

A Period of Self-Reflection

Elise Unterseher

Elise Unterseher is a current University of North Dakota student who will graduate in spring 2021 with a bachelor's in English and a certificate in creative writing. Starting fall 2021, she will be attending the George Washington University to earn a Masters in Publishing. In the future, Elise hopes to have a career in the publishing or copyediting field, and then later on further her education.

Dear Diary,

Once again, I'm here to talk and you are there to listen. I don't know where to begin; there is never a great way of knowing where to start. Should I ask what you wish to hear? The good or the bad? I don't like discussing the wonderful things in the commonplace. Those memories have to be stored behind my mind, so I can casually smile when I think back on them.

I don't actually want to get to the point.

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. Aren't you sick of my bullshit? These negative heart-to-hearts are demanding, but the weight of this heavy cavity in the lowest part of my stomach is beyond endurance. The discomfort is rimming my bronze eyes with tears. I have my logical brain, irrational heart, and wild composure working against me. I cannot confess anything to this trio. Depending on the day, I'll be strained to the advice I don't acknowledge, or I'm hooked on the diluted answers that I'm directly seeking for. My head isn't consistent with its reason, my heart is not the best judge of character and I usually restrain my common sense.

You are an amazing confidant. Do you have the ability to shoulder all my dilemmas?

I'm unable to be honest with myself. Because that's hard. That's fucking impossible.

I'm trying to liberate myself from the bitter affairs accompanied by the brief ach-

ing. I'm simply deprived of appeasement. For there is a safety on this ivory, pale-blue lined pages bound in teal cardboard tightened by a sewn spine.

Beauty, the combination of authentic physical appearance that extends into a genuine nature mixed with alluring sexuality. From personal experience, it is punishing trying to get ahold of all these pieces. From personal experience, the procedure of securing beauty requires more than purifying all invading insecurities. I mold my cheeks around with my fingers. I stretch, push, and attempt to shrink, and any bystander would think I'm making funny faces. Temporarily, I'm envisioning another image of my appearance. For me, there is no trust in mirrors. I hold an unbroken doubt in my own portrait that is reflected back. I don't want to look like myself. I hope to become an imitation of her.

Her. Beautiful her.

I've become an addicted observer to every post on her Instagram. Yet, there is one picture that I deeply study. The delicate way she arranges her curves with impressions of her ribcage pressing against that golden kissed skin. My eyes then travel to her flaunted flat abs. My thumb would trace over all the lines while my other hand caresses my own untuned abdomen. Her desirable pale-rosey lips go along with that tempting smile. How her effortless tousled hazel-brown hair catches the sun, giving her natural highlights. Finally, those crystal sea-colored eyes, I can see how any man would be enchanted by her. I'm completely enthralled. However, I cannot blame genetics for providing me with common brown orbs.

She simply stands out against that boring brick wall background. My meager envy has converted my individualized judgment into a new mindset. Every time I gaze onto my face or body, I seem to find a flaw. As mentioned before, I don't have a strong belief in mirrors. There are moments where they operate like the ones at the carnival. Each time, my physique is distorted in a new way. It could be mighty legs, a monstrous nose with matching elephant ears, or an overflowing torso. Although, sometimes that carnival-looking glass is broken and I catch a glimpse of what I want. I'm cursed with a jaded dysmorphia, for I won't have the ability to not notice my imperfections. The battle between body and self is an all-out war. But I am not gentle either, the way I grip my stomach, thighs, and biceps leaves them with scratch marks or hints of red bruises. It's a bond built off of love and hate.

But, then again, me and I rarely agree, because me is the one who carries the overly critical frame of mind. Me is the face that is presented to the world, and I tend to be kinder to what me is going through. The conversations between these two either end with tears or disheartening unease. Me and I are in control of every bit of myself. Unfortunately, myself is the one who bears the aftermath of each debate. Myself is the frequent loser in each battle of internal conflict. Not that myself could even

be a contender in these matchups. Myself is too timid, it wants to people please.

But despite all that, when a menacing inconvenience arises, all of these sides will shelter away and leave this empty vessel to fend for itself. That's why it's hard to blame something or someone for this kind of temperament, it's all crafted by me, myself, and I.

Needless to say, I do make an effort to come off as customary, at least when I was in front of him. Yes, him. You and I have had many consultations about him before, so I hope that I do not have to jog your memory on our previous ups and downs. For how much I speak about him, I am sure that you are fully educated on what has happened. I am also sure that by now, you are sick of it. I'm sorry to continue this narrative, but will you be happy to know that we are over?

At least, for now. However, I'm ruminating a lot. The persistent thoughts, "what did I do wrong" or "what did he do wrong" are now companions on my sleepless nights. Although, I strongly believe it was more my fault this time around. His tricks remained identical, there weren't even different magic words. He whispered each turn of phrase while he distracted me with the wave of his hand. I understand that I look foolish, but feel some sympathy for me because I was captivated by the roses he pulled out of his sleeve. The relationship between him and I was always complex, but it was designed that way. Neither of us is solely responsible for its demise, even so, my actions during this part of our saga may have to do with this current conclusion. I left. In dramatic fashion without a clean pause, I left with sitting guilt and my departing gift to him was bewilderment.

Pervious to the end, he and I occupied our closing moments in the quickest way to immediate gratification. His dense head sat halfway between the crook of my neck and my naked chest. I lightly leaned the weight of mine on top while I weaved my fingers through his blond locks. I felt the dampness towards the base of his hairline and at that moment, I couldn't stop my mouth from tugging into a smirk. Each and every stroke I bestowed on him was done with purpose. I wanted him to sense something else alongside the pleasure. I could not see his cobalt eyes, his lids covered their radiance. But if they were open, I would stare back with silly adoration and ask, "can we stay like this until the morning sun peaks through the window glass?" I knew that the fantasy would finish once he lifted his head from my breast and returned to his pillow. The excitement between him and I became a grim figment of my imagination. Reality discovered ways to throw in hard to ignore plot twists. That's why I ran away. I didn't want to. I never wanted to leave him, but for mine and his sake, it was a better solution.

There's a brunet that I'm currently in pursuit of, but for right now I spare the details about him. Let's just say, I don't hold any high hopes.

I ask you, dearest diary, when do I get to say fuck it? I'm not there yet, but the day when I do get to utter that phrase could be tomorrow or next year. I know that when I am allowed to speak it, it will be said for a reason, don't you agree? The problems that I express to you are not tremendous, but we both can acknowledge that they are frustrating. The consequences of these events are influenced by my choices, and I don't decide on the smartest ones. It's the age-old excuse of I'm only human.

To you, I probably come off as a pessimist, but despite all my worries I actually yearn for the future. The future is undetermined. It is like a gift, perfectly hidden away. I can easily daydream about my life. There are multiple routes that can be taken, Robert Frost said it best. I guess that is how I define myself against everybody else. I'm not wary of the years to come. Honestly, I fall into a haze and imagine. To look forward means I am allowed change; I can change into anything I please.

Oh, dearest diary, I believe our conference has concluded. Thank you for giving me all your attention. I do not feel like I have reached an epiphany, but I feel at ease. Maybe you and I will get there next time.

Love,
Your patient writer