

Memories

By Karoline Hix

Wednesday, October 21, 10:19 P.M. I usually don't go out. It's not my scene; I don't like the loud music and overcrowded tight dance-space, filled with bilaterally drunk college students. The girls wear too much makeup and not enough self-respect, while the guys wear too much cologne and not enough good intentions. I was finishing up my work, and my mind was far away from the sweaty smelling club environment, until my phone reminded me. *Buzz*. "Heyyyy Karo! We are going out and you need to come. Don't be lame!" It was from my sister. "Not tonight," I thought, as I kindly declined, per usual. I felt a little bad for always being so introverted, so boring, so myself. "It's just Paddy tonight! Not the clubs. C'mon." I took a deep breath in and thought to myself "Why not? Paddy's Irish Pub is laid back and it won't be a late night. What's the worst that can happen?" I exhaled. "Fine. I'll go." *Send*.

Every year, about 8 out of every 1,000 people die, according to the Population Reference Bureau and the CIA's World Factbook. That's about 55.3 million people per year. Or: 151,600 people a day; 6,316 people an hour; 105 people a minute; nearly two people a second.

Journal entry #1: Welcome to my journal. I have this nightmare; it recurs to me quite often. It's a dreamless nightmare. I am awake most of the time. Thoughts, sometimes an entire sequence. The things that happen after I die. The things that happen when I die. The things that happen before I die. They're sad; they make my stomach churn. I want to share some of them, to give a better understanding of what occupies my mind if it is left alone long enough.

Wednesday, October 21, 10:54 P.M. I pull up to the Pub, and park, but don't go inside right away. I've always liked to sit in my car for a few minutes after I reach my destination. It's a good place to people watch. In this case, I was wondering to myself if the girl entering the bar with her friends was wearing a shirt as a dress. Besides, there was a good song on the radio, and I couldn't leave before it was over. I thought about home. I like canceled plans. And mellow coffee shops. I like rainy days. And thunderstorms. I like messy beds and over-worn pajamas. I like learning big words and their meanings. I like poetry. A deep sigh released itself from my lips. The song was over. I got out of my car and strolled inside.

According to the CIA's fact book, exactly why we get old and die is still a puzzle. One hypothesis is that because most creatures are killed or die of disease before they can get old, evolution doesn't weed out the mutations that hurt us in old age.

Journal entry #2: I am laying on my deathbed; my life has drawn to an end. As I take my last breaths, the people I love are not there. No one is there. I am all alone. The weight of my gray wool blanket presses down on my chest. I am afraid and I don't know why. I look at my frail, purplish hands, marbled with veins. My eyes close, but not for long. I am too afraid. Why am I so afraid of knowing what I knew all along? No one escapes death. No one has. In the end, we all die. Being moments from it, there is nothing scarier, just as the thought that it most definitely will happen.

Wednesday, October 21, 11:03 P.M. “Karooooo! You look good!” my sister excitedly proclaimed. Luckily, I had some clothes in my trunk, and changed out of my shoes, shirt and pants. After working at a restaurant all day, they smelled of onions and hate. She was trying to get me into a social mood. “Two amaretto sours!” My older sister knew those were my favorite. Every bartender knew her by name; what a social butterfly she’d become over the last year. After a while of my silence, she was getting upset that I wasn’t having a good time. I tried talking. “You should try talking!” she laughed. She didn’t know that I did, right before I got ignored. Or right before I got talked over. Or right before I got interrupted. No one paid attention; no one cared. I weakly smiled back at her “You’re right, but I think I’ll head home. Thank you for the drink. Please make sure you have a safe ride home.” I love you.

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility warns that every hour at least 1 person is killed by a drunk driver in the U.S.

Journal entry #3: What happens after death? What if I am locked in a dark room for eternity? What will it be like to go to sleep and never wake up again? Darkness. It will happen. I will find out. And so will you. I am scared of nothing more and I can’t halt or change that destination.

Thursday, October 22nd, 11:16 A.M. Why am I always late for everything? If teleporting were invented, I would probably still be late. The funny thing about the morning of October 22nd is that I was late, but I was not in a rush. One of my mom’s tidbit sayings is, “If you are late, you might as well take your time because you can’t be late twice.” I’ll miss her words. I was late

because I couldn't find my shoes. I knew I had them with my work clothes from the night before, but they weren't in my room with my clothes that I had carried in. I ran to my car barefooted, and sure enough found my shoes on the passenger floor board. I calmed, turned on some serene piano music, and hit the road. It's going to be a good day. I remember the colors of fall. Summer had collapsed into autumn all at once. The world was red, yellow, orange. It is strange that autumn is so beautiful, yet everything is dying. The air smelled of spice and smoky bonfires. A cool breeze. The trees rustled, but it was peacefully quiet. 55mph. "I better put my shoes on, there are no cars on this road." 60mph. A big hill approached. I reached for my shoes and had lost sight. I was right: no cars were coming or ahead. A large tractor had just pulled over onto the road from the grass. He didn't see me over the hill. 65 mph. I couldn't reach them. I slowly looked up. The tractor was 2 inches from my car, overtaking my entire sight. 67 mph. My body was completely relaxed when I hit. Then, darkness.

Rigor mortis, a stiffening of the body, sets in between three and four hours after death. It's caused by chemical changes in the muscles that force them to contract.

Journal entry #4: I love my mom infinitely. She inspires me. My mom gives the best advice. I can imagine the way she smells of lavender. Her laugh is infectious. She has green eyes and perfect teeth. The scars on her forehead tell a story, and I think they're beautiful. She loves opal, and had I been able to afford it, I would have given her jewelry made from it. One day, she picked me up, sat me down, and never picked me up again. One day, I slept in her bed for the very last time. One day she took my hand, let go, and never took it again. Just as those things came to an end as I grew older, so will everything else. One day, she will be gone. In my

lifetime, I will have to endure the pain of losing her. I will never have tea with her again, never be able to ask the questions I wanted to, and never be able to tell her that I love her. I try to as often as I can, because one day, it surely will be the last time.

Thursday, October 22, 11:28 A.M. I woke up. My vision was blurred, but I could hear the muffled screaming of a lady in the distance. It came closer, until I realized she was shouting at me. "Get out of the vehicle, it is on fire!" I couldn't move. I felt no pain; I was numb. I looked down and saw blood. I don't remember how I got on the grass. I saw the man on the tractor, slumped over. I wanted to scream and cry but all I could get out was a scratchy sound. Finally, I swallowed the clump in my throat. My voice was shaky, "Dead. Is he dead?" Oh my god, did I kill this man? The paramedics arrived, followed by a firetruck and the police. "What does your mother look like?" I couldn't remember. "Where is your cell phone with contacts?" I didn't know. "What is your name?" I wasn't sure. Suddenly, my numbness turned into hysteria, and all of my emotions flooded out like a monsoon. I turned from feeling nothing, to feeling everything at once. I turned from thirsting to drowning.

"The man is fine! Not a scratch on him." A paramedic shook his head, lost in thought, and mumbled "Last week, we handled a case of a girl who went slower than you, but was texting and driving, when she hit a tree. It was the same kind of head-on collision as yours. She died on impact. Why? Because her body tensed up, and her neck snapped. You were relaxed when you hit, weren't you?" What he meant to say is that I should be dead.

I read in an article that you are more likely to die in the taxi cab on the way to and from the airport than on the flight itself.

Journal entry #5: What if on the last day you have on earth, the person you become will meet the person you could have become had you not been so afraid, had you applied yourself more, done everything you said you would. The person you turned out to be will meet the person you could have become.