

# Space Diving

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**Y**OU CLOSE YOUR eyes and you fall. You fall and you fall and you fall upwards and you're soaring and you open your eyes and you're surrounded by pink and purple and stars and infinity. Everything is glimmering. Everything is beautiful. Nothing is wrong.

It's years before you notice you're dead.

Van Gogh ate yellow paint because he thought it would bring him happiness. Yellow is the sun and daffodils and buttercups. It's lemons and canaries and autumn leaves. Yellow is warmth and joy; it's enthusiasm, it's optimism and it's happiness. True happiness. Van Gogh thought that eating yellow, toxic paint would blind the sadness inside him and make him feel happy again. Can you imagine being so empty of joy that you try to fill the void by poisoning yourself? Can you imagine being so desperate to feel happiness again?

There are other, more dangerous ways to try to feel emotions again. You know that. You took a lot of drugs just to get a reaction, but you stopped when you woke up in hospital for the fourth time. You fell in love once or twice, hoping that would fill the void – but it didn't, not really. It just ended with a few heartbreaks and the overwhelming sense that you were lost. You wonder if you're selfish. Do you think that no-one else is lonesome? Do you think that no-one else lives in the abyss? You know that other people have their demons but you also know that no-one will ever, *ever* truly understand.

Maybe you *are* selfish.

You take your tablets four times a day. You cry sometimes. You smoke more and more and more. You consider tripping acid. You consider trying to meet someone new. You think, *everyone has their own version of yellow paint*. You pause. You consider eating yellow paint. Instead, you don't eat anything at all. You lie in bed and feel nothing. You watch *The X-Files*. You ignore the ghosts. You lie in bed and you feel nothing.

At night, your demons crawl out of the shadows. They hiss and grieve and slither into bed with you, wrapping around your body. You lie there, frozen and terrified, until the morning comes and they whisper goodbye.

You live with ghouls and wraiths who pester you to follow them. You pretend you can't hear and you take your tablets four times a day and you cry sometimes. And you consider eating yellow paint. Every day. Every day. Every day. You are always on edge and you bite your fingernails down to nothing.

The demons and ghosts are all you have.

*Follow me.*

You think, *not today*, and you watch *The X-Files* and you lie in bed and you feel nothing.

*Follow me.*

You think, *not today*, and you consider tripping acid and you lie in bed and you feel nothing.

*Follow me.*

You think, *not today*, and you smoke more and more and more and you lie in bed and you feel nothing.

*Follow me.*

You think, *I am having an existential crisis*. You nod and you walk through the veil. The wraith holds your hand and it feels like sadness and smoke and lost time and you're sick to your stomach.

You are on top of a cliff staring down at a deep, black drop. Everything is glimmering. Everything is beautiful. Everything is wrong.

*Follow me*, says the wraith, and then it falls and then it's gone.

You consider. You consider going back. Back to what? Back to smoking and crying and *The X-Files*? Nobody is as lonesome as you. Not even the demons are grieving like you. You grieve for your happiness. There are more dangerous ways to try to feel emotions again. Everyone has their own version of yellow paint.