing a blood red top. No recollection of where it appeared from. Clothing seems to be a free-for-all round here.

I am the Scarlett woman, I thought. Mary Magdalene. I noticed the few men eyeing me up. Mixture of ages. I'd later play bowling with them, when I had the privilege of being allowed out for trips.

I guess I was drawing attention to myself. I sung loud. Passion flowing from me in this worship. My upbringing of church choir meant I barely had to look at the music. I felt joy in singing these songs. Like some unexpressed emotion was finally being let out. Soaring to the stars.

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The constant interrogation happened again. They'd clearly taken note of my behaviour, but not my message. Although. This place was sucking the spirit out of my prophesising. Impossible to be evangelical here.

There was too much science. Something I used to find exciting. But now, I noticed how it made people look so serious. Frowns fixed on their faces as they present data. How do the statistics always seem to depress people? Or was I watching the wrong type of science? Faith was so much more comforting.

Yes, my version of reality is different to yours. But isn't that the case for everyone? What about people that believe in aliens? Are they dragged by the police for sectioning?

Being argumentative seemed to provide further ammunition for them to persecute me. I should stop that. But actually, they probably had all the evidence they needed. From my traitorous family. She told them all her suspicions.

The family that had pulled me out of bed on a Sunday, every week. They thought that bringing up children with Good Christian Values would be best. How has that worked out for me?

Michael Jackson, back from the dead on the TV channel, asked if I was okay. Repeatedly. I, clearly, was far from okay.

Staring into one of the many mirrors. I ask myself questions I can't seem to answer. Decide that in some lights my eyes look hazel. My hair unruly. In some lights my faith looks ridiculous.

As I had walked back to the ward, from the basic church 'service', the chaplain passed me a booklet. 'Prayers for anxiety' made me laugh. I'd prayed many times for signs. I'd listened to the voices that I believed were religious experiences. I'd recited the Lord's prayer as I skipped through town in the dead of night.

Now. I Don't Believe. Now I see differently. Medication-ally fuelled.

She visited. I forgave her as soon as I saw her. It wasn't her fault. But it wasn't mine either. Life deals us different cards, and she shared in my bad suit. I just wish that everyone could see it that way. I was diagnosed crazy for a while.

Don't let this mislead you. I introduced you to the barmy me. But my life will be a lot more cool. There are so many adventures to go on yet. Maybe one day, out of here, I'll choose to go skinny dipping in the river. Maybe one day, I won't be called ill for wanting to do so. It's all a matter of perspective.