

I am once again awoken by the sound that has become numbingly familiar. Like a knife's edge, it becomes blunt over time. Though that doesn't mean you have to dispose of it. Resharpen it, and it's good as new.

That is, if you're willing to put in the effort. That alarm hasn't changed in... a few years. Frankly speaking, I've forgotten for how long I had it for now. No wonder it blends into my morning so easily now. It's just like every other morning now.

Despite that damn noise being so familiar, I can't seem to pin down where that familiarity is coming from. I might have moved it yesterday to some other place, different from the usual. Or was it the day before? I have no clue.

All the junk lying around doesn't help either. That damn black box does blend in easily with everything else. With my newfound goal, I gain the will to rise up from my mattress. It takes me a whole 10 seconds to find out where it's mocking me from.

That noise box tells me it's 10.02 AM, as if it's laughing at me for staying in bed for a whole two minutes. A sigh managed to leave my mouth. That way you know I'm finally awake. Another start to another day, huh? What day even is it?

I found myself staring at my calendar to find out if by chance I do have anything going on today.

As always, it looks blank. Technically, it isn't blank at all. I still have to eat at least three times today, along with trying to actually find a job. However those aren't do or die tasks, so in the back of my head they stay.

For now, I guess lying in bed isn't too bad of an idea. I drag myself back onto my bed, past my closed blinds. I'd open them if I had the will to do such a thing. But right now I don't. It's not like I need to anyways.

"Flop" I go onto my bed head first. I'm back in my comfort zone. Back to the status quo.

I find myself reaching for my laptop. Probably because it's closer than my phone. It's still on, surprisingly. I guess I forgot to turn it off. Thank god it was plugged in.

An email notification popped up. Seeing that it isn't from, let's say the back or some workplace I applied for, I checked it out.

Surprisingly, it was from the school. Saying that we need to empty our lockers and return our locker keys while we're at it. And that it needed to be done by 2pm today.

"Sounds like my school alright." somehow managed to escape from my mouth. I guess it wasn't a bad thing to say, since no one is around to complain about my snarky comment.

"Guess I'll go now." I mutter to myself. "It's not like I had anything better to do anyways.."

With my shoes on and bag on my back, I say goodbye to no one, and lock the door to the house. I leave the estate on my bike.

Just like old times.

The path I've chosen was the same one I'd have used when going to school. I don't know why. Maybe subconsciously I wanted to re-experience this scenery in this context for the last time. Well, I couldn't really. It's lacking the cars and people I'd see at the crossroads, which isn't a surprise as no one goes to school at this hour, plus there's no school to go to anyways. But even if the cars and people are gone, everything else isn't. The scenery is still the same. Nothing really changed.

I eventually arrived at what is now my formal secondary school. The place looked deserted, bar the few posters on the entrance saying how to proceed inside. For the last time, I locked my bike at our make-shift bike shed by the main entrance, and proceeded to the door. The posters on the doors said the same copy pasted message like all the other ones. "Keep 2m distance, use hand sanitiser, don't cough openly" type stuff. I don't know why they still put up posters like that. Any message they were intended to send has become numb, in a way. Like a dog barking over and over, you learn to ignore it, and it turns into background noise. So I treat it as such, making note of it yet paying it no attention, and I open the door.

As soon as I opened those doors, I was greeted by two familiar faces. One being the janitor, and the other being the principal. Two separate tables also catch my eye, each containing varying amounts of paperwork. Instantly noticing me, the principal proceeded to make small talk with me, like nothing major is happening at all. Maybe it's just another day to him.

Another normal day. I guess this abnormal became the new normal, huh.

After the small talk ended, he instructed me to sign in on the sign-in sheet, take out the remaining books from my locker, throw away any rubbish, hand back the key in an envelope and sign out when i was done. Simple instructions, really. Once he was done talking, he left me to my own devices.

Once I signed myself in, I took note of the fact that I was the first one to arrive, and proceeded on to my locker.

It was odd walking down the hallway. There was no one in any of the classrooms, so no noise could be heard from them. Random students weren't walking around idly like they used to. The hallways weren't even lit properly, which added to the unusual atmosphere. It made that ache I was feeling in my chest get worse, but just slightly. It felt like I spontaneously got shortness of breath, with the air that I was breathing becoming colder as I inhaled it. I was familiar with that feeling. I'd experience it during situations like these. It's just something I don't want to but can't help feel.

After a good minute of walking and taking in the irry atmosphere, I finally arrived at what I can call my old locker. It felt nostalgic, being at this place again for what it appears to be the final time. I started remembering some of the interactions I'd have here during our normal school days. How we'd take every week one day at a time, while remaining ignorant about the fact that our days were limited, and that one day we wouldn't have another interaction like that ever again.

A wordless goodbye leaves me as I soak in the view of the locker I used for the past year, and the ones surrounding it that were used by my "friends". Once I had enough, as if right on queue, I reluctantly took out my keys out of my left pocket.

"Guess this key will have to go now." escapes my mouth as I narrate to myself, outloud. This time I don't look around to see if anyone picked up what I've said. Muscle memory takes care of opening the locker swiftly for me. Just like old times. The books that I've left in there were... still there.

Shocking, I know.

I managed to just barely fit the books into my former school bag, which was actually shocking.

With my bag now stuffed, and key detached from my keychain, I put a lock on what is now my past locker and start to head for the exit, leaving the lock behind.

Before I exit this scene, I have to actually hand in my key. One of the desks had the envelopes which I had to use to do so. Casually, I put the key into the envelope, like I've done many times before. Thing is, I have. 5 times, exactly. Although it's the last time I'd be doing this, I'm still doing it so casually. Must be the muscle memory.

As I'm about to put the envelope into the box sitting on the desk, the principal enters the scene once again, asking me about the locker key.

"Have you written your class number and locker number on the envelope?" he asks in his usual calm tone.

"Yeah, I have." I reply in my own calm tone.

"Have you put your lock and key into the envelope?" he asks, again in his usual calm tone.

"Wait, what lock?" I replied in my own surprised voice. He didn't say anything about returning the lock.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. We also would like it if you returned the lock as well. Just so we know which ones are empty."

Yeah, sure. I'll do that." is what I tell him before I leave to see my locker again.

And here I was, thinking I had left it for good a few minutes ago.

I took the lock off my past locker for the last time, with the help of muscle memory. I guess I was okay with this, even though it was slightly annoying. I get to take in everything again before I leave. For good this time. As if to confirm my previous actions, I locked the lock as if I were pressing down a button while I was walking back. All that returned was a satisfying, confirming click.

With that, the task was done.

The key and lock were now in the box on that desk, and all that was left to do was to say our goodbyes. So I did just that with the principal. He decided to make some last small talk again, for whatever reason. It somehow felt more like a proper goodbye because of it too. Finally he reminded me to sign out on the sign-in sheet and use the hand sanitiser on my way out. I did just that. Seeing that I had finished all my business here, he sent me off. A fitting end.

Well, it would have been if I had forgotten what I wanted to ask. A small, innocent enough question I thought off on the way here. I turned on my heel to face him again. Anxiously, I asked:

"Sir, one more thing. Is there any info on our graduation? Like, any at all?"

His expression tells me he's surprised. Thrown off balance a bit, I'd assume. Guess that's payback for doing the same to me.

"Well.. there is none right now. Maybe in the future when these restrictions get lifted. But right now there's nothing to tell you."

What did I expect?

I nod to him in acknowledgement, and finally exited out of the entrance I used.

Somehow, I've chosen the same path I'd have used when going back home. I don't know why. Maybe subconsciously I wanted to re-experience this scenery in this context for the last time. Well, I couldn't really. It's lacking the cars and people I'd see at the crossroads, which isn't a surprise as no one goes home from school at this hour. Also, my "friends" that I'd usually walk with weren't with me. So it couldn't be like-

That though was stopped in its tracks, as one of my friends was in sight. I assumed that he too got the email, as he's headed in the direction of the school.

He spots me, and quickens his pace in order to meet me.

We make small talk about quarantine, and how it has been a... different experience. He made a comment about my appearance, saying it was really good. Surprisingly good. Which surprised me. I didn't do anything to keep it good.

We talked about more pointless things, as a form of catch up I guess. After all, we haven't seen each other in a good long while. Some catch up was due, frankly speaking.

That's all that we did. Small talk. Like nothing happened.

After we finished talking, we said our goodbyes in the hopes that we'd see each other again, and I saw him off.

Once I returned home, I let a sigh of relief escape me. Back to familiarity. A literal weight is lifted off my shoulders, as I don't have to carry the hefty books anymore. At least for the foreseeable future.

What strikes me as odd, is that I found that whole experience, refreshing. Almost fun. Almost.

Even though it was out of my comfort zone, I still welcomed it. Which is out of character for me.

I don't want to move forward. Losing track of days is just a front for not counting how many days I have left of this idle bliss.

Yet I still take the steps necessary to push myself forward.

I just hope there's a calm future ahead for me.

One where the waves of life that I'll sail on aren't ones belonging to a hurricane.