Running. The scenery of the urban landscape around him began to blur and mix together – red lights, green lights, yellow lights, florescent lights, mangled blobs of people, trees and weeds that pervaded the gaps between the sidewalk blending into a single disconcerting mess around him.

He was running again. He felt the ache in his thighs and the cool wind, almost too cold, against his face, the messy flaps that were all that remained of his shoes barely providing him with any protection against the cement at his feet. He could feel it all – each pebble that he passed over, misplaced keys, dropped earbuds, forgotten bracelets strewn on the ground – images of home and belonging and comfort that had all been left behind. He thought of his own belongings, how they reminded him of home and helped define him, and he willed them away, choosing instead to run even faster. He felt everything, and it was both too much and too little for him at once.

Faster. Faster. Faster. He couldn’t stand it anymore. This time, he would leave home behind before it could leave him.

In a desperate bout of emotion, he shut his eyes, pushing tears down his face and swallowing the lump in his throat. He could see it even with his eyes closed: the corner shop he’d always stopped for coffee in in the morning, the flower stand that always managed to hand him a daisy when he passed by it, the friendly Vietnamese couple who always grinned at him like he was their son when he walked into their restaurant and always gave him a little bit more than he’d paid for.

“I can’t run fast enough,” he said, finally, in a tired, breathless gasp, and opened his eyes, expecting to see the same old city scenery that had pervaded his senses and thoughts so strongly before.

He blinked.

The sight of a green, lush forest greeted him. He could feel the dew beneath his feet from the soft grass that grew haphazardly in all directions beneath his feet. Trees towered above his head for what seemed like miles, blocking out the sun with long branches and leaves and allowing only the smallest slivers of light through. A spring flowed lazily, and he thought he could see small fish if he squinted.

He’d never run this fast and far before. Delicately, he knelt down and picked a daisy, growing earnestly towards the sun from between two rocks. Somehow, it felt like he wasn’t running away at all.