

## **It**

Mind games and blurred vision. Childhood, present, and likely future. At the age of four my vision began to deteriorate.

“Glasses off. Time for sleep.”

Mom would leave my door open just a crack, just so the furniture in my room didn't appear as monsters coming to attack. Tightness in my chest strangles me with short breaths of panic. Like static on the television the specs of color float around my room. Or was it my eyes? Disappearing as I look at them, hiding in my peripheral vision.

“What was that.”

With the door and the timed light from the hall, a large foot-like shape appears on the ceiling. The vision is blurred. The light goes out. Everything is worse when you can't make out the objects. The blanket is the shield covering my body. How long has it been since she left? Ten minutes? Thirty minutes? An hour? I need to get out of here. Find my mom.

“I can't sleep.”

She sits with me and strokes my forehead.

“It's time to go to your garden.<sup>1</sup>”

The strangling sensation constricting my chest as I'm curled in a fetal position.

Something feels as if it's hanging over my head. Waiting for me to fail. To give up. To

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<sup>1</sup> My mom got the idea of using a garden as a visualization tool to help me with anxiety from a book. The name of the book is currently unknown so I can not cite it.

be less than perfect. Looking at the outcomes of the future. Analyzing. Always spinning. Always thinking about it in the back of my mind. **It**. Whatever **it** is. **It** is always something. Constantly changing, but nevertheless consistent. Usually a six but recently an eight. Self induced pressure.

“Kira it's not that important if you don't complete it. You can always ask for an extension.”

Not an option.

Can't sleep. Stay up late. Finish the work. Get it done so you won't have more later.

120% or nothing at all<sup>2</sup>.

“As you tread along the brick path up the hill to the gateway. You see the gatekeeper.

The angel. She points you to a weeping willow banished in the corner made of origami paper with words written on each note . The worry tree<sup>3</sup>. Hang all your worries on the worry tree before you enter your garden.”

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<sup>2</sup> “Children with GAD often worry about the same subjects as children who do not have an anxiety disorder. The difference is that for a child with GAD, there is no “on-off” switch for the worry: it is ever-present and so extreme that it interferes with the child's ability to relax, concentrate and enjoy activities”

“Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Symptoms & Causes: Boston Children's Hospital”, Boston Children's Hospital, 19 Nov. 2020, <https://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions/g/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/symptoms-and-causes>

<sup>3</sup> “People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and problematic worry experience it more often, as more uncontrollable, and may even end up worrying about their worry (meta-worry). The worry tree is a way of conceptualizing some of the important steps in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and communicating these to clients.”

“Worry Decision Tree”, Psychology Tools, 9 Nov. 2020, <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/worry-decision-tree/>.

The vision has decayed beyond most.<sup>4</sup> Except one. His vision is better than the blind but not far off. Him. The one who wakes up twice in the middle of each night because **it** hangs over his head too. **It** tortures Him more than I. He is in denial. He has no one to talk to. Anger builds up in Him. Traits I have inherited but learned to control to an extent. So similar but so distant. Such surface level interactions. Acceptance.

“The angel gives you a big warm hug and opens the bronze gate. You enter under the rose grown arch-way to a garden that emits an overwhelmingly calming smell of sweet flowers everywhere. Lining the pathways are the lavender, lilies, and lilac trees. Whitseria, fuchsia, and buganvillea cover the walls and the canopy where a snack awaits on the table next to your favorite squishy chair. The waterfall gurgles in the corner across from the arching bridge above the river. You are at peace and you stay there for hours feeding the koi and petting the cats basking in the sun.”

Her vision is less damaged than Him and I. **It** has been kinder to her. She. She has struggles with loss. Very young and very gruesome. She has been left in despair and in anger but She has restrained **it**. **It** has been fought with weapons of the mind. She does not need a shield of blankets. **It** surfaces still but She knows how to push **it** away and let go. I have learned many valuable lessons from her.

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<sup>4</sup> “Older adults with impaired vision are more likely to have symptoms of anxiety and depression, and older adults with symptoms of anxiety or depression are more likely to develop vision impairment, according to findings from the U.S. National Health and Aging Trends Study.” Will Boggs MD, “Vision Loss Linked With Anxiety, Depression - and Vice Versa”, Psychiatry & Behavioral Health Learning Network, 24 May. 2019, <https://www.psychcongress.com/article/vision-loss-linked-anxiety-depression-and-vice-versa>

I am a combination of both Her and Him. So many sleepless nights searching for my garden sometimes trudging through the darkness and other times stumbling upon the brick path. **It** will not control me.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

“Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Symptoms & Causes: Boston Children's Hospital”, Boston Children's Hospital, 19 Nov. 2020,

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions/g/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/symptoms-and-causes>

For the majority of my sources I used research on Generalized Anxiety Disorder(GAD) which added facts to support my personal experience with anxiety. For this specific source I supported my obsessive need to finish work before the deadline. By using this footnote my goal was to emphasize the reason why it is so difficult for me to just leave alone something like turning in an assignment late.

“Worry Decision Tree”, Psychology Tools, 9 Nov. 2020,

<https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/worry-decision-tree/>.

When my mom would “bring me to my garden” the first task in attempting to settle my anxiety was to “hang all my worries on the worry tree”. When researching for this assignment I came across the worry tree as a tool for GAD. This was very surprising considering I thought my mom made it up as part of her story. The worry tree I had been imagining was a tree made of thousands of origami paper sheets with written worries folded to look like a weeping willow. However the psychological tool therapists often use is more like a diagram of worries to help visualize and organize one's thoughts. This resource was an article I found quite intriguing and I added to compare my own imagination to an actual tool used in helping people with anxiety.

Will Boggs MD, "Vision Loss Linked With Anxiety, Depression - and Vice Versa",  
Psychiatry & Behavioral Health Learning Network, 24 May. 2019,

<https://www.psychcongress.com/article/vision-loss-linked-anxiety-depression-and-vice-versa>

While researching the relationship between poor vision and anxiety I came across this quick fact I thought would really add to my essay. The subject "He" in this paragraph refers to my dad, and later on "She" referring to my mom, who has struggled with anxiety for as long as I've known. My dad also has worse vision than anyone in his family and my vision is half as bad as my dad's but still a higher prescription than both my brother and my mom. I thought it was worth looking into considering my level of anxiety and the relationship it has with my age adding insight to something the reader might not consider.

### **Intention Statement**

I wrote the lyrical essay "It" to release some built up anger I have towards my anxiety and swarming thoughts in my mind. I originally chose my "my garden" as the subject of this essay which quickly developed into more of an idea on my struggles with my daily anxiety. "My garden" is a place that lives only in my mind. This was similar to a bedtime story my mom would tell me when I was struggling to calm down and go to sleep. I began this essay with an introduction to a nightly event for me as a child which was being scared of the dark. This is not an uncommon thing for children, however my eyesight is very damaged. I am nearsighted and wear contacts. Most people who need glasses have a -2.00 diopter prescription in their eyes, whereas I have a -10.00 diopter prescription, something almost unheard of for someone my age. This caused a lot of fear and anxiety as a child not being able to see what was in my room even with a night light or the hall light on. Vision is later used in other sections as both literal and a

metaphor to battle anxiety. For most of the first section I used questioning as a technique to establish what was going through my mind. When the questioning changes to short fragmented sentences of one to two words my attitude as the narrator shifts to implement a more rapid factual tone rather than a questioning fearful tone. Ultimately the pattern of the more rapid tone aims to show what I know to always be true to me while also using the technique of "it" as my subject to represent anxiety. While I did research generalized anxiety disorder symptoms and tools to cope with my more personal research sources, like my mom, were particularly helpful in how I used my footnotes. I was very certain that I wanted to use quotes of research in my footnotes rather than straight in my essay. This was a way of explaining more topics that wouldn't make sense to anyone but myself if I didn't explain. I arranged my text using white space as a way to not just break up but section off commentary. I also bolded the word "it" to make it clear that "it" was a noun and very important in the sentence. During peer review, my readers enjoyed all of my sensory imagery, but suggested that I not only describe how something looks but how it feels as well. This was the most helpful feedback I could have received in order to go back and adjust the way I worded some of my sentences focusing on the panic I feel. There was no specific author I tried to emulate throughout my essay. I did however pull inspiration from Ross Gay's, *The Book of Delights*, chapter titled "Humming Bird".