

My name's Zooey, and I've been pretty depressed lately.

I know. SHOCKER! It's not like it's been pretty easy to decipher that fact if you know me or read this blog.

But I've been alluding to it as if it's over, or close to over. You know, I'm "coming out of a funk." Or, "the last few months have been hard, but it's getting better," or even the more cynical but no less silver lining-ed "it's tough now, but I still have so much good in my life."

Well, I lied.

I'm not coming out of it. It's not getting better. And yeah, there's good in my life, but that just makes this pervasive darkness even more oppressive. Of course there's good in my life, so where do I get off feeling so crummy? Seriously. Man, I suck.

When I talk to people about my sorrow, it turns into a laundry list of why I shouldn't be so sad.

"But Zooey, you're so smart!"

"But Zooey, look at all you're doing! You're owning grad school!"

"But Zooey, look at the opportunities you're getting!"

"But Zooey, you have a loving husband and a really good life!"

"But Zooey, there are so many people that love you!"

"But Zooey, you are really so blessed! Look at all you have!"

But, dear friends and family. But, while that is all true and well and good, but. But that doesn't automatically make me happier.

If anything, it makes me worse.

Because those reminders and encouragements only add to the mental tally, and yes it is a constant tally, of things I'm doing wrong. It becomes another failure. That Zooey, having all these lovely things and yet somehow, selfishly, *brokenly*, remaining depressed.

I'm trying to pull myself out of this mire. I'm chasing that freaking bluebird of happiness with a titanium butterfly net, tricked out with rocket launchers and an army of drones in the handle. And there are times when that lovely little creature will circle around my head, nearly landing on my shoulder but not quite there yet. It's there on a sunny afternoon when I sit by the Iowa River and feel my skin tingle under the sun. It's there when I dance to *The Ballad of Mr. Steak* with wild abandon during a Kishi Bashi concert, arms flailing underneath colored lights and layered sounds. It's there while watching *Veronica Mars* and having good conversation with fine folk that give me hope in humanity and my place therein.

But for each time the bluebird almost lands, there are tenfold moments where it flies into a thorny hedge and refuses to budge. These are the times where I stare into the void of a growing inbox of requests and freeze.

It's times like today, where I lie on the couch watching television and eating Cheetos Puffs. The cheese-spun cylinders make me feel marginally better, right before making me feel exponentially and inevitably worse. You know how it is. Curse you, sweet sweet snacks!

Today is extreme. Usually it's just this heart-squeezing, gut-tearing feeling of misery and loneliness and failure that never really goes away.

I keep telling myself that fessing up to it is better than gulping it down and pretending it's not there. You know, saying outright that yep, I'm basically a champ at the whole self-loathing thing. I recognize this and want to change, and like any good addict admitting I have a problem is the first step to recovery.

And blast it all, I'm trying to recover. I'm doing the exercises, eating the healthy foods, seeing the therapist, making the happy lists. Pushing myself to get out and socialize. Forcing myself out of the solitary comfort zone my jerkbrain prescribes. Doing all the maddening suggestions that well-meaning people give me when they try to help. I mean, I still find myself crumpling on the ground almost every day, but I'm giving it the college try! Happy face! Attempts!

I'm still chasing the bird, but I'm running through quicksand, and for all the leverage I get I still am sliding down, sucked into the depths.

So what, right? What now? Why write this? Why talk about this?

Because somehow, it's making me feel better. Writing is a great way to figure things out. It's why English teachers assign essays. Well that, and the feeling of enjoyment we get from hearing the groans. Sweet music to the ears!

"The shortest distance between a human being and the truth is a story." Anthony de Mello.

Right now, my story is sadness. And anxiety. And defeat. And by writing about it, I hope to see the truth in this experience. I want to be able to figure out what this means, to see patterns in my malaise. If all goes well, these words will form a ladder to tug me out of the sand. They will shape into wings where I can catch that damn bluebird in his own turf.