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# My Self-Esteem Left Me There

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## My Self-Esteem Left Me There

J.C.G.

I stare at the center of the circle, trying to force myself to listen to the voice vibrating through the table from a phone across the room. It wants me to concentrate on the light in the space—but that’s hard to do when your eyes are watering.

The salted rain changes the light: it makes it too bright.

I thank my terrible timing for the fact that I walked in during meditation; most of them kept their eyes closed. They didn’t look at me and smile in that way people do: condescending.

I swipe at my cheeks hoping to get the tears before anyone notices, and that my face isn’t too blushed or swollen.

Who am I kidding?

I can’t meditate right now. As soothing as I find Andy Puddicombe, I can’t zone in today. I’m restless, and my heels are throbbing from the pounding they got on the sidewalk, on the staircase, through the library. All I can think is how much I DON’T WANT TO BE HERE!!

I’m at least fifteen minutes late. How do I let this happen to me? Why? I was watching the clock the whole time.

Maybe that’s what I did wrong. Each and every time I looked over my shoulder at that digital timekeeper, I wasted a quarter of a second. And maybe another with the time it took to turn my head back. Every half of a second must have built up until I had somehow wasted three minutes I didn’t have to spare.

Another five were stolen by my body, by the gravity of the earth, by physics itself. Maybe if I wasn’t a hundred pounds overweight, I could speed walk to class a minute and a half faster. Maybe if I was actually, consistently, motivated to be active, I would feel comfortable enough to run to class and get there three minutes faster.

The last seven are probably how late I would have been to begin with. As much as I would like to find some inanimate aspect of the universe to blame, I should have printed the assignment out sometime last night, yesterday morning, or Tuesday afternoon.

Even worse, I spent about thirty minutes this morning debating what to eat for breakfast, having completely forgotten that I needed to print...

The voice stops, and everyone around me starts to stir. I force myself to breathe, letting my hair swing in front of my face while I robotically pull out my binder. Then I uselessly debate whether the blue or purple biro is to be my weapon of choice before I tattoo the paper with empty words.

*What happened to that bright, rainbow outlook you were talking about, the one with the golden clock and the silver scoreboard?*

I watch as she tears herself away from me, the smarter, skinnier, confident shadow of me. I watch her glare at me in disappointment and let her flick my forehead before placing her finger on my notebook. Her face transforms with a soft smile, calming me.

*Let it all out, just like you planned.*

Her finger taps the wounded pages, and I flip to a new canvas.

*Put it all there, and when you're done—*

I tilt my head to watch as she peels her wings from her skin.

*You know where to find me.*

She integrates into, then through, the firm water of the glass wall. I didn't need to watch her to know she never hit the pavement below.