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## He Whispered To Himself

Mareesa Forbes  
*St. John Fisher College*

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# He Whispered To Himself

## **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The day that Julian died was the busiest day of his life. To him, looking back, he found it oddly fitting that he'd woken up so early in the morning. The blaring scarlet digits next to his head read 5:32, a mere two hours after he had managed to find the massive bed so he could pass out atop it. He was silent as consciousness overtook him; and through the darkness, his eyes adjusted until he could count the cracks in the ceiling from where the guitars had been repeatedly thrown upward."

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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## HE WHISPERED TO HIMSELF

BY MAREESA FORBES

The day that Julian died was the busiest day of his life. To him, looking back, he found it oddly fitting that he'd woken up so early in the morning. The blaring scarlet digits next to his head read 5:32, a mere two hours after he had managed to find the massive bed so he could pass out atop it. He was silent as consciousness overtook him; and through the darkness, his eyes adjusted until he could count the cracks in the ceiling from where the guitars had been repeatedly thrown upward.

Twisted in the sheets somewhere beside him was a blonde whose makeup smudged the white pillows. Her entire torso was exposed. Julian scanned over her without a single thought running through his head, until he came to the track marks on her arms and he silently wished he'd gotten the girl who preferred blow.

He got out of bed and put on his pants from last night and stepped over the scattered clothes, empty bottles, and mangled guitar pieces to the armchair next to the curtains. Julian opened them and let the lightening darkness flood in, then sat down in the armchair with a heavy sigh leaving his pierced lips.

Julian's black hair framed his face and his pale emerald eyes locked on the horizon where the rays of sunlight only just hinted at dawn. The black fingernails itched at his pocket and stopped when he felt the contents pressing against his leg. Without moving his glazed gaze, he removed the little metal skull from his pocket and he held it before his line of sight before the window. Its sparkling ruby eyes leered at him.

He snapped it open at the crest of its scalp and held it under his nose, quietly breathing inward as he stared across the mass of city lights dotting the buildings and streets.

"I can't remember the last time I watched the sun rise," he whispered to himself, and then gave a hard snort and emptied the skull of every last white grain.

For a moment there was deafening silence, but then he felt his pupils dilate and watched as everything around him sped up. It was like everything in fast forward, and he didn't stop watching until the blonde's twitchy movements around the room caught his attention. He rose from the chair and gathered everything he owned.

The manager knocked on the door and let out the blonde, gathering Julian and taking him from the room to the lobby to the bus outside. He had a notebook shoved into his hands and Lenny, the drummer, was telling him to keep working on the songs for the next album. Ben, the second guitarist, was busy signing a high stack of posters, and when Brendan, the bassist, was on the bus, it pulled away from the hotel and down the strip.

They arrived at the label's building and piled inside to find socialites with bloody marys swarming them, and there was Flea, and there was Maynard, and there was Trent patting him on the back, and all of it happened in seconds. They were eating and drinking and Julian had no appetite, but they kept shoving sandwiches at him.

Someone made a speech, everyone raised their glasses, and someone handed Julian a thin blue vial that he studied briefly and then put in his pocket. Someone was going on and on about the tour so far and asked about the next album, and Julian smiled and got into the details. As he spoke, though, he felt everything slowing down around

him, and reached for the vial in his pocket. Brendan took his arm and pulled him up a spiral staircase and led him to a leather couch next to a pool on the roof. Julian let go of the vial in his pocket and reached for the smoking bong sitting on the glass table. Brendan patted his shoulder and sat next to him.

"Don't let Jay see you," he chuckled and handed Julian a little white pill with a skull painted in maroon on it, and Julian swallowed it. Jay the manager came from behind him and handed him a scotch, and said something that was drowned out by the sudden rush of the world's noise around him.

In seconds it was all running around him again and his heart was pounding through his inked and naked chest. Brendan nudged him, and they rose and in the blink of an eye were back in the bus, and it had been hours. The scotch was long gone and he was holding another empty glass, and the bus had barely moved when it stopped again. The notebook fell out of his lap when he rose and stepped off the bus to discover they were in another city.

They walked into the dark restaurant and sat at a booth where Jay talked to them, and then their promoter joined them. Julian didn't touch the food in front of him, but he spoke for a long time about everything; and at some points they laughed because he was being philosophical.

In another blink they were standing in front of the venue and the sun was beating down on them. Julian shielded his eyes with his hand and watched as time slowed down again. His other hand took the blue vial from his pocket, but Lenny was shoving the bottle of pale green absinthe into his side and Julian had to comply. He took a swig of it. He left the vial in his pocket and instead took in his hand the small white tab Ben was handing him. He rested it on his tongue and walked inside.

The scaffolding was immense and the stage was swarming with men in jumpsuits and clipboards. The stadium seating was open to the west. Julian counted the hours and realized they would be playing with the sun in their eyes.

Suddenly it was sound check and he stood before the microphone, blinded by the stage lights and aware of the gathering masses because of the stadium's open gap. He watched the sun dip lower in the sky and, for a moment, felt a rush of peace overtake him.

The acid had reached its second wave.

"Julian," Ben called and startled him, "the doors are opening in ten minutes. Come on."

Julian looked back at the sky and felt the moment slip away. He followed Ben backstage past the warped scaffolding and the spare amps that had begun to breathe. He kept his head high and walked into the lounge with a solemn gaze.

"You don't look okay," Lenny murmured as he leaned back from the powdery glass table.

Julian said nothing. He sat in front of the mirror as an assistant set a tray of alcohol and sandwiches in front of him. His lips curled and he brushed his hands against his pockets as if keeping them as far away from the food as possible. His eyes glossed over as his fingertips ran across the vial.

Jay came inside as Julian turned away from the food and turned to the couch. The plush nearly swallowed him. Jay ranted and Julian took the vial from his pocket, studying it over. Its cap adorned a skull with red eyes that glinted in the light. Its contents seemed enough to make a large animal have a heart attack, but his tolerance had built

quite high over the abusive years that he had been sitting in studios for countless hours at a time, and alight on stage. It was eating away at him. The bloody noses had stopped, but so had his sense of smell. His heart always ached. He never had fat on his body, just bone beneath muscle beneath tight, tight skin. He was always tired if he was sober.

Yet Julian knew that quitting was nowhere near in the future.

He opened the vial and, as Jay spoke, emptied it onto the glass table and began to neatly arrange it with the flat edge of the cap. When it was a straight line he removed the cap on the opposite end of the vial and bent forward. In a single deep breath he traced the vial from one end to the other and closed his eyes as he very slowly leaned back once more. They hadn't noticed, much like they never had before, and again the world around him began to blur by. He could feel how slowly he blinked, and how long it took him to process a thought.

Jay was leading him onstage and the crowd was roaring, bathed in crimson by the glow of the sun sitting on the far off horizon. Someone handed him a guitar, and before he could realize he was walking, his lips were pressing into the microphone and he was waving to the crowd. They screamed and the amplifiers whined. Julian could feel himself playing and he barely heard his voice over the music and the fans, but he couldn't understand how he was doing it.

It was after the seventh song that he turned and studied his band mates. It was just after that seventh song that his eyes rolled back in his head and he collapsed. The sweat was pouring from his body, and the guitar was slick with it.

His eyes closed and didn't open again until he had IVs in his arms and a plastic mask over his nose and mouth. Jay, Lenny, Ben, and Brendan stood over him and just stared as he turned his head to the clock next to his bed.

It read 5:32.

Jay started talking, but Julian couldn't hear a thing. His cracked lips parted and he swallowed to dampen his throat. He hadn't remembered Brendan yanking the guitar off of his body and checking his pulse as Lenny screamed for the medics. The stretcher had been cold because he was so feverish, and Jay had ridden with him as the ambulance wailed and sped through the city.

The doctors had busily pumped him full of fluids and the nurses hadn't been delicate about the needles. After all, he was a trashy overdose patient at a Catholic hospital. They thought he had woken up a little after midnight, but he was screaming so incoherently that it was decided he couldn't have been conscious. When he settled down, the men were allowed in the room because the doctors told the band and the manager that Julian would be lucky to make it into the morning.

Jay took his hand and Julian turned his gaze from the window to the ceiling. His voice came weakly. He smiled ever so slightly.

"I can't remember the last time I watched the sun rise," he whispered to himself.