

Emmett was sitting on a soft patch of grass near the edge of the woods, waiting. It seemed like he had been doing a lot of that lately. He was waiting for his life to take a change for the better. For it to return to the way it used to be, three years ago. And now he was waiting for Narcissus.

Narcissus had told Emmett to meet her near the big oak tree at five o'clock in the morning. Emmett had arrived half an hour early just in case Narcissus changed her mind and went without him. He looked up at dark sky, wondering when the sun would rise. He heard a twig snap behind him and turned.

The girl was tall for her age, with striking white-blond hair that flowed down her back. Her piercing blue eyes were surrounded by long, thick eyelashes. Her perfect lips were the perfect shade of pink, and her stride was intimidating to say the least. Nothing stood in her way. Her steps were quick and impatient. She stood in front of him and said, "Let's go."

Narcissus immediately started towards the woods, but Emmett hesitated. He knew where they were going. He had wanted to go. He had to go. A voice inside him was screaming no, but he ignored it.

"Prove yourself," she had said. He followed and didn't look back.

The darkness of the forest was nothing new, but the air was thick and the ground was covered with leaves. They stepped over tree roots and around bushes, trying to avoid getting their clothes caught on the tree branches. Emmett was breathing short, quick breaths and sweat trickled down his face and back, weighing him down. The air was a barrier now and he began to fall behind. Narcissus took off at a sprint and he was alone. Desperate to catch up, he started to run, but a tree root caught his foot. Branches surrounded him, holding him back with their reaching hands, so hard to push through. Panicking, Emmett thrashed at them and took off after Narcissus.

She was sitting on a log, perfectly composed, as if nothing had happened. Her piercing eyes stabbed Emmett. Unspoken words, so loud in the quiet forest, hurt his ears. He was a failure. An embarrassment. A sad excuse for a human being. He couldn't look into those eyes and be ripped apart again. He looked down, feeling vulnerable. Weak.

He wanted to turn back. He wanted to escape from the hold Narcissus had on him. He was always trying to please her, but never succeeding. His father's voice invaded his mind and seemed to echo through the trees. His hard, cold eyes were everywhere in the darkness, staring him down. The trees branches were his hands, surrounding Emmett, blocking his way. He pushed them aside. He tried to ignore voice that was drowning in rage and frustration.

"You're a bum. You're a loser. You are throwing your life away." He thought back to all the times he had arrived at his house in the early hours of the morning, only to be verbally ripped apart again. His house has been polluted with disappointment for the last three years.

There is never a night that he doesn't hear his mother's quiet sobs from down the hall. "You are throwing your life away"...

But there was still a part of him that couldn't let go, couldn't even bear the thought of it. Emmett needed Narcissus. She distracted him from the real world, and made him numb to it all. He needed that numbness, because otherwise, his life was unbearable. He didn't want to feel. He wanted to be void of emotion. She was a way for him to escape from everything else, only to be caught in another trap. No, Emmett couldn't live without her.

Addiction. There was no other word for it.

Narcissus got up from the log with a little smirk on her face.

"Let's keep going."

Emmett followed without a word, some calmness returning to him. The sky was still dark. They'd be lucky if the sun ever got past the clouds. A droplet of rain fell on Emmett's face and rolled down his cheek. He brushed it off and pulled up the hood of his sweatshirt, but no more rain came.

Emmett knew they had reached the right place just by looking at Narcissus's expression. A wild excitement spread across her face; a look that would haunt these woods and Emmett's mind. A shrieking filled the forest and they both looked up to see a flock of birds flying wildly to the south, away from the woods. Narcissus ignored it but Emmett's eyes followed the birds as they became black dots in the distance, leaving the trees and the two of them behind.

Emmett looked around. Behind him was the path they had followed, the one leading back to that soft patch of grass. It seemed like light years away now. Straight ahead he could see that the trees were less dense and an opening lead to what seemed like a cliff. He was between these two paths, surrounded by trees. A breeze passed them, blowing north towards the clearing. Emmett returned his attention to Narcissus.

She was rummaging through her bag, and she looked annoyed. Emmett kept his distance, feeling anxious. Then, having found what she was looking for, Narcissus walked up to Emmett and held out a pack of matches.

"Prove yourself," she said.

A thousand different emotions stabbed Emmett in that one moment. He was angry at himself for not being strong enough to break this hold earlier. He was ashamed that he had let someone control him, and his life, for so long. He had turned away from his past out of the hope that his wounds would heal, but all that came was more pain. He had let himself become a different person. Someone he's not.

Emmett looked at Narcissus. He could see the dagger in her hand. Behind him was a way back. Ahead of him was a way out.

He took a step forward, a match in his hand.

He looked back at Narcissus; he couldn't help himself. For the first time in forever, he looked straight into those piercing blue eyes. It was hard to imagine not having Narcissus in his life. But, in the end, she had caused more harm than good. More pain than happiness. The addiction needed to be broken. No. It was already broken. Just as there was no way for Emmett to go back to the way his life used to be, there was no way to get himself back. He had lost himself, and his mind, a long time ago.

He struck, without hesitation, and let the world he was so desperate to hold on to slip through his fingers. Then he kept walking, this time without looking back.

One step. The air was thinner, lighter.

Two steps. The sweat seemed to have disappeared, and a cold chill ran through him. He breathed in the cool, refreshing air. Deep breaths.

Three steps. A single bird flew north over his head, silent and strong. The sky began to clear up.

He was only half aware of the smell and the smoke and the brightness. The darkness was startled by the sudden flashes of color. The heat broke through the cold air. He kept walking.

After what seemed like eternity, he reached the clearing. The edge. He was in unknown territory, yet it seemed so familiar to him. Everything was behind him, and this was it: the way out.

"Wait."

Emmett turned, despite his brain's frantic warnings. There stood Narcissus, looking vulnerable and weak. The tables were turned. The flames made her blonde hair glow in the still darkness, and her eyes were wet. In this moment, she was a different person. She wasn't the same controlling, addicting, devilish girl that had controlled Emmett's life for the past three years. The little purity she had left was only just being let out of the safely locked box that was her heart. She tilted her head to the side, confused.

As he walked towards her she held up her hands, palms facing him. He put his own hands up against hers and looked her straight in the eyes for the second time. To be so close to temptation was difficult for him. He could so easily fall back into the addiction. The obsession...

No, he couldn't. He wouldn't. He was stronger than that. He was done. For what felt like the first time in his life, he was invulnerable. He was done waiting. He let his hands stay on hers for a second longer, and then pulled away. He took a step back, and let the image of her seep into his mind, piercing eyes and all.

Then he turned and ran towards the sunrise, leaving Narcissus and the rest of the world behind him.