

The ground must be excavated before a house is built. Artifacts of the lives that walked upon the surface will be lost as these superficial layers are dug out to lay the house's foundation. The deeper layers will escape the excavation and remain untouched, lingering quietly below, while the face is molded into a new form.

Jaidee hates construction work, but it's the quickest way for the son of a rice farmer to make money. He left home hoping to earn enough to repay his father's loan. He has thirty days before his family's farm and livelihood are lost. His sister also left home. She works in a department store in Bangkok, only a few hours away. Together, their salaries could pay off the loan in six months.

“Meanwhile the woman, writhing like a snake  
On fiery coals, kneaded her breasts to make  
Them hug their steely corset; and she said,  
Her lips redder than strawberries are red:  
‘Behold, my mouth is moist, and on my deep  
Couch I can lull grim Conscience fast asleep,  
I dry all tears on my triumphant breasts,  
Where old men laugh like boys at boyish jests.’”<sup>1</sup>

A house is built from the labor of man and the materials of the earth. Once he aligns a nail, the initial swing of the hammer only pierces the surface, but the second offense infiltrates deeply, wedging the nail tightly into the flesh of the wood. Years from now, when the house is old and the wood begins to decay, the nail will slip free, leaving a hollow scar. But, for now, the head of each nail fits smoothly against the panel, showing no hint of each small penetration underneath.

“It's incredible. In two weeks, I made enough to pay for my son's surgery. I feel strong, like Superman. I don't even need to take a break to eat. I can go several days without sleep, and I'm not even tired. Want me to get you some? It'd be easy. It's cheap too, but don't worry about that, Jaidee. I'll treat you this time.”

**Addictive drugs typically induce the most dramatic effects via their activity in the brain. Some substances have structures that are similar to neurotransmitters, the natural chemicals produced and released by neurons to communicate. More addictive drugs can bind to certain proteins and change their structure and function. For example, methamphetamine hijacks a protein and forces it to transport excessive amounts of neurotransmitters out of the cell. In general, addictive drugs trick neurons into sending unnatural signals, resulting in uncontrollable communication between cells.**<sup>2</sup>

Jaidee phoned his sister and told her to return home. "I will take care of it. Mom and dad need you with them. I have been working a lot lately. They even promoted me, you know. I don't know when I'll be able to call next. Go home okay?" Jaidee hung up. He pulled a lighter out of his pocket and placed one of the pills on a piece of foil. He flicked on the flame and held it closely under the foil. He leaned in and breathed deeply through the paper pipe.

"For him who sees me naked, I comprise  
All moons and suns and stars and clouds and skies!  
I am so skilled, fond scholar, in love's charms  
That when I hug you in my ruthless arms,  
Or, shy and lustful, frail and forceful, when  
I yield taut nipples to the teeth of men,  
My bosom's pillows, palpitant, would doom  
Angels to ruin for coveting my womb..."<sup>1</sup>

**Drug-induced cellular hyperactivity typically results in feelings of euphoria through excessive stimulation of the brain pathways involved in pleasure perception. These pathways normally create a small, natural "high" when a person engages in an enjoyable activity. Under the influence of drugs, the "high" is much more amplified than any natural happiness the user has ever experience. This euphoria is the chemical temptation that leads to repeated drug use.<sup>2</sup>**

The construction of a house is a celebration of the beginning of a new life and eager possibilities. As each part is built, so too are the hopes of the future inhabitants. They imagine where their children will play. They see them sleeping in their bedrooms, dreaming quietly. But eyes burst open as their miniature bodies thrust upright and they throw their hands over sensitive ears. An oblivious worker revs a chainsaw nearby, and then begins to cut into a beam, emitting a high-pitched whine as the blade shreds the wood.

**When drugs are used repeatedly, neurons become damaged by over-stimulation. To attenuate the damage, the brain begins to produce less of its own natural chemicals and less of the proteins targeted by drugs. This down-regulation causes the user to feel depressed when not under the influence of the drug. Natural pleasures are no longer capable of eliciting feelings of happiness. Furthermore, the user must increase the regular dosage of the drug in order to achieve euphoric effects comparable to those experienced during the initial administration of the drug.<sup>2</sup>**

“And mom is okay too? Good. No, I can’t come home. They’ve got me working a lot. They need me for this job, I can’t just leave. I’m working my ass off for all of you, you know. No you’re not going back. We don’t need any more money; I’m taking care of it. What do you mean, you don’t trust me? Fine, do what you want, but I don’t want to see you at home ever again.” He slammed the cell phone onto the floor. Three pills this time.

**The brain is programmed to direct human behavior towards activities that stimulate the neural pleasure areas. Humans are more likely to repeat behaviors that are emotionally rewarding. This natural tendency is amplified in a drug user because the euphoria induced by drugs is extremely memorable and much more rewarding (in terms of chemical activation of pleasure neurons) than any natural pleasure is. Consequently, a drug user’s behavior can quickly become compulsive and even psychotic. The pursuit of drugs becomes an obsession and the chronic user will often experience hallucinations and exhibit paranoia.**<sub>2</sub>

The watertight roofs and sturdy walls protect from the harsh reality of the outside world, keeping the inhabitants unharmed. But the wooden beams are ancient. They were witness to many cycles of birth and death when they stood proud and tall, rooted in the earth. Now, hacked and sanded, they persist as chopped pieces of their former selves, creaking while they watch their crucifiers run and jump upon them.

Jaidee sat in the dirt, sipping from his water bottle. He closed his eyes, leaning his head back, letting the icy fluid wash down his throat. As he emptied the bottle, he heard a whisper in the distance behind him. He sprung up and turned to see an enormous cloaked figure floating briskly towards him. A coldness crawled through his core and he spun around in terror, searching for some escape.

**Behavioral transformations are representative of the drug-induced alteration of brain infrastructure. The brain is a series of communication pathways, and the route along which signals travel can change. Pathways that are used repeatedly will grow and transmit signals more efficiently. In a drug user, the pathways involved in decision-making change dramatically, such that the user’s brain is driven to seek drugs. The compulsion becomes so powerful that rational thinking is severely diminished, and the user is at the mercy of his mind.**<sub>2</sub>

The child wept as Jaidee held him too tightly. The two stood in the middle of the street, the boy's eyes shut tightly while Jaidee's were wide, sweeping all around. "Stay the hell away! Who are you? I'll kill him. Don't think I can't kill him with my hands. What do you want?" Jaidee pointed threateningly. The men and the other boys hovered out of sight, watching Jaidee scream at an empty street. The police were coming.

"When she had sucked my marrow dry, I turned,  
Languid, to give her back the kiss she earned,  
Only to view, I fond and amorous,  
A viscid wineskin, nidorous with pus...  
Frozen with fear, I shut my eyelids tight,  
Then, opening them against the garish light,  
I saw no solid puppet by my side  
Whose lusts my blood, drained dry, had satisfied,  
But a debris of quavering bone on bone,  
Moaning as only weathervanes can moan,  
And creaking as a rusty signpost might  
Lashed by the furies of a winter night."<sup>1</sup>

The officer ordered his men to stay back. He crouched around the side of a parked car. Jaidee was wiping the sweat from his forehead when the crack of the pistol made his body limp. The child fell to his knees next to Jaidee's lifeless body. The officer glanced at Jaidee's sallow, sunken face as he lifted the child. This was his fourth execution in two days, but the orders were clear. All drug users were to be put behind bars or to vanish without a trace. He signaled his men to come for the body.

**The plasticity of the brain is remarkable. This ability to build and remodel the cellular connections that compose the mind is a tremendous strength to mankind. But, like the rest of the body, the brain is vulnerable to damage induced by exposure to the environment. Drugs take advantage of neuroplasticity, using biology to reprogram every effort on one goal: getting the drug. Though frightening and ugly, addiction, like any disease, is the outward manifestation of an underlying biological metamorphosis.**

## Works Cited

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