

“Ferris Wheel” by Alexander Lee-Rekers - Hank - M - 20s/30s

Hank shares a memory with a loved one.

HANK: When I was ten years old, I fell off a ferris wheel at a carnival and died.

I don't remember much: only being *at* the carnival, and then suddenly waking up pressed into the cold, clayish ground with my mother sobbing over me. The doctors said, so the local papers printed, that I'd been dead for six, whole minutes before sitting up like nothing was wrong. Medically, I was fine. I didn't even miss school.

I think about it, sometimes. Not as much as you might expect, but definitely in those 'crossroads' times, like now, when there's a clear, better path than the one we seem to be headed down.

I think about fate, string theory, parallel universes—all the stuff I pretend to understand when I'm at parties. I think about the world where I never woke up. I wonder if it's better than the one we're in right now?

Once, after I'd told this story to a particularly gloomy partner of mine, they asked me if I considered myself dead—like I'd never actually woken up at all. They almost-gleefully told me about this condition called Cotard's syndrome, where a person might believe they've died or lost their soul. We broke up a few weeks later.

But I think about that, too. For all the fate and chance, for all the paths taken, whether I really exist or not and whether or not I'm dead or alive, it all brought me here to you.