

Life Won't Grow In The Dark

By: Josie Madzik

Waking up to the darkness is common for me. The Sun's radiance doesn't flood through the window, no birds chirp, no comforting smell floods in from the kitchen. Just the maddening clang of a neighbors shower and the smell of day old coffee. I can already feel the weight of the Earth pressing against my chest, crushing any will I had to rise and face the world. "**Why get up?**" and though struggling,

I stand.

I walk to the kitchen feeling the cold wood under my feet, usually I would stand on my tiptoes to avoid the stark cold, yet on this morning I press my rough feet into the floor just to have the sensation of something, and it happens,

I feel.

I reach the cabinet and outstretch my arm to open it. I feel around for some kind of food, eventually landing my fingers on the polished skin of an apple. Visions of people dancing materialize, the towering yet slight dancers with visible collarbones and legs extending past humanly possible, their combined voices rings in my ear. "**Do you really need it?**" My throat seemed to close up and refuse the apple as if it is the forbidden fruit. I ran my thumb over the glossy fruit and reluctantly,

I eat.

I walk back toward the bathroom and stare at the tired thing in the mirror. It's face is almost a messy paint palette. A blend of purple veins under the eyes and red puffy cheeks over pale near translucent skin, it's lips were chapped and thin. The voice screamed "**Cover up the monster, scrub it away!**". I see the monster's face fade and it shifts into my own. The lips I see are still chapped, the skin is still tired and pale. I instinctively reach for the potions that makes the eyes burn and skin scald, the cosmetics that cover and conceal. Still eyeing the morphing image of myself, remarkably I put the products back and,

I smile.

The smile is pained and fragile as my lips begin to crack and I taste blood, the blood I had seen many times many ways. But the smile is real. It's real for the first time in a while. It's not the fake smile I use to assure my friends and family I'm safe. It's the joy of still being here, existing in the moment. I feel the voice began to wail and shriek as it fades away, all of its ramblings disperse.

I know it will return, but for now.

I breathe.