

Swallow.

Here I am, Lossemouth beach. The most northern point in the world I have ever been. It is farther north for someone born and raised in New Zealand than for most. I got here a lot of ways, but most recently by car. From Edinburgh to Elgin I drove, the first car I have ever hired. The first time driving with signs that read miles. What a glorious day trip it was, driving through the back roads. Scotland reminds me of home, just colder. But yesterday was pleasant and I stopped to climb Kinnoull Hill. I danced on the picnic table at the top and then stood on the edge of the cliff looking down. I thought about jumping, but I didn't have my license on me so they wouldn't know I want to be a donor. I'm not sure I can even be a donor here.

On the way down I squatted in the bush. As a female I can count the number of times I've done it. Every time it gives me the feeling I have slipped a lipstick into my purse and walked out of a shop. A taster of whiskey at Bell's Distillery sat well in my stomach, sharing space with a burger and fries at a stereotypical pub. My bladder was calling, but I held on and went in a ditch outside of town.

I saw an old Gaelic church and graveyard. I love talking to spirits so I stopped for a cuppa. They were in a good mood. The sun was shining and most seemed at peace. I can always feel tension around graves of the young or tortured. There were few here. People had lived good lives. What an appealing deathstyle.

Now I am here on this beach. I made it. A dog barks in the distance and I turn away from the wind to see who was disturbing me. A woman and her daughter walk arm and arm down the beach. I wave them over and ask for a picture. The mother smiles and takes more photos than normal strangers do, observing me. The daughter has a shy smile.

"Where are you from las?"

"New Zealand."

"Oh wow, you've come a long way 'aven't ya?!"

"Haha, yeah you could say that."

"And what brings you to Scotland of all places?"

"For views like this! Hahaha."

The daughter looks into my eyes for the first time as asks: "Do you like it here?"

"... Yeah... its very beautiful"

"And the people?"

"Some are nice... like you are your mother," I respond with a smile.

"So you're out here all on your own las?" The mother observes me with worry behind her eyes.

"Yeah I am travelling the world alone."

She asks me many questions about my safety and methods of travel. She asks where I sleep and how I get food. She asks me how old I am and what I was doing before travelling. I answer everything truthfully except when she asks:

"So you have been completely safe then?"

At the end of it all she turns to her daughter: "Well las, don't be getting any ideas from this las here. You'd be much safer to stay with me I think."

When they half a kilometre away I cry for the first time since the morning after. Since I woke up in the morning and looked into his eyes. I tell myself- life is long and that I am lucky to be still living it. But to have a breakdown- on my own, in a foreign country, on a beach the farthest I have ever been from home, that I can't explain. Maybe I needed to break to be fixed. To fix myself. He tried to help fix me, but what can an almost stranger do?! He didn't see it happen, he hasn't experienced it before. No one knows who the person was who did it or why.

I can still feel the kiss, it was soft. Not my first kiss from a female. I don't remember what she looked like. That was not the first time I have tried to make myself throw up. I thought it would work because I had had a lot to drink. The toilet smelt of vomit, but not mine. I don't remember much after that.

Struggling to get out of the bathroom.

Finding my friends again.

My hands in front of my face.

Strobe lights.

Smoke machines.

My skin feeling like sand paper.

My hair kept getting in my eyes.

I could feel creatures behind my knee caps and marbles in my lungs.

But what I will always remember was the little pill, from her mouth to mine, a secret I didn't even know about.

The easiest pill to swallow, the hardest pill to swallow.

Then suddenly I could breathe again. I looked around the crowd and recognised the strangers in front of me, they were my friends I came with. I grabbed one and whispered something to him. When he asks me to repeat I couldn't remember what I said. I continued dancing. I grabbed him because I was scared. But I don't know why, I just was. He is scared of me for a second. I looked at him and he looked at me. I then let him go and continued dancing. He pulled me over to the door and demanded an explanation.

I heard myself say: "a girl in the bathroom put a pill inside me."

"What?!... like she gave you one, and you took it?!"

"No she put it in my tummy, she wouldn't let me choose!"

I cried with my whole body.

He hugged me and chanted: "We have to go, we have to go, we have to go."

Down the road in a kebab store, just like any other, two almost strangers sat across from each other. The guy watched the girl as she sloppily shovelled food into her mouth, repeating herself and getting distracted. From the outside it would look like a couple who had drunk too much. But we weren't. We were accidental lovers from the past who had met up for one last night of fun that had resulted in something neither of us had counted on.

I ask him what time it was. I was shocked that it is 4am. To me it was as if we were in the club for 20 minutes. He looked at me like I was his dog about to take one last trip to the vets.

"No, we were in there for four hours."

"Thats four hours of my life I will never get back".

He didn't laugh.

I dig my toes in the sand. I put my hands over my head. Brace position- bracing myself against my life. When I open my eyes and lift my head I am a little surprised. Nothing has changed around me. But I feel different within me.

"I am alive... I am alive... I am alive," I begin chanting in my head. My personal incantation. I then whisper it, then say it, then shout it.

I am the only person on this beach.

I am the only person who knows I am here.

I am the only person who can save myself.

I am stronger now I tell myself. I will keep saying it until I believe it.

But just as well the water was so cold, just as well I left my license in the car. The ocean has a way of swallowing problems, of swallowing people.