

# Twenty Years Since...

*by Jacob R. Moses*

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Tried to write about that day so many times  
Cried in fright into the grey, then the rhymes  
Avalanched from my thumbs, wanting to  
Pound my fist into my own brain

For I deplore the disdain contained  
And conditioned within me

I am not the same person I was  
Twenty years ago, but the pain lingers

Middle fingers are what stigma feels like  
Constant reminders that I lost myself  
Punchlines made out of my fall from grace

No idea whether I'm worse for ware  
Too many struggles since then  
Too many muggles smoked when  
Pills weren't enough to sustain me

Every time I enter the room  
I am that dark stranger with a past  
Park ranger of a land unseen  
Untraversed, devoid of footprints

Prince of darkness within my mind  
I've tried for twenty years to purge it  
Imbided many beers, I just scourge it

Knowing I was not born to suffer  
Not my birthright to run into the same

Pitfalls time and time again with those  
Without my best interest at heart

To be taken for granted, to be abused  
To be hanging from the balance  
Like I did when I could have died

And here I am writing out my sorrow  
And my trauma wondering if  
This poem will end abruptly  
In the same way I could have

Ended this life  
Ended these voices  
Ended these mood swings  
Ended this paranoia  
Ended this rage

With a Long Island Iced Tea  
Packed in a thermos

But this poem needs to end smoothly  
This life I'm living needs to conclude  
Without interrupting my pulse

And every damn day I struggle  
Not to repeat my mistakes  
So I don't end up somewhere  
Authorities claim is safe for me

What is safety but protecting the public  
Instead of protecting you from derision?

I could count every finger on my right hand  
Tallying how many times I wanted to die

I could count every toe on my left foot  
Tallying how many times I survived

The song "Born To Be Alive" plays  
All the while wondering if I was

Born to simply survive the constant  
War I fight with my nervous system  
Battling intrusive thoughts daily

They say a tornado is supposed to sound  
Like a runaway train and I hope the next  
Two decades don't place me  
In front of cyclonic winds  
Regardless of the power they have  
To dry these suppressed tears