

An Unexpected Smack In The Face

I put on my jeans. Today is the day, I thought to myself. Today is finally the day I get to step outside and walk on the concrete pavement. I look over to the calendar hanging on my wall. It is May 4th, 2020. I forgot to cross it out with my pink sharpie, but I will do it later when I get back home. Today, my brother and I finally convinced my mom and dad to drive us up to Harlem so I could get some mail and belongings that were left at my aunt's house before COVID-19 hit New York City. In the meantime, we can also go on a grocery run. It has been almost two months since I was last outside. I crave the warmth of the sun on my skin, the feeling of the wind running through my hair, and the sight of other human beings alive in this world besides my parents, my neighbors, and those on my computer screen.

I am dressed and I walk out of my room, each step feeling more and more excited. In the living room, my brother is handing everyone a surgical mask and a pair of latex gloves. We look silly but we will be safe, I thought. I will do anything just to go outside. As my mom and dad put on their masks, I can tell they are worried, scared, and paranoid at the same time. I am surprised how easily the human eye leaks emotion. They are definitely out of their comfort zone.

My dad and brother go downstairs to start the car in the garage first while my mom is making sure we have everything we need.

"Keys, I have. Wallet, good. Okay, let's go," she says, reassuring herself.

I slowly open the door with my gloved hands. Everything seems to be in a slow-motion movie. I walk out of my apartment and my mom follows me.

"Lock the door." She waits for me.

“Okay,” I say, looking for the keys in my bag. It is harder to do everything with these gloves on.

My mom goes down the stairs and into the hallway. This time I am following her. I see the sunlight coming through the metal doors. I am so excited to go out. I feel like Rapunzel stepping out of her tower for the first time. My heart races. I hear my mom twist the doorknob. Standing a couple of feet away from the door, I can already feel the gentle breeze swirling around me. She opens the door for me and I step outside. The feeling of freedom is indescribable. Then, suddenly, I feel this excruciating pain on my right pointer finger.

“OOOOUUUCCCCCHHHH!” I yell at the top of my lungs.

The metal door had just closed on my finger. I don’t remember ever feeling something as painful as this. My mom looks back.

“What happened?” She walks back to where I am standing and examines my bruised finger. I am in so much pain.

While I am soothing my purple finger, I feel my phone vibrate. Who is calling me at this time? I reach into my pocket and pull out my phone. The screen shows a photo of my dad. I swipe right to pick up.

“Hello?” My voice clearly shows my feelings: annoyance.

“Amie, you and mom should stay up there. Don’t bother coming down anymore.” My dad’s voice fills my left ear.

“Why?”

“The car’s battery is dead. It won’t start. We can’t go anywhere,” he explains.

I shove the phone to my mom. I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear anything. My mom's conversation with my dad fades into the background. Excitement leaves and all I can feel at this moment is disappointment smacking me hard in the face. I look down at my bruised finger and rub at it. Ouch! Everything was going so well. What happened? The more I think, the more my heart dies with every passing moment. I close my eyes and the world turns pitch black.

I wake up with a startle. I look around my dimmed bedroom and feel my pillowcase drench with sweat. I reach over to my nightstand and grab my phone. 6:37 AM. Oh, thank goodness! This was all a dream.