

I'm sitting in the living room of my parent's house, which is not my childhood home. I've never lived here and I never will, but right now it represents safety. I'm sitting just outside my mom's peripheral vision and I am painfully aware she is doing all she can not to shift her gaze directly on me. We're once again conducting this miserable dance routine, one we started to choreograph once she found out I was using.

Sidestep once, turn away. Step back. Move toward one another. And sidestep AGAIN. Repeat.

I'm so tired and my scuffed Doc Martins want off this dance floor permanently. I'm in a surreal state, my body slack but my mind heightened, as I pretend to watch a made-for-TV miniseries about the 70s. It's a little after 9 pm on a Tuesday.

At 6 pm today I was pronounced dead in the back of an ambulance, only to resume breathing seconds later. I was told this as I came to in the local hospital. I remember my last conscious thought, upon leaving a filthy Burger King bathroom in downtown Hartford, was how white the lines of the crosswalk were as I trundled across the street. Then nothing, blackness. Then suddenly, pure panic, three point restraints, and my own desperate pleas to leave the emergency room.

Thankfully, I was in one of the rare periods where I was just on the brink of giving myself a physical habit. I wasn't quite there yet, so I was spared the hellish payback Naloxone demands when gifting one's life back into one's body. But I had still come out of the reversal swinging--hence the restraints.

My Smith College ID convinced the staff to let me leave. As I stood outside the ER entrance, only one thought repeated itself incessantly: "I want to go home. I want to go home."

I did not mean my home, but my parents' home. The prodigal daughter returns once more, and sits in silence, unable to relate the

past few hours' events out of the fear and shame of admitting to myself that something is critically wrong. It's ever harder to admit that I just died.

My eyes, when I can stand to open them, continuously dart around the living room. The Naloxone begins to wear off and the heroin is settling into my opiate receptors once again.

Two things keep pulling me out of the nod that threatens to take over: First, the little circular metal buttons still stuck to my chest that were used to monitor my heartbeat, six in total placed on me as my life slowly ebbed away. I keep running my fingers over them--as a reminder of what just happened and to force myself into wakefulness. The second is the set of my bronzed baby shoes that serve as a base for a picture of my two year old self. I know they are meant to be a keepsake of childhood, yet for me right now, they seem more like a memorial to a child lost. I cannot look away.

My mother is watching me now. I can't turn to look back at her. The thought comes again--"I just want to go home"-- but I've forgotten how to get there.

"Goodnight, Jessie," my mother says quietly from behind me as she heads off to bed, "You're welcome to spend the night."

Instead, I leave, after another hour of fighting to stay conscious as the drugs finally begin to wear off. As I head out the door, I turn around and quickly jot "I'm sorry" on a small piece of paper, tucking it into one of the bronze shoes as I go.