

Gutted

By Tiffany Bystra MS, OTR/L

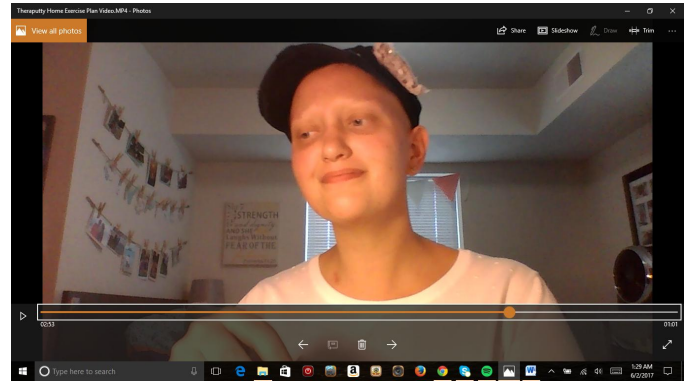
Going through old files
I received a firm slap in the face
Sinking back into the reality
I lived not long ago
enduring chemotherapy.
They transported me
to the
pain
anticipation
anxiety
relief
of finishing treatment
at 21 years of age.
My shoes have new laces
and intact tread

yet I remain lost
on this trail
a curious path
that has led me to open
fields lush with bluebonnet.
My feet remain dirty
and ache
longing for innocence.
Maybe it will all make sense someday.
My feet push into the earth
with disappointment and thrill
as confusing a sensation as you can imagine
each step a gesture of altruism
and rebellion against
what gutted me,

what enraged my spirit
leaving a port-sized hole in my chest.
To what has consumed my thoughts
demanding an insatiable thirst
for hope,
for promise,
for rescue.

The art of reflection
has become as much a part of me
as my eye color.
If I've learned anything,
it is to live life for its moments
like biting into a strawberry,
a perfect balance between tart and sweet.

Maybe it will all make sense someday.



This is a screenshot of the referenced old life, captured in the insomnia-induced early morning hours, urging the creation of this poem.

About the Author



Tiffany Bystra, MS, OTR/L is a faculty instructor in Occupational Therapy at The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences in Austin, TX. She graduated from Western Michigan University, where she received her BS in Interdisciplinary Health Services and an MS in Occupational Therapy. While practicing at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, she earned a Certificate of Professional Achievement in Narrative Medicine from Columbia University. Her passions and research interests reside in psychosocial oncology and cancer survivorship, pathographies of complex medical care (namely critical care), health humanities, and mental health advocacy. Through this poem, she hopes to illuminate how respite and healing can be found in the cadence of a poem, in the tenderness of a musical phrase, and in the nuanced brushstrokes of a canvas, for patients and providers alike.