

Happy New Year

I awake in the middle of the night for the third time this week. The first thing I notice as I peer through the darkness is the blinking orange light that my computer emits while it is in hibernation. I look at the clock, and it reads 3:17 am. As I slowly become more conscious I hear a silent weeping, and half-awake, half-asleep memories come pouring into my head. Though not as loud as it could have been, I remember the couple in the next apartment having something that sounded like a heated argument. It has been happening on and off for the last few weeks. At first I thought that it wasn't a big deal, and that it would correct itself in no time. However, my conscience is becoming increasingly guilty, and I feel like I need to take action. I think that I could maybe be misinterpreting the situation; I also think that I cannot be the only person who knows about this. One of the other rooms' inhabitants must surely have heard something by now. Although, that might not be so likely; the couple's apartment is at the end of the hallway, and the apartment across from them is vacant at the moment. My thoughts scatter, and drift, as I slowly nod back to slumber.

I wake up around 8:00 am; I slept a little over so the clock reads 8:03. I am kind of in between jobs at the moment, so I'm helping one of my friends out with his business. He owns a food truck, and small food cart, and I spend the majority of my mornings in the streets of New York City selling food to passersby. We agreed last night to meet up early this morning before we started. I quickly get dressed and head to the designated Starbucks. I see my friend Emil wearing a black sweater, and it directly conflicts with his incredibly fair complexion. He sits down at my table in our normal store and he sets his iced mocha down. Emil is never one to beat around the bush and he gets straight to the point.

"Have trouble sleeping last night?" Emil asks.

"Yeah... just one of those nights" I respond.

“Seems like you’ve been having ‘one of those nights’ a lot lately.” he responds.

I stay silent.

“I can tell that something has been eating away at you for the last couple weeks. I’m not here to ask what it is, or even help you fix it. I’m just gonna say that, whatever it is, if it’s a big deal, and things get bad, and you do nothing about it, you’re gonna carry that weight right up to the breaking point.”

There are hints of anger in his voice, so I remain silent, and think that he is probably right. He continues to look directly into my eyes, and gives me his best “I’m not fucking around” look. After that Emil quickly checks his phone, finishes his drink and tells me to take the day off. With a brief utterance of a halfhearted apology he was gone, and I was left alone with my thoughts. I thought of the Christmas that passed a few days ago, and how I didn’t get anyone anything. The closest thing to a gift I got anyone this year was a round of drinks at the bar.

After a long day of walking around and thinking of gift ideas the best I could find was an apron that read “natural born griller” and a few DVDs. After I purchase the gifts I head back to my apartment. The hours slowly pass as I watch television. Around 12:00 am I hear the woman from the apartment over close her door after she enters her room. Her partner begins to yell at her because she is so late, and he throws around several ridiculous drunken accusations. She tries to explain that she was held over at work. This occurs for a good half hour, and then I suddenly hear one blow land, and it is quickly followed by another. Afterward I hear him say, “I’ve had it with this shit. You’re so worthless you can’t even keep one man happy.” He leaves closing the door with very little force. He apparently decides to treat the door better than the woman. A little while later I choose to head outside for a smoke; I’m not going to be able to sleep after that.

It’s quite cool when I make it outside; it’s a little over three in the morning. I see someone else smoking near a source of light, and it makes her look radiant. I discover that it is the woman from the next apartment; I still don’t know her name. It is too dark to see where she was injured. There are a lot of things I want to tell her: that I know what is going on, that she is not alone, that I want to help her. In the end I don’t tell her anything. I don’t

tell her because I don't know what she would do if she knew that I know what has been going on. However, I also think that maybe this is enough, to be sharing the somewhat silent atmosphere on New Year's Eve, perhaps it will calm her. I head back inside and fall asleep after all; I don't remember the man coming back.

I wake up far too late, and check my phone. I have a message from Emil from about four hours ago saying that he had some really important business to take care of today. Looks like I have another day off. I spend my day doing meaningless tasks around the apartment, and thinking about how miserable I am to be spending New Years Eve like this, alone in my apartment. I make a list of possible New Year's resolutions. From top to bottom the list reads:

#1 stop being a little bitch.

#2 stop being so miserable.

#3 do anything with your life.

I think of how my list is so critical of myself, and I also think that I don't really understand how to make a resolution. Regardless, this is the way I feel. I become increasingly frustrated with everything and leave for a long walk. I stay out for the rest of the day, and around 10:30 pm I hop into a bar that's close to the apartment. There's something that I don't really care about on the TV, and the bar is emptier than I expected. I take a seat that's a few down from a guy who's also by himself. After a few drinks I ask the man sitting close to me why he is all alone.

"Why the hell do you think?" he responds.

I remain silent, but I recognize the voice. Two people's voices ring in my head. The man from last night saying "I'm tired of this shit" and Emil saying "You're gonna carry that weight." I tell him that I'm sorry I bothered him, and bid him farewell, telling him I promised someone I would meet them for New Years.

I return to my apartment and hurriedly find a piece of paper. I don't address it to anyone, but I am writing to the woman in the apartment over. I write how I want to help her, and that I know what has been going on, and that she should come over and talk to me about getting help. I seal it in an envelope and write Happy New Year on the front. I plan to

give it to her and have her read it. I left instructions to burn the letter after she reads it to keep him from seeing it. I don't want to confront her directly, because I might be forcing her into a situation she might not want to be in. However, I plan to tell someone tomorrow, whether she comes to talk to me, or not. It is twenty seconds to midnight and I walk through my door, and head to the next apartment.

I briefly hesitate outside the door; once I knock and slide the envelope under the door there is no going back. I think back to a few nights ago when I heard her weeping. I think that I should have acted sooner. It is a second to midnight, and I hear the gun go off from inside the apartment door I am standing in front of, and I simultaneously hear a chorus of voices from various rooms echo "Happy New Year."