

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN, OUTSIDE, ABOVE AND SIDEWAYS

This wasn't supposed to happen.

That's what John Locke kept saying, and he ended up dead and then almost half alive. But in a world of smoke monsters and an island that could go back in time and disappear, the coming back to life part didn't apply in real life (unless it did and I just haven't found it yet), you just remained dead.

I thought I had a destiny, I thought I hate some fate that would put me to bigger and better places. I thought I would travel the world, discover Asia in all its glamor, climb the mountains of Everest, explore the dry desserts of Abu Dhabi and Australia. I thought I'd be writing stories, doing everything and nothing for the rest of my life with friends as close to me as my own beating heart, and a boy who I loved so much it hurt and squeezed every bit of me. I'd have complete strangers look up to me and say things like, "I want to be her friend!" or "I hope she notices me!" or "The world never wants to let you go." Maybe I'd end up in Time's 100 Most Influential People of the Year.

But in the end, we are all just numbers, and in a world with seven billion people and rising, we are nothing. Society tells us that we're all our unique butterflies, but we're not and our world is raw and imperfect and wrong. I always wondered

that maybe Earth was hell, in its pure and physical meaning, and if death was actually birth, we could possibly be “reborn” into a “heaven” where everything is actually brighter, livelier, and happier.

I only knew what I was saying a quarter of the time.

I accepted that I’d never see my parents again, I would never see my brother graduate from university and become a father or a grandfather, I would never get married to Tommy or whoever my potential partner was, I would never see the people I was supposed to meet, the fate I was supposed to have.

I sounded so selfish, so my thoughts reversed. I hoped that everyone I knew and loved wouldn’t cry and worry about me because it was unnecessary. I hope my mom wouldn’t kill herself if she fell into depression; I hope my dad still smiled and hooted around after a big holiday meal and pat himself to the couch, in front of the TV without blinking an eye. I hoped my brother would do nothing more than just remember my name and my face, and go on living his life for me.

In the end, I hoped everyone would just forget about me because death seemed to cause so much stress.

James once told me that dead Azalea wouldn’t care about anything though because she’s dead and she’s turned into stardust.

“Stardust?” I asked him.

“Yeah,” he confirmed, “Didn’t we come from stardust? And when we die, we would go back to being stardust, and then millions of years later, our stardust would turn us into another person.”

He continued to say that although we’d have no memories of our past bodies, we’d be here on Earth, laughing and smiling, being we were the same person, just unaware of our past lives. And then he’d say maybe we’d live on and on and on again until we’ve experienced all there was to experience in All of Life.

I laughed at that and told him he was being too idealistic.

“No, I’m serious,” he told me.

And I knew he was being serious.

Stardust?

I thought about it again and nodded to no one in particular.

Sure, I’d love to turn into stardust.