

The Master of the Universe

*Chris Smith**

I'll be blunt so that you can be.

It's hard to talk about depression without sounding like a whiner, someone looking for a pity party, someone weak. It's also hard to talk about depression because no one gives a fuck about your feelings and, in my experience, when you assume people should care about your feelings they give even less of a fuck than they did before you started crying at them. And yet, that is exactly what I am going to do with this offering. I am not sure why, except that I wanted to do an autobiographical piece and this is the deepest I can dig on my own. When I say 'dig' I mean that I want to achieve a closer orbit of my Real—the Real being that unseen, nebulous force that encapsulates everything that makes you tick. It is all your subconscious traumas and loves and hates rolled into one colossal fuck that frames every part of your Self. It's a Lacanian principle that you might want to look up for yourself because I'm not good with the theoretical shit. I just know that this is one motive for this piece; hopefully you can find other reasons to care about this and my writing is not just self-indulgent. I like to think that my story can be revealing in some way, either to you as the reader or in regards to the study of autobiographical writing and criticism. I have never written about or discussed these things with anyone before except for my parents, my girlfriend, my doctor, and Chase—my dog.

For starters, let me try to capture the feeling for you. It is one of self-hatred, born from what I perceive to be inadequacies in my person. It is not a seasonal malaise or a 'rainy day' depression like you see in the Zoloft commercials with people sighing and staring out of windows while a piano tinkles in the background. (For the record, though, I take Zoloft and it is fantastic.) Instead, it is a nasty anger at myself for being worthless: I am a hideous, stupid, talentless faggot who should be dead fucking dead and am just so ugly ugly ugly ugly ugly ugly ugly ugly UGLY UGLYYYYYYYYGIwudfjdkgsejfoi. The depression goes something like that, anyway. I would only add that this sort of thing is constant, unyielding, and never leaves me, just as my inadequacies never leave me. I am always ugly and stupid, so I always hate myself for failing to not be ugly and stupid. However, this only applies to me. In other words, I only hate myself for being this way, I do not hate other people for being ugly and stupid. I recognize this is inconsistent, but I am really only an accurate judge of myself and so I don't have the faculties to condemn others. All I know is I am not good enough to exist, and I resent myself for that. Why don't you kill yourself then, drama queen? Keep it in your pants, we'll get to that.

Maybe we can look at my history to further understand my feelings, where they come from, why they're there, what to do about them. I've always been ugly, and I can remember when

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I was first made to feel that way. I was in fourth grade and Dane Conly asked “What the fuck is on your face?” I actually didn’t know what he was talking about. I never thought my acne could be something disturbing. And yet there it was, and from then on there was a lot of ridicule about the way I looked. Boo hoo, poor me. These days I don’t look as bad, but when I was little,

especially from 12-15, I had freakish cysts that would emerge on my face and nasty scarring across my shoulders and back. When we had to change in gym class I waited until everyone was gone, because if not I used to scare people or make them laugh. The worst was when I would startle my friends. Once, in the locker room, Aaron Hall jumped back and asked ‘how I got that way.’ I had no idea how to answer that, I just stood there and let him and Jared poke at me and laugh. When they left I cried. Then I went and lived under an opera house and sang ‘Music of the Night’ for the next decade. Haha, just kidding. I’m more Hunchback of Notre Dame than Phantom of the Opera. Anyway, after years of sneaking to the dermatologist and shoving every possible medication into me, I was introduced to a pill called Accutane. Some of you might have heard of it or even had it prescribed. It is a very intense drug regimen that sucks all the moisture from your face over a 5 month period and exterminates your pores. My face would be so brittle that a stiff breeze could cut me open, and I would start bleeding in class all the time. Some days I could not open my mouth because my lips were so chapped—it was too painful to part them. No one ever understood why, and I didn’t want to say I was on skin meds because I didn’t want to appear vain. Often, I pissed blood. I was told that it would be a miracle drug, and it would make all my ugliness go away. I should’ve known; I’m an atheist, I don’t believe in miracles. Within four months my acne came roaring back, and in addition were a number of side-effects. The most infamous was depression, which Accutane is apparently famous for delivering in addition to its panaceas. A lot of teens kill themselves after taking Accutane, which is why the drug is not prescribed by a majority of dermatologists. I learned this after the fact, from another doctor, who said he would never prescribe the drug because he didn’t want a kid’s death on his conscience. I am sure my depression existed before Accutane, but the drug has certainly exacerbated it.

Once it became blisteringly obvious that I was suicidal I began to see a psychologist. I didn’t meet him in an asylum or a hospital; my dad delivered his mail and so I went to his home office every week for the next 4 years, and every week that I was home for the two years after that. The doctor was an old man, in his late sixties when I first met him, but very lively and witty. Brilliant, in a word. His office was crammed with books, movies, and sports memorabilia, and I spent a good amount of my therapy just discussing his office with him. He used to sit behind his desk, leaned back in his chair, and the two of us would talk for an hour. It was not like the therapy you see on TV; often he would talk more than me—about his kids, politics, movies, whatever. And yet he was very professional, always needing the copay and never bringing me into other parts of his house. I think he can best be described as a teacher and a friend, and he walked with perfect balance between the two. His name was Dr. Charles K. Miller, he was the greatest man I’ve ever met aside from my father, and he saved my life. He died last year, and I still mourn his passing. No doubt part of my description of him is to honor his memory.

In my sessions with the Doc, he reminded me that depression is a disease. Once, I told him: ‘I don’t want to need pills in order to be happy.’ He said, ‘Let’s say you have cancer, Chris. [As it turned out, Dr. Miller had pancreatic cancer at the time.] Are you not going to undergo chemo because you’re responsible for your own health? It’s the same thing.’ I recognize that

some of you might disagree with this statement because mental health is not usually equated with the same victimhood as physical health. You're wrong if you disagree, but at least I recognize your wrongness. Either way, I took Dr. Miller's statement to mean that my depression is something that I cannot control. This makes sense when I consider the fact that my melancholy persists despite all things to the contrary. I had loving parents but still felt unloved, good friends but still felt alone, girlfriends but still felt unattractive. I worry that the reason for this is that my depression is an integral part of me, not something to be expelled but something else. Suppressed, channeled, ignored? When I think of it this way it can seem rather hopeless, this struggle against depression, because there is no scenario where I kill it but there is a scenario where it kills me. Thus we again return to the question of suicide, and why I will not perform it. It seems like a viable course of action, that I succumb to depression as opposed to suppressing it or channeling it, etc. The first reason against that would be that although I do not love myself, I love plenty of others, and they keep me anchored in this world. You can blame my loved ones for having to deal with me, haha again. Maybe another reason is *jouissance*? I like what I don't like, the habit of being depressed. I'm not a fan of that theory because it is hard for me to conceptualize the comfort I get from such a habit. Lastly, I stick around because I fear death, and I don't want to be worm chow. Luckily, as the Master of the Universe, I am eternal. However, if I do go to the great junkyard in the sky, I want the words on my tombstone to read: 'Here Lies Chris Smith. He died of things that were not depression, so suck on that Dane Conly. Now plant some flowers and get off of my grave.'