

Jumps and Steps (inspired by One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest) - Jess Oghenegweke

I did it. It was painful, but I did it. The first time was the hardest. It's easier when you think about the Consequences. Nothing is worse than the Consequences. I found an empty part of the chalk wall to add to the tally chart- there is hardly any space to draw any more lines, like a full tank on the verge of overflowing. It's a game you see, they don't want you to think it's a game but it is, I'm telling you LISTEN to me it IS a game.

Today they conquered 13 jumps on my body. A jump is a part of you they take away. But it was only a small jump today, don't worry. I still have 7 nails left. You get no points for making any noise. Noise equals negative production. Everything you complete has to be silent (production) or they do it to you all over again. We call it Step One: an attempt to remove YOU. When you complete the jumps quickly you have free time, so I am reading the note she gave me, with the special alphabet, running my fingers over the bumps. I do this everyday at 13:13 for twenty minutes. They won't see, that's when they have dinner.

The Nighthawks dragged another number in today. I know because I heard them and you DON'T hear that kind of screaming unless you are going into Step One. Why would you want to go back there if you had already experienced it? I am forever on edge, balancing on a single thread, in a giant cobweb of warped unimaginable evils, lying to my conscience everyday to cheat my way out of them taking my internal clock. The one that works clockwise. The one that reaches definity, can calculate, understands, remembers a name and not a number. 9875462.

They think I have forgotten Step One, but it's forever etched into every fibroblast cell and deeply burnt beneath in my blood, veins and tissue. It was the aftermath that scared me the most, after they finished the attempt to take the you. I can remember, it was like death gave me another hand. The life escaping from my nose, flying in and out in a rush of excitement, my chest struggling, ripping, tightening with each gush of life. I found it so difficult to open my eyes; the frustration took over and the warmth trickled through my fingers as my full set of nails tore deeper and deeper into my palms. They were so heavy, as if each eyelash had been boyscout knotted at the end with a teabag. Beneath my eyelids, a black and white distorted film danced sporadically. I was hugging her again, for a moment. I was always envious. I had his pond water eyes, hers were like crystals. The rays from glass used to make them glisten with different blues and whites, like the up outside.

Her skin smelt like smiles. I don't know where she is anymore, I don't know if she's here or in my clock, the clock that's not working anymore, I don't know, I don't know anything. If I shut my eyes tight, really tight I can hear it. The laugh coming from the living room, when my hair softly brushed passed my shoulders when I fastly foot stepped to see him. He was productive. Pure. His hair was like hers. Sparkly red in the rays, it made me warm. I'd kiss it over and over and over again hearing his laugh become more energetic. The pixels were teasing me making my eyes want to burst. To see if it were in front of me. One of my arms had been strapped down. The harsh leather breaking into my rights creating a gaping wound. I could feel the antibodies trembling, panicking wanting to help but the strap just kept tightening and tightening. My other hand was free but extremely weak, it took so much determination and concentration to even make it shudder slowly feeling the wet incision in my chest, up to my belted neck, up to my mouth.

My whole body convulsed, out of fear, confusion, horror. I dared to do it again, slowly laying my fingers on my lips. They were different. I took my index finger and worked my way from the left to the right slowly feeling each bump. I then moved my finger up and down following the bloody lines, a messy zigzag as if a child was in a rush to finish an abstract picture for mother. I tried to pull but it was too painful. I shook my arm fast and powerfully in hope to shake off the pain. It was metal, metal wire pierced through every inch of my mouth, conjoining both lips. What was I now? A freak of nature? I just wanted to scream. I tried so hard but no noise escaped, nothing. They thought they had silenced me. The adrenaline and terror managed to waken my eyes upstairs. As I peeked through my eyelashes I saw a blurry box room, a box room with something bright on the wall in front of me. My eyes slowly gained courage and I could make out words on the charcoal wall. Bright, blood red letters, dripping to the floor.

Noise equals negative production. Silence equals production. Welcome to your new life 9875462.

In the corner, next to the steel door is a telescreen directly facing me, always facing me. Every day the black awakens turning to white with different coloured writing: green is the easiest, then orange, then red. They are instructions, of what we must do to ourselves within a certain amount of time. You have to press the green buzzer on the left hand wall of your cell, you have to show that you have completed the tasks by revealing your jumps to the telescreen, otherwise you can't join the rest of Wing A10893 for production time, and you will be

sent to Step Two. I always complete the jumps, no matter how painful because B (9875453) is my life here. We can both remember. I send her secret notes in special letters. Her little sister was blind. And now she is too.

Every day a scrolled up note is pushed through the perfectly fitted, round hole, the eye to the corridor through the steel block. It was rolled up like when actual people used to do the round paper. When names used to chuck the paper onto the freshly mowed grass, and you had to brush off the green sparkles whilst walking with shoes on the concrete stepping pavements. When it was the norm for names to be outside. Vehicles, birds, coloured doors. All kinds of colours, everywhere. Life. Living. So many smiles. They are my favourite. The real kind. Sometimes I think I've lived twice, as if the memories of a different time, a different realm has somehow stayed connected and is trickling into my new reality confusing my mind. It is just too different. I can't remember how I got here. Neither can B.

After the eyes, she hasn't said as much. She doesn't want them thinking she is negative pure. That's why we are all here; we are all negative pure to Nighthawk. These tasks we do, the telescreen ones they make us pure (they say). They slowly make us a Nighthawk too. B said to me 'They are making us kill ourselves'. But I knew a secret; they are the ones dead inside.

"They are trying to kill me. They are making us kill ourselves".

In special alphabet I wrote 'No one's trying to kill you'.

"Then why are they jumping me?"

'They are jumping everyone. They are not trying to kill you. They are killing you'.

They heard it. The conversation. That's when they jumped her.