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# Turning Tides

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# Turning Tides

**ALEX PERRY**

Alex is a junior majoring in communication studies. This creative non-fiction piece was written under the mentorship of Dr. Kathryn Evans. He plans to attend graduate school in Los Angeles, and pursue his dream of filmmaking. He enjoys running at night, eating candy hourly, and conversing with others.

**M**y eyelids shoot open in unison with the shade moving up quickly past my window. The beams of sunlight find their way to me, giving me an excuse to close my eyes again. What a beautiful day it must be, and after a rejuvenating twelve hours of sleep, a person could take full advantage.

I am wide awake but tired, still tired enough to add another twelve hours to the count. Whoever did me the kind favor of opening my shade leaves the room while trying to make as much noise as humanly possible in a five yard walk, but my sleeping powers cannot be overcome by such an attempt. My eyes threaten to close again, leading me into another escape, but the alarm placed on the stand next to me has different plans. The noise is low at first, but soon it will be unfathomably loud, and equally unpleasant. My hand quickly finds its way to the button on top, ending the noise in an instant, but it does not return to my side. Instead, it hovers over the clock, frozen in a position of terror as I feel all control slip away. The dark figure next to me is pressing the cold steel of his blade against my head, and I try not to move, only focusing on meeting his demand. “Again” he demands in a familiar hiss. I comply, and without a moment’s hesitation my hand drops down once again on the clock as I push the button a second time.

Running will not be necessary this morning, of course. He will find me no matter where I disappear, and there will be no mercy; more demands will come. Though it will seemingly make no difference at all, in this moment of imprisonment I am able to pause and reflect.

It was not always like this. There was a time when he was not around. If my memory serves me correct, he was non-existent during my childhood. Perhaps I was simply not looking closely enough, and there he was around every corner, watching and waiting for the right time to strike.

Like any truly intelligent nemesis, he befriended me first, and offered to keep things on track if I simply completed his tasks. I touched a railing in my house. “Could you touch it three more times please?” he would pleasantly ask. “Possibly four more now?” he continued. “Okay, twelve times should seal the deal.” It was nothing.

So how did it come to this? Lying here frozen and at his mercy as he threatens to end me. I prefer not to dwell on the journey, and I keep it tucked away safely in the back of my mind.

I meet every demand he throws my way now; an inescapable pattern that rules the day. However, I cannot help but notice the fear in his eyes this morning. Something is different, and he is aware of it. I know exactly what it is, and it is mine to keep far away from his line of sight. It is in fact my only weapon against him, and if I were to hand it over, my hope would be attached to it, and along with that, my life. In the moment of reflection that occurred as my hand fell onto the clock for a second time, I made a journey. As the memory of a time when he did not exist entered my mind, I journeyed out of the head and into the heart in order to remember a time without him, and remember a feeling devoid of all worry; it is a feeling that is worth holding onto. It has the potential of being a powerful weapon, and I look forward with great anticipation to using it against him.

I hope that as I go through my morning routine, he notices the determination in my eyes. I want him to know his end is coming. I want it to see the train coming from miles away before it crushes him.

He follows me downstairs where I sit with my mother for breakfast. She knows that he is there too, always. He has a name; OCD is what she calls him. She asks me if I would get something for her out of the basement that she needs for school, and I tremble. I sat down at this table with confidence, but walking into his lair is suicide. I stand up, unbelieving of what I am doing, and walk slowly toward the door leading to the basement. The cold steel once again pressed against my head. I know I will not do this. I will make up an excuse that she will see through, and kindly put up with. He is closer now, closer than ever to placing my life on a track that only knows downhill. Closing my eyes, my hand reaches up and grasps the freezing lock, and I turn it. After a snap, I open my eyes. His presence seems to have faded. I look to my right, and to my dismay, there he is. Strange, however, is that he is a more than ten feet away, and his expression is one of confusion. Next, I open the door, and in less than a second he is out the window, freezing in the cold winter morning. The feeling is back, the one I found again, but this time it is real. I look down the stairs to the basement, and wonder how long this will last.