Shamiah Allaway

Professor Wood

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<center>"Mind is my Enemy"</center>

I am falling down a hole in my deepest thoughts. This pitch black hole, seemingly endless. As I look up, unable to see where I fell from, the light turns to darkness. Constant anxiety, restlessness. Without a shoulder to cry on, loneliness. This silent terror. Watch as I become languid since there is no reason to yell for help. No one can hear me. Nobody will help me. I am alone in this dark hole, with anxiety and fear taking hold.

Then I snapped back to reality, but still, negative feelings prevailed. Why am I feeling this way? That boy didn't deserve my love yet. *I gave him my whole heart for him to crush it between his fingers.* He shouldn't have been able to break me, ruin my trust. I broke up with him! *Wasn't I respecting myself by letting go of someone who wasn't treating me right?* The day-long text backs, missed phone calls, broken promises, declined hangouts, and shady excuses. It might not seem like much for me to break up with him, but I knew something was off. Until a month later, I'd find out from Leona, a mutual friend, that he was, in fact, seeing other girls. Just as I suspected, my intuitions were correct. Yet I left him, already shattered in pieces.

I woke up one morning, noticing the emptiness around me. An eight-hour rest felt like thirty minutes. I am tired of feeling this morbid loneliness, tired of not being able to trust myself, and

tired of questioning my worth. My strength was sucked out of me like dust by a vacuum; the little power I had left was used only to hold back unwanted tears. I couldn't deny I am tired of being tired of being tired. That day I finally went to school after a week's absence. The reality of my depression ripped off the fake mask I'd usually wear. I walked through the halls with my head down, defeated. The teachers knew, everyone knew; the jig was up.

"I need help," the three most complicated words for me to say were the truth. The feeling of my mind working against me is unbearable. My guidance counselor recommended that I begin therapy, then explained that my situation was something that she felt was deeply rooted and beyond her training. *What did she mean by that? Is she implying that I'm crazy? Why did she have to refer me to a therapist and not just talk to me like any other student?* But I still agreed.

On the first day of therapy, I was uncomfortably comfortable. The lady greeted me with a huge smile and a calm voice. I wasn't sure if I could trust her, but I knew I wanted the help. When I began talking to her, I remember trying to act like everything was alright. There I'd go again, putting my mask back on; I felt comfortable behind it. *Replacing my frown with a smile, my cries with laughs, until I'd return home sad and feeling lonely all over again.* But weirdly enough, that woman knew I was hiding. She knew there was a reason why I was present that day. She knew too.

I told the therapist about my relationship. She allowed me to talk about my feelings freely, which I wasn't used to; many people I'd share my thoughts with seemed dismissive or couldn't relate, leaving me to feel alone and unheard. She clarified that her concern was genuine and

nonjudgemental, but she took no time to assess me. That therapist dug into my past, uncovering all the issues buried deep within. Her questions helped me to see the problems I kept myself blind to. She helped me discover my trust issues, fear of abandonment, failure to keep boundaries, and lack of self-assurance; all I needed to maintain a healthy relationship. That is what I'm there for, after all, *right? To help me feel closure from my break up.* A situation I didn't know back then was an opportunity for me to gain strength from a hard time. My heart, just like any muscle, became more robust through its tears to repair.

I was wrong, though; there was much for me to learn about myself through these therapy sessions. Given the situation, I shouldn't be focused on trying to make sense of someone else's selfishness. Therapy taught me the importance of knowing what I can and cannot control, which I've struggled to understand from a young age. Issues stemming from having a dysfunctional family, growing up in bad relationships, and meeting guys who didn't know how to treat a woman with respect were all things I couldn't control. Instead of realizing this, I'd pretend that my life was all together for false contentment while I drowned in my inner thoughts. I was at a point in my life where the negative thoughts felt uncontrollable. Though it's funny how I let myself feel so weak when the most powerful thing I had complete control over all along, my thoughts. Proverbs 4:23, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." I later understood that it was my thoughts that kept me in anxiety and depression.

Once I realized the control I've had in my life this whole time, I began to walk with definite Grace. I stopped doubting myself, all those negative thoughts didn't disappear, but I found it easier to handle. I began to believe that I had a purpose. I wasn't given life for it to be wasted at

my own expense. Life is a gift to enjoy the experience, not dwell on the unbeneficial. So with this, I affirm that I am beautiful. I am worthy of love, respect, and honor. I am intelligent and gifted. No longer will I allow myself to be blinded by deception because I failed to see that I was my own worst enemy. Guarding my thoughts and permitting positivity into my life helped my mind become a friend.

After feeling stuck in an eternity of falling into darkness, a glimpse of light gave me hope. Naturally, It took nothing for me to chase that light. For me to see that something extraordinary was at the end of the hole that I found myself in. Once I reached the light, I could easily see my strength. There was a purpose to this hardship; it was to empower me.