I feel, in the process of trying to make peace with myself and the world around me, that my personal and my emotional state is sort of like an artery. When wounded, with too much pressure and no bandage, I will eventually bleed myself out. But that, after a prolonged state of meditation and peace-making, I might reduce my injuries to scars, and simply be… okay.

For a long time, I felt like I was a failure of a very high order. Having been extremely gifted when young, I blew far past my peers, reading Greek Myths and puzzling out elements of Algebra and Calculus while they were still struggling with Dr. Seuss and Trapezoids. And yet, for all my prodigious brilliance, my grades were terrible, only improving marginally over time. I was constantly disorganized, my work undone or sloppy, and even though I could rederive Mathematical results faster than the teacher could explain them, that wasn't fast enough to avoid poor grades on exams I could never make myself study for. So there was permanently this disconnect between who I thought I was - who I knew I was - and how disappointed my teachers and my parents were in me. It wasn't just that I wasn't doing well, but that I was wasting what had been given to me. It hurt. Badly. For a long, long time.

But respite came. Balm and gauze and medicines that heal. I sought and was diagnosed with both high-functioning Autism and ADHD, and what had previously only been laziness, a conscious unwillingness to do the necessary busywork or operate within the system, was now only a biochemical disability. It's not some character flaw for me to feel terrible about, I'm not a worthless failure and disappointment, I just have a physiological difficulty with handling certain neurotransmitters, treated with medication, like absent limbs are treated with prosthetics.

Yet as I've gotten a little older, I've found that even the systems that for so long devalued me will now hungrily accept what I have always offered. My student job, what is to me as waiting tables or working retail is to others, is developing Artificial Intelligences for the Department of Defense, for which I am paid handsomely. But though the wounds have closed, the scars remain, and for all the newfound money and prestige and 'success' I might have in this society, I would gladly trade them to exist in one that doesn't cause so much pain.

My ex from High School got engaged in January of this year, and I have been surprised with the magnitude of the distress that this has caused me. Had I not quite made my peace with never dating her again, after I broke up with her? My rationalizations: that she was forfeiting her freedom as an individual by marrying so young; that she was too immature and too coddled as a person to understand adult life; that becoming more religiously conservative and marrying similarly would reduce her to a broodmare; were they anywhere near legitimate, or just attempts to avoid admitting to myself why I could not stomach it? I felt pain and hatred and disgust, pointed at her and her fiance, but that deep down came from myself. I know I felt extraordinarily lonely at the time, maybe there was some element of resenting her for having something I had, in a way, forfeited.

That's one of those emotional arterial wounds, spurting spiritual blood, pressured under the weight of hurt. I didn't eat or drink for three days when she told me. I suppose that's how long it took to apply the bandage. I can feel the wound healing, replacing an astonishing pain with a dull ache every time I am reminded of her. But I am a coward, I still only wash and redress it, not daring to expose it to the air; I cannot bring myself to speak to her again, even after all these months.