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## My Last Day

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## My Last Day

I wake up seeing a red glow through my closed eyelids, and a faint smell penetrates my nose. As I am able to think more clearly, I realize that I am in my own apartment, no hospital room with locked doors, but my own apartment. The red glow is the sun shining through my windows, but I am not able to place the smell yet. As I slowly wake up, so do the voices in my head. Sometimes I wish that the moment between waking up and being half asleep could last all day.

I cannot remember how long I slept, but it could not have been very long. The tiredness and exhaustion I feel makes me want to go back to bed, but the activity in my head and the anxiety I already feel prevents me from doing so. I decide that water will help me to wake up. When I look up from the sink in the bathroom I become aware of a reflection in the mirror. It takes me a while to realize that the man I see is me. How long has it been since I looked at myself? The hair and the beard are too long, and the eyes with the dark rings seem to be too big for the narrow face. Now I also recognize the smell I woke up to. It is the smell of stale beer and old sweat, which does not surprise me after I look at my clothes. From now on, I decide, I will take better care of myself. If only I was not so exhausted.

I am sitting against the wall on the floor of my living room, not knowing how much time has gone by. The voices in my head are arguing and criticizing my every thought. Suddenly, the walls of my apartment are closing in on me, and I know that soon there will be no air left for me to breathe. I have no choice but to leave this place.

My apartment is on the fourth floor of a nine story building. I decide that the stairs will be safer than the elevator and run down, taking two steps at a time. Four boys have already gathered in the lobby. Normally, the group consists of six boys, probably between the ages of 18 and 20. I do not like the boys. They shout at me and call me names, so it is a relief that they are whispering among themselves and do not seem to notice me today.

The air outside is cool and crisp, but the sun's rays warm my face. The park is busier than usual. People walking by are staring at me, and I start to feel uncomfortable. I look around, wanting to enjoy the peace and beauty of the park, but all I feel is emptiness and loneliness. People do not understand me, but then again, sometimes I do not even understand myself.

Back in the lobby of my apartment building, the two other boys have joined the group. They are looking at me as I walk over to the stairs. I do not pay much attention to them and am surprised to see them outside the elevator on the fourth floor. They scare me, the way they are looking at me. When I turn around to close the door of my apartment, they are standing in the doorway, preventing me from doing so.

The six boys enter my apartment and start looking around in my living room, in my closets and in my kitchen. That is where they find my beer. I keep a large supply of

beer, as it seems to take away a lot of my problems. It calms both me and my voices and just makes life more bearable for me. We start drinking, and slowly my fear disappears. The boys are laughing and joking. A lot of their jokes are at my expense and after a while do not seem funny to me anymore. I wish they would leave so I could be alone again. They should be leaving shortly. I can tell they are getting bored.

I have been sitting in a corner for some time when one of the boys, who I think is the leader of the group, approaches me, offering to help me. I am confused, as I do not need any help. I want to be left alone. He pulls me onto a chair which he has placed in the middle of the room. I feel uneasy, sitting there with the boys looking at me. The boy has a knife and starts to cut my clothes, saying I need a bath. I feel a burning pain on my chest and realize that the boy has cut me. I stare down at the parting in my flesh and look at the dark, red blood, not being able to say a word. I can feel the pain as he cuts my flesh a second, third, and fourth time, but I am unable to react. This cannot be happening to me.

Three boys now lift me out of the chair, pushing me into the bathroom. I hear their laughing in the background when suddenly, with a shock, I come to my senses. I am standing in the shower without clothes, and cold water is pouring down my body. I am terrified, and I need help.

I can see the door of my balcony across the room, and I try to calculate the number of steps I would need to reach it. The boys are too occupied to notice me as I walk to the door. I stand on the balcony, screaming for help and feel relief when people hear me and look up. However, my screaming has also alarmed the boys. I am being pulled back into the room and tied to the chair, but I know help is on the way. The punishment for my action is very severe. Burning cigarettes are held against my chest, and the beatings on my face and head are making me feel numb. I do not know how long this has been going on for, but suddenly, I feel a different kind of pain, a screaming pain which is caused by a cut in my neck. As I look down, I see a thick stream of blood running down my chest, my legs and onto the floor.

Looking around I realize, help never came and the boys have left. I feel a darkness surrounding me. I see pictures of my past appear, the hospitals, my brother, my parents, and the first exacerbation of my illness. Now I am young again. The voices in my head have died. All that is left is clearness and tranquility. I feel happiness and I feel at rest, feelings I have always wished to experience again. I start walking toward the light that I see in the distance, without fear, and I can only wonder if I am finally cured from my illness.

-Suze Tegert