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“Depression Part Two” - Close Reading

Allie Brosh has a strikingly unique method of storytelling. Her utilization of graphics and hyperbolized text transcends her stories off the page. In this essay I will focus on Brosh’s use of hyperbole and understatement in her story “Depression Part Two.” Brosh is capable of telling a story about an emotional disability, depression, and transforming the topic to be less heavy and largely relatable. Her captions often contain unlikely exaggerations, while the words and actions that she depicts in the story are often under exaggerations. This contrast is revealing of the experience of a person suffering from depression, and Brosh is able to bring that to light in a creative and compelling way.

Following the opening anecdote in the story, Brosh depicts herself as an emotionless figure, experiencing “horrible, soul-decaying boredom” (Brosh 125). There is obviously nothing literally soul-decaying about the feeling of boredom, but it may feel that way when you are “existentially confused” (Brosh 125). Following this page, there is a depiction of Brosh attempting to interact with a friend; her internal thoughts are chaotic and desperate, while her external dialogue reflects a slightly lower level of disorientation, as she simply states to the friend that she is “...interacting with [them]” (Brosh 127). Another interaction with a friend reflects Brosh’s tendency to exaggerate for effect in her storytelling, as her non-depressed friend spews advice at her, saying she “should do yoga while watching the sunrise...it’s literally impossible to feel negative and sad while appreciating the wonder of the universe” (Brosh 128). This is an obviously embellished statement to reflect what Brosh may have imagined her friend

saying as she encouraged Brosh to get better, even though she was feeling incapable of reciprocating that gratefulness for nature, or any general positive feelings.

One particular scene in this story is especially revealing of the ambiguous feelings that depression evokes. Beginning on page 142, Brosh attempts to reveal to her mother how she has experienced suicidal thoughts. This is an effort to seek help; a very, very difficult and extremely vulnerable position to be in. Rather than being entirely transparent about her thoughts, Brosh depicts herself telling her mother that she doesn't "necessarily want to *KILL* [herself, she] just wants to become dead somehow" (Brosh 143). This interaction is particularly telling of how confusing the experience of depression can be. Even while Brosh is struggling with the most severe form of self-harm, she opts to downplay it as "becoming dead" once she feels capable enough to ask for help. There is clearly a discrepancy in severity here, but it may very well feel physically impossible to reveal the true level of severity to anyone.

Though the actual aforementioned exchange may have gone slightly differently, there is a strong chance that there was some level of under exaggeration in an attempt to console whoever was receiving this news. This conversation speaks to how anyone struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts may be inclined to minimize their suffering for the sake of others' comfort. Ultimately, this idea reflects how detrimental the stigma surrounding mental illness can be to those who suffer, as they may not feel equipped or validated enough to seek help from anyone.

The final scene of the story is a tremendous way to wrap-up the rollercoaster of the experience of depression. Brosh has obviously condensed her history with depression into just a few readable panels, but this last scene is a most memorable one. Brosh is on the other side of the "dark part" of her depression, and suddenly finds "stupid tiny piece of corn [to be] funniest thing in universe" (Brosh 154). The unsophisticated syntax is representative of how the shriveled

piece of corn made her feel in that moment; she became unhinged with laughter at the corn for no apparent reason. The point of the laughter is that it makes no sense, and it shifts something in Brosh that helps her understand that there may be points in life where nothing really makes sense, and that is perfectly beautiful (see image of rainbow on page 156) and perfectly okay.