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Social Media

I remember the time before this all began, before the age of social media swept through our generation. You were confident and bubbly, charismatic and inspiring. In school, you always had perfect grades but was never arrogant. Whenever there was a cry for help, you would be the first to extend a helping hand. Never to stand out or to look good, solely out of compassion and goodwill. Many believed that you were born to achieve, a saint destined for greatness.

It didn't matter if you weren't liked by the Mean Girls or the Bad Boys, their taunts and provocations never stopped you from your beliefs. Headstrong and determined, unchanging in the face of adversity. Even when rumors of you plagiarizing the work of others spread through the school, you were unfazed. You proved to the non-believers, through effort and hard work that your achievements and accomplishments belonged solely to you.

You wanted to tackle issues that you felt were important like poverty and climate change. Fundraisers to help the poor and sharing sessions to raise awareness to the general public were organized but things didn't take off all that smoothly.

At the time, Facebook was the go-to for the latest news and it was a platform where you could post your views and share it with the world. This social media service was a medium for you as an agent for the masses to speak up for those who needed help, for those who were afraid to speak out and for those whose voices could not be heard.

Your efforts were recognized and you were hailed saint and savior, applause and admiration came pouring through. The public showered you with their undying affection and you reveled in your new found fame. I was there; I witnessed you in all your glory.

You were thrilled that you achieved success and became intoxicated when you were placed in the glare of publicity. You loved it. The sensation of being in the limelight. The splendor of the world watching you as you worked.

Time passed and your continued efforts paid off, but the spotlight never came on you again. After your first fifteen minutes of fame, a bud of emptiness was beginning to sprout in the depths of your heart. As you continued to work, an itch started to spread, a need for recognition took root and you were no longer satisfied with just the appreciation and gratefulness of those that were in need. The effort you've put in and all hard work that you put yourself through, only you knew.

"That's not enough."

"The people need to know."

You seek to fill the ever-growing void in your heart, as you looked back on one day wonder. Instagram seemed to be trending then, posting a picture of yourself or of what you were doing, and you could leave a caption. It was perfect for you. You made a new post with a picture showing you fighting for justice and fairness in this unfair world and a notation was left, just for the uninformed.

You wanted to create awareness, to educate the ignorant but most importantly, it was for people to know it was you who was doing it. The world remembers your feats of yesteryear and the number of followers your Instagram account had grown by the day.

Every moment awake, you check the number of likes to ensure that your latest updates were the most popular to date. With each new post, your captions seem to be more eloquent than the last, and you find yourself crafting intricate and meaningful words, just so others would read it.

The notation was no longer for the uninformed, but to dazzle and enchant those who scroll past your post. The photographs seemed to show your activities less and less, with you clearly becoming the point of attraction. Your updates eventually become just a means of painting a prettier picture of yourself, creating a beautiful illusion, as though your mind is constantly at work, pondering the profundities of our universe.

But you know it's only a façade.

Pretending that you're loved and always well received, pretending that your life is perfect, flawless in every way, pretending to be someone that you're not.

It no longer mattered how blatantly shallow your methodologies were, as long as you could quantify your popularity and see the number of people that "like" you increase. All you do now is fuel your egoistic self, in an attempt to win a make-believe race of fame on the internet.

All you wanted was to garner likes and approval from hundreds and thousands of people that you deluded yourself into believing are your so-called "followers".

Your only fear now is that if today there was no new post on Instagram, the world would forget about you, you'd cease to exist and return to dust. It's as if that without these pretty pictures and witty captions, you'd hold no value, like a penny with a hole in it.

Now I can only laugh ruefully when the shutter clicks as you worry that the camera would fail to capture all the qualities you no longer possess. I shake my head in utter disbelief, anxious about how much lower you'd sink into depravity because of this rat race called e-popularity. Tears are shed, as you swipe from filter to filter, trying to figure out which one would make your picture prettier and help garner you even more followers.