Bernstein, Byron

10/20/2005

English, Per. 2

Beep!

My alarm clock is standard. I bought it at Fry's Electronics. It has a digital display, numbers in geon green, all the buttons necessary to set the time, and most importantly, a snooze button.

Occasionally I procrastinate on my homework. I lay on my bed at midnight, the night before a given assignment is due, and I reiterate to myself; "You have to do it. You have to get up." But my lethargic side kicks in, saying, "Do it later. Actually, it doesn't matter. there's more to life than this." The two sides of my brain come to a compromise: "I'll do it in the morning."

So I set my alarm clock to six. I typically wake up at seven, and the extra hour, if used effectively, is sufficient to accomplish most assignments. If used effectively.

So I'm hearing the monotonous "beep beep beep," and the strength I was so sure I'd have after sleeping isn't there. If anything I feel weaker, and I'd kill for ten more minutes of napping under my warm sheets, safe from the struggles of the outside world.

This is the deciding moment. The alarm clock is triumph and loss, hope and despair. The snooze button is negligence; the off button is responsibility.

All snoozers know snoozing for nine more minutes doesn't alleviate any of your fatigue -- you don't reach REM in nine minutes. Each time you press snooze, you're accomplishing nothing, save being more of a degenerate.

The answer should be simple. But at least once a week, the alarm clock asks me to struggle with this question: am I responsible or negligent?

This morning I didn't hit snooze.

### RIP july 2, 2020

### this wont be long and wont be eloquent, im still processing

### i didnt see the proposal until it was too late but that doesnt change the fact that i wasnt able to be there for him.

### he was amazing. he taught me how to have fun, to experience more, and challenged me to try to be more than what i was. he was larger than life, too big for this world.

### he brought me to realize that i knew NOTHING about depression, NOTHING about mental health issues. i had this vague idea of what it was and embarrassingly thought that i could help with trivial bullshit.

### we loved each other but it came with its difficulties. i was insanely insecure when it came to him, i couldnt even recognize myself. i dont feel that i was able to be the person that he needed in his life.

### we need better support for those with mental needs. i remember byron telling me how traumatized he was when he had the authorities called on him for being at risk of suicide. anyone that knew him knew how much it scared and affected him. THIS CANT BE HOW PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT THE PLACES THAT SHOULD BE KEEPING THEM SAFE. HOW THE FUCK IS THAT OK? friends dont feel that its the right move to call for help when they know that the mental institutions they get sent to treat them like animals incapable of understanding. FUCK that stupid ass logic song about the hotlines.

### my heart hurts. im sure many of yours do as well. byron just wanted everyone to be friends, so lets be that for each other during these difficult times.

### i will do my best to live as the best human i can be, byron. i promise. rest in peace.

### Byron

I wasn’t planning on posting anything besides some pictures of good memories but there’s a lot of confusion surrounding Byron. I’ve talked to friends who thought he was doing well recently and were completely shocked. I see people saying “where were his friends?”. Some thought he was high on mushrooms and that was what caused it. A few thought this was related to his tweets and Becca. There are many friends I do not know at all that might be confused.

I’ve lived with him for about a year now (at our last apartment right below him and in the new one I was his roommate) and I’ve talked to him every day for 4 years. I want to clear the air. None of the above reasoning was the case. Byron was sick — his depression was like cancer and in hindsight this last month was like a stage 4 diagnosis. Almost nothing short of a miracle would have saved him.

Byron has been up and down his whole life. I didn’t know him too well or watch his stream before 4 years ago but I know a lot of people from back then and they all have similar stories. Byron constantly battled with depression and suicide, he attempted it multiple times in high school and in 2016. I remember ~6 months ago we randomly spoke of this incident and him being brought to the mental hospital and how it was one of the worst experiences in his life. It traumatized him and cost him $700 a day to be there for a week. He had taken a bunch of pills and someone called the police on him, the procedure is to take you to the local psych ward until they clear you to leave. He said he wished he could have live streamed that place and exposed it for the scam it is. They would make him play baby-like games and kept him in the same place as legitimately really insane people. They would have a game where there were 3 lights (red green yellow) and pictures of food. One was a picture of cereal and the staff would ask “Which food is cereal? Is it a good food, green, bad red or medium yellow?” Someone would respond “green, cereal is good” and the staff would say “no it has a lot of carbs but it isn’t that bad! So let's put it under yellow”. Imagine going through a week of that in a loony bin (a bit insensitive of a term but think of a place built for people in straight jackets) and you are one of the top minds of our generation, capable of being the top player in multiple ultra competitive games. I wanted to include this because I want to shed light on how fucked our mental health support system is and how expensive it is to receive that poor treatment. Also it is relevant later in my account.

Covid and the 90+ degree Texas summer hit around March and really isolated Byron. He loved food and nature, we couldn’t go to restaurants and we couldn’t walk around and explore. It also stopped friends from visiting and made it near impossible for Byron to try and have a relationship. This was important for his BPD, to have a close romantic relationship. We saw a slow and steady decline in his mental health and were with him almost every day. We tried to include him in any little activity we did and it became almost impossible. He was very lonely and sad. Getting him to go float on tubes on the river, something he would have previously loved, with a group of 6 girls and me took 30 minutes of pleading irl, 4 phone calls, and eventually us pulling up and throwing him in the car. He ended up having a great time and was super thankful we dragged him out. I didn’t have the mental strength to do this for everything, it was exhausting, but we always went above and beyond to include him. It really sucks when people say “where were his friends”. This is my first time losing someone this close and anyone to mental health, I was not prepared to deal with this but I fucking tried.

Fast forward to three weeks ago. We had 2 apartments in our building and we had a few friends overnight that slept in the 2nd apartment and they told me they saw Byron on the balcony for a bit. I did not put it together that they saw him in our other apartment balcony since we were in the main apartment for a bit and I thought he was on the main balcony. The next 2 days I wasn’t around much, I was texting Byron minor things to which he didn’t answer and I stopped by one day to see he wasn’t home. I figured he popped out for a night walk and was too busy to respond to what I had texted and I left for the night. The next day he calls me and tells me he had taken all my prescribed pills, about 80x the regular dose and was trying to die but instead slept for 35 hours. He said he finally was happy for the first time in months because he thought he was going to die and that he was on the balcony the day before because he wanted to jump. I take somewhat of a solace knowing he was happy to think he was ending his pain and suffering but I am devastated here without him.

After this I spent almost every minute with him and even got our 3rd roommate to come back to town. He seemed better, more close friends around and less talk of suicide. Monday I had left for a dental appointment for one hour and our 3rd roommate was still sleeping. I came back and saw Byron trying to climb up over the ledge, I opened the balcony and had a normal conversation with him but I was freaked out. I called his loved ones and reached out to a medical professional and got advice from them that night. We talked through various options, and under which circumstances we should call 911. Given his prior traumatic experience with hospitals, we wanted to formulate a plan that Byron would be a part of. We researched options that may have been good fits for him, like the Menninger Clinic in Houston, which was one of the top 5 psychiatric hospitals in the country. It would cost 70k for 6 weeks of treatment. Byron already was asleep and I needed to speak to him in the morning before doing anything so I slept right by the balcony and intercepted him around 4am and we watched movies all night and passed out in the living room together. I slept maybe 2 hours and had a discussion with him in the morning about his options. I didn’t want to forcefully have him sent to a place that gave him so much trauma and made him worse in the past and to send him to Menninger he would have to agree to the treatment. The problem was that he had investor meetings lined up for Everland, a project that he had sunk almost all his life savings and emotions into. Byron needed the funding for Everland to keep the project alive. He had one meeting Wednesday and another the week after the 4th. If I forced him into the psych hospital he probably would have missed both.

We constructed a plan that Byron agreed to: 1) Email VCs (venture capitalists) 2) Wait until monday to see the response and if there was no interest then 3) Cut non-essential Everland workers and Check him into Menninger hospital so there could be development while he stayed there. They even provide special phones patients can use so we could figure out a way to meet with VCs with him there. The medical professional agreed this was a good option. Tuesday I researched a list of 55 VC companies that all invest in games and we sat and emailed all of them personalized messages on Wednesday. He also had his meeting on Wednesday that went well, they wanted a 3rd meeting and said “we wouldn’t waste your time with a 3rd meeting unless we were very interested”. Things were looking up. I went out Wednesday night and didn’t sleep at home. He spent the night with our 3rd roommate and his friends, they said he had been more talkative and fun than he had been in a while. They spent the night talking, watching movies, eating at one of Byron's favorite restaurants, he had two entrees and a boba tea. The next morning he killed himself. I checked his phone before the police took it, a few VCs responded saying they would like to set up meetings.

He hadn’t done any drugs in months that would have led him to that point (besides my prescribed ones to try to overdose). Everything tells us he was completely sober when he did it.

Poor Becca. I was around them when they dated. They weren’t soulmates and she wasn’t the key to fixing Byron. He had a girl over a couple months ago that he seemed ecstatic about but she lived far away. When she left I asked if he had thought about Becca or missed her during the time, his answer was a firm “no”.

It wasn’t drugs, it wasn’t Becca, and this didn’t happen out of nowhere. His closest friends were with him almost 24/7 watching him and doing their best. He was seriously sick and I wish I knew the signs a year ago to push him to see a psychiatrist to find the right drug/regimen for him. I wish hospitals were better and affordable. I wish Byron were still alive. I will miss him forever, he was my best friend and the closest thing I’ve had to a brother.

If you’re suffering, reach out to someone. If someone reaching out to you is suffering then listen but know you don’t have the full story, only what they decide to tell you and you are not completely qualified to deal with it. Reaching out to a medical professional is a great idea in this case, I wish I had done it sooner. A common issue for depressed people is the idea of burdening close ones but a funeral is the ultimate burden. Byron lived a wild life, he lived 1000 life times in his uptime. Even when he was sad and depressed I preferred hanging out with him over some of my close friends when they are happy. I wanted to hear his insecurities and reasoning, I did not want him to make the decision about his life for me.

Rest easy Byron, I love you.