

## Me, Myself and Why?

“Me.” Lance acknowledged. “I am myself, and by myself I am left with myself, only me.” The mirror only laughed, reflecting the coward just as it always had, though for the first time, Lance listened to its vexing, beckoning voice. *Dud, flop, hash, wreck, an absolute shipwreck, shriek, scratch, splat, splattered with a splendid sash.* The knowing snickers shot Lance through his very core, unceasing as the bullets bounced off the walls, then off each other, rapidly and relentlessly returning to Lance with a rehearsed trajectory.

He was a still fawn, absorbing the impact inflicted by his own sharpened antlers, not from the malice of another forsaken predator. Oh yes, it was his own head that resulted in this outcome, his pointed, prickly head. It was his hand that brushed the bristling, blistering strokes across the vast canvas Lance earnestly and eternally convinced himself he is absolutely not apart of, his harsh, heckling hand. For Lance has painted a portrait, a portrait so unfamiliar that he had not recognized it until now. Now. Why now?

Why now has Narcissus swam so deep into the open sea that he only now realizes he is drowning? The hues seemed so vibrant, refreshing and rejoiced. Slipping further, the colours lost their vibrancy, dulling into a bleak, matte finish as he reached the gravelly end of the sea. He was now able to truly see himself, enveloped and absolutely absorbed with his consequence.

He reminisced on a simpler time, an innocent time, an insignificant time— once the bullets reached a reigned halt. The honeyed vibrations of cello emanating from his tiny, trained fingers as he worked the stringed steed just to stray his eyes from the abrupt sighting of his mother. There she sat, in line with the other moved participants, not with tailored tears nor with the tossing of trimmed roses, simply seated, acknowledging his perched presence on stage with the preconceived notion of approval. The night concluded with a praised paw lifting his chin to eye level, a prideful performance that would leave any mother proud. A pacifying tale if it were only ever true.

The bullets reawakened.

They would not be dormant again, not ever.

No more could Lance prance off with shattered shards of his vindictive vices. For a fleeting moment, his mother replaced his contorting silhouette. He grunted, raising a calloused palm to claw over the maddening material. The mirror now bore fresh wounds, resulting from the pouting predator. The gashes then began to bleed, pouring into an unstoppable river as Lance drowned a second time.

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He was left alone, in the damp dead meadow void of predators. Mere seconds felt like lifespans, though even lifespans could not correct what was left. Himself. No more were the wailing wolves howling into the depths of his skull, no more were the restrictive snakes coiling back his cries, no more were the unforgiving cougars marring unfortunate flesh. Only vultures seared above in their slow, steady motion. Circulating, as the final loop to his spiral. Lance felt inclined to point his finger even at them, but alas the mirror knew better.

Misfortune was his birthright; malice was bound to follow since his first breath. Was it truly so wrong to attempt escape from something imposed rather than offered? The answer seemed so simple, though with simplicity came direct ignorance, or perhaps bliss—blissful ignorance—or something else entirely. The answer was no longer clear, having simmered into an erratic enigma.

Lance pressed a twitching finger upon his throat, sensing his pulse, as if ensuring he really was living. He is. It was comedic, witnessing a cat discovering its own flared tail, though there were no observers, not here at least. In the voided meadow. The real world would say otherwise, having fallen victim to the destructive feline pursuing his own tail. The echos of the wolves still lingered alongside the senile serpents, his physical form an artifact to the power of the cougars yet he was still his own beast. Strumming his throat once more in a motion akin to that one of his valued instruments, he was able to truly feel how sharp his claws have become.

It was disgusting, his pulse. An innate instinct that comes with being human lead him to preserve it despite it being the root of his anguish. His unsavoury efforts failed rectification, puncturing but never alleviating. Anguish only seeped as an unfortunate but rationalized result. Sympathy could never be granted with such reasoning. Accountability, responsibility, he finally swallowed those bitter pills, and bitter they were. With a concluding prance, the meadow finally swallowed Lance in his entirety, embracing the crimson stain to initiate a cleanse. Though, in a belated clarity, Lance's final contemplation questioned if this was the ideal fate for an iniquitous being such as himself. The continuous stream of oozing and pooling warmth surrounding his misaligned form reflected his finalized decision; this was the granted experience Lance ensured to discard any relating grievances to prior. The abrupt conceptualization of "why" reared its perplexing head once more, but by then it was far too late.