

Shattered

Micaela Achilli*

A wounded deer leaps highest

- Emily Dickinson

I stare at him. Once again, out of nowhere, he is coming at me. With words like teeth that tear my flesh and screams like hammers that break my bones. And the worst part is, that once more, I let him.

He tells me how awful I am.

You'll never be good enough.

He tells me how superior I am.

You're better than everyone else. You're smarter. You're stronger. No one sees the world like you do. They don't understand.

He believes in me like no one else does. He crashes my soul. He is both my friend and foe. And I cannot seem to find a balance, a safe haven, a stable ground to stand on, and fight back. I never do. I let him bite and devour. I let him adore and praise. I just let him.

I used to think I didn't know what I would wake up to, but the truth is I have always known. Sometimes he holds me, sometimes he drowns me. The thing is, I can never see the transition, it's abrupt. There's no time for me to adapt. It just hits me. The only thing that I'm certain about is that there is always change.

He stares at my body as I stand motionless. I can feel the aversion, the loathing, the sharpness of his eyes...

He sees me as a tragedy. He scrutinizes, looks up and down for flaws and only sees my vices. Today my virtues are barely noticed.

Say something, I think. Fight.

Please don't do this. This is not the way you're supposed to treat me. We made a promise. We would be there for each other, for better or worse.

But even though I try, the words can't seem to come out of my mouth.

Even when I do not fight him, he feels the need to attack me.

Have you seen yourself today? How could I ever think you were worth it? Sometimes I don't even know how I manage to spend a day with you.

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His words are cruel but I'm now used to them. Sometimes I even pity him. I gaze at him and wonder what has gone wrong. *Has he always been like this? And have I always been so fragile?* He seems helpless - I can even see he is barely hanging onto himself, trying to swim in an uncanny ocean of fears. He is hardly recognizable. But even if it's just for a second, I try to think that I once knew every bit of him, that I am also frightened, that we have things in common. I hang on to the memory of him, of *us*, as one. I hold on to the pieces of him that remind me of myself.

I ponder upon my next move. I'm certain that he doesn't see it coming. I take a deep breath, and this time I'm coming at him, relentlessly. I feel that my heart will jump out of my chest at any moment, but I am determined to make him stop.

I hit. I strike. I smash the mirror into a thousand pieces. I can see the glass shattering and I don't care if it hurts me anymore. I'm finally doing something.

My doctor says I'm the sum of my parts. I'm not manic. I'm not depressed. I'm not bipolar either. My disorder does not define me. I am the person who gets up every day, looks at himself in the mirror and tries to find an oasis that will save him. It seems like an endless war, a hopeless fight, when your opponent is your own reflection. I realize how much I hurt myself with the slivers of the broken mirror. My pieces have sharp edges - and they cut, they break. But they also shape me. *How do you build a shield to protect you from yourself?* You should not have to fear yourself enough to feel you need protection. I am the only unconditional person that I have. My body is my only home and it is up to me to make it a shelter. I will live inside myself forever. I'd better make it feel like home.