

I wake to the drone of an airplane engine and the feeling of something warm dripping down my chin. I lift my hand to feel my face. My front four teeth are gone, I have a hole in my cheek, my nose is broken and my eyes are swollen nearly shut. I open them and I look around and I'm in the back of a plane and there's no one near me. I look at my clothes and my clothes are covered with a colorful mixture of spit, snot, urine, vomit and blood. I reach for the call button and I find it and I push it and I wait and thirty seconds later an Attendant arrives.

How can I help you?

Where am I going?

You don't know?

No.

You're going to Chicago, Sir.

How did I get here?

A Doctor and two men brought you on.

They say anything?

They talked to the Captain, Sir. We were told to let you sleep.

How long till we land?

About twenty minutes.

Thank you.

Although I never look up, I know she smiles and feels sorry for me. She shouldn't.

A short while later we touch down. I look around for anything I might have with me, but there's nothing. No ticket, no bags, no clothes, no wallet. I sit and I wait and I try to figure out what happened. Nothing comes.

Once the rest of the Passengers are gone I stand and start to make my way to the door. After about five steps I sit back down. Walking is out of the question.

I see my Attendant friend and I raise a hand.

Are you okay?

No.

What's wrong?

I can't really walk.

If you make it to the door I can get you a chair.

How far is the door?

Not far.

I stand. I wobble. I sit back down. I stare at the floor and take a deep breath.

You'll be all right.

I look up and she's smiling.

Here.

She holds out her hand and I take it. I stand and I lean against her and she helps me down the Aisle. We get to the door.

I'll be right back.

I let go of her hand and I sit down on the steel bridge of the Jetway that connects the Plane to the Gate.

I'm not going anywhere.

She laughs and I watch her walk away and I close my eyes. My head hurts, my mouth hurts, my eyes hurt, my hands hurt. Things without names hurt.

I rub my stomach. I can feel it coming. Fast and strong and burning. No way to stop it, just close your eyes and let it ride. It comes and I recoil from the stench and the pain. There's nothing I can do.

Oh my God.

I open my eyes.

I'm all right.

Let me find a Doctor.

I'll be fine. Just get me out of here.

Can you stand?

Yeah, I can stand.

I stand and I brush myself off and I wipe my hands on the floor and I sit down in the wheelchair she has brought me. She goes around to the back of the chair and she starts pushing.

Is someone here for you?

I hope so.

You don't know.

No.

What if no one's there?

It's happened before, I'll find my way.

We come off the Jetway and into the Gate. Before I have a chance to look around, my Mother and Father are standing in front of me.

Oh Jesus.

Please, Mom.

Oh my God, what happened?

I don't want to talk about it, Mom.

Jesus Christ, Jimmy. What in Hell happened?

She leans over and she tries to hug me. I push her away.

Let's just get out of here, Mom.

My Dad goes around to the back of the chair. I look for the Attendant but she has disappeared. Bless her.

You okay, James?

I stare straight ahead.

No, Dad, I'm not okay.

He starts pushing the chair.

Do you have any bags?

My Mother continues crying.

No.

People are staring.

Do you need anything?

I need to get out of here, Dad. Just get me the fuck out of here.

They wheel me to their car. I climb in the backseat and I take off my shirt and I lie down. My Dad starts driving, my Mom keeps crying, I fall asleep.

About four hours later I wake up. My head is clear but everything throbs. I sit forward and I look out the window. We've pulled into a Filling Station somewhere in Wisconsin. There is no snow on the ground, but I can feel the cold.

My Dad opens the Driver's door and he sits down and he closes the door.

I shiver.

You're awake.

Yeah.

How are you feeling?

Shitty.

Your Mom's inside cleaning up and getting supplies. You need anything?

A bottle of water and a couple bottles of wine and a pack of cigarettes.

Seriously?

Yeah.

This is bad, James.

I need it.

You can't wait.

No.

This will upset your Mother.

I don't care. I need it.

He opens the door and he goes into the Filling Station. I lie back down and I stare at the ceiling. I can feel my heart quickening and I hold out my hand and I try to keep it straight. I hope they hurry.

Twenty minutes later the bottles are gone. I sit up and I light a smoke and I take a slug of water. Mom turns around.

Better?

If you want to put it that way.

We're going up to the Cabin.

I figured.

We're going to decide what to do when we get there.

All right.

What do you think?

I don't want to think right now.

You're gonna have to soon.

Then I'll wait till soon comes.

We head north to the Cabin. Along the way I learn that my Parents, who live in Tokyo, have been in the States for the last two weeks on business. At four A.M. they received a call from a friend of mine who was with me at a Hospital and had tracked them down in a hotel in Michigan. He told them that I had fallen face first down a Fire Escape and that he thought they should find me some help. He didn't know what I was on, but he knew there was a lot of it and he knew it was bad. They had driven to Chicago during the night.

So what was it?

What was what?

What were you taking?

I'm not sure.

How can you not be sure?

I don't remember.

What do you remember?

Bits and pieces.

Like what?

I don't remember.

We drive on and after a few hard silent minutes, we arrive. We get out of the car and we go into the House and I take a shower because I need it. When I get out there are some fresh clothes sitting on my bed. I put them on and I go to my Parents' room. They are up drinking coffee and talking but when I come in they stop.

Hi.

Mom starts crying again and she looks away. Dad looks at me.

Feeling better?

No.

You should get some sleep.

I'm gonna.

Good.

I look at my Mom. She can't look back. I breathe.

I just.

I look away.

I just. you know.

I look away. I can't look at them.

I just wanted to say thanks. For picking me up.

Dad smiles. He takes my Mother by the hand and they stand and they come

over to me and they give me a hug. I don't like it when they touch me so I pull away.

Good night.

Good night, James. We love you.

I turn and I leave their Room and I close their door and I go to the Kitchen. I look through the cabinets and I find an unopened half-gallon bottle of whiskey. The first sip brings my stomach back up, but after that it's all right. I go to my Room and I drink and I smoke some cigarettes and I think about her. I drink and I smoke and I think about her and at a certain point blackness comes and my memory fails me.

and obviously disappointed. I'm tired of making people sad and I'm tired of disappointing them and I'm tired of seeing them break. I have seen this too many times. He will be the last.

I appreciate your time and your efforts. Both of you. Thank you.

I stand and I open the door and I walk out of the Room and I shut the door behind me and I head back to my Room. Although I have just been told that further use of alcohol and drugs is going to kill me, and kill me soon, what I want right now is a nice strong drink and a blast of rock. I want them badly. Get something. I want them so badly. Fill me. I would kill for them. Get something. Kill for them. Fill me. I am completely fucked.

All around me, People are going about their day. Patients are going to counseling and to therapy, Doctors and Therapists are giving them whatever they need. People are either getting help or giving help and they are all doing it willingly. Their bodies are recovering and their minds are recovering and they are rebuilding their lives and they are following the Program and they are trusting in the Program. They have turned themselves over and they believe and whether it works or not in the long run doesn't matter. For now, they believe. I do not know how they are doing it.

I get to my Room and I see that someone has retrieved the Bible and the *Big Book* that I threw out the window and placed them back on my bed. They are soggy and wet, the pages swollen, the covers warped. The fact that they are back and that someone has brought them back makes me angry. I pick them up and I carry them to the Bathroom and I stuff them in the garbage can beneath the used razors, the brown Q-Tips and the dirty snot rags. If I could, and if my body would cooperate, I would stuff them into the toilet and I would shit on them.

I walk back to my bed and I lie down and I close my eyes and the finality of Doctor Baker's words start to sink in and the words clear my mind and kill my urges and slow my heart. I have received my sentence. A few days of regular drug and alcohol abuse is going to kill me. I will be dead, gone, no more. I will cease to exist in any way, shape or form. I will meet the blackness and the blackness will be eternal. Somehow I always knew I would meet my end this way. Somehow I always knew that I would kill myself with drugs and alcohol. I knew each time I took a drink, I knew each time I snorted a line, I knew each time I hit a pipe or sniffed a tube or took a pill. It is nobody's fault but my own. I knew each and every time. I could never stop.

I can imagine my obituary. The truth of my existence will be removed and replaced with imagined good. The reality of how I lived will be avoided and changed and phrases will be dropped in like Beloved Son, Loving Brother, Reliable Friend, Hardworking Student. People will change their view of me, from reckless Fuck-Up to helpless Martyr, from dangerous Fool to sad Victim, from addicted Asshole to unfortunate Child. They will say things like my God,

Start
Here

what a waste. Oh, what he could have been. He had so much going for him, what happened? And it will be fucking false, every single word of it will be false.

I know who I am and I know what I've done and I know why I am about to die. I have faced the reality and the reality is simple. I am an Alcoholic and I am a drug Addict and I am a Criminal. That is what I am and who I am and that is how I should be remembered. No happy lies, no invented memories, no fake sentimentality, no tears. I do not deserve tears. I deserve to be portrayed honestly and I deserve nothing more and I start to write an honest obituary in my own mind. I write the obituary that should appear, but never will. I start at the beginning and I stick to the facts and I move to what I know will be my end.

James Frey. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, September 12, 1969. Started stealing sips from drinks at seven. Got hammered for the first time at ten. Vomited from abuse for the first time at ten. Smoked dope at twelve. By thirteen was smoking and drinking regularly. Blacked out for the first time at fourteen. At fifteen got arrested three times. For Driving Without a License, for Vandalism and Destruction of Property, for Public Intoxication and Possession of Alcohol as a Minor. Went to jail for a night. At fifteen tried cocaine, acid and crystal meth for the first time. Got arrested three more times at sixteen. Started drinking and doing drugs before School. Started selling liquor and drugs to his fellow Students. Blacked out and vomited regularly. Three more arrests at seventeen. Got first DUI. Blew a .36, and set a County Record. Went to jail for a week. Drank and did drugs every day. At School, at Home, everywhere. Vomited and blacked out several times a week. Made first attempt to quit. Experienced delirium tremens. Drank to make them go away. Two arrests at eighteen. First drug overdose, first case of alcohol poisoning. Tried to quit again, lasted two days. Vomited blood for the first time. had first cocaine-induced bloody nose. Nineteen. Blacked out five days a week, vomited five days a week. Pissed bed for the first time. Shook visibly when not drinking. Woke up for the first time without knowing where he was or how he got there. Twenty. Blacked out seven days a week. Vomited several times a day, seven days a week. Smoked cocaine for the first time, smoked methamphetamine for the first time, smoked PCP for the first time. Twenty-one. Three arrests. Assault with a Deadly Weapon. Assaulting an Officer of the Law, Felony DUI. Resisting Arrest, Attempted Incitement of a Riot, Possession of a Narcotic with Intent to Distribute, Felony Mayhem. Skipped bail on everything. Smoked crack for the first time, started smoking crack regularly. One overdose, three cases of alcohol poisoning. Twenty-two. Accelerated alcohol abuse, accelerated crack abuse. Took anything and everything possible, whenever possible. Was constantly sick. Vomiting and shitting blood daily. Tried to quit four times. Never lasted longer than twelve hours. Twenty-three. Continued acceleration of abuse, continued decline in health. Two overdoses, constant alcohol poisoning. Rarely knew where he was or how he got there. Tried to quit twice, lasted a total of six hours. Fell down

fire escape and destroyed face. Checked into Treatment Center. Left Treatment Center. Died two days later. Fatal dosage levels of alcohol and cocaine found in system. Death ruled accidental overdose. Should have been ruled suicide. Intentional Suicide. He is survived by no one. His Family had written him off, his friends had written him off.

My mind is clear and my urges are gone and my heart is beating slow and steady. In my mind, my obituary is done. It is done and it is right. It tells the truth, and as awful as it can be, the truth is what matters. It is what I should be remembered by, if I am remembered at all. Remember the truth. It is all that matters. END HERE

~~My mind is clear and my urges are gone and my heart is beating slow and steady. I have made my decision and I am comfortable with my decision. It's what I always knew would happen, though the details are just now coming into focus. I am going to leave here and I am going to kill myself. I am going to leave here and I am going to find something to drink and I am going to find something to smoke and I am going to drink and smoke until I die. I am going to leave here and I'm not going to look back and I'm not going to say good-bye. I have lived alone. I have fought alone, I have dealt with pain alone. I will die alone.~~

~~I think about when I'm going to leave. I don't want to be seen and I don't want to be followed, I want to disappear quickly and quietly and without any drama, I want as much time in the darkness as I can possibly have. The darkness provides cover, the darkness provides places to hide and the darkness provides comfort. Darkness usually comes around dinner, but dinner would be too obvious. We are required to show up and we are required to eat and though I don't fraternize during dinner, it would be noticed if I were gone. The Lecture follows and the Lecture would be better. People get up and leave during Lectures all the time. They get up and go to the Bathroom, head outside for a smoke, leave to meet with a Counselor or a Shrink, run to get sick. It would not be noticed if I left, and by the time anyone realized I was gone, which would probably be three or four hours later, I would be far enough away that there would be no bringing me back. I would be in the darkness. I would be alone. I would be comfortable. There would be no bringing me back.~~

~~My mind is clear and my urges are gone and my heart is beating slow and steady. I am going to leave here and I am going to kill myself. The thought makes me smile. It makes me smile because it is sad and horrible. It makes me smile because the mystery of my death is gone and without the mystery it isn't scary anymore. It makes me smile because I would rather smile than cry. It makes me smile because it's going to be over. It is finally going to be over. It is finally going to be over. Thank you.~~

~~I take a deep breath and I wonder how many breaths I have left. I feel my heart beat and I wonder how many more. I run my hands along my body and my body is warm and soft and I know that soon it will be cold and hard. I feel~~