



Oct. 21, 2024

Well. I skipped over Dad's birthday entirely. And then Mom's, too. I actually shut down pretty hard after Dad's b-day... there was a group text that day with all my siblings. I mean, ALL of them, my 6 sisters and 2 brothers. I don't think that ever happened during my life, all of them together at once. Of course, they weren't quite all "together" this time, either. Not really. Just a trick of technology. But still. And even now, I had all my siblings together at once, but none of them did. How not? Because I wasn't included in this big digital get-together in Dad's honor. In fact, I wasn't even welcome to it. Not by everyone, anyway. So, they all chatted away, one big happy family, not only without me but as if I didn't even exist. They talked with each other about my dad — MY dad, his MY dad, too! — asking questions none of them knew the answers to. But I did. And when they gave up and batted around who they might ask, they came up with... my aunt, Dad's sister, Maia. And sure, Maia probably knows. But... seriously? Not even a single peep of a mention about me? Their brother, his son? The last of us to live with him?

Anyway, all of that really hurt. It cut me pretty deep. I just... tuned out, for awhile. I'd wanted to write here, in this journal, or more accurately, I wanted to want to write here, but I just couldn't summon the emotional strength. The wound was still too raw. Eventually I wrote to Maia and also Sherry explaining some of what I'd been going through and why (it wasn't just the text snub and feeling like I'd been cut out of family photos, but also a call with Maia in the midst of all that in which she spoke about my sister Darby, relaying some things Darby had expressed to her), but I never could bring myself to write here. Not the ultra-reflective stuff. What I'd pined for, really, was a Facebook page where I could post a general reply to my entire family at once, let them all see the same thing at the same time, then maybe I could let some of the hurt go. But no one has put a Facebook together for me, either. I rely on others for almost everything now. It isn't pleasant.

So, yes, I skipped over a lot of milestone days for journaling. It could hardly be helped. Today, though... some time has passed, and today is October 21st. Yesterday and the day before were rough. They always are. Today could be, too... probably should be, but more often this is the day when I begin to come up from the depths of 10-19 and 10-20. Together, these were the last days of

my life. Today, many years ago now, is the day I would awaken in a small, cold, hard cell, shocked to discover that the nightmare was reality. Today is the day when, long ago, I'd be driven by a pig, in chains, to a different cage, where they intended to keep me until I died. I remember that morning so distinctly — it was early, cold, and bright. A crystal clear day, incongruously beautiful outside while a storm of ugliness raged inside, within my very life, yet all around was sun and blue sky and birds ... all along the drive all I could think about was Coby, wondering where he was at that exact moment. Had he made it home during the night? What had he endured? Was he asleep on his couch-bed, or maybe already awake too, seeing some of the same impossible things I was seeing? Did it all feel so fake to him, too?

A friend recently sent me videos from Coby's TikTok account. It's ... it's so many things to me, most of them impossible to put into words. Mostly, it's overwhelming. How can I be looking at my friend, but only through a screen? Two screens... no, three. I see Coby, but it's my other friend who is connecting us. He's right there, but still a million miles away, and he has no idea I'm on the other side of the glass, peeking in. And of course, he's different, a different person, yet still familiar. He's older, much older than I ever knew him, and it's bizarre to see him like this — even these video clips are a few years old now, but they're still very much a glimpse of a future person, only from the past. There is no present between us. Our friendship was more than half his life ago. He's done a lot since then. But one image stands out to me, starkly... I see him doing a handstand. Some of my best memories with Coby involve doing handstands, walking on hands... he was better at it than I was, even back then. Memories of us helping each other learn to do backflips on the beach. Seeing that image in particular brought a real smile to my face, right up til it made me cry. I want to talk to Coby again, more than almost anything in the world, but... I can't. Not yet. Not yet.