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ENGL377

Memoir

Sleep

With every sharp turn I could feel the bile steadily inching it s way closer to the surface. My eyes were closed but weren’t really needed to envision the space around me. My mother was to the left, silent and still. While the paramedic sat to my right, bombarding me with a slew of questions.

“What’s your name? How old are you? Have you been drinking? Are you taking any medications?” The speed in which the ambulance was traveling, along with the rapid fire of questions made me all the more nauseous. However, after about the fifth or sixth round of me not answering, he seemingly gave up. As lovely as the silence was, it wasn’t to last.

Once we arrived at the hospital and the doors to the ambulance flung open, things seemed to erupt. People seemingly came from every which way, pushing, pulling, and carrying all sorts of sci-fi looking devices. I slowly began to disengage, watching the chaos unfold around me. It was only when I noticed the ungodly amount of people surrounding me, did I eventually begin to return to reality.

One woman broke through the blur of faces, brandishing a pair of scissors. I just laid there staring, obviously still to disoriented to fully comprehend what it was she was saying She seemed to register my vacant gaze and began to motion with the scissors to help me understand. The cool metal grazed across my skin as she maneuvered the scissors through the rough fibers of my jeans. It only took but a few minutes until all my clothing had been cut off and now lay in a heap upon the flooring.

Despite, my grogginess I became uncomfortably aware of how naked and exposed I was. However, there wasn’t a thing I could do but simply just lay there. I noticed the door opened revealing a single man, toting a trash bin on wheels. He offered me an apologetic smile as he averted his eyes from my nakedness. He moved about gathering my discarded clothing and placing them into the bin. As quickly as he had appeared, he left in the same manner. No one had seemed to notice him, and I couldn’t help but question the validity of the events, that had seemingly just taken place. However, the spot in which my clothes had been just moments before was now vacant. In fact, the only evidence of their existence was a few drops of blood that had smeared across the tile.

For quite some time, nothing of real importance seemed to happen. Doctors came and went asking an occasional question, but nothing to make me feel like an actual human being. Eventually, the crowd seemed to fizzle out so only one woman remained. In her hands she had what looked like a small plastic bag, with a tubing of some sort sticking out of the side. Suddenly finding myself alone with this woman, I longed for the chaotic mass of people to return. In reality, I wanted to scream. I wanted to get up and run away not only from her but from this night, from what I’d done. However, in the end I simply just laid there letting her insert the tube and watched as my urine filtered through the tubing.

After her departure I was left completely alone, with nothing but the methodical rhythm of beeps coming from the multiple machines around me. I can remember laying there hating everything. I hated the woman and her cursed pee bag. I hated the sterile smell of the room, in which I was forced to occupy. I hated the feeling of the cold metal table beneath me, but mostly I just hated myself. For the first time since the accident I cried. I cried until I exhausted all of my tears. All around me, lay the remains of the mess that I had created. Bloody footprints stamped the floor. Discarded towels were strewn about. The catheter just dangling out of reach. Despite, the anger and self-hatred, I didn’t want to be alone. I wanted someone to take the blame, someone to tell me everything was going to be okay, someone to say it wasn’t my fault, but it wasn’t to be. I was left there alone, with nothing more than my thoughts.

Eventually, I again found myself at the mercy of crowds. One-person injected morphine into my IV, while another demanded I fill their vials with blood samples. I tried convincing them to use what had already been spilt but they ignored my request. The majority of people had ventured downwards and seemed to be crowded around my legs. Their voices held no emotion but almost sounded mechanical.

“Move this way, move that way. Wiggle this toe and now that one. Lift your left leg, now the right.” Just trying to process their demands depleted what little energy I had. Once they finished what seemed like a cruel game of Simon Says, they informed me the morphine should have taken effect and they were now going to remove the object. Hearing this I again disengaged, as in no point in time did, I remember being impaled.

The morphine had done its job as I couldn’t feel a thing. However, the squelching noises I could hear were something awful. The actual procedure didn’t take long, and once they’d finished, they showed me the offending object. I almost immediately recognized the green handle of my hairbrush. After this they cleaned me up and moved me to another room where I fell into an uneasy sleep.

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The speedometer read 90 but I knew I was actually running about 55. The speedometer had been broken for months now and on one had taken the time or had even cared enough to have it repaired. I was no different, although even if the device had worked properly, I would still have neglected to obey the speed limit signs. As long as the vehicle could transport me to and from my desired location, I was content.

My usual commute while obeying all the traffic signs took around 35 minutes. However, I can confidently say that no one obeys all the rules. While I may have neglected more than the average person it was acceptable. Only because I worked third shift. So, at 2 in the morning there was no one to stop me as I recklessly flew through all of the stop signs. With this luxury I was able to make my commute illegally comfortable in about 20 minutes or less. Unfortunately, the poor choices of my lifestyle crept up on me without warning. I was working three jobs and between all three I was topping around 101 hours a week. My work hours continued to increase while my time for sleep only declined. Naturally it was a disaster bound to happen.

One night, I felt the exhaustion weighing heavier than usual. I decided I needed something to persuade my eyes lids to remain functioning. I pressed the button indicating the mechanism to lower the window. I had hoped that the wind would help keep me awake. Unfortunately, as ingenious as my plan was, there was but a single flaw. I was cold. So, I let my sleep deprived mind choose comfort over caution.

My struggle only continued to increase. So, I turned to the radio for help. Flipping the dial, I was greeted with nothing but commercials. I switched from station to station and every single one of them was trying to sell me something or convince me I needed dental implants. After three rotations I stopped at the first sound of music. Of course, it would be an overly played pop song. Normally, I would have waited the commercials out, so I could listen to AC/DC or Guns N Roses but tonight I didn’t care what genre it was, as long as it could keep me awake.

The needle of the speedometer was now pushing well past the 120 MPH mark, which indicated my actual speed was around 80-85 MPH. Rihanna’s auto-tuned voice filtered through the speakers as my eye lids flipped open, which had at some point apparently decided to remain closed without my consent. I brought my eyes to focus on the road, or well lack of road. I jerked the wheel to the left to avoid the telephone pole in front of me.

For one split second time stopped and everything seemed fine. The moment came to an end as the sound of screeching tires penetrated the still silent night. I grabbed for the wheel but this time, I was the one being jerked to the left and then to the right. I had overcorrected and couldn’t regain control.

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“Dad?”

“What’s wrong?”

“Don’t freak out or be mad but-”

“What happened?”

“I wrecked the car.”

“How bad?”

“The car is totaled.”

“Are you hurt?”

“I can’t feel anything… but there’s a lot of blood.”

“Call 911, I’m coming.”

“Hey, dad?”

“What?”

“I’m sorry.”

“I know… I love you.”

“Love you too.”

As I waited for the ambulance, I lay there dumbfounded trying to piece together the events that had just taken place. First, I recalled the car had taken out a fence bending the stakes like they were pipe cleaners. Which from my position at the time I could see that portions of the fence were still attached to the bumper of the car. Indicating I had been traveling a lot faster than I originally thought. Because taking out 7 feet of fence did little to nothing in slowing my momentum. After the first impact came the second and final blow the collision with the tree.

I remember the feeling of desperation as my need for air became dire. The driver’s side door was blocked by the tree, so that left me little choice in my escape route. Eventually I succeeded in prying the passenger side door open. Without any thought I let my body fall the full height from the seat of the car to the ground below. The damp grass was a welcoming comfort as the air around me once again became breathable.

Looking over the vehicle, there was no doubt in my mind that it was totaled. The hood was smashed in. All four tires were either flat, or in the process of becoming flat. There was a strange liquid leaking out the front end, and a mysterious ticking noise coming from the engine area. Despite the damage, Rihanna sang on. Hearing the same song, I came to realize that everything that had just occurred, happened within a matter of seconds.

After assessing the vehicles damage, I decided to assess my own. I remembered my head had bounced off the steering wheel as the air bags exploded. Then my collar bone was smashed against the doorframe. My legs had been crushed with the weight of the collapsed dash. At this point it was safe to assume my nose had been broken. Although, I couldn’t feel any pain, the amount of blood dripping from my face was rather convincing.

There was a moment where nothing happened. I just laid there waiting. Waiting to live or die I didn’t know which. Never once did I fear death. My mortality was definitely questioned a time or two, but I was never afraid. Thinking back, I never truly realized how lucky I was to have survived that night. I escaped with nothing more than a black eye, smashed collar bone, broken nose, impalement, and a lot of damaged pride. Sometimes without warning the world will fade away and I once again find myself in the driver’s seat. I can do nothing but wait for the nightmare to end. Every time I am transported back to that moment the same thing always resonates in my mind. Time, everything had happened so quickly and yet was all in slow motion. I remember as the images of my life were presented before me. Seeing my life flash by so quickly made me realize that my life in relation to time is nothing more than the snap of the fingers.