

Since the beginning of the spoken word, there have been tales of men who left all they knew behind and returned a different man. Perhaps I am but the next in this long line, and if that be so, I am both proud and burdened to carry the torch forward so that others may see what a man is truly capable of. My journey did not take me to distant lands or even all that far from home, but as I traversed it, I felt farther from home than I have ever been in my life. The journey's beginning was not heralded by a great sage or seer declaring an encroaching danger, but rather as a simple pain in my wrist. Like many before me, I did not yet know that this was the hero's call meant to pull me away from all that I knew, and it was many an hour before I would look down and realize how far I had come from the path that I had been walking. In truth, it was only much later that I realized that I could move nothing below my neck. In the month that followed I felt Death's cold hand reach for me more than once, but I refused it for my work was not yet done. I prayed each night to wake and find that I could return to the boy I was, but once one has begun the hero's journey they can never return to the life they once knew. It was a long time before I would learn to accept that truth.

As the month drew to a close, I became resolved to return to the life I had known no matter how hard I was forced to push my body and mind. Each day I pushed myself through therapy that would've forced a less resilient man to surrender, but I refused to allow myself to give up. Several months later I returned

home not yet whole, but not as broken as I had been. Those that I had known were happy to see me, but they could not understand what I had experienced. They could not understand how the experience had changed me, and I could not blame them, for I had not fully realized it either. I attempted to hide the change and act as I had done before, but it felt wrong as if who I had been was now a stranger to me. What made things worse was how I was now being treated. People would likely assume that the worst would be those that looked down on me as if I was nothing, but it was those that tried to help whose words stung the most. They tried to offer help, and assumed I was incapable. I knew their intentions were good, but they did not understand the pain I felt at needing so much help or the pride I took in the small things I could still do for myself. They did not know, and yet, I barked at them to stay away because I could not face the shame of feeling as if I had lost another piece of myself. They did not know. They could not know.