

“Covet” 2014

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Imagine being at war with your own body, your own reflection causing you horror, grief, disgust. You’d do anything to change it, even going so far as to causing yourself physical pain or irreparable self harm.

Imagine you despised the look of a certain part of your body, not just groaned about it or felt you needed to ‘tone it up’ or ‘put a little make up on it’ but actively obsessed over it, fixated on it until you swore the entire world was looking at and judging this one flaw, this huge imperfection that is the centre of your life; and not just judging it, but judging you as well, for having it, for not fixing it, for not doing something about it and sparing the world your broken, mutilated visage.

Say you somehow got the chance to fix it, to remove, reshape or cover up this particularly unforgivable flaw, you’d be happy, right? You’d do anything to make the broken whole again and so you suffer through pain, isolation, possibly even death to repair it and you come out the other side fixed.

But then you (alone) notice it’s been fixed incorrectly, or they didn’t fix it enough, or it broke again because it was never really fixed in the first place and then you **must** go through all the fear and pain and danger again because who wants to be broken? Who wants to look at a disgusting, damaged individual when you can barely stand to look at yourself in the mirror? And if you can’t stand it then no one else can either, so you do it again and again and again without complaint because you deserve to. Because you are flawed.

This is an example of the mental black hole a person with BDD, or Body Dysmorphic Disorder, may get trapped in, an endless cycle of self hatred, body loathing and flagellation that no matter what they do, what others say, what others see, they simply **know** that their body is sickening, repulsive and imperfect and that there is no way of ever fixing it, not really.

You may read about people with addictions to plastic surgery, who have one procedure after another to enhance, change or ‘perfect’ what is seemingly broken, only to them, until they are a virtual mockery of their natural selves. These individuals are usually lumped under the banner of vanity or stupidity or self absorption, but like obsessive compulsive disorder or even schizophrenia, the urge to address the problem that is their body is unavoidable, for how could anyone else like what they see if you can’t stand the very person looking back at you in the mirror?

In extreme cases, BDD has lead to severe depression and anxiety, self harm and suicide.

Shame is a constant companion and isolation is an acceptable outcome of not *inflicting* the world with an abhorrent and flawed physical presence; it’s no wonder most sufferers remain silent about their misery.

With this project I hope to show a glimpse of how a person with Body Dysmorphic Disorder may feel, about how everyone else around them is so much better and of the longing for the perceived perfection that everyone but themselves has, the questions that haunt the sufferer;

“Why am I so ugly?”

“How can they stand to look at me?”

“Why can’t I look like that?”

A BDD sufferer’s worst enemy is the mirror.

The mirror is the confronting truth that they are unnatural and unforgivingly faulty.

The mirror is the face of the lie that they unwillingly, yet wholeheartedly live with every day when they step outside, into a world that embraces physical standards, one that is all judging eyes and distorted reflections.