## The Day I Decided to Chase the Sun

## Dana Johnson



I cannot be sure when I first noticed my own existence.

Whether it was the smell of the gardens around me, or the first time I felt the sunlight dance along my stem. But I am now here.

I remember what it was like to feel happy and nourished. The sun provided me with all I needed to flourish. To grow and blossom, petals unfold.

I noticed the garden around me.

Full, colorful, and robust.

Where life would go to chase the sun.

I remember finding that beautiful once.

Before the voices.

The voices that told me the sun would make me less beautiful, less desired. The voices that told me the sun would take away my worth. That I was delicate, and that should be protected. The voices that told me the sun could not protect me.

The voices that told me only I could protect myself.

I remember feeling my energy fade and seeing my color dull. And I remember thinking it was worth it, because the voices made it so.

The voices, I realized, were all I had. My only trustworthy companions in this garden full of life.

I was alone.

I was isolated.

Just me and my voices.

I remember hiding from the sun and hoping it would not find me. I remember finding my safe space in the garden where I could go unnoticed. Left alone to listen to my voices. Left alone to try and find joy and worth. Searching for answers, feelings, fullness, life.

Until.

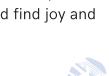
Only until I blossomed, I would say.

That was the goal.

The voices could help me get there, then I could be seen. Only then could I be beautiful.

I remember reaching for that.

Then I remember seeing it too late. The moment my leaves were crumpling and my petals falling. remember feeling lost and unsure. I remember questioning the voices and challenging them. Fearful of what that would mean.



I remember seeing how the others blossomed, and wishing I could be them. Comparison felt so simple. It seemed the only way to stay motivated. Watching the world of life thrive while I slowly died.

I was fading.

Fading.

And fading.

And fading.

And then I remember fighting. I'm not quite sure what I thought I was fighting for. I knew I was not ready for the fade. I was not ready to leave without existing first.

So I would fight. Fight to join the garden and have what they have. I had nothing left to try but to fight for life.

To feel the sun again.

I remember the fear of the fight. The fear I still feel bright and early when the first light of dawn erupts. I remember testing the sun and challenging the voices. I remember how I started slowly and would gently present one petal in the way of the sun. Just to see. To see if the voices were right. I remember slowly inching more of myself into the sun's path. Ready to run at the first sign of damage.

But the damage never came.

I instead felt the familiar pull and tug of the sun like a warm embrace. A safe haven. A place where I could be alive.

I remember fighting until my leaves sprouted once more. And my petals thrived. Fighting the fear to find my place with the sun. I persisted and fought and feared.

And I blossomed.

Petals bright, stem strong, leaves exposed. I remember feeling beautiful at that moment.

This is what *life* feels like.

I fight the fear still. And the voices; though they are quieter now.

I fight this so that every day I can chase the sun.

Chase life.

I cannot be sure when I first noticed my existence.

But I am sure I notice it now.

