

Memory

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It's already fading in the way that a dream dissipates - so distant from real life that it never had any anchor points to begin with. To try and put it into a poem would be a disservice - to give the experience flourishes and metaphors, as if the moment itself is not enough, to make it nothing but the truth. As it was.

On Sunday night, I had an urge to go for a night swim - something that I've been doing more often recently to combat that feeling of wanting to peel back my skin layer by layer. A healthy adrenaline rush of sorts. Mum and Dad wouldn't let me go (it wasn't that late, I swear), despite me paying my little brother in MacDonald's drive-through to watch over me. How I felt wasn't conducive to staying at home - the type of restlessness that is terrifying, that needs to be let out by a regular and steady flow of teenage mistakes; something that had been building and building. So I just took the keys and left, assuming that my dad seeing me walk down the stairs to the front door would give them a clue that I was going. *Not going for a swim just going for a quick drive*, I texted once I had left. There were plenty of angry texts and calls and punishments conveyed in response, but I didn't check.

I drove for a while, sticking to the waterfront, passing bay after bay of water so flat it was like glass, smudged with streetlights. There was no reason as to why I kept driving past these quiet swimming spots. I sped, almost thinking that a man in the shadows on the side of the road would be able to grab me if I went too slow. Finally, I stopped at an uninspiring curve near the rocks, enough in the sight of the road that I could have easily been assaulted, robbed of my phone or car keys, or any combination of misfortunes. I took off my jacket and jeans, pebbles scoring my feet, too cold to shiver.

I took a step towards the water, and underneath, glitter seemed to catch the light. But there was no light except for the full moon, hidden behind the hill, and street lights far far across the water. I took another step, and the pebbles lit up, miniscule dots of glow where I had disturbed them - so faint that if not for the hill shielding the moon, I wouldn't have noticed.

I knelt down, so alone and so cold, my hand on the stones. Again. To describe how I felt is too difficult - it doesn't belong in this world with sweat and McDonalds and conflict with your parents, too poetic that to use words is to miss the point - so what you read is so watered down, so untrue. But it is all that I can give, and I have to record it.

I swam. The ocean lit up around me, ripples from my body the only disturbance. I was there, it suggested, I was there and I was real. I figured out what the glow was (once the possibility of a schizophrenic episode had been ruled out) - bioluminescent plankton, a miracle, a rarity. And it was just me here.

I realised then why people believed in God. I had an idea before, of course - that blanket of there being something else out there to comfort and give meaning. But this? People had been converted on less. I glowed. It was a gift, a gift of coincidence, not fate. I couldn't breathe properly, but I cried.

A girl, standing shoulder-deep in a small and shabby bay, chosen that night by nature, by life. Covered in a type of light that she didn't know existed, not silvery and distant like stars or moon, almost unnatural - yet so far from whatever man could create. No photos or videos could even pick up on the faint glow when I tried. It was the rules. It was for me to see, for me to feel.

The blanket fell upon me that night - not of the presence of God, but of the absence of Him. Of complete belief of a coincidental collection of matter that was conducive of life, and on that collection of life and collection of coincidences shaped in a globe, was a girl standing in the water, on the rocks, moving her hands slowly through the water, the tiny lights telling her

you are here.