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Reflection

The garden of tomorrow

Antonio Yaghy 

In the depths of addiction, time moves like honey dripping from a broken jar – thick, sticky and inexorably slow. I remember the way morning light would crack through my blinds, not as a herald of new beginnings, but as an accusation of another night lost to the endless cycle of craving and surrender. The substance, whatever its name or form, became the sun around which my universe revolved, a gravitational force that bent all moments toward its singular purpose.

At first, it came dressed as salvation, wearing the mask of relief, of escape, of belonging. It whispered sweet promises of peace in a world that had become too sharp, too real, too demanding. Each hit, each drink, each pill was a key that unlocked a door to somewhere softer, somewhere kinder. But doors, once opened, are not so easily closed, and the path back becomes obscured by the very shadows we sought for comfort. The metamorphosis was gradual, like watching your reflection fade in a darkening window. Friends became distant constellations, their light still visible but impossibly far away. Family turned into background noise, their voices muffled by the roaring in my ears, their love deflected by the armour of denial I'd fashioned around myself. Work, passions, dreams – all became footnotes in the story of my next fix. Time began to loop like a broken record, each day an echo of the last. Wake up, promise yourself 'never again', feel the tremors begin, watch your resolve crumble like autumn leaves, repeat. The world outside became a stage set, flat and unreal, while the drama of addiction played out in vivid detail within my veins, my synapses, my soul. I mastered the choreography of chaos, dancing through the ruins of my life with a grace born of desperate repetition.

Rock bottom, they say, is where you stop digging. But in truth, it's where you finally look up and see the depth of the hole you've carved around yourself. My moment came not with a crash or a bang, but with a whisper – the sight of my own reflection in a rain puddle, unrecognisable yet unavoidable, a ghost wearing my face asking 'Is this all there is?' Recovery unfurled slowly, like a fern in spring. Each day of sobriety was a small miracle, a tender shoot pushing through concrete. The world, once muted and distant, began to return in overwhelming clarity. Colours were too bright, feelings too sharp, reality too real. But with each sober sunrise, each clear moment, each honest breath, I found pieces of myself I thought lost to the void.

The cravings never fully leave – they're like distant thunder on a summer evening, a reminder of the storm's power but no longer directly overhead. They've become teachers rather than tormentors, each one an opportunity to choose again, to reaffirm the path I've chosen. In their persistence, they've taught me humility, resilience and the profound courage it takes to simply stay.

Now, I count my days not in substances avoided but in moments fully lived. I've learned that recovery isn't about returning to who you were before, but about discovering who you can become after. The shards of my former self remain, but now they catch the light differently – like stained glass that only shows its beauty when illuminated from within. In the end, addiction taught me that our deepest wounds can become our greatest teachers. Each scar tells a story not just of harm endured but of healing achieved. And in the space between who I was and who I am becoming, I've found something unexpected: gratitude. Gratitude for the struggle that brought me to my knees, for it taught me how to stand again. Gratitude for the darkness that showed me how to search for light. Gratitude for this second chance at living, not just surviving. Every sunrise now comes as a gift unwrapped with trembling fingers, every clear thought a small victory, every genuine laugh a revolution. I carry my addiction not as a burden but as a map of where I've been, a compass pointing towards where I hope to go. In this journey from the depths to the surface, I've learned that healing isn't a destination but a direction, and every step forward, no matter how small, plants a seed in the garden of tomorrow.

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