

Love as a Bounce

His mind is filled with images. Rubber on smooth wood, the rhythmic thump of a vibrant red ball moving up and down and down and up, a dizzying visual of arches and parabolic functions. The softness of the ball as it crashes on the woody surface, accelerating downwards from the irresistible call of gravity. One dimensional motion with constant acceleration.

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The whispers of the past hunted him like specters with pitchforks, all red smiles and a hunger for suffering on their empty tongues. A few months earlier, he was free falling in the vastness of the universe, between stars and celestial objects, grand and divine. He had been murmuring philosophically and sweetly from morning to night, laying in bed, under the golden light of the bedroom window, holding her soft fingers. Nearly one year ago, she had been shrieking for pure joy when their eyes had settled on each other, drinking in the sight of his ruffled hair and bags under his eyes from the sleepless night on the train. The result of insomnia from loving and loving and loving her.

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He had never entered such a steep ride of darkness at any of the aqua parks he used to visit as a child. He had always observed them from afar, noting the vibrant, saturated colors swirl in circles around a closed plastic tube, hearing the delighted screams of the braver children from inside. He watched from outside and liked it, taking notes of life and its cruel patterns along the way. He looked, but never lived.

Until her. He lived with, through, for her. Life pulsating heavily in his veins, strong chemicals of passion traveling from his fingertips to his nose. Life was her soft, faint breath of daisies on a hill, her wide grin and sweet laugh. She could sweep away time and space with a single touch.

He believed in the infinite soul, the one that never dies or perishes to oblivions and black holes, that bluish transparent thing, trapped in the chambers of one's heart. He believed their souls to have touched, to have mixed them like a potion, forever keeping a part of her in him and accepting the loss of a piece of his soul for the sake of hers. He developed a fondness for soaring in the air, wind in his cheeks, hair naturally brushed back.

Until the love turned to reality, and the heat of the room turned into bright flames. His blood burned, coursing through his veins, fingertips to eyes, ears to toes.

His "soulmate," he realized, was just an iron splinter in his heart, infecting and poisoning all that he was. It consumed him, this monster in his mind, this absence of her touch, her words, her smile and voice. It corroded his sanity, forcing out the rotten and spoiled parts of him. He was rude and sad, disappointed and tired of living. He wept and sobbed after he smiled — nothing was real, nothing was true, nothing was her, nothing was, everything was not.

Five months, he spent drowning in their pool of memories. Turning over each one like an old photograph, there were days where he violently wished to go back and others where he desperately scrambled through the medicine cabinet, pushing out and throwing away old white bottles, in search of finding a blue pill. At night, he gulped down large sips of alcohol, letting his tight leash around his thoughts loosen and loosen, until they were

completely free to roam around the plains of his mind. College and work became a menial task, an endless repetition of the same process.

The depth of his emotions eroded the walls of his mind and heart, and without the steady, shadow and fierce protection of his armor, his heart beat and thrashed rapidly, a blind bat forced under the spotlight of a microscope. Living vulnerably, dangerously.

Oftentimes, he went outside, pulled out a blanket, and laid down to watch the night sky, still bright from all of the city's lights. He thought of nothing and everything, and simply bathed in the silence.

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A rubber ball bounces upwards, downwards, and back up.

He falls, he rises from the ashes like a phoenix, he crashes, he flies.

Over and over and over again.

Until the fall doesn't hurt.

Until the rise doesn't disillusion.

Until the normality and patterns of life, conquer all.