

Beaming lights

Crystalline lights beamed down from the ceiling, focusing on a square canvas - a boxing ring. A place that I called home. With a roaring crowd behind my back, I took a single deep breath. This was it - my last chance to win the national championships. I had lost 2 times in a row in these finals and I was not going to let it become a 3rd. I stepped towards my starting position and stared venomously at my opponent's eyes, shooting him an intensive glare that declared "*I am going to win*".

I was winning. My game plan was working flawlessly and my head was functioning perfectly, dismissing any negative sensations that tried to dig their way into me. The weakness in my opponent's eyes was obvious, nourishing my body like the most powerful drug ever to exist. In less than a minute I could sprint over to the glistening pure gold cup and claim what was rightfully mine, what should've been mine for the past 2 years. I swung and watched my glove travel gracefully through the air, momentum and power building up beautifully each passing centimetre. "*Perfect,*" I thought as my opponent tried to defend with a move I knew awfully well. It was as if each of my opponent's moves were in slow motion, my brain registering every movement with expertise. Each of his actions and intentions were as clear as glass and with 12 years of training and experience, it was obvious to me that this glass was shattering. Hundreds of fans screamed my name and I knew it was time to play a winner. With confidence and certainty pumping through my veins, I steadily pulled back my right hand.

Suddenly, I collapsed. A tsunami of pain rippled through my leg as if every muscle fibre had been torn to shreds. I lay there, shaken. My mouth resembled that of a gold fish with piercing cries of excruciating pain escaping through the 'O' shaped tunnel. There was a large, malicious demon trapped inside my right knee, punching and squirming as if trying to escape my throbbing skin. The demon had completely distorted my leg, exhibiting an unnatural twist like a contorted tree trunk. He stripped me of the ability to breathe, causing me to desperately suck air in as if the atmosphere lacked oxygen.

However, I could never quit. I was way too stubborn and borderline delirious. My coach's words spiralled their way into my head, his voice echoing "*pain is temporary, glory is eternal*". As empty as his words may have seemed to me throughout training season, it now hit me with such force that I could almost feel the physical impact on my skin. He was right- pain was temporary and although the demon slashed and stabbed at the walls of my leg, it was fully within my control to get up or not. I limped to the edge of the ring, hobbling like a shot animal - a victim to a huntsman. This wasn't the end. I wasn't quitting - not now, not ever. I was an extremely crazy, mad man who could never accept defeat, a word foreign to my battle-hardened soul.

I gazed over at my coach and was reminded of the excessive amount of time, effort and faith he had invested in me. I had to win for him. He had always believed in the impossible and hell, as a 6-time national champion, if the impossible was an object then he'd be the living proof of it. With his arms crossed firmly across his chest, he gave me a small but encouraging nod. He had always told me that as long as I could see the beaming lights above, it was not over. The lights shone for me. It was enough to assure me that if anything could have stopped me in this moment of time, it would have had to be death. "*I will win,*" I muttered under my breath.

However, though my voice sparked positivity, deep down inside of me I knew it was over. I couldn't win. I knew that no matter how hard I tried and no matter how hard my brain worked to pump air into my lungs, my leg was gone. An agonizing cutting sensation through the left side of my chest told me that today, the lights shone for my opponent. I shook my head and ridded of unwelcomed tears,

ignoring the yells from the crowd. I had to at least try. My non-injured leg dug into the ground, ready to push off and pounce. Like a spring, I leaped forward and swung...straight into the ground. The malicious demon inside my leg shot me down with ease. The crowd screamed at me, no longer in support but instead yelling at me to get out of the ring in case I hurt myself even more.

"I...will...win," I whispered to the ground with my face firmly pressed against the cold surface. My arms pushed against the ground, attempting to heave my damaged body up...*thud*. Once more, my face hit the ground. It was as if I was continuously trying to run back into fire to save the unsaveable, each time coming out more and more burnt. I lay on the firm, sorry ground, thinking of all the plans that would be ruined, all the dreams that would be ruined and all the happiness that would be ruined. It was exceptionally easy to describe myself in 1 word - ruined.

1 day later, familiar crystalline lights beamed down from the ceiling, focusing on a square canvas. However, this time, it was not a boxing ring. It was not a place I called home. It was a hospital bed. Though I stared at a single spot on the ceiling, my vision flickered like electronic slideshows, hazily transitioning into the same slide displaying the same patch of ceiling repetitively. Though my head was groggy, I knew that I had lost all feeling in my leg. However, at the time, I thought it was a good thing. I finally couldn't feel pain, like the demon inside my leg had escaped and left me at peace. So why were more and more surgeons and nurses coming to surround me, frowning and staring with such concern painted on each of their faces? I strained my neck to look around me, my drooping eyes trying to fight the urge to fall asleep. "Don't worry love," I heard one of the voices say, "you can have a nap!" I dropped my head back onto the pillow. What were they talking about? Why was there so much discussion? However, although my brain was muddled and confused, I was conscious enough to hear the next words spoken which answered my curiosity. I gasped, unable to register the soft, sharp words drifting through my ear canal. "We have no choice," I heard a voice say, "we have to amputate".

1 year later, I stood as a spectator outside the boxing ring. I was never going to be a player again. My injury had caused an artery behind my knee to rupture, which had caused the loss of feeling in my leg. After unsuccessful emergency surgery to restore circulation, the surgeons had made the call to amputate my leg - an extremely rare case. I looked down at the gleaming metal of my artificial leg reflecting the glorious speed of rapid jabs, uppercuts and hooks happening in front of me. Oh, how my body yearned to jump into the ring and hear the satisfying sound of the glove upon impact- a sound that fuelled me with supremacy and self-fulfilment. However, now, I watched movements which used to be so normal and ingrained now appearing like impossible, alienated movements. The actions of the competitors in the ring were becoming increasingly distant to me, drifting away from me like a thin aged leaf gliding down a stream. However, what I saw wasn't simply actions. What I saw was my source of happiness, my dream, my identity and my life drifting away from me.

I thought back to the championships. It now sent a mixture of frustration, depression and pain all bundled up into 1 monster that resided inside me, teasing every cell in my body. "*You lost*," it told me, "*you god damn lost*". The nostalgic feeling of light beaming down on me caused flash backs of the injury, causing tears to accumulate on the rims of my eyes. I quickly turned my head away, in desperate search of darkness. It was getting worse – every day, my fear of beaming light grew. The light that reminded me of the square canvas. The light that reminded me of the time I fell, never to get up again. The light that showed me how something you dearly love can easily be turned into something that completely, utterly destroys you. The light that forced me into an eternal black hole, darkness comforting me like I ceased to exist.