

I wake up and check my computer to see if I have posted anything I am now embarrassed by so I can delete it.

I get distracted by other things. I press little blue Like buttons on the screen until I remember I am supposed to find out if I should be embarrassed. It turns out I shouldn't be embarrassed, or at least not that embarrassed, not relatively. Relative to what? Relative to another day when I had posted something I was more embarrassed of? Or relative to what I perceive as the embarrassing statements posted by other users, my online friends and so on? My brain feels soft. I eat cereal.

The sun comes through my window and makes the dust in my studio apartment look like glitter drifting down from the rafters. It is late in the morning now and I have watched a lot of YouTube videos, but I don't remember what most of them were about. I have pressed the Like buttons a lot more times. I have rubbed my eyes when the screen blinked at me. At one point, my great aunt posted, "Not feeling well today" and I pressed Like just to let her know I was aware she was feeling bad and that I had her in my thoughts. I did not actually like how she was feeling.

I watch some stuff about plastic floating in the Pacific Ocean and a mini-documentary about child soldiers on the other side of the planet. I watch two old friends that I have not seen in years as they misunderstand each other and get in a heated argument in the comments section of one of their statuses. I press Like on all of their comments to be safe.

Now I am watching more videos and thinking about Aunt Ade. My great aunt is a sweet woman who loves what is left of her family. She had no children and my father passed away two years ago, leaving basically just my sister and I as the people left in the world that care about her. I guess my mother cares about her because she was my father's aunt, but on the other hand I don't know that they got along when he was alive. Not everyone gets along, even if they are both okay people. I remember my mother once calling my great aunt "a wormy old thing."

I wish I hadn't seen Aunt Ade's status. I look for something to take my mind off it. I think about what I would be doing if I was at work now, if I still had a job, and I realize it would probably be pretty much the same thing only I would be dressed in less comfortable clothes and attempting to look busy and being paid for it. I would have still seen her status update though.

I try to play a game but the farm I am building in the game bores me, I can't focus on it. I look up my exgirlfriend and try not to click Like on all of her photos, even though I kind of hate them. I only click Like on a handful. Her relationship status has changed to It's Complicated. It is not me that it is complicated with and that bums me out a little on top of my great aunt not feeling well today and everything else about being alive. I don't even miss my ex, I just want proof that I am an okay person again—like a girlfriend would mean everything else was in working order. Something pops in my soft brain. I can feel a cool blue mist coming out of my ears and eyes. I

am having an idea and it is refreshing. So refreshing I have to take a picture of myself with the computer and write a blog post about it.

This is what the blog post says:

*ran away somewhere. need a vacation. :(*

Beneath it is a picture of me frowning. I am making a frown-y face. I don't bother to use all caps. I think about using all caps, but decide not to.

I consider deleting the post as soon as I have published it. I hold off. I go to shut down my computer but I don't.

If I shut off the computer, I will be alone. I am afraid to be alone in my apartment. I could go outside, I think. My phone rings. It is my mother. I do not answer it. She sends me a text message. It is hard to read because she is not good at text messaging. I think it is supposed to say something about "lucky turnips" or "luck turning up." I am not sure. Both seem like something she might say. For some reason, getting a text from my mother reminds me that I will not be able to pay my rent by the end of this month. I will have to ask my mother or younger sister for money and they will give it to me and my heart will crumple a little when they do.

I think about going outside and walking somewhere, but I don't get up yet. I just think about it. I will bring my phone, I decide, but I won't look at it. I think about getting a sandwich but I am not hungry. I think some more about purchasing it, taking a bite, then wrapping it back up in its foil and coming home to heat it up in an hour, maybe looking for something to watch that reminds me what it felt like to be child.

I often get nostalgic and find myself watching puppets or cartoons from my childhood. Usually they don't hold my attention the way they used to. That depresses me. I imagine this time it will be the same. I start to watch a cartoon, then click away, already bored. I look at my fingernail, then back at the computer. I search several professional networking sites for job opportunities but I find nothing that I am qualified for or that I have not already applied to earlier in the week. I feel another little pop in my head. A deeper, bluer mist. I log off about ten different websites in quick succession. Sites I usually never log off on purpose.

When I try to log off Facebook, at first it won't let me. There is an error message. I have to type in a Captcha code, which I keep fumbling with. I don't remember this happening before. On the other hand, I don't remember the last time I logged off. They probably changed something. These sites are always changing, I think. My hands feel tingly. I am starting to panic. Finally, it works and I shut the computer fast like I am trying trap a bug inside. I pick it up and put it on a shelf tucked in a row of dusty books. I put a small porcelain giraffe in front of it, like a wall. The giraffe was a gift from Aunt Ade.

I feel good about putting my computer away. I almost take it down and open it back up, but I don't. Instead I take a shower. A thin layer of dry, dead skin covers my face and arms. I scrub them. I'm still ashy. I am still shy.

After the shower I do push-ups. They are very hard and I feel stupid doing them. I am not sure what I am doing. I feel like I am getting ready for something. I do less than twenty before giving up. I maybe do less than ten.

I do all the stretches I remember from gym class. I usually forget to breathe while I am stretching and have to start over. I recall someone saying it is very important to breathe. It feels like it is taking a very long time, but the clock on my phone says it isn't. I think about going online to tell people I have been stretching, see what they're thoughts on stretching might be. Instead I just stretch harder. I am afraid I might pull something, but I like it. My legs are like saltwater taffy when I am finished.

I'm loose. I put on my clothes and go outside. I want to walk around before that feeling leaves my muscles.

My first day offline is like wearing a disguise. I look for strangers to recognize me or poke me or tell me they like my tee-shirt or that my eyes look red, but no one says anything at all. Not a single comment. I picture yellow smiley faces bubbling out of people necks when they look at me. I watch a man on the corner, yelling about Christ, and I try to think of it as a status update, which I know is silly. I think about anonymity, about how strangers on the street are just walking past with no profile or avatar. Their faces are unstable, a blur, just moving things. I wonder which is bigger: the world or the Internet?

I decide to take a little break from my own thoughts. This strategy has never worked before, but I try it anyway. I sit down near a fountain on the east side of Mount Vernon Place. I cross my legs Indian-style like I did when I was in school, then I close my eyes. I am meditating I think maybe. I feel stupid again. I want to open my eyes to see if anyone is looking at me but I tell myself to keep them shut. I squeeze my eyelids tighter. I see purple and orange blotches like cells. I remember someone telling me that you are supposed to repeat a word or phrase over and over while you meditate but I am too embarrassed to do that out loud, so I decide to just repeat a phrase in my head, but I can't think of anything to say. Maybe that means I am already meditating successfully?

Vacation, I finally think. Vay. Cay. Shun. I say it once through my breath just to see how it feels out loud. I keep breathing. It feels like the way my breath should sound all the time. I leave my phone in the grass when I am finished.

On its back in the grass, it resembles a field mouse. I kick it slightly as I get up.

That night I spend a long time sitting in the quiet dark. I have not done that since I was a child and my parents put me to bed. Back then, monsters visited me. I remained perfectly still under my covers so they would leave me alone. I was a wooden boy for them.

The monsters never stopped visiting me. I just ignore them now. I set up a wall of distractions. I go to bed with the TV on, looking at the computer screen, listening to headphones padded with soft leather. I go to sleep holding my phone, pressing buttons.

Now I am on vacation from my distractions and I am afraid the monsters will come back. I imagine my great aunt in the corner. Bones are coming through her skin. They look sharp in the moonlight through the blinds. There are voices whispering outside the window. Laughter. Everyone in the world knows my thoughts and dislikes them. The carpet is made of tiny fingers. I am a man without a home and people are laughing at me.

I fall asleep sitting up in my chair. I do not get up and walk to the bed. If I don't move, the monsters will not notice me.

At night I dream I am an animal in a laboratory. I keep drinking sugar water. I drink it on tap out of a little bottle with a metal nozzle. I am in no danger of running out. Drinking the water becomes all that I do. I drink it because it gives me a little boost of comfort. Eventually I start to feel sick but I keep drinking anyway, even though the water stops tasting sweet like it used to. Pretty soon it tastes like nothing at all. Then it starts to taste bad, but I keep drinking. . .