A Room With A Void

This is not a story for the healed-hearted. It's a moment of silence for those who are in need of words. For the faces in the crowd who've never felt more alone. This story will not be a solution, but it can be a way of letting the light back in. Even if just a sliver.

In his novel *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham wrote: "To look life in the face, always, to look life in the face, and to know it for what it is… At last, to love it for what it is, and then, to put it away."

It's my personal belief that once you've seriously thought about ending your life, you've crossed some kind of metaphysical barrier and you're able to do exactly what Cunningham wrote: to love life for what it is, and then choose to put it away.

I imagine it's like standing in a room where there are only three walls. There used to be four, but that one's been taken down, brick by brick. With every time I thought about what it would be like to not be here anymore, I chipped away at it. Sometimes using only a nail to pry away some of its mortar. Other times,by taking a sledgehammer to it.

But now, there's no more wall left.
It's just a void.
And what's on the other side, is beautiful.

I probably think about ending my life more than the average person. A quick Google search taught me there's no data on the average time one thinks about suicide. All it could tell me is that it's generally not a daily occurrence.

What does Google know, right?

A search engine can't look at a body of water and think: gee, how far do I need to wade into the water for me to reach the point of no return? Or admire a friend's new apartment and find your eyes wandering off to the balcony, wondering if falling from this height would be enough?

Did I mention this story wasn't a fairy tale?

I'm sorry.

The thing is, I don't know how to not look at the exposed void in front of me anymore. In the same way that I couldn't stop myself from carving pieces out of that fourth wall before. The longer I now stare into this void, I feel like it sees me too. After all this time, we've become more than acquaintances. We're more than friends. This thing between us, it's actually gotten quite serious, if I'm being honest.

And that's the thing, isn't it?
Honesty.
You should always be honest.
With yourself. With your partner. With your therapist.
Honesty's the best policy.

But you see, I'm also a pathological people-pleaser. I don't want to upset people. And so when you congratulate your friend on their new apartment and in the very same breath mention how badly you want to jump off their balcony, it's not considered a good thing. If anything, it might actually land you in therapy.

And even if you don't say the words, you still end up in front of a therapist. So what do you do? Who goes first? What do you say? Does she want me to start? Okay. I'll go first. Should I start from the beginning or share my traumas in ascending order of severity? Or descending? Which is better?

Will her words save me? Can she make me not love the darkest parts of myself?

There. I said it. Love. I love the void. Damn, therapy really does get you to open up.

I'm sorry. That was a lie. I never even told my therapist I was suicidal. I already made her cry talking about my traumas. In chronological order. So as to give her a full account of the moves and countermoves, the actions and reactions. And that was already enough for her to pause the session and take a moment. Am I winning at therapy?

Yes, I know. I lied.
How could it be a full account if I didn't tell her everything?
Damnit. This honesty thing is harder than it looks.
Nevertheless, my therapist told me to breathe through it using these special breathing exercises. If she really got me, she'd know that's the last thing I wanted to do.

It's my fault, though. I didn't give her a fair chance. I didn't give her all of me. I didn't tell her about the void, and how teetering over the edge doesn't make me feel scared anymore. And you should know I'm deathly afraid of heights. Hehe. ironic.

It would take a few more years and several dark and twisty episodes before I'd get the answers Google couldn't give me before. Or maybe just part of an answer. But it was enough for me to begin to confront my problematic relationship with the void.

My friend told me: "The part of you that wants you to kill yourself, that's your body's way of protecting you from harm, it wants to stop the pain – however extreme the treatment."
Isn't that just the highest level of honesty you can think of? An overwhelming desire for the pain to stop, even if it's achieved through the cessation of life itself?

To look life in the face, truly stare it in the face and know that it won't all be good, but more importantly: to choose to love life in spite of the certainty of pain.

I won't lie to you and say that those words magically bricked up the fourth wall again. That would make this a fairy tale and I assured you this wasn't that. The void is still there.

Only now, when I'm standing on the edge, I notice something that wasn't there before. In that infinite darkness, a star has appeared. Though its light is dim and it has taken years to reach me, it reminds me of what's still to come.

And if one sliver of light managed to reach me after all these years, maybe it won't be the last.

I'm sorry. Final lie.

I *know* it won't be the last.