

An Unknown Reaction

Circular fields of crops scattered the earth below.

Straight ahead a group of light grey clouds were the only barrier stopping him from seeing the full 360 degrees of horizon. The sun hit the wings of the small aircraft and his bare arms and chest, warming his skin; comforting him like a warm fire on a freezing winter's night. The warmth was a stark contrast to the cool wind blowing his hair away from his face. From the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of something hitting the left wing of the plane and immediately it began spiralling downward. The young man now had no control of the machine and felt ill as the damaged wing, forced the plane to spin clockwise at tremendous speed. He tried to regain control but it was hopeless, in less than a few seconds the plane would crash. He closed his eyes and breathed deeply.

The bell rang. Jack was pulled back to reality.

He put his chemistry books in his locker, swung his port over his shoulder and walked away from his third last semester of secondary school.

It was raining outside; it had been for quite some time. The sky darkened as rain clouds hovered overhead. It had been raining for weeks, it seemed. Whenever a ray of sunshine came through the clouds, it was quickly smothered by a new layer of even darker grey. At night, Jack would lie awake in his bed, debating some issue or another, and hear the sky rumble and shake. He was so close to the noise that the sounds seemed to be coming from within his room, within his own head. And the noise was getting louder, stopping him from sleeping.

He immediately stopped; the northbound train accelerated just metres in front of him. He stood, staring at the space between each of the carriages.

In the past few months, Jack had become distant, not in that he didn't talk with his parents and friends but in that he seemed unconcerned with the usual activities of a sixteen-year-old young man. He did feel alone, isolated; somewhat alienated from those around him.

He felt weak; his now soaking school uniform weighed him down. The uniform, consisting of linen black shorts, an overcoat and a blue and maroon diagonally striped tie, turned a deeper colour and shone as they became more saturated with rain. Beneath his jacket his white shirt clung to his body, and his expensive leather shoes made puddles of water for his feet and short black socks. He was soaked through, down to his navy Bonds singlet and boxer shorts; the only expression of individuality his uniform allowed. He was weighed down; he felt weak. He continued to walk, slowly approaching the event that had made him sick for the past week.

Reaching a park, Jack sat on a swing which looked out over a lake. With the rain, the rippling water seemed alive. He thought how easy it would be to disappear under the skin of the water and never come out. The rain on the surface of the lake would distort the transparency of the water and inhibit anyone from seeing him deep within. He would look up from the depths and see an entirely different world. The pressure against his skin from a few metres of clean water, would offer resistance and provide some confirmation of existence.

"Jack, are you okay", it was Roger McDonald yelling to me from the front of the corner store, which also happened to be my weekend workplace, "You shouldn't be standing out in the rain".

Jack was pulled back to reality, where he found himself in the middle of a road, looking up at the water simply pouring down on him from above.

"Are you able to work next Thursday, Peter can't make it? You are on holidays, aren't you?"

Jack told him that he would work, that this rain was terrible and that he would see him the following day and then continued.

Constantly anxious about life and where it was taking him, Jack's mind threw thoughts back and forward constantly; whether he was awake or asleep his mind was alive with thought; plagued with regret, guilt and anxiety, his thoughts were all consuming.

One year earlier, while visited a friend in a neighbouring city, Jack had felt a sense of belonging. During his three week stay, Jack had kissed his friend. His friend, Marcus didn't know how to respond; Jack had betrayed his trust. Since then Marcus had not responded to any of Jack's attempts to contact him.

That feeling of belonging left Jack, and a feeling of isolation took over.

He had arrived, outside the front door, he almost kept on walking, but he made himself stop and he *will* make himself enter.

Jack walks inside. His parents are home. He doesn't know how to say it.

"I am gay". He said it.