Desperate lullaby

It was a rather arduous process: finding somewhere to die. One couldn’t make it too public – it wasn’t an exhibition after all, but at the same time, one doesn’t want it to be so private so as to never be found. Christopher wanted to leave this world, yes, but he did at least want this parents to have his body once he was gone.

He thought about doing it in the lounge but no; it was too public. Besides, his landlady would probably find the body and Chris couldn’t stand the thought of that woman telling his mother that he was gone.

He thought about doing it in his closet but that was too private. His roommates would probably take their time to start looking. The smell eventually would alert them to where he was but, if he was honest, he didn’t want to have his body degenerate into a bloated, maggot-ridden sack of meat in the two weeks’ time it would take those idiots to get their heads out of their asses. Or sooner depending on whether they wanted to get high with him or not.

Gregory and Phillip. Upstanding names right? The fortunate sons of a banker and a doctor. They were just as big a part of him doing this as the drugs were. After all they had introduced him to it, offered to teach him how to fly. They’d helped turn his life into the perfect circle of doom that it was and now they couldn’t look him in the eye anymore. When they left the house that morning, Chris literally could not make it down the stairs without help but even through that haze he could tell they’d given up on him too. Just like his supervisor, just like his parents and just like Chris himself. For now he would take ownership of the one thing his had left. His death.

Of course there was the question of how he was going to do it. His first thought had been an overdose of prescriptions - that would be too darkly ironic even for his taste - besides he was always more theatrical than curling up in an attic and taking a fistful of pills, why should his death change anything? He bounced back and forth between slitting his wrists and straight-up hanging himself. He liked the latter more, just as long as his throat snapped cleanly, he didn’t like the idea of choking with his neck half broken. Maybe he could just stab himself with a butcher knife or something? He would do an inventory and then decide from there.

Plath once wrote: “Dying is an art, like everything else. / I do it exceptionally well. / I do it so it feels like hell. / I do it so it feels real. / I guess you could say I’ve a call”.

Well he had a call alright. And he was going to greet the reaper in style. His death was going to be the brand of excellent that his life should have been. The universe had denied him a good life when it sent the Kramer twins into it, so he sure as hell was going to have a good death. Chris was going make his demise into the Sistine Chapel of suicides.

When he was younger, he’d been a stead-fast believer in destiny. ‘Nothing is an accident’ he would say. ‘Everything happens for reason’ he would repeat. Now he wasn’t so sure. The thing was: if everything was meant to be then what did that mean for him? The way Chris saw it, there were two ways it could work: either the universe didn’t care about anyone or it was a malevolent entity that uplifted the few and spat on the rest. He didn’t know which one he hated more. Either way Chris was tired of getting spat on by circumstance. The drugs, the debt, the alcohol. None of it came here with him. But it was his baggage now. At least until he quit this stupid game.

It was midnight when Chris started rifling through the drawers, unpacking and repacking them. Looking for signs of anything that could be of use. He laid out his findings on the kitchen table: a bottle of Jack Black, a chef’s knife, a wine opener, a tie and a letter.

The bottle was still half full. He could always crack it over his head and stab himself. Well he’d finish the damn thing first – one didn’t waste alcohol - and maybe take a hit just to calm his nerves. Actually no. This was a bad plan. The knife could work but it was more of a last resort, in case nothing took his fancy.

The letter was probably the university looking for their money, or one of the credit card companies, or the landlady – actually no she would just yell at him in person. He entertained the idea of getting naked and hanging himself from her balcony. The Vitruvian man: hanging edition. That would be a good ‘fuck you’ to her and her incessant whining.

The tie was his best shot. It was the one thing that still had value to him. The red and gold stripes had seen him through the best 5 years of his life. And they would see him through the end of it. Now the question shifted back to where.

Christopher Lowell stood in front of his bedroom mirror and looked at himself. He scarcely needed the thing anymore. Straighten out both sides to the right length, cross the two then loop them around - he was careful to avoid the four-in-hand-knot. After a few seconds he landed up exactly where he wanted to be: with the same Windsor knot that he had tied for 5 years, the very knot that would end him. What had his father called ties? ‘Little nooses’. The irony was too delicious for Chris not to throw his head back and laugh.

As he stood in front of the mirror, he couldn’t stop looking at the tie. The vivacity of the red and gold seemed to make the object come to life. It represented good memories, happier times. The damn thing felt as though it was burning his neck. The proverbial cross placed on a vampire. He wanted so desperately to use it, to allow it to help him enter the blackness that held eternal sleep, but he could not. It would not let his eyes go.

Chris turned the tie around his neck, the knot now facing away from him, and tightened it until he could barely breathe. This was his childhood wrapped around his throat, the penance for his adult life thus far. Yet it was that childhood and the purity of the memories associated with it that made him think.

He hadn’t been honest with himself. It wasn’t the Kramers or his parents or the landlady or the universe that he really hated. They didn’t deserve his punishment. They didn’t deserve him wielding his death as a weapon to coerce them into guilt. Well maybe the landlady did - that woman was a cackling witch who lived to make his life miserable – okay fine, he was still being too harsh. Rather the problem was deeper and more internal. It existed beyond his blood, his bones and even the control room of his mind. It was himself. Or whatever part of himself that had allowed his life to go to hell.

He looked in the mirror. He was only 30. He had been old enough to enter the world but young and stupid enough to get himself saddled with a drug addiction, mounting debt and no money to pay that off with. It was hopeless.

But the tie around his neck reminded him that life had not always been this way and maybe it need not be this way forever. Chris scanned his brain, trying to put that degree to use for once. After a second he came up with it: “It’s the theatrical/ comeback in broad day/ to the same place, the same face, the same brute/ amused shout:/ ‘A miracle!’ That knocks me out.”

Maybe he would die today. But not in the way that he had intended. He could make this into his theatrical comeback to the same house, the same situation and the same life but be different in himself. He could remake himself. But first the needed help from one last contact.

Christopher rummaged through the house and mustered up some loose change to use the payphone on the next street over.

“Hi.” Chris muttered. “Is Pastor Lowell available?”