

ICMJE forms are in the supplementary material, available online at <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2020.153>.

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reflection

Even the longest summer ends

Kacper Niburski 

I want to tell you of the summer I went crazy. It was hot, and I was raw with wilderness the way the ocean was when seaweed choked the beach and he hadn't quite killed himself yet. My feet were wet. I was sure I had a runny nose. And my dad would tell me that we do not go crazy. Nor was there an ocean nearby. Nor were the waters where he drowned anything more than a shallow lake. In it, there were no fish anymore, but there was a man for a little bit, at least.

It was during a summer that crept with a slow evolutionary crawl, that chattered about something mutated on the horizon. The sun was bent, lopsided. I could smell snow years away.

I was very sane, I want to tell you. I knew what led to what. Where one thing would happen instead of another. It was easy. First, wake up. Shower. Shave. Brush teeth. Eat. Wonder why I didn't eat then brush.

We do not go crazy, I was told. I come from a family of those who daringly lived. I am brutal ancient history packed into a human hot dog, a testament to the pinnacle of a species wrapped into sandals with smelly holes in them. My grandfather hid Jews. I sometimes hide that I am Jewish. My other grandfather delivered milk. I think I am lactose intolerant.

We do not go crazy, I was told. It was a bad word to say – *crazy* – one whose letters were pregnant with more than can be imagined. But it was mine and I needed to own a thing more than myself. This, of course, was the problem: I wanted to own it all. Did I not deserve it? Was it not summer? Wasn't there a chance to invent new language unimaginable? Could I go back and still save him?

We do not go crazy. The mental hospital was nice. I was nicer. I was going to be, to live, and this would help me. I stood at a wall for 3 days straight. It was nice, as I said.

I do not tell you this. I am seeing my first patient as a medical student in the psychiatric ICU. You have done the impossible task of pulling out your toilet in your room. Water weeps on the floor as you bang your head against the wall, promising to destroy this whole thing. I step in the water. I tell you that this is a nice hospital.

My feet are wet. My nose is runny. Your blood from your forehead seeps into the toilet water.

I want to tell you that I was you, that I am you too some days. I want to clarify that I did not have multiple personality disorder, and that I learned that some psychiatrists question the authenticity of the diagnosis. I want to say that the diagnosis matters less. I want to say you matter.

I do none of this. I suggest Acuphase for agitation immediately. I watch you struggle against the code white team. I watch them inject you. I watch the summer horizon drift its last bits of day on your face softly, a gold crown showing to anyone that you could rule the sun if only you woke up and got out.

The wound on your forehead is shallow. It is a little, red lake. You sleep like the dead. I do not. My place is cold. Is it winter, already?

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