

Pain

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Reflections from the Author:

In this poem, I personified pain and used it to explain the progression of a healing journey and one's own process with understanding their emotions and eventually accepting them. I wrote this poem during a time when there wasn't a lack of Pain's presence. Describing how Pain acted in the beginning of the poem was therapeutic as if writing down the experience made it real, and I couldn't tell myself I had been making it up or exaggerating. The idea of personifying pain and spending so much time to get to know it as if it were a friend helped me accept its presence without guilt or shame. Even when I would experience pain, it had something to teach me, or at the very least hold my hand when I was lonely. However, the idea that this friend I have spent so long with could disappear was troubling. Although I know I needed to feel the pain and hurt to get through it, I found it hard to let it go as it was what I had known and grew to be comfortable with for so long. I came back to the poem once I had been feeling better and added the experience on the end as well. I wanted to emphasize the presence of Pain on my birthday because on a day that was so filled with happiness, I still had the bittersweet presence of Pain at the end of the day to sit with me. It is important to note that this poem does not follow conventional formatting or grammar. It is meant to be read with the 'abnormal' spacing as pauses. The longer the space, the longer a pause to take while reading.

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About the author: *Kiera Collins is a senior majoring in Social Work. After completing her bachelor's, Kiera plans on attending UIUC in the MSW program, concentrating in the mental health field. She hopes to work with those who are deaf and/or hard of hearing along with clients who are experiencing disordered eating.*

Pain

I often find myself missing my friend. Wishing to be reunited. I don't like being alone. I miss the company and the presence of someone who understands me.

I used to dislike Pain. I used to curse at my Pain, at the world, at the people who hurt me. I would close my eyes, curl in on myself, and ball my fists over my eyes hoping if I didn't see Pain, then Pain wouldn't see me, and therefore would leave me alone.

When Pain approached me, it was not silent. Pain did not creep. Pain did not apologize for invading my life. Pain demanded to be seen. Pain did not just take hold of my life and my body, but rather consumed me. Like I was nothing more than an object in the way of a tornado's rampage. Pain gripped at my shaking shoulders and dragged me into a very dark place, far away from the outside world, and held me there to rot and starve and be nothing. Pain was not ashamed of being there like I was ashamed of Pain being there. No. Pain was mad. And made sure I knew it because Pain wouldn't leave me alone.

And I stayed there. Dissolving more and more into myself. Wishing for a ladder, a rope, anything to help pull me out of where I couldn't escape.

Once I realized that this place would be my home for a long time, all I could do for months, for weeks, for days on end in that deep dark place knowing I would not be set free from Pain's grip...

was cry.

Fall-to-the-ground-gripping-at-my-chest-heaving-edge-of-throwing-up-if-only-I-could-bring-myself-to-eat-something-anything-then-I-probably-would've-thrown-up-but-instead-I-would-

just-heavy-shaking-jack-hammer-headache-from-sobbing kind of cry.

Wishing-Pain-would-just-consume-me-finally-saying-I-don't-want-to-be-a-human-anymore kind

of cry.

It's a wheezing kind of cry. Reaching-for-my-inhaler-that-I-know-won't-help-my-lungs-at-the-

moment-let-alone-a-broken-soul-so-why-use-it-anyway kind of cry.

Staring-at-the-window-next-to-me-looking-for-an-escape kind of cry. Because-it-seems-better-

than-the-Pain-here kind of cry.

It is the kind of cry where being a human and being alive seems like too much of a weight to

bear.

But... Pain would be there when I lifted my head, promising to watch over me from just behind my peripheral. Enough to sense Pain's presence but not enough to see Pain when I turned quickly.

Pain and I would do this dance daily getting good at understanding each other's next step and rhythms. Soon enough, Pain and I would spend so much time together that I became accustomed to Pain's company. Soon enough, I began to appreciate Pain's presence in that dark place.

Now Pain holds my hand when I am lonely and always sits in the passenger seat when I drive. Pain doesn't leave me alone.

Once I started listening to what Pain had to say, my Pain began to speak to me in a sing-song voice and would softly remind me I'm alive. My Pain explains why I am led back to that dark place so often because I am human; one with a lot of feelings. Pain shows up in the first place because I care so much. Pain says it hurts because I am soft in the middle. I don't have sharp edges, or a wall built around my heart like many people do.

Pain is no longer mad at me the same way I am no longer mad at Pain. Pain is gentle and kind and lets me take my time in that deep dark place away from the rest of the world. Even when I need to set Pain aside for a little while, Pain is patient with me, now knowing I will return. I always return.

After many long nights and hazy days spent with Pain, my Pain stopped coming around as often to walk with me back to that dark place. I didn't understand what I did wrong or why I didn't have Pain to join me in the comfortable, secluded place where we would sit and talk and just be together.

My Pain used to visit me often. Not just at night or when the world slept and I would be forced to be alone with my thoughts, but rather in the morning when my coffee smelled too much of summer. And in the middle of the day when I saw friends, people who I know say they care about me, but I just couldn't see why anymore. And at night when I would drive home skipping each song that starts to play until I finally turned the music off and chose to listen to the concerning melody created by the rattling of my car rather than the songs I used to love. Pain showed up there then too with a soothing hand on my shoulder.

But where did Pain go? What did I do? Why am I not good enough to have Pain stay?
Did I say something wrong? I can fix it! Please.

I often find myself missing my silent friend. Waiting for Pain to come back to me.
Sometimes I look in dark places where I know Pain likes to sit and watch me from a distance
making sure I'm always in eyesight.

I don't like it when Pain leaves, I've begun to feel so comfortable with Pain that I feel we
are the same sometimes. So, when I don't feel the constant tug on my sleeve of Pain wishing I
would pay attention, I find myself feeling lost without my longtime companion.

I've traced around the edges of Pain so often and spent so long in Pain's warm embrace
that I don't know where the edges of me end and where Pain begins. After all this time, I am
beginning to wonder if we are the same. Maybe that's why I've stopped feeling Pain's presence,
but I'm not feeling much of anything else either.

Months later, and I begin to see the hopeful start of flowers peeking through the warm
earth. Pain no longer visits me as often, which was uncomfortable at first, but Pain promised to
come back to me. Pain has left me but not alone this time. I'm getting to know a new friend. It is
me. And I think I'm beginning to like her.

But Pain still showed up to wish me a happy birthday. Pain sat with me until I fell asleep watching over me to make sure I was not alone.