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Today, I'm alive

by Ivor John

Waking, disappointed to see it was only nine thirty. She preferred it when the first she saw of the day was closer to midday. There was less day to get through. The couple in the room next door had woken her, with their loud argument. Sweating and feeling nauseous, she was clucking, badly. She hated withdrawals, everyone did, but her particularly so. As well as the pain, they often kicked off her anxiety, breathless panic attacks when she felt she was going to die. Often this was a comforting thought.

Generally people couldn't understand this, that she could want to die. Not that she made a habit of telling people. Anyway she didn't exactly want to die, but she wasn't sure either that she wanted to live. It was a known thing, this ambivalence shall we say. Thanatos, the Greek personification of death gave his name to this ambivalence, the death instinct. It did not literally mean death, although it could, but the struggle to relieve tension. She did not think she would kill herself, and probably not today. Even she couldn't contemplate the finality of this. Although she could see little cause for optimism, not since her little girl had been taken from her. The social workers and the police. The only contact she was allowed, was letters. She could send letters or cards, but her daughter was only two. What was the point of writing letters to a two year old?

Having Lucy taken from her hadn't caused her to use heroin. Not really, but it hadn't helped. The irony was that it was the substance misuse team who had reported her to social services. They had prescribed her methadone and reported her. They had told her that if she tested positive for the gear, Lucy would be put in foster care. She couldn't stop using, how could she? the meth was useless.

When Lucy was taken she was thrown into a dissociative haze. She moved through the days like a severed head, that finishes a sentence.

Her anxiety had overwhelmed her, her brain, which was no longer able to mitigate her actions, sentenced by her out of control emotions.

Cutting helped, it wasn't clear how but the pain and the sight of her blood as she cut her arm or her thigh with a blade connected her with her emotions and with the world. It hurt, of course it hurt. It had to hurt. That was the point. Sometimes she would cut quite deeply, the marks inflicted over many years like laces, criss-crossing her arms and legs. Angry red and purple gashes of scar tissue testified to this. But she didn't want to kill herself, however she accepted that she could do. She didn't really mind if she did, it didn't really matter, she could only die in the future she thought, right now, she was always alive.