

Song of Depression

I've heard people say that depression is something you choose and that you can just 'get over it.' If it was something I chose, I probably would have been cured a while ago. But it isn't something you choose. Depression creeps up on you, regardless of age, race, or social standing. It's your body not being able to cope with whatever life is throwing at you. The best way to describe depression is the feeling of nothingness. Or maybe freefalling is best suited. Imagine you're falling through a black pit, where the sun and everything happy is right above you. You try and try, but you can't seem to get to the sunshine. And don't forget the invisible hands pulling you down further into the pit of darkness.

I remember sitting on my desk when I was fifteen and contemplating whether or not I wanted to live. I was convinced, at the time, that no one cared for me and that I was a major fuck-up. Thinking back on that time, if the band Green Day hadn't been formed or even if Wake Me Up When September Ends had never been written, I wouldn't be sitting here typing this. As much as I'd love to have said that I pulled out of the depression after that, or at least sought out help, I couldn't do so without lying to myself. It wasn't until years later, after college, that I started seeking medical help. After all, nobody wants to be the psycho on medication, especially during high school.

There's a cliché where fans say, 'such and such band saved my life.' From personal experience, I can say that most of the people saying it are only seeking attention. Or, if they are in personal contact with the band, seeking to warm one of their beds. Saying something saved your life is a thing you should only say if you mean it. Art affects us in different ways and

sometimes it can be the tipping point for one's future. I pretended to love Green Day, for years, to mask the hurt I felt inside by my father's constant absence and my peer's scorn. This facade lasted up till high school, when I realised just how much Green Day meant to me.

In the wake of September 11th, the United States of America took action against Iraq and the people they believed to be responsible for the heinous crime. Soldiers were sent off to war, and families were broken. My dad was sent to Hawaii for a year, to protect the ports. In his absence, my mom had to take care of my two sisters, Amy and Marissa, and me. My sisters, who were two years younger than I, have ADHD and so their behaviour was hard to predict. You never knew what would set them off. Whether that was the food we were eating, or the itch of a tag on the back of a shirt. Being only ten at the time, I didn't feel like I could do anything to help them.

While most kids in my class already knew, I kept hold of the myth of Santa Claus till I was ten years old, the year my dad went away. I dubbed it, 'The Year Santa Died.' Because of my sisters' behaviour, and some of mine, mom decided not to do Christmas that year. Trips to the grocery store or even to the bank would be tedious for my mom. My sisters and I were always fighting. My mom once came back from grocery shopping, while we waited in the car, to find that my sisters and I had scratched each other. My sister Marissa has a permanent scar on her right cheek from where I had scratched her. Having to decorate, cook, and go shopping was a hassle for a mom taking care of three unruly children. Especially if my sisters would act out anywhere. My mom was once called into the principal's office because Marissa decided to throw a desk across the room at a girl she disliked. Even mundane things such as brushing their teeth was an annoyance. They simply did not want to brush their teeth. I acted like not having Christmas didn't faze me, but in truth, I resented the fact that we were skipped over on

Christmas. If I were in my mom's position, however, I probably would have done the same thing.

It was a family tradition that we would celebrate Christmas at my grandma's house in the Sunset District of San Francisco. Her house was always decorated with garlands and plenty of ornaments, whether that was on the tree, or on top of the record player that acted as a table to hold side dishes and appetizers. In my grandma's house, you couldn't escape Christmas. Houses in San Francisco were not that big, so my family made the room feel full. In contrast, my house in Daly City, only ten minutes away, felt dull and empty. There were no decorations, no smell of meat cooking (which it always did in Christmases past, since my mom always made her Portuguese stew), and most importantly, no Christmas tree. Mom didn't put up the Christmas tree till a week after Christmas, so she could send a 'happy family picture' in front of the tree for my dad, who was away in Hawaii. We woke up to the drab brown walls of our house, hoping that Santa Clause came anyways. No such luck. There were no stockings under the brick fireplace, no garland hanging around the wooden walls, and no presents to be seen. Outside our backyard, the ocean was covered in a layer of fog. I used to pretend I could see Hawaii from the back window and that would help me cope with the absence of my father. That morning, we could not see the far horizon.

My mom came from Macau, a small island next to Hong Kong. Being the oldest of five, family was an important part of life for her. When she was five, she moved to the United States, with her Mother, Irma, and her two brothers, Vasco and Nuno. They left for better opportunities and a better life than the one they were living in. Macau, having been taken over by the

Portuguese until China's take over in 1997, was mainly a Portuguese speaking country. So, when my mom first came to America, she didn't speak English. That went away as the years went by. Mom used to talk about the many experiences she had growing up in San Francisco. I used to try envisioning my mom walking through the hilly streets of the City. Because everyone says that we look practically the same, it's not hard to imagine her as a young social butterfly. We both share small brown eyes, freckles, and the ability to look like we've never aged. Three features which I have come to associate with anyone of Macanese descent. Macanese being those who are, or from someone who is from Macau. She was someone you wanted to be around, due to her bubbly personality and quick wit.

Sometimes, when my mom was feeling in the mood, we would go to some of the events the military families were holding. It would consist of mainly going over someone else's house, talking to everyone, and pretending we weren't broken up inside. Even then, I knew that our relationship with our dad was different than those of other 'military brats,' as most of the children of military soldiers are called. Other kids would get a call from their parents overseas or on base, or they would receive postcards. I remember only one or two phone calls to my dad. None of which sounded like the ones kids my age were getting.

As I recalled, it was my mom who made the call.

'Hey Daddy!' my two sisters and I sung into the phone.

'Hey guys. How are you?'

'We're doing good,' I said.

'Daddy, Mommy says that Santa Claus isn't coming this year,' Amy said, earning her a pinch in the arm from me. I didn't like it when they talked about how bad things were going in

the house.

‘Well, you’ll have to speak to your mom about that.’

There was an awkward silence, in which Amy started pinching me in the sides for my earlier pinch.

‘So, how was your day?’ I asked, hoping to hear more about what he was up to.

‘It was okay. How is school?’

To me, he sounded like a robot. As if he was reading about the ingredients in a bowl of cereal, rather than talking to his kids.

‘It was good,’ I said.

‘It sucked,’ Amy and Marissa said at the same time.

‘Jinx!’ Amy yelled, while Marissa huffed.

‘That’s great to hear. Well, it was good hearing your voices. I got to go. See you guys soon.’

The fact that we never talked about our feelings about my dad’s absence affected my psychological well being for years. My mom was always busy with my sisters and that would make me feel like I was just something in the background. As an adult, I understand the reason behind that, but at the time, I was furious. I thought, ‘why are they getting attention for being the way they are?’ Instead of acting out like most teenagers do, I curled up inside of myself and missed out on a few milestones, such as going on dates or sneaking out at midnight.

I was never liked in school. Whether that was in Elementary School, Middle School, or

High School. I was always too loud, or too annoying. There was even a time when I would tell on people if they did something against the rules. I got labelled as the class snitch. It got so bad that my 5th grade teacher got a few of the kids in my class to teach me what 'cool' was. At the time, she told me it was to help 'build character,' but I knew she just felt sorry for me. The funniest thing, looking back on it, that they told me was that wearing a bra wasn't cool. I think they were all jealous, since I wasn't an A-Cup like them, but that could be me just being full of myself. This was one of many differences between me and my classmates.

I heard a song in high school that was written about Daly City, the city I grew up in.

Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.

And the people in the houses
All went to the university,
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same,
And there's doctors and lawyers,
And business executives,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.

This song made me acutely aware of how different I was. Ever since I was eight, when we studied segregation, I knew that I was different than the other kids in my class. My skin was the lightest in the class, and no one, except for that one girl who was from Hawaii and had red hair, had freckles like I did. If I had footage of myself in middle school, I would probably use this song. I felt like I was not part of that ‘ticky tacky’ narrative and that somehow I would be kicked out for not being the same.

There was a moment in sixth grade, when I was twelve years old, that should have been a happy memory for me. Our school was putting on a variety show. We would be singing songs from ‘Oliver’, ‘Annie’, and ‘The Wizard of Oz’. Before this, I had never gotten the lead role in any of my classmates’ plays. When we would do skits in class, I was always a tree, or some waiter who never had any lines. But the music teacher heard me sing at the audition and cast me as Annie. Besides ‘The Little Mermaid’, ‘Annie’ was a movie I had watched over and over as a kid. Annie’s iconic song, ‘Tomorrow,’ was one of the three songs I sung on a loop in the shower. The other two being ‘Part of Your World’ from ‘The Little Mermaid,’ and ‘Journey to the Past’ from ‘Anastasia.’ There was a small part of me, even growing up, that had hope for the future.

Getting to sing as Annie was a big deal for me. We would practice after school and I would always sing the songs by myself before each practice. I wanted to be completely ready before anyone else heard me sing. It was during one of these practices when I realized to what extent my classmates hated me.

The song that Daddy Warbucks sings with Annie was one of my third favourite songs from the movie. It always made me laugh how funny they were around each other. When I started practicing the song, however, it was anything but loving. The guy who was playing Daddy Warbucks was not thrilled to be singing alongside me. The teacher would have to force him to

even look at me while we were singing. There was an extra verse that was added, in a later version of the song. The teacher asked if we wanted to sing it. I loved every opportunity to sing more.

‘I’d like that,’ I said, with as much enthusiasm as I could manage. In the back of my mind, I knew the other kids would take it the wrong way.

‘Ew!’ someone had said from the chorus seats.

‘Jillian likes Earnesto! What a gross couple!’

Earnesto didn’t say any comments to defend me, which hurt even more. I had no interest in him, but that didn’t matter. All I wanted was to sing more of my favourite musical. My cheeks had turned beet red, and my stomach was in knots.

‘How can I make them stop?’ I had thought.

Speaking up for myself never made anything better for me. There were times when I would come home crying because some girl told me that I had freckles ‘only my mother would love.’ Or, when a guy I liked started singing that one rap song, ‘White Girl’, which was supposed to be about marijuana, but I knew it was a cover up for making fun of my skin tone. There is no class for these kinds of issues. You either know how to have a quick wit, or you suffer more.

It wasn’t until I was on the breaking point of suicide that I started really listening to Green Day. Those pivotal moments when I would sit down with a Green Day album were essential to who I grew up to be. I’m sure my parents didn’t understand it. My mother never knew what it was like to be a ‘fan.’

She once mentioned, on a car ride, that she was a bit jealous she could never feel that way towards something.

One day while driving along the coast to get to my grandma's house, my mom had explained to me how she has never felt the need to be a fan.

'I just never saw the appeal. Growing up, if I wanted to be a girl with flowers in her hair, I was that. I was never a 'fan.' I never fawned over the Beatles like my other classmates did,' she was saying, as the sun began to set on the ocean on our left side.

The hill next to us, from our perspective, seemed to simply end and made way for the ocean. You couldn't see the beach below and the division between land and ocean was blurred; as the hill was covered in grass. The green clashed with the blue of the ocean, like the relationship between mother and daughter.

To put it simply, their music sparked something in me that made me go absolutely crazy. Maybe it's my ability to obsess over something for a while, but I would call my love for the band a good obsession. After all, I might have been obsessed with alcohol or drugs, which I am not. My walls were covered in Green Day paraphernalia. Pictures I had gotten off the internet were haphazardly strewn around my room. There was no rhyme or rhythm to any of the posters on my wall. Until that point, I had experienced life in a dull shade of gray. The exact shade of gray 'Karl the Fog,' a nickname we gave the fog around the San Francisco/Bay Area region of California, was every morning on the horizon. My love for Green Day brought my world into shiny new colours. Every time I would hear a song, I saw hues of purple and blue. Life was more exciting with a musical background.

There were several times in my high school years that I felt left out and alone. When I

would feel like this, I would usually go into my closet and put on some Green Day songs. This habit actually started my first year of high school, two years after the release of the hit album, American Idiot. I remember helping my dad get the songs onto his new iPod hours before he left to help build naval structures for the war. He was part of the engineering unit of the Navy, back in 2006. When we had to move to a new house, my dad got sent to Iraq.

It was a gloomy day in Pacifica. We had just moved all the boxes from the old house to the new house. We had moved because our old house in Daly City was falling down a cliff. Instead of spending the summer worrying about high school, I spent the summer of 2006 worrying that my dad would never make it back home. The move to the new house felt fitting, given the circumstances. It was as if only something destructive, such as erosion, or war, or even suicide, could make a big change in my life.

While I waited for my two sisters to get ready, Dad had called me downstairs, where we kept the computer.

‘Jillian, help me put American Idiot on here,’ Dad said, pointing at his iPod.

‘Okay,’ I replied, making sure not to make eye contact with him, as my eyes were blood red, from crying all night.

The computer was still new to me and most of what I knew was from pressing buttons on the screen. My dad’s iPod was the newer version at the time and so I was having trouble getting the music on there. It didn’t help that my dad was looking over my shoulder the entire time.

My dad started getting annoyed at my inability to get the music on to the iPod. He started tapping his toes and letting out a low huff under his breath. After five minutes of getting notice upon notice of incomplete syncing of music, my dad unhooked his iPod and left the room.

‘I don’t have time for this,’ he huffed up the stairs.

It felt like he meant, ‘I don’t have time for you.’

I had to stay in that room with the door locked to keep anyone from hearing or seeing me cry.

I recall going to the airport with the kind of dread you save for executions or last minute essays. I wasn’t sure whether it was appropriate to cry or if I would be scolded for making a scene. Looking back, I do wish I didn’t care whether they saw my tears. Instead of crying and begging him not to go, I gave Dad a short hug and watched him leave.

When we got back to our new house, I went straight to the closet in my room to cry. The closet was roughly the size of a sauna. Because my closet was on top of the staircase leading to the garage, the closet had what looked like steps leading to, what my overactive mind thought could have been Narnia. Of course, it didn’t actually lead to anywhere but the wall, but I liked to pretend I could travel anywhere in that closet. In order to get into the closet, you have to open the sliding mirrored doors. I would look at myself, and that reflection would judge me every day for the rest of my life. Being as tiny as I am, I can fit into tight places easily. At the top of the stairs in the closet, when there aren’t clothes or toys in it, I can easily spread myself out and fall asleep. If I closed the doors, I could pretend that I was somewhere far away, where no one would hear me cry or tell me that I have to hold it in. So when my dad left for Iraq, I went to my safe haven in my closet.

It was during these times in my closet that I got the closest I had ever gotten to suicide. I didn’t have that many friends and my mom was always so focused on my twin sisters. I didn’t feel like I mattered in the grand scheme of things and I wanted it all to end.

I remember the day I was going to do it. I had gone to school, gone home, and went straight to my room. I couldn't feel anything for anyone and I thought I'd be better off dead. It wasn't anything that triggered it that day, but I just knew that I didn't want to live anymore. I looked around at my room. From the loft bed my parents bought me from Ikea, to the bookshelves only half filled with books. I remember believing that the walls were a perfect symbol of my life. They were a dull grey, which my mom refused to let me paint. I would've felt like I was in a hospital room, if the floor hadn't been carpeted instead of tiled. My iPod was on shuffle on the speakers next to the dresser. There wasn't anything much to do, since my mom never liked us wandering off on our own. I guess the neighborhood being what it was, I didn't blame her. There were reports of kids being kidnapped and a bunch of hit and runs. This was a year or so before I got into Facebook and had gotten my first computer. I'm sure if there was Facebook back then, one of my statuses would have been, 'Sisters acted up again today. So, I'm not going out today.' At the time, my life was part of a melodrama written for MTV.

'This is it,' I whispered to myself, a tear falling down my cheek. I was about to make the list of ways to kill myself when I heard my iPod change songs. The first few chords of the song stopped me in my tracks.

'Summer has come to past. Seven years has gone so fast. Wake me up when September ends.'

The song was written about Billie Joe's father passing away in September, but has come to represent a time of war and devastation. In the video there were bombs being blown off and guns being fired, which hit home for me more so than others. My father could have stepped on a bomb, or have been hit by enemy fire. The uncertainty of war was something that drew me into the video and made me connect with the lyrics on a deeper level.

In my head, I was reminded of the couple in the music video. In the middle, when the girl finds out the guy joined the army, she wasn't happy about what he'd chosen to do. He'd looked at her, surprised by her reaction. His eyes were red with tears when he said,

'This is supposed to make it easier. I thought you'd be proud of me. I thought at least of all people, you would already understand why I did this!

All I could think of was what it must be like for my dad over in Iraq. I didn't want him to come home to something as tragic as my death. That was all it took for me to stop thinking about it and to try to move on from my depression. Of course, it didn't happen overnight, but eventually I got to the point where I felt hope for the future. It was by no means an easy endeavor. I even tried to run away, once. It only lasted a day and I came back feeling more lost than ever. This led to spending a year in counseling, which I stopped going to because I didn't like having to talk about my feelings. Even then, I never gave away how depressed I really was. Years later, I still couldn't believe I spent all that time hiding how I truly felt.

There were definitely good days and bad days, but I handled the bad days better than I would have years prior. Years later, in college, I heard this quote that I keep close to me.

'The way I see it, every life is a pile of good things and bad things. The good things don't always soften the bad things, but vice versa, the bad things don't always spoil the good things and make them unimportant.' - The Doctor

We have to keep moving on, if we are to start living. I learned this the hard way. Like in the Doctor Who episode this quotation comes from, even if I knew the future was better for me, I still would have had the ever present depression hanging over me. Because even though Van Gogh knew people appreciated his work in the future, it wasn't helpful in the long run. He still

ended his own life.

Although the band's fan base is pretty big, during most of my teenage years I felt like I was alone in my love for Green Day. I didn't start feeling like part of the fan community until the end of my senior year of high school.

I led a very sheltered life before I turned 18. I couldn't go out without my parents' permission and so going to a punk rock show was out of the question. There was a little function on Myspace that told you about shows in your area based on bands that you liked. It's kind of like those notifications on Facebook about events your friends are going to in your area. It was pure coincidence, although some in the community might call it stalking, that the Myspace page for Emily's Army came up for me. Emily's Army is this punk rock band from Oakland, California, who were talked about mainly because of their connection with Green Day. The drummer's dad is the lead singer of Green Day, Billie Joe Armstrong. After hearing the music, I convinced my mom to let me go to the show in Berkeley with my cousin. After all, I was 18 years old and should start being treated like an adult.

When we got there, I couldn't contain my joy. Not only was I going to experience a real punk rock show, but I was going to be at the place that Green Day played at when they were younger. The place was what one would expect of a punk rock venue. It had graffiti all over, and it stank of pee. My favourite part were the words 'Sweet Children,' Green Day's first band name, graphited on the ceiling.

There was a band playing beforehand called The Pillowfights. Like their name, there was a pillow fight happening in the mosh pit. It was a blur of different colours and an array of spiked

hair. There wasn't any order to what was going on and I loved every second of it. I couldn't shake my own shyness. I always wanted to be a part of a mosh pit, or even in this case a pillow fight. But I was terrified of joining in, afraid that somehow they would notice that I didn't fit into their tight niche group.

After that band played, Emily's Army was going on stage. While I was sitting on the stage waiting for the band, a guy walked up next to me, holding on to what looked like a guitar. There, standing in front of me, was Billie Joe Armstrong's son, Joey. I hadn't seen a recent photo of him before that, but there was no doubt in my mind that he was Billie Joe's son. He had curly brown hair, like his father's, but brown eyes, like his mother. One huge difference from his father was the fact that he was taller than Billie Joe.

When Emily's Army started playing, I knew that this was where I belonged. The energy the band members had on stage was staggering. The lyrics were catchy and you couldn't help but dance around whenever you heard them. The lead singer didn't seem to have a care in the world. In fact, he took off his trousers halfway through the set and danced around in his boxer shorts. The moment I knew that I had found my niche was a small moment in time.

Throughout that first show, I had been trying to get decent photos of the band. I had recently gotten this nice digital camera and I wanted to make my Myspace page look like I led a cooler life than I was actually leading. As I was zooming in on Joey behind the drums, he did something I will never forget. He looked straight into the camera and stuck out his tongue. All the while still playing fervently on the drums. I had to focus for a few seconds and I was worried that the camera would take too long and he would get tired of that facial expression. But as luck would have it, I got the shot!

That moment sticks in my mind because of the agility and goofiness of Joey. I wanted to emulate the feeling they had on stage, where they aren't afraid to be silly in front of their fans and give their all to their music. I always felt like I had to ask for permission to do anything outstanding, but Emily's Army didn't seem to ask permission. They put their all into their performance and didn't think twice on whether or not it was acceptable for them to do so.

From that point on I was hooked. I went to as many Emily's Army shows as possible and grew a small fan base based on the videos I put up on YouTube about the band. I felt like I was part of bigger community and no one was there to make fun of me. It almost felt like the more shows I went to, the more popular I became. This was a year or so before I met Billie Joe. The fact that I kept going to shows and video taping my experiences, brought me more fame than I had hoped to gain. This was a whole new concept for me. No longer was I the girl who the other kids looked at with disdain. No, I was the girl people came up to, to have fun and rock out. I've heard the words, 'you're so lucky' and 'I'm so jealous' tossed around in conversations throughout the years.

I remember the first time I got to meet Billie Joe. It was right before one of Emily's Army's shows and I was with my roommate, Sarah. Being the shy person I am, I convinced Sarah to ask Billie Joe for a picture. It was always nerve wracking to go up to new people and introduce myself. Meeting celebrities was even more of a challenge to my shy and awkward persona. On the surface, it may have appeared that I was the most outgoing person out there, but on the inside, I was just as afraid of meeting new people as I was back in middle school. I will never forget this moment as long as I live. Not because of the fact that Billie Joe looked me in the eyes and said hi. Nor the fact that I shook his hand. But my friend, not being as big of a Green Day fan as I am, called Billie Joe 'Mr. Joe,' because she thought his full name was Billie

Joe.

Seeing him in real life was different than seeing him on TV. This might be because I am only four foot eleven, but he looked taller than what I was expecting. Throughout the message boards and especially on Tumblr were jokes on how tiny Billie Joe was. He was, in reality, definitely taller than I had been led to believe. But in terms of average male height, he is on the short size at 5 foot 7 inches. His hair was just as fluffy as the pictures depict. That's probably on account of all the hair gel he puts in it. Or so the rumours say. Since a lot of the time celebrity photos are airbrushed and photo shopped, I assumed that he wouldn't look exactly like the photos on the internet. It was a surprise when I realised that he looked the same in real life.

He was wearing a black hoodie with a jean jacket on top and black skinny jeans. His face was clear of stubble and his eyes were bright green. He had what I would call 'pouty lips.' The kind of lips you get when you pout too much. When he shook my hand, I could feel the calluses on his fingertips, from all the years spent playing guitar.

I'm sure if I had my own Tardis, I would go back and tell my younger self that dreams do come true. You just have to wait long enough to see them. Then I would go back to this moment and relive it all over again. Over and over.

This love for Emily's Army and Green Day brought me and my dad closer. It was always hard to connect with my dad. There was a lot of things he missed out on and the loss of his presence didn't help matters. Years later, after my dad retired from the Navy, we started to go see Emily's Army shows together. At one point, there were shows almost every month and my dad would drive me and maybe a few of my friends to shows that were thirty minutes or an hour away. I never worried about my dad cramping my style, because I just wanted to spend more

time with him. Well, until he told Mike Dirnt, the bassist of Green Day, how much hair I shed in the shower.

It was the opening of Mike's restaurant, Rudy's Can't Fail Café, in Oakland. It was also the release party for Emily's Army's first album, 'Don't Be a Dick.' We were leaving the venue of the release party when we bumped into Mike. My dad had spoken to him earlier that evening, about how he listened to Green Day while in Iraq. Mike was heading home, but was nice enough to stop to say bye to my dad and I. After I said hi and shook his hand, my dad proceeded to talk to Mike like they were old pals.

'You would never guess what I did today,' my dad was saying.

'What did you do?' Mike asked, seeming curious.

'I dug out all the hair out of the shower drain. These girls,' he said, while pointing at me, 'always leave so much hair clogging the drain!'

Mike laughed.

'I get you man. I live in a house full of women too,' Mike said, while giving me a wink, 'they shed like cats!'

While it was great to talk to Mike like any other person, it was horrifying to hear my dad talk about those kinds of things that only dads know.

Even through this embarrassing incident, I still felt close to my dad at that moment. It was great to have him connect with one of the band members of my favourite band. I didn't feel so alone in my family anymore.

It was March 2015 in a small bar in San Francisco where I got an experience I would never

have thought possible. Emily's Army, now renamed Swmrs, was headlining the show. The show was at this small bar called Thee Parkside. There were two parts of the building. One was the food area, where you can sit and enjoy a pint and a burger on a lawn bench. The other part was a bar, with a small stage set up in the corner. The lighting was dark, and the place smelled like bad body odor. After working at a movie theater concession stand for eight hours that day, it felt nice to unwind in a place like that.

It was at this bar that I saw Billie Joe again, for the third time.

Billie Joe could be found near the bar, chatting with fans, who were congratulating him on the upcoming Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame induction.

In between one of the opening acts, I made my way to stand in front of him. I didn't think of what I wanted to say prior to tapping him on the shoulder. When he turned to me after doing so, there was a short silence in which he looked me in the eye, almost making me lose my nerve.

'I just wanted to thank you for your music. Your music got me through some rough times. Thank you.' I said hurriedly, stumbling over my words.

I think he said something along the lines of, 'I'm glad, we all go through some rough times.' But all I could think of was, 'I did it! I talked to him!'

I left right after that, before I could ask something that would make me look like a fool.

Although I will always be a Green Day fan, the dream I had when I was younger is done. I told Billie Joe how much his music means to me and have had different other encounters with him and the rest of the band. The dream has been fulfilled.

There's a line in 'Tangled' where Rapunzel asks about what she should do if her dream

turns out to be what she's always dreamt it to be. Flynn says, 'Well, I guess that's the fun part. You get to find a new dream.' I spent most of my teenage years dreaming of meeting one person, and the moment I realised that dream, I understood how true this line is.

As I go forth in life, I have to find a new dream. I can't help but sing as I reach into the great beyond of my future.

'It's something unpredictable, but in the end is right. I hope you have the time of your life.' These lyrics were written as a bitter portrait of a breakup, but have come to mean different things to many people around the world. The meaning of the writer and the understanding of the listener are two different things in this case. This memoir could be seen as a sympathy piece; or it could be seen as a tale of hope. After all, I got my dream and I've started to lead a happier life. If I was going to leave the reader with just one message, it would be this: don't give up on your dreams. It might seem hard at the time, but it will be worth it in the end. If I had let all the times I felt sad and alone control me, I would never have gotten where I am today. Which is happy and hopeful for the future.