

FOR SURE GONNA DIE: A MONOLOGUE ABOUT O.C.D.

By

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At all my jobs, there's this really funny thing I have going on where I'm like, the meticulous one. On my touring gig, we had a case-cleaning contest last year. I don't think anyone else was excited. I like to fold things. When I go out and do merchandise, I get to fold things all the time. I get real pissed off when people don't fold things right. I think this is supposed to be sort of hilarious. It's funnier to me that this is supposed to be funny. It's funny that you can sort of spin a whole personality—in fact, a kind of charming one-- based on doing all sorts of crazy little things in a certain order in an attempt to avoid death.

I technically don't have full-blown O.C.D. The diagnosis was called generalized anxiety disorder with obsessive-compulsive tendencies. I asked why it wasn't just O.C.D. because it feels that way most of the time. Most of the time I do all sorts of these rituals because half of my brain thinks it will avoid certain death, even though the other half knows this isn't true. If I set enough alarms in the morning, with a high enough volume, I'll wake up in time so I won't die of a heart attack in my sleep. Because you see, if I'm asleep too long, my body will get used to it, and it won't want to wake up any more. I told my first psychiatrist in college about that, and I said, that sounds a lot like O.C.D. But he also knew about a loophole we found. If I can convince myself that there is something worth not setting the alarms for, I won't set them. Like if someone is staying over in my room, I don't want them to think I'm socially awkward, and ask questions about all these alarms, so I'll just set a normal-people amount of alarms, instead of the regular twenty to forty. My psychiatrist was delighted. A loophole is good, he said. Follow the loopholes and figure out what powers them, and start applying it to all the habits, so use that to figure out how to also stop going back home to check the locks. Use it to pretend someone's watching me check the stove and oven and microwave in the middle of the night. When the loopholes didn't work, he prescribed me Ativan, but he said it was great that we had a plan to work on it.

It sounded wrong to me. Is the loophole to always have someone around? All night every night? Like what, a boyfriend? What good would that do? Is he going to lovingly say that there's no way I can die that night, like that's supposed to matter, like he has

any power over that? If I have that mystical heart attack in my sleep, what can he do to stop it if he's sleeping too? What if it happens to him? Oh great, now I've got to stay up and watch him, too. That's what I first thought when I got this college boyfriend I really liked. Oh great, now I've got two people's deaths to avoid desperately. Mostly I liked having him around, loved it, actually. I liked having someone else to worry about. Except at night. Even when he stayed over, the loophole stopped working. I started wanting to set alarms again. Enough alarms to save both of us. That was a lot of alarms.

We didn't work out, so I didn't have to keep worrying about him. That was a plus. But after we didn't work out, and my best friend graduated and left me too, I had this feeling that my college town was full of too many people, yet empty for me—there were all these people, but I didn't care about any of them not dying, and they didn't care about me not dying. I still couldn't make the half of my brain that said we were for sure gonna die be quiet, but I wanted so badly not to care, just like I didn't care about anyone in my city, so one day I took half of one of those Ativans, because the loopholes started to look like these shapes that I rammed into a series of horrible straight lines. They wouldn't stay straight, so I took a full Ativan, but it didn't work, and the loopholes still weren't straight enough, so I took another, and the loopholes still weren't straight enough, so I took another, and the loopholes still weren't straight enough, so I took another. Maybe the loopholes weren't straight enough still. So maybe I took another. I don't know. I wasn't keeping track because I went to sleep for about 14 hours instead. I didn't set any alarms. And I was for sure gonna die. And the craziest part was that I wasn't even going to know about it. But I didn't die. I didn't understand how it worked. But it did. So I thought anything could work. So I moved to New York City because anything could work.

It did, and when I moved here I stopped checking locks sometimes, and didn't set so many alarms, and didn't need to always check the stove, because moving to NYC worked—so anything could work and I'm not for sure gonna die. There were scary men yelling at me on the streets some nights, making me feel like they were for sure gonna kill me, but I still made it home every night. Things worked out. I even got this cool job where I tour

every weekend. My parents said I seem less anxious. Is it because you have this job where you can concentrate your energy? Sure, I say, I guess. Whatever it is, I've never been more comfortable. We have these early morning hours, so I can set as many alarms as I want to make sure I wake up. And I can fold to my heart's content, so that every folded shirt is another day further from dying for sure, and no one suspects a thing, not even my own folding hands.