

Still tomorrow...

By Patrick Harris
1039 Words

The clock is ticking. There is only a minute to go ... I don't know why I've chosen eleven o'clock, but it seems as good a time as any. Eleven hours since Luke my 'line manager', as I was told to address him, texted me.

The message, sent in the early hours of the morning, pertained to my poor sales figures and my imminent dismissal. Eleven hours since the last nail was driven into the end of my life. I may as well have been be in the coffin I had dodged back in Afghanistan, when an RPG projectile hit the wall of the compound my team and I were clearing. It impacted six feet away from me. Two of my mates blocked the force of the explosion, saving my life.

They came back via Brize Norton with some of the other lads who didn't make it. I went to a spinal unit in Germany, where fragments of the dried mud and animal dung wall were removed from my back. They told me I was lucky.

Lucky to have been in immense pain for the last three years. Lucky to be dependent on Co-codamol for day pain relief, and the Oramorph that enabled me to sleep through nights spattered with violent, crazy, Technicolor dreams that just you won't believe. My long-time girlfriend left me, terrified by the noises I made.

I've previously popped the pain relief tablets from their foil strips and placed them into a large plastic bottle for ease of use. Cradled between my legs is a bottle of budget-supermarket 'Tennessee style sipping Whiskey'. After all I don't want to waste the good stuff do I?.

I'm sitting here thinking about Luke. Effeminate, grossly overweight and temperamental. At twenty-three he's seventeen years my junior. I once heard someone say, 'Call a useless sack-of-shite a manager and you can get him to work twice as hard for half the money'.

That is true in Luke's case.

Well my minute is nearly up. The car's air-con automatically kicks up a notch, making the engine run harder. I'm really sweating though. Outside in the car park of the small shopping centre the August temperature is at record levels. The Daily Express on the passenger seat squab forecasts heat related deaths. A diagram of a thermometer with an arrow pointed at 100 degrees 'f', reiterates their prediction. A side column article warns that ISIS will target soldiers and police officers.

When they finally realise I've passed away I'll be well into decomposition. I've decided to go and sit in the back seat you see when I take

the tablets, nice and comfy for the last minutes of my life. Black privacy windows will keep the inquiring eyes away. One tablet, one swig. That's the way to do it. Well I hope so.

Luke was always put out I'd been given an Omega, big powerful engine with an automatic gearbox. It crucifies the fuel returns. I usually use the 'park' gear instead of the hand brake as it's less strain on my back.

The Army who helped me with the job placement, had talked Versatile Windows' H.R. department into it. Pointing out my left leg was somewhat weaker after the injury. It had in fact become much stronger and I was now able to run on the treadmill at the gym for short periods.

Yes, the army paid for that too.

The time reads eleven on the dash clock. Here goes nothing. I pop open the tablet bottle.

Hang on. Bloody cop car. I'd better stow the booze. If it doesn't work I don't want a drink-driving conviction. I'd intended leaving the engine running as I drifted off, until it ran out of petrol. All planned you see. Also it would screw Luke's fuel returns up, as well as leave a nasty smell in the car. No-one else would want it then would they?

The cops are two young women. Just girls in fact. They wear stab vests, carry their ASPS truncheons in their belts and have body cameras. One of them smooths her trousers down, nice figure I think, as the other tilts her hat to keep the sun from her eyes. They are laughing as they walk towards the Subway fast-food outlet.

A movement from a large white van distracts me. What the... Two jokers spring from the rear of the vehicle as the doors are flung open, crashing against the van's sides. They are dressed in the black garb of Islamic State, their long black bandanas flow as they sprint across the tarmac. Both are carrying automatic rifles. I see the unmistakable outline of an AK47.

They run across the car park heading towards the police girls who are blissfully unaware. The terrorists are about fifty yards away and closing. I slam the Omega into gear and gun the engine as I do so. Speeding across the car park I catch the trailing black clad man on his thigh bone. He flies across the bonnet his head smashing into the car's windscreen, blood gushes from his mouth and eyes, before he falls off the nearside front wing.

His gun remains lodged against the off-side windscreen wiper arm.

Screeching to a stop, I leap from the car and grab it. The other joker ceases his run and looks back at his fallen comrade. He hesitates one second too long. I check the AK's safety is off and send two rounds towards his head. The bullets explode inside his skull with brains, blood and hair spraying from

the rear. Must have been hollow points I muse. His legs crumple and he hits the baking tarmac.

The driver's door of the van opens. Another dark skinned man is emerging. I see an automatic pistol in his right hand. He stumbles from the driver's seat trying to bring his gun to bear. I calmly aim at his head. The bullets go through it exploding his skull like a ripe melon. Blood, bone and hair splatter the now crazed windshield. I agree with myself. They were hollow points. The terrorists weren't the only dum-dums.

Maybe today wasn't a good day for me to die after all. Still tomorrow...