

A Day in the Life at St Vinnies

Returning to the homeless shelter was hard. The last time I was here I thought I had it all figured out. The "it," being my mental illness, my addiction to alcohol and drugs. So I quit drinking and end up with the shakes, visions of bugs and rats crawling all over me, voices laughing and urging me on to hang myself. All this while I am awake; sleep is even crueler with the reoccurring dreams of the dark shadowed man, sitting on top of me, choking me while demanding I urinate on myself. So every night, twice a night I awake trying to push the man away. I am soaked in urine. Every night twice a night, the hospital staff changes my bed and clothes, then give me haldol and ativan.

Yes, before arriving at St. Vincent de Paul Village, I was at County Mental Hospital for a month. Just like last time. I now have been in 3 of the 4 mental hospitals here in town. Each time wanting or trying to commit suicide: drive off a cliff, drink myself to death, and hang myself. I tried so many times that the government took away my right to own a firearm. If I want a gun I have to go to court and get a federal judge to reinstate my right. Pathetic, eh?

Sad thing is that I still have strong feelings about suicide. Even sadder, I can't share that with anyone for fear of being put back in the hospital. I really need counseling but don't know how to get it. I pretend that all is well to staff, my daughter, and the other women here.

Do people really want to hear the truth when they ask "How are you?" I think not. It is something people say, not really wanting to sincerely sit and hear how you really feel. So much of human interaction is superficial, that I find myself incredibly lonely amongst the 87 women I live with. They are probably just as lonely, the good lord knows they have some sort of problem or they wouldn't be living here in a homeless shelter. So they too, steal away what ails them, smiling that courtesy smile, getting by every day. So, everyday as we pass each other with that same smile, saying "Hi, how are you?" "Fine" I brace myself for someone to say "I'm hurting" But the words never come. I never utter the sound.

Even staff looks thru you as they rush from one task to another. The discerning eye cannot rove over 87 women and do all the things that the job requires. Thus, the "How are you?" doesn't pass their lips and their roving eye never lands on anyone for more than a brief second.

Please don't think I am not grateful, I am more than grateful. This place saved my life. Just this time the job is harder and no body knows what I am going through. That Coronado Bridge beckons to me like a lighthouse beckons to a ship in the fog. I pray for this to end. But the voices laugh and urge me to leap. They say, "Heck there is so little attention, go make a noose and hang your self before anyone notices."

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