Ver. 1— introversion & NH

During my last few weeks of the summer before senior year, I spent approximately two weeks at my grandparents' house on an island on Lake Winnipesaukee, New Hampshire. During this time I learned to drive a boat, helped my grandparents on errands to the mainland, and spent countless hours kicking back with a drink, a puzzle, and my favorite albums as the waves crashed against the shore. I'd never felt so happy— so in control— in my life as when I'd secure the boat's stern line to the cleat on the dock or check the weather to track an oncoming storm. Isolated from the world, I'd never felt any less alone— but I knew who I was. I knew what I valued and loved. It was perfect.

And it was all gone the moment my airplane's tires burned rubber on the ground of the concrete motherboard of flashy lights at SFO. The anxious hustle and bustle of countless bodies and personalities, all of which seemed to miraculously clash with mine as a simple result of the mind-boggling daily task of coexisting in the same plane of reality.

The headache-inducing tropical whirlwind of high school morphed me into a highly cynical and independent-minded person. My depression has always enjoyed masking itself as projections out onto others from the outside, rather than a piercing gaze inward. It's strange, because I haven't grown up within oppression or surrounded by people trying to beat me down. Rather, I've grown up surrounded by people who cannot stress enough how much they support us all and how important the values of community, love, and compassion are. But interestingly, none of that reassurance helped me at all. It just made me angrier and more upset. I wasn't afraid of being alone. I was afraid of being around other people and being okay with that.

I often find myself often looking at these same sort of social situations through a glazed window. Sometimes I feel a longing to rejoin that world out of insecure uncertainty, but I know that the overstimulation of the crowd is far too unhealthy for me to handle. Once I was officially

diagnosed with anxiety and inattentive ADHD, I gained a new perspective into the way I view the world. I learned about how my inability to slam on the brakes, and how it caused me to obsess over the tiniest details, or the apathy that resulted from my mind being tired.

It took me years to accept and understand what it meant to be an introvert. The gears only clicked into place when I started seeing certain patterns occur in my everyday life, tying in directly to my mental health. Sure, I'd always felt uncomfortable in social situations, but never felt the standard kind of anxiety you hear about everywhere;

 shaky hands, sweaty palms, accelerated heart rate; instead, it came out as irrational anger and a tendency toward projecting negative thoughts outward. I began pushing away the world around me and isolating myself from the company of others, attempting to appease my seemingly uncontrollable feelings of discomfort.

The best I ever truly felt during those times were when I stepped away from the overwhelming environment of high school and pulled out my headphones and laptop at a nearby Starbucks. Now alone, things began to click back into place. My conscious brain matched wavelengths with my subconscious. Everything I loved and cared about came back to me. Motivation returned once more to take on the world.

I found that pulling away from the overwhelming anxiety and stagnancy of such a hyper social environment helped me to recharge and recover. I pulled myself away from the world, and while it felt as if it were out of discomfort, it was a different kind of discomfort. One without fear. I was looking out for myself and doing what I knew would restore me to myself.

So while many may need that sense of community to be themselves, I was never taught growing up that there are some of us out there who need the opposite: to detach and drift. To sit alone on an island, kick back, and recover who we are, unearthing the motivation and inspiration hiding within.