

How are you feeling?

Inside my chest lives an encaged animal, I feel it breathe against my sternum on a constant basis. It's there now, breathing with me, humming low within its iron barred cage. His voice echoes within my head telling me of his disgust and his irritation.

He sits hunched, his talon-like hands sit limply on his knees, his midnight black nails twirl the sparse hair on the bent bone. His dark red eyes, that were almost a shade lighter to black, take in the world as I do.

He snarls at strangers as I pass, beats down on his knees when he comes upon people we know. He isn't a very sociable...thing.

There's no name to give him. Names give him answers to who he is such as Aeshma or Mastemah only give a name for rage and hostility. My little caged demon is that and much more. He's irritation, annoyance, cynicism, scepticism and on a rare occasion patient.

I always had him with me, a constant companion making himself known after he broke from his cage at the end of my fifth year of high school.

My school life was difficult, I was always made aware that I was never good enough, that no matter what I did or who I was I didn't matter. My schoolwork became a must, electing no free time for me. And it crept up, mounted high until he broke free.

“...Just because you don't want a relationship.” Was the trigger. Once it was uttered, for a split second he took over, my speech, my movements and my sight.

He roared, ran rampant within me. I was paralyzed with shock and that disrupted him long enough for me to take back control.

After that time, I had to do something about him, about me. He scared me. To me at the time, he was something new and dark. I didn't realise that he has been with me since birth maybe even before, that he was my negativity, my caution, my rage and fear.

Counselling helped me see that, all six months of it and surprisingly, through those sessions he didn't show his face. He was rather quiet, dormant.

At times I thought I lost him, that he was gone but every once in a while, he would scuffle against the bars, letting me know he was still there.

The cage he stayed within was barely secured and fixed when he came back again in full motion. I thought I was back to my old self and had ended my counselling when he took an instant dislike to my sixth year English class. I fought with him tooth and nail to get him to at least be civil to people. He didn't. It took energy I didn't have to stop him from getting into an argument about politics. The little guy was very vocal and offensive to say the least.

But like everything, it ended. I had him calmed and passive enough to fix the yearlong damage he did, breaking in and out of his cage.

Extending his cage down to the ends of my ribs so he was enclosed within my rib cage seemed to make him a little happier.

Even now we're still trying to get along and exist together. I've found that if I take in his opinions then he doesn't derail and break free. He finds ways to 'protect' me by forcing me to take a step

back from people and observe as he deliberates and judges.

If I feel like he's getting control I leave, lock myself away and distract us both. Reading and watching crime drams seems to draw out his curiosity and times where he is out of control, music helps to coax him into a controllable state.