

Now

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Now

by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2234) - Sometimes he moved wrong and then he existed in nothing more than tortured breaths that just made it hurt even worse, and in those moments he was eternally suffocating, fighting to breathe, fighting not to breathe, until the blackness wasn't just something encroaching on his vision, it was everything.

I never saw a wild thing
sorry for itself.
A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough
without ever having felt sorry for itself.

-D. H. Lawrence

It was beautiful. A battered household management computer, pulled out of the rubbish of a neighbor's recycling bin; broken now, but it was full of potential, complex and tangible and something he could understand, that he could take it apart in his mind after a glance, put back together. Something he could make better; something he was capable of repairing. It was beautiful in both potential and fact, even now. Even partly disassembled, laid out on the salvaged piece of plywood under him.

He tested the links between different circuits with a linkage tester he'd made himself, a couple years back. His hand wasn't big enough to do it as fast as his mind could, though, not yet. He used his left hand; his right arm didn't work, just existed as something distant that hurt with the rise and fall of his breath, but not badly enough to override the part of him wholly focused into what he was doing.

Sometimes he moved wrong and then he existed in nothing more than tortured breaths that just made it hurt even worse, and in those moments he was eternally suffocating, fighting to breathe, fighting *not* to breathe, until the blackness wasn't just something encroaching on his vision, it was everything.

But it faded eventually, every time; in the moments it hurt, eternal moments, it was all there was to the universe, and when it stopped he forgot about it. He had to stay right *here*. Right *now*. There was something to work on; something he could take apart and fix. Something that made sense. Something understandable.

His left hand wasn't dominant, but he was good with it anyway. He followed the links, tested each one meticulously. One at a time. Right here. Find what was broken and fix it. Right now.

He existed in something he built years back, a little fort of scavenged parts and bits and bobs; not shelter enough to keep the cold, damp air out, but enough to keep the rain off and enough to create a dry workspace, and it was safe here, at least, and at least for now.

There was no time; sometimes the universe was black, sometimes all white hot pain, sometimes hazy gray work and distance, and he lived in every single one of those moments a whole lifetime. There was only this, what he was doing. Fixing what was broken. Sometimes a sound made him jump that didn't fit in the trees and dead leaves, then he held still and those moments were spent in absolute silence, holding his breath. There were no prayers. No thoughts of mercy. Just silence and waiting, eternally waiting.

Then he forgot again and went back to the work. Testing links one at a time, systemically, methodically, carefully. Always gently. Testing each link in the system.

Now light fades, but he has his own weak light and has to keep it in his teeth to work, left-sided, awkward but well enough. Finding the fault. There's no anger. No frustration. Just singular focus.

Just something he can fix, right here. Something complex and tangible, and understandable. Beautiful in reality and potential, something he's able to repair.

There's no self-pity. No grief. No trying to understand anything before this, no believing in anything after this, there's only this.

Right here. Right now.

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