





**The Soil Of God by William Becker is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.**

## Autolysis

I watched myself in the mirror. My reflection was disgusting, now a mere shell of who I had once been. The little awkward kid with social anxiety and terrible acne was no more.

The public restroom on the third floor of my apartment building had become the best place to inject, as every apartment had a private bathroom, so I was likely the only one to ever enter those. If the cops ever broke my door down, they'd immediately know the stuff belonged to me. At least in the case of using a public bathroom, there was a degree of plausible deniability. *No, Officer, I just found it here and decided to inject it.* I hid a briefcase with a handful of plastic bags full of God's soil, a spoon, a tourniquet, a package of wet wipes, and a syringe behind the mirror, which was screwed into the wall adjacent from the toilet. Each time I escaped from my apartment and was depressed enough, I'd journey into the bathroom and descend into nothingness. When I was first worried about getting caught, I used a screwdriver to loosen the screws and I'd anxiously tighten them back up, and before too much longer, I was using a quarter. My levels of effort had finally plummeted enough to allow me to only tighten it with my fingers, as to allow the minimum amount of effort when I'd return.

The ashy geyser entering me was pure heaven from the moment the 18 gauge needle pierced into a vein on my lower right forearm. Nothing compared to the first time, but even two months later, the rush was still fantastic. I could describe the feeling as something that was comparable to the first few seconds of an orgasm; the sheer bliss, the blown mind, and everything within the user completely subdued and floating through time. Watching the sharp end breakthrough was always oddly satisfying to me. There was a tiny white spot on the skin where the pressure of the needle was applied, and then it clearly pushed itself through and if done right, blood would spurt up into the syringe.

Three track marks had already appeared on the lengths of the surface of my skin, like dark moles or freckles marring the uniform tan color of my body. I had ignored the advice of a cousin to start lower on the arm, for fear I wouldn't be able to hide the scarring as easily. They seemed like tiny entrances inside of myself. A sick, twisted corner of my brain imagined me being able to stick my finger in them, yanking out my purple veins and playing with them in my fingers.

On my usual site of injection, right on the inside of my elbow, there was a large black mark, looking as if I had been bruised, or the skin itself had begun to rot. The vein had finally collapsed from overuse, and swelling had begun.

## Bloat

An abscess had sprouted in my usual spot. It was a crimson knob that was rising from my veins along my forearm. It was stiff and hot to the touch, and burned like hell whenever I tried to touch it, as if I was pushing my finger down on a blister. The skin surrounding the abscess was inflamed, turning a pinkish-red color, like I was a piece of raw meat that was slowly being cooked. A needle sized white-hole was at the center of the oval shape, filled with pus and bacteria of the likes of which I didn't want to imagine. Squeezing it was extremely painful and sent the pus freely leaking out; it was pure white in color, like my body was beginning to produce milk.

After my first vein had collapsed and the abscess had appeared on top of it, I had switched to using a 26 gauge needle and heroin that was more of a shiny white color, simply because I wanted to do less damage to my body. I had also switched from my right forearm to the back of my left hand. In the dim lighting of the restroom, this made things slightly harder, as I would have to bring a flashlight to find a fresh vein. However, the injection always stung less and seemed to be easier to stomach.

Even still, the abscess was incredibly itchy, and like any other impulse, I fell into it, clawing at it and scratching at it, ignoring the ache until the red bump became numb. A tiny slit formed, and before I even had noticed it, a sickening soup of blood and pus poured down over my skin and onto the floor. The mixture massaged the surface of my skin and made me silently apologize to whoever would have to clean the floor up. I yanked some toilet paper from the wall and applied pressure to the now ruptured cyst, hoping anything at all would stop the agonizing, shrill pain that was erupting from my arm. With a deep grunt, I shoved the briefcase behind the mirror, tightened the screws, then left, knowing I would return to the bathroom before long.

### Active Decay

No one ever really told me how difficult it would become to inject once a handful of the veins in each of my arms had failed. Shooting in my neck was terrifying and would require me to remain completely still and calm, for fear that I would inject into an artery. I had tried a tiny vein just above my collarbone once or twice, but it was too difficult, and I was so nervous that I had to look in the mirror to see where the needle was entering. Another viable option was rubbing some of the powder on the inside of my rectum, which made the high take a bit longer to activate and not last as long. Unfortunately, sticking my fingers up in my anus was too much for my sensitive pride, as little of it as there was. For the most part, my general rule of thumb was to avoid the lower half of my body, as the only perfect place that didn't hurt a lot was my ankle.

More prominently than the fear of collapsed veins was an infection that was forming where my abscess had once been. In the days following me rupturing it, the wound had begun to turn brown, peeling at the edges. After a week, the pus has returned, giving it more of a yellow appearance. In the right conditions when I pointed my arm a certain way, the pus would seep out from the wound, requiring me to cover it in a bandage, which I would have to replace almost four times a day.

For the first time in my life, I started to contemplate my actions. It wasn't so much that I wanted to stop, I loved the feeling too much for that, but instead, my body was becoming disgusting. More often than not, my face was extremely itchy, leaving me with tiny scabs from scratching myself. I had to wear long sleeves just to hide my track marks, infection, and the bruises dotting both of my arms. Piece by piece, I was starting to fall apart, rotting away. I imagined that one day, I would become so weak that a strong gust of wind would tear my limbs off, sending me floating through the air like a bundle of paper.

Regardless of that, I still injected that day, taking my needle and jamming it into a vein on my ankle. With a yelp, I watched as the drug went inside of me, coursing under my skin and taking me to that special place. I didn't think I would get clean, even if I lost everything.

## Skeletonization

I knew it was too late for me when my body started to rot. At first, the necrotizing fasciitis that ate away and peeled at my skin like a sunburn from hell manifested itself in the form of small ulcers around the site of infection, and little specks of brown discoloration, like tiny bruises. A sensation that I can only describe as feeling like my flesh was crackling and I had pulled a muscle. The skin began to peel away in small clumps that looked like it was simply a bad sunburn. The peeling was intense, leaving the layers of skin underneath a red color that quickly turned to brown, growing deeper, until the brown turned back to the color of my blood, revealing mounds of flesh and veins. The mounds of skin surrounding the wound seemed to form a canyon of flesh that was slowly being eaten by gangrene. My sociopathic fantasy about pulling on my veins with my bare hands became something of a possibility. If I wanted to, I could touch my insides and yank on them. Vast quantities of pus would occasionally leak out, with a smell that could be best compared to the offensiveness of a dead animal, with a sort of sweet undertone of death and rot.

Parts of them began to shift to a moldy green color as the bacterial infection came into full effect. When it grew deep enough and the fiery pain was absolutely immobilizing, I could look into the wound and see my tendons shifting with the movement of my hand or wrist. With the decay that overtook my flesh, any thoughts of doing heroin had shifted away. I felt far too sick to find the motivation to leave the apartment. I was constantly fighting diarrhea, the cold aches of a fever, and nausea. My entire body hurt and felt like it was finally giving up on me.

The intense pain that came with my rotting flesh was overwhelming. The little bits of peeling skin made me want to pull them off, but each time I did, I recoiled and tears flooded my eyes. It was like someone had used a thumbtack and ran it into me time and time again, until they had taken a chunk of me out. The pain was so immeasurably awful that it kept me awake through the nights and took away any semblance of sleep. I had developed such a tolerance to opioids that any pain pills I took did nothing for me. With a logical progression on my final day of living, I turned back to heroin.

I used my trembling left hand to inject into my neck veins. My right hand was too infected and weak to tie a tourniquet around my other arm, and the pain was so immense that the only thing I craved was relief. My first mistake was not paying attention to my dosage. I had a high tolerance, but it wasn't enough to counter what I put inside of myself.

Overdosing isn't anywhere as painful as people describe. I still had that beautiful feeling of joy combined (although it was slightly dulled at this point) with the pain of my infection being reduced to what felt like a mere stinging sensation. I simply felt myself nodding off with the

relaxation, my back pressed against the toilet where I always had shot up. My eyes were closed, the pain was mostly gone, and I felt at peace. The unconsciousness took me into its arms like a blanket, and then, I was wrapped in the peaceful calm of nothing.

## THE FOUR STAGES OF DECAY

### **Stage One: Autolysis**

The first stage of human decomposition is called autolysis, or self-digestion, and begins immediately after death.

### **Stage Two: Bloat**

Leaked enzymes from the first stage begin producing many gasses. The sulfur-containing compounds that the bacteria release also cause skin discoloration. Due to the gasses, the human body can double in size. In addition, insect activity can be present.

The microorganisms and bacteria produce extremely unpleasant odors called putrefaction. These odors often alert others that a person has died, and can linger long after a body has been removed.

### **Stage Three: Active Decay**

Fluids released through orifices indicate the beginning of active decay. Organs, muscles, and skin become liquefied. When all of the body's soft tissue decomposes, hair, bones, cartilage, and other byproducts of decay remain. The cadaver loses the most mass during this stage.

### **Stage Four: Skeletonization**

Because the skeleton has a decomposition rate based on the loss of organic (collagen) and inorganic components, there is no set time-frame when skeletonization occurs.

