

Eggestential Dread

A quiet whirr of the fan and the faintest 'hello' from the afternoon sun slip through the slivers of space between curtains. I am tired of being, let alone a person. An amalgam of science and arts twist into the recesses of my mind, disheveled and disorganized. The semester's slog has finally run its course, and I am *exhausted*.

The popcorn ceiling looks like it's run its course. My stomach growls. I want to cry. The house is quiet.

'I'm hungry,' is what I think. *'Life sucks, and I am hungry.'*

Sitting up, let alone crawling out of bed, is a miracle — it's my lucky day! I can do both. Like a marionette, I am dragged to the kitchen, my stomach, the puppeteer. The kitchen tile is cold. The chipped bowl, too. The lone fork's prongs are slightly bent, but they still work. It still works despite the damage, and I should, too.

Fingers wrap around the fridge handle, and I crack it open. Soft scrambled eggs are easiest for me, especially now; let's see what we need:

- ~~3~~ eggs
- ~~love, organic~~
- ~~1~~ tablespoon (15g) unsalted butter
- ~~a way to forgive past mistakes~~
- kosher salt (optional)
- ~~freshly ground white or black pepper (optional)~~

I take out what I need and have the bare minimum of a mise en place settled on the counter.

Three eggs: one crack, two crack, three. A piece of nicked shell makes its way inside, but it's alright. Tears find their way down my cheeks, but I remind myself that it is okay. I stab the fork through the yolks and whisk. Rapid, circular motions, the sound of metal against ceramic rings in my ears, and I cannot help but think about being with friends under halcyon clouds, the sweltering Florida sun an afterthought. We laugh (that rings, too) despite our sunburnt shoulders and flushed faces. The sweat isn't a problem once the wind picks up. We talk about shows we watch and books we read, all while eating snacks from our childhoods. One, two, three, we sit like ducks (chickens?) in a row. One, two, three, I toss the shells. I continue to stir and soothe myself in the mundanity of it all; this will pass, and I can return to that sense of normalcy one day. Does this

suffice for love? The love of my friends, the feelings that reignite my heart? I feel warm. A smile pulls at the corners of my lips.

Life sucks, I am hungry, but it will be okay. I must repeat this to myself: a mantra, a passage. Until the words sear into my brain, and the tears stop.

Gold foil wrapping gets peeled back; it's salted butter, but it works! It means I won't ground salt later, maybe just the pepper. Mitigating problems and persevering through hardship must be at the forefront. There are remnants of breadcrumbs, remnants of fast-paced mornings between my mother and me. All I can think about is freshly brewed coffee and reheated leftovers being packed to-go. Telugu hymnals and conversations about the new happenings with family members fill the air, and we rush out the door. My mind grows muddled, and I think about slipping grades, the pit in my stomach from anxiety, but I must be kind. Just as my mother is to me. It simply means I have to work harder. I slice butter and throw it into the pan. It sizzles, and I sigh.

A dance of moving the pan back and forth off the heat, stirring eggs that cook too fast. I take time to crack pepper, and they overcook (only by a little)! It's okay; my eggs were made to sustain me, and I worked hard. Every part of my body did, too, and I must be nicer to it.

The eggs are soft, and I am full.

Life sucks, but it will be okay.