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CBC Writing Competition

Senior Level Entry
Category: Fiction
Author: Hannah Corpuz

Bye-bye, Goodbye. I Tried.

I had only ridden in a limo twice before in my life; once at my wedding and the other at my dad's funeral. My mom was like that—everything had to look fancy, even my dad's funeral.

When she died, we burned her and sent her to Florida with Aunt Charlene.

This limo was different. It wasn't a rental and didn't have those fake tube lights that changed color every few seconds. This was my father in law's limo.

I owed him some money that I never got around to collecting from the people who owed me money. I really shouldn't have married into this family. They weren't even the mafia or the mob of anything. They were just a bunch of mean people with a lot of money.

"Where are you taking me?" I said. I wasn't in handcuffs or anything. I'm not sure if it was because I was family or because he knew I knew if I ran for it I'd get slaughtered.

Dear old Clay wouldn't answer me. Neither would my father in law.

"Can I call Dianne?" I added. Dianne was my wife. I didn't know why I was interested in calling her anyway.

The other day I woke up and realized my life was like a soap opera. If I couldn't watch for a while, I could still come back to it next month and know exactly what was going on.

Every morning I would wake up at 6:55 and lay there. Then the alarm would go off at 7:00 and I would wait for Dianne to angrily wake up, reach over me, and bang the shit out of that poor alarm clock. Then she'd kiss me on the forehead and I'd open my eyes and yawn and stretch.

I would take a shower which sometimes, sometimes not, Dianne would join me for. I'd put on a shirt, a tie, a suit, socks, shoes—all of various colors which always complimented each other. I would drink coffee out of no mug in particular and eat dry toast, cereal, or a breakfast burrito.

My daughter, Elise, would ask me a question every morning from her chair at the dining room table. "Dad, why do humming birds' wings flap so fast? Dad, why do people have toenails? Dad, why is Monica from next door always naked with different boys?"

Some of them were tough, I'll admit. But for the most part it was nothing brain- boggling.

The answers were always standard. "I don't know," "Because that's the way it is," "Because Monica is a slut."

I'll miss Elise.

"Hi, Dianne."

"Rex? Did you stop by the store yet?"

"No, Dianne, I didn't—"

"If you're there we need detergent, I can't do laundry without any detergent, Rex. And if you expect laundry—"

"Dammit Dianne, I'm not at the store."

"Well, when you go, get the detergent."

"I will, I will. But Dianne, listen I think I might not come h—"

"I'm driving right now, Rex, I can't really talk. But I'll catch you at home. Love you, bye."

"I love you, too." I'm not sure she caught the end. Everything with Dianne was always rushed. Conversations, arguments, sex. Everything. That's probably why I married her after a month and a half. Shitty mistake that was.

It never bothered me, being with someone who I didn't really love.

She was my wife. She was something I could check off my 'to do' list.

My father in law squinted at me through fat-crescent eyes.

"Rex, you make Dianne pretty happy. But I don't like you, and I always come first."

I had never heard such an honest, blunt statement. I appreciated that.

I smiled at Clay because I needed something to smile at.

After the "dad, why" question of the day I would leave in my standard Toyota middle class car and drive to the office. That day was the first day I noticed that I got to work in 10 minutes. We lived in New York and I could get to work in 10 minutes. That never happens, but that's my life.

Nothing exciting has ever happened on my way to work. No birds shit on my car. No teenager ever swerves in front of me. I don't think I've ever even hit a fucking squirrel. I don't even get traffic.

I go through a 9 hour work day, on average. I work in a cubical next to a black guy named Bryson and another guy, Kirk.

Bryson's cubicle always featured new pictures of his sons; playing baseball, climbing a mountain, winning the science fair. He was the kind of guy who leaned over you when he talked.

Kirk was quiet and lived with his sister. We didn't really like him.

But when you're older you don't pick and choose your friends. You just have them. Bryson and Kirk were my friends, by cubicle. I doubt if we were in cubicles 34, 56, and 144 instead of cubicles 23, 24, and 25 we'd still be friends.

I went go to barbeques at Bryson's where Kirk would do magic tricks for the kids.

Elise liked Bryson's kids.

I only had one picture of her in my cubicle. I didn't like cluttering it—that didn't take much, either. So that's all I had. Just a little picture of her pinned adjacent my computer.

Lunch was at 12:35 each day. I always bought lunch at the office. They had a day for everything. Tuesdays was Meat Loaf. Wednesdays was baked potatoes.

Sundays, if you were called in, they had a salad bar.

I watched the solid cell walls of the city go by; a variety of grays, browns and reds. This was the moment my life flashed before my eyes-- just a variety of grays, browns, and reds.

Slowly we came to a halt, and the man next to me (his name was Clay) pulled out a pretty pistol from his suit jacket. The driver, who, I assume, was completely oblivious to the situation fast approaching, opened the door for my father in law. He clambered his way out. He reminded me of a hamster in a wheel.

Clay angled the gun into my neck and prompted me out of the car. I had no

idea where we were. I still wasn't handcuffed. I wasn't even blindfolded. My father in law led the way, which made for a slow pace, to the service elevator where a man in a chef hat was waiting.

"Bonjour," he said. I doubt he was French. He looked around as if to check for FBI, CIA, or maybe even the police.

My father in law hit him on the head with his muffin of a hand. "Hurryitup."

The French man just wanted to feel important—like everyone else.

Bryson's house was a tope color. It overlooked a little park squished between urban disturbances.

He held the barbeques every other Saturday around 5:30 pm. I don't know why they were so frequent, but everyone enjoyed themselves anyway. Dianne would get rather drunk within the first hour and would often become "the life of the party."

I thought she was embarrassing.

So I took Elise and Bryson's sons to the swing set.

It made me feel like I was completing my task as a father and good friend of another guy with kids.

Bryson's sons had little interest in swing sets, like typical boys, and spent their time there picking at trees and eating bugs.

But I pushed Elise on the swing set. She was always so happy when I'd push her on the swing set. The higher she'd go, the more she'd giggle. Eventually, she'd start holding her breath on the way up and squealing "weeeeee" on her way down.

By 8:00 pm I would detach her from the swing— and Bryson's sons from the trees—and take them back to the barbeque, which was rampant by then with drunken adults. Dianne, naturally, leading the pack.

It wouldn't be so bad if this was a singular event. But it wasn't; this was my life.

This was how it was every other Saturday from 5:30 to 8:00 pm.

Clay gave me one choice; to jump facing the sky or the ground.

"Wait," I said, "Are you going to push me, or am I going to just jump off myself?"

"I'll giveya two seconds tajump before I fucking pushya." Clay had the voice of a school girl. It was disappointing to hear him talk.

"Alright." I turned so that the barrel of the gun pushed into my belly button.

And I floated backwards.

It's true, you know, what they say; everything really does slow down.

I focused on the edge of that gun until it slowly disappeared behind a wall of 1920's brick. I had had enough of a variety of grays, browns and reds, though. And against impulse I raised my eyes.

The sky never looked so peaceful and cozy, like a blanket rushing down on me to envelope my body.

I knew the reality of it. At the end of those 250 some odd feet, my brains would splatter and my limbs would detach and my blood would make a little halo around my head.

But until then I couldn't help but think…

"Weeeeee."