One unfortunate night, they dragged me into the hospital despite my many pleas and cries. They say it had to be done now or there is no way of getting me back.

My voracious screams of *‘I’d rather live like this no matter how crazy it is!’* never reach my friends. All they shout back is that I’m falling in love with a disease, eating me up from the inside, changing the chemistry of my brain forever. That I need to let go now, for my sake. But alas I don’t care about myself anymore.

No matter how loud my cries are, I fall silent when my condition worsens and it speaks for itself. It tells me that it’s growing sick of me instead. It tells me it needed to heal itself. It tells me the relationship was never mutualistic.

The flowery branches that I held onto with my dear life all this time, turn out to be ivy.

And now I’m wearing a straitjacket, mindlessly staring at the tiled walls while they come one by one to inject me with their move-on drugs. They seem to work for they develop new hallucinations and fixations. It started slowly with a small happiness dosage, then doubled with new additions. Several multiplications later, I got addicted to its taste. The storms in my heart died and small hurricanes attacked my head instead.

For a moment I forget all about how the traces of my sickness are still lingering in my old clothes. Still living in the pages of my diaries. Hidden in my phone like viruses hidden in plain sight.

For a moment, I just let myself be swayed away in the trance of my new drugs, of my new fixations. Nothing is going on with me on the surface when I’m with the doctors and friends. I’m healing.

But when the sun falls, I crawl back into my bed and poke at my wounds to find comfort in those stingings and sensations because they make me feel more alive than whatever drugs I consume all day long.

Hurt numbs the pain more exceptionally than medications do.

I repeat the process every night, falling into a cadence of this dance with my destiny without fail. I’m obedient when the strict sun is glaring down at me but for the moody moon, I can’t help myself.

Until one morning when they bring in a new doctor to treat me. He’s brutal and unforgiving thinking he can fix me. He keeps a close watch on me, intimidates me, and keeps me far away from my devices and vices to ever reach out to my old habits.

That’s when I began feeling the change taking over. The real pain overrides me now. My heart hurts from the desperation. My hands struggle to move and touch my harms. My feet hesitate to move in the direction I seek false comfort from.

Every morning I meet the new doctor and I hate him. I scream when he breaks my old habits. I cry when he takes away my broken toys. I throw away the new ones he brings.

He force-feeds me the move-on drugs, now the dosage increased. Unable to handle the after effects, my body short circuits every night, another tactic of the cruel doctor to keep me away from indulging in my previous indulges.

And after months of being tied to my bed, I start growing tired of fighting. I grow weary of looking for escape because there is no escaping reality anymore. I’ve forgotten all the places I used to hide. I’ve forgotten the path that led me back to the past. High on my drugs now, I’m no longer deluded.

I hate the healing but I’ve never been better. They bring me out of the hospital walls and I’ve never felt my lungs be so full. Never felt the soft grass tingling my feet. I’ve never known such a beautiful world existed right outside my hell.

I turn to my doctor to thank him. He’s already looking at me with brilliant eyes and possibly a brilliant smile hidden behind that mask. He’s given me this world which I didn’t know was imaginable. He’s my saviour. He’s my true escape.

“Run,” he is whispering. “Run wild now. Like how you were always meant to.”

I fill my lungs with every particle there is. I press my feet in front of the other and let myself go breaking those ties wrapped around me. Once they felt like chains, now weaker than threads. I scream. I laugh and cry. I run like a wild beast, free of the shackles of my past.

I feel the air hit the old wounds, now I don’t feel anything. I don’t know how it used to feel anymore. I breathe in the fresh air, taste new tastes.

My friends join now, along with their new companions whom I openly embrace. Some pinch, some caress lovingly, while some wave from afar. Because of these medications, I optimistically find the positives in their every misbehave and critique.

The doctor tells me that every medicine has its side effects. He tells me to continue on this path and only then I’ll finally be free. Happy. And healed.

I don’t think I have the patience for that yet. The drugs make my head swirl, make me happy momentarily but when I go back to my room and the effect wears off, I’m left to my own sick mind.

I find myself blabbering about my past at most random moments of the day. I still find myself saying the name before going to sleep as if I’m saying a prayer.

Though I’m completely healed now, I still turn my head in the hallway for a glance.

The wounds and scars are healed, but the past is still attached to me with invisible strings that this doctor is unable to cut off. Now and then, I pull at them to see how tightly bound I am. They lead me back to the old alleyways, down the same roads.

When the medicines expired, I set out to see the doctor again. Without these pills, I’m an empty shell of a woman who is lost without anyone to devote herself to. When these antidotes aren’t in my system, the identity of the new me is lost.

I abandon the path once again and find myself back in these old streets, a place where I’m familiar with every crook and nook. I was having a hard time adjusting to the new life, but now that I stumbled back into the past, I feel whole again. I think this is the happiness that the doctor was telling me about.

If I move ahead, will it be the defeat of the healing purpose? Is this where I fail now?

But I failed multiple times when I poured my heart to strangers. I failed when I tried to get out of bed and got hurt anyway. I failed when I couldn’t find happiness without the move-on drugs.

I want to respect the efforts everyone put in me and not damage myself again with the same disorder that got me there. So, I stand twenty feet apart from the cause of it because love is not contagious at this distance, right?

I can still smile, I can still feel those bursts of dopamine by running my hands over the scars, though they are gone now. I can still feel the remnants of what it was like.

With this distance, I’m not risking losing anything, right?

Fully healed now, I wonder what was the purpose of the exhaustive procedure for me to find myself back here again. To go through the intensive training and restraint only to stumble back here when I was granted free will.

But when I hesitate to take a step forward, it’s all the answer I need.

The drugs were all just candies in disguise. With time I learned to differentiate between right and wrong. How taking a step forward will inevitably make me lose all the control I have in my life. How it will continue to ruin my sleep and jam my thoughts. How I should be moving forward in the opposite direction than this.

But, the hesitation in taking a step backwards is a whole other revelation.

So, I stand here waiting for someone to come move me. I don’t watch when the world moves on, not even when the rain falls to wipe away the dust collected on my shoulders. I tell them to come bury me in this same place for I still can’t move.

No matter how long I heal, how hard I fall for another or fix myself, once I’m back in these streets, I’m always catching this condition.

This illness of love is a tricky case. Once you’ve fallen, you’re only destined to be martyred.