

“I’m sorry, but we’re in a fund-raising phase right now. Can you call back another time?”

And with that, I was done. My one last shot had been shot down.

I was finished, but first, I had to unload on this lady who had been unlucky enough to have picked up the phone. I hit her with everything that had been building up inside of me over the previous eight years. I cursed her and her family and everyone at that fucking group of hers that was raising funds supposedly so they could help guys exactly like me when a call exactly like this came. I screamed and cursed and cried. I had just told some stranger on the phone that I was going to kill myself, and she had reacted as if I’d just called to order a sandwich.

I hung up and looked around the shitty little one-bedroom apartment that the five of us were living in. It was the first place my wife, Cecy, and I could find when we had to sell our house, the home we had built for ourselves and our three children, just before Christmas. It was an apartment just a few steps from the bridge that connects Harrison to Newark in New Jersey, so close to the street that drunks would stumble into our front door all night long.

I shook my head, still trying to believe what I’d just heard.

*“Can you call back another time?”*

No. I couldn’t. I was out of time.

And then the funniest thing happened: I felt calm. The pain in my neck went away. So did the pain in my back and in my knees. Gone. The fog I’d been in from all the pain pills I’d been swallowing lifted. I was no longer depressed. I felt no anxiety. I wasn’t mad anymore.

For the first time in years, I had clarity.

Better. I had a plan.

The idea of killing myself was not a new one. I had already been having that debate with the voice in my head, the one that was always telling me, *Look at yourself. You're filthy. You smell. You're an embarrassment. You're worthless. You're not helping anyone. You're a burden. You need to kill yourself.*

For a while, I would think of reasons to argue with that voice.

"I'm a father."

*You're a fucking joke.*

"I'm a husband."

*You should kill yourself because of what you're doing to your wife.*

Eventually, getting from "Look what you've become" to "How are you going to do it?" becomes a pretty short walk.

So, you start to figure out a way. You listen to the voice.

*Try the pills.*

Made sense. I had enough of them around. When you take 1,400 pills a month, there was always a potentially lethal dose handy.

There was still some small part of me saying, "Are you listening to yourself? What the hell are you doing?"

But that was way in the background. People always talk about having a good angel and a bad angel. Well, my bad angel was kicking the shit out of my good angel on a daily basis. As soon as I'd hear a whisper from the good one, the bad one would smash him with a pitchfork.

*Try the pills.*

So one night, before I went to sleep, I took 50 pain pills.

The next morning, I woke up. I don't know how, but I woke up.

The good angel tried a little harder to get my attention: "What are you doing? What happens to the girls after you're gone?"

But that other voice was louder.

*Tonight, take 60.*

So, I took 60 pills the next night.

And the next morning, I woke up.

*You are fucking pathetic. You can't even kill yourself right.*

Maybe it was that other little voice that convinced me to make that last call for help. Clearly, that didn't turn out too well.

But now, at least, I had a plan. Something I could actually look forward to.

It came together so easily. It made sense. I'd kill myself on Sunday.

I actually sat there in the kitchen thinking about it and smiling. It was perfect. Cecy and our three daughters would leave for church. I'd write the note, get in my truck, and go.

Right then and there, alone, in that shitty kitchen, I felt at peace. It was going to be over, and I could hardly wait.

*Thank God this is going to be over,* I thought to myself. *I can't do this anymore. I can't be a drain on my wife and kids anymore. I'm not doing anything to help support them. I'm not there for them when they need me. I'm a ghost. I just can't wait for the pain to go away.*

That was it. A minute or two after I'd hung up the phone, I had clarity, a plan, and a date.

It was a Wednesday. Four days later, on Sunday morning, when my family went to church, to pray for me to get better, I finally was going to fix everything.

I was going to drive off the George Washington Bridge.