Those first few sunbreaks were spellbinding, flooded with the hyper awareness of a new empire. I saw gold grass, clear diamonds. I smiled, and smiled again. I began to realize that, like Lewis and Clark, I might need a compass, something to point me in the right direction, but when it comes to decrypting well-being there is startlingly little support. So in Edmonds, Washington when the sun comes up and I lie on my hand-me-down mattress inspecting the quick, quick morning sun sparkling on my pill canteen, I think that no matter what is happening in that room, my pills are watching me. The pills glared out of the bottle at me, a light caroty orange, oblong, diamond capsule, quickly put together, small, and lightweight, with a panicky, smooth plastic-like crust. But there is something about the way the small white beads in the shell are keeping still, something strongly scornful and knowing in the customary shell recommends that, somewhere below this restless sturdiness is a flaw as infinite as it is inflexible, like an ex-girlfriend’s hazardous rage, yet so entirely astonishing.

Very swiftly I turned to face the bottle better or as though God’s hand came down to earth and slapped me in the face and turned my life around. The house was blackening. The pills inside the bottle stood on my nightstand at my service; I was terribly aware of the pills’ muscles, and of mine. I got up and walked over to the nightstand and stuck my tongue out at it. I wanted to stand there, concealed and still. But then, far inside, I felt the chemical bond of amphetamines scrambling to help, gushing to unclutter the gates of the synthetically built empire, and let the noble archduke of delight come in. I felt so aimless, like a bouncy ball, bouncing and bouncing, and I began to wonder where I’d land.
After all those years of being “the kid” that parents told their sons and daughters not to hangout with, all those times I embarrassed my family and myself, they were over. I was going to get help. My main fear was that I was going to mess up and I did not want to end up in jail or be that crazy guy everyone avoids in the town. So when those cops took the handcuffs off of me freshman year of high school after going streaking, my parents got me some assistance. My life changed when I was diagnosed with ADHD, and I was prescribed Adderall.

Adderall began transforming my lifestyle into one filled with solitude. That space between rock bottom and being sane was slick, and I kept on sliding back and forth. I felt that Adderall had made me a more sensitive person, cracking me down into pieces. Eventually I reached a point where I was scared that if I quit taking Adderall I would slip and fall down to the rock bottom.

The worst part though was that Adderall attacked my inner voice and I was not a talkative person anymore. I gave up talking because when the Adderall came about I turned silent. It ruined many situations where I could have had way more fun if I would have talked. Examples consisted of being in the presence of girls.

Halfway through my junior year of high school on a winter night I carpooled with a fling of mine named Tanya Britt to the Sheraton Seattle Hotel to gawk at the 14th annual Gingerbread village display. I was wearing an ugly Christmas sweater, which was my lame attempt to appear festive. She was all dolled up in her white top with a burnt sienna colored scarf that matched her cinnamon hair. She always had a colossal smile with the cutest dimples that pressed her cheeks. The whole car ride there I did not speak at all. I wanted to, but words would not form into complete sentences. I swear we only submerged into conversation about the rain that had drenched my car. It stressed me out. I wanted to say...
something, but what?

A few minutes later we were at the hotel and held each other’s hands as we walked slowly together gazing at the gingerbread mansions.

“Whoa look at this one Andrew, it has a chocolate syrup fountain!” she said, and squeezed my hands tighter, hopeful that I would respond.

I scratched above my right ear and mumbled, “fountain.” Gosh, it was so embarrassing. I felt wordless as my head bubbled with blood.

Somehow she was not completely annoyed with me yet and said, “I love this one. It’s so cool!”

I looked at her and smirked, saying nothing. I pushed no more words out of my cerebellum that night. She came and knocked on my door, and even rang my doorbell, but I was not there. I was somehow different – I couldn’t form words out of my thoughts.

She never called or texted me again. It was another failed romance on the old belt for me, because I was in a romance with someone else; I was in an unwanted romance with a psycho bitch named Adderall. It just seemed like I could have spoken so much more if I was not on it – she made me calm, and silenced me. It was killing me, and has altered me. I wanted to leave the Adderall Empire and enter back to the normal world.

Imagine taking Adderall were a sport. It would be like jumping from space. A window opened, and a robust draft blasts you down through the atmosphere. Then slowly, you plunge hazardously, with a gulp and a breath. The atmosphere and you become the same. Then comes the moment, four minutes, when you wait for the restraints to deploy inside you. You stop soaring and start, finally, to recline down to ground level. A changed person, the buzzing channels in your brain form a sequence of new thoughts. The land has escaped you. You are living on a different frequency for the next six to 12 hours, or maybe forever. I wanted to leave the
dare devil lifestyle inside this alternate world.

I had surrendered myself to Adderall and it was eating away at my soul. This pushed me to grasp for reality and rationalize what was really going on – what was at stake. Adderall had created a false perception of who I was. That’s why I turned to Cogmed, an alternate method to treating ADHD.

I ended up stumbling into the office of Lorie Overland. She was a Cogmed practitioner who worked at Family Learning Strategies in Edmonds. She had a big smile, shiny white and gray hair, and a soft voice that made me feel at home. Lorie was a counselor as well as an educational ADHD specialist. She invited me in and stood near her chair, allowing me to sit anywhere I desired.

She stuck out her right hand. “Andrew, how are you?” she said the afternoon we met.

“I’m doing alright,” I grunted, and sprawled out on the couch with my arms crossed and my feet kicked up.

She sat. She always would have a grin from ear to ear. At that time, I was frustrated with all the recent findings of me. Naturally, I despised her grin.

“Anything new going on you wanted to talk about? Anything at all? We have a client-counselor privilege, you know? I don’t tell your mom and dad about anything we have talked about.”

I folded my arms tighter and said, “Yeah. I play baseball. I’m a pitcher.”

Her eyes brightened up that I’d actually said something. “Wow, that’s so neat Andrew. Do you like playing baseball?”

I nodded. “Yeah it’s fun. It passes the time I guess.”

She scooted closer to me and things were going as scheduled. I was dipping into the platitudes like I always tended to do. That is, until she mentioned a cognitive gym called Cogmed Working Memory Training. My ears wiggled and eyes lit up bigger than the Empire State Building on Christmas Eve.

“What’s Cogmed?” I asked. My tone of voice was starting to
flutter with excitement.

“It’s an experimental computer program that helps people with ADHD, Invented by Dr. Torkel Klingberg in Sweden in 2001,” she remarked.

To myself, I thought that was pretty cool. But I was skeptical. Hell, I was skeptical of everything though. I was the epitome of the word skeptical.

She explained to me that it was an online computer-generated program with exercises that exercised the brain muscles. The skepticism was moving toward more of a cynical vibe now, but that was just my brain fumbling. My brain thought it was too cool for the experimental journey. After an internal bedridden argument with my brain, I mustered up the courage and accepted the opportunity from Lorie who was so kindly trying to help my little soul. I was about to enter what I called the Cogmed Clubhouse.

Inside the Cogmed Clubhouse I trained on a computer program for 45 minutes a day, repetitively performing working memory tasks – always with new and different combinations of flashing structures. As soon as I improved, the levels of difficulty raised. I was pushing the limits on how much information I could remember. Working memory boosted the regions of my brain that activate and help penetrate mental functions.

I gained incredible awareness of many physiological functions by the usage of Cogmed. I eventually started to pick up books that had been piling up and reading them, something I have never done before. They seemed to have been thrown through the gates into my Adderall world. With the help of Cogmed, I was more able to read the books and understand them.

Keep in mind though that the affects of Cogmed sometimes didn’t show up until weeks afterward. But when they did show up, it was a minor miracle. I felt the most profound, concentrated, noble occurrence of my life. It made me feel like my thoughts were
dancing down the street like Michael Jackson on stage. I skipped on after real thoughts that interested me – because the only thoughts for me are the clear ones, the ones that are headache-less; the ones that never failed to come to mind, the ones that are always fully completed; hopeful of everything at the same time. The ones that never disappointed or said something inappropriate. In fact, it felt like my neurons floated out of an invisible room in my mind frame and through my soul, exposed to the elements, and soared, soared, soared, like a meteor in the night sky. I know that sounds cliché, but it was true. Every thought of mine began to feel like a home run over centerfield.

Cogmed refunded my thoughts back to me, where Adderall had glazed my eyes like a donut – Cogmed unglazed them. Some mornings I woke up and my eyes felt sharp and everything I thought was crisp. I could be me again but with a stronger component, and Cogmed had been the only thing that allowed me to be Adderall-free in the normal world.

When I received better working memory, I was happier. The doctors did a good job helping me with that, but at the same time the effects of Cogmed never fully stuck. So I would turn to Adderall for a working memory fix.

That was not the real problem though. Maybe the real problem was the shame I felt after the shinny pill was consumed. In the Adderall Empire I sometimes encountered students as I walked along the sidewalk. We mixed our bodies with amphetamines and dove into this fake empire, wandering through the streets together. Sooner or later the buildings we built together on Adderall are going to collapse like sandcastles on the beach. The college users came and went like strangers, but I was a permanent resident riding the elevator to the top of a skyscraper to my room, fueled by Adderall.

I felt Adderall was bad for the world – it had done nothing but give me a fabricated wisdom of confidence that I’m not good
enough to focus without it. My conversations with people gave me the feeling that my thoughts were synthetic, indistinguishable from my real thoughts. Like sex with a prostitute – it’s not the real thing. As for those people I saw taking it recreationally, or my encounters with casual users in high school and college, I still don’t believe it was a good thing for any of us: it made us put off time we could be spending working on assignments, and has allowed us to party more by popping an Adderall last minute to bust out a good grade. It was not only that though; we lacked the confidence to do it ourselves and used Adderall as a crutch.

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I laid in my bed at night and my mind did figure eights. I wondered how I touched my life-long limit of denial about needing a drug. 100,950 mg swallowed and $31,020 spent. I didn’t like the Adderall. No man or woman really has. But we like what is inside Adderall – the chance to find ourselves. The personal vision, for ourselves, not for anyone else. What nobody else could ever dream.

In the few moments Cogmed worked, when I was sober from Adderall, I had a sense of pride. It was the only time I felt freedom, that life was fascinating again – I was the real me. People should know who I am, not who I ought to be. But somewhere down the line, I became scared to open other doors. Adderall always makes me open one door and one door only: the door to the Adderall Empire.