

Sunday Plans

By

Miloš Doroški

Wroclaw hummed with life on that Sunday afternoon. A remarkable sight in Poland where Sundays were typically reserved for church, communing with nature, and enduring the repercussions of previous night's revelries, all in the name of obligatory family time. Nevertheless, the arrival of summer heralded the return of the annual wine festival, captivating the attention of tourists.

The cobbled streets of Rynek teemed with activity as vendors sold food, homemade products, sweets, and snake oil. In small wooden houses, one could find an abundance of wine, cheese, olives and crystal pyramids. The merchants behind the counters were mostly domestic, from all parts of Poland. They were paddling their products with a sincere smile. The patrons, mostly foreign, didn't seem to mind that the items being sold were available in stores at half the price. The *organic & home-made with pride* culture has long since become a staple of the modern tourist. The one who knows that he is paying a premium price for the privilege of entertaining placid coworkers, friends, and kin with tales of their travels to Wroclaw.

It was already noon and almost everyone was indulging themselves in some kind of outdoor activity. One of the older, green buildings close to the Rynek, was a mirror image of the streets. The windows were open and music filled the air. The people on balconies were finishing their brunch and coffee and getting ready to join those already in the streets. Neighbors were greeting each other, telling forgettable stories about the past weekend and exchanging plans for the day. From the vantage point below, the green building resembled a bustling beehive. Yet, one window remained shrouded by closed blinds, as if its occupant sought to shield themselves from the sun's gentle rays on this beautiful Sunday.

Inside the dark apartment, sun rays were piercing the dust like bullets going through water. The air hung heavy, pregnant with stillness and a palpable sense of neglect. No bed occupied the space, merely a mattress resting upon the floor, its surface obscured by a linen cloth that shrouded a form beneath. When viewed from above, it bore a

resemblance to the revered Shroud of Turin, revealing the faint outline of a man's face. The beams of sunlight caressed his head, eliciting a pained moan that resonated within the room – an indistinguishable sound, reminiscent of a bear rudely awakened from its hibernation.

Adam Johnson, after a series of spasms, managed to sit upright, his eyes now hurt by the intrusive sunbeams. Shielding his gaze with one hand, the other instinctively wandered across the floor. Amidst the debris, alongside his wallet and mobile phone, his hand found a pair of well-worn Ray Ban classics. He covered his reddened-blue eyes and lit up a cigarette. He got up, dressed only in boxer shorts and surveyed the situation.

The single-room apartment lay in disarray, clothes strewn haphazardly over furniture. The table, burdened with its dual roles as a workstation and dining surface, groaned beneath the weight of styrofoam food containers, pizza boxes, empty beer cans, and an ashtray teeming with spent cigarette butts. Adam made his way toward the refrigerator, retrieving a can of beer. With a swift motion, he cracked it open and took a long swig, seeking respite from his trembling hands.

Extinguishing the cigarette, he unearthed a laptop from the rubble of discarded food containers. The light from the laptop illuminated his face. Adam was in his mid thirties, with dark, long hair and a scruffy beard. Beneath his eyes, heavy bags of darkness testified to nights spent in restless contemplation. In the dead silence that followed, he embarked on a profound pause, gathering the strength to commence his final act. As the video recorder started, his gaze, steady and resolute, bore into the unblinking eye of the camera, ready to impart his truth.

- "If you are watching this, it means that I am dead. I have decided to end my life as I can no longer find a reason to live. This is not a decision I have taken lightly. For the past six months I have been at the lowest point I have ever been in my life. I have no family. At least no one who would care if I died. No friends, no pets. No lover. Nobody to share this day to day agony I find myself in. So, I decided to end it all. One of the key reasons for my decision is..."

The doorbell broke Adam's monologue. He swore in disgust and paused the video recorder. The doorbell continued to ring, but Adam wasn't planning to answer it. The doorbell continued to ring and the sound was starting to pierce his ears.

- "Go away!" - Adam shouted in bad Polish.

The sound of the doorbell didn't stop. It turned into a constant noise. Adam jumped from the table and rushed towards the door, yelling "Kurwa!" to himself. He grabbed the door handle furiously and pulled it, almost breaking it in. He was ready to fight anyone who stopped his Sunday plan!

- "Who is it?" What do you want!?" - he yelled in anger.
- "Sorry. Do you have some sugar?" - a soft, female voice filled the hallway. She was speaking in English, but her accent had an eastern European ring to it.

Adam's attention was drawn downward, his eyes landing upon a young woman. No more than twenty five years of age, she sported long, flowing blonde locks and rocked a vibrant ensemble of baggy pants and a matching hoodie. And, rather astonishingly, she was tattooed. Her vibrant energy and infectious happiness stood in stark contrast to Adam's somber demeanor. Meeting his gaze with clear, captivating green eyes, she seemed to convey an unspoken apology, a message understood even without words.

- "Do you speak English? Sorry, I'm from the apartment across from you." - she murmured gently, her voice carrying a softness.
- "Yes I speak English." - Adam replied, lowering his voice a bit. - "What do you want?"
- "Sugar. If you have some." - the girl continued. - "I'm sorry, I'm not from around here. You can probably tell?" - Adam merely nodded, acknowledging her observation.
- Undeterred, the girl gestured toward the door behind her, explaining further - "I rented the apartment for the weekend. I came to Wroclaw to travel. I always wanted to visit but never found time, you know? So, I was walking around all day yesterday and now I'm beat. And I need coffee. Coffee with sugar. Can you help?"

The young woman possessed an unmistakable vibrancy, an unrelenting sense of energy akin to that of a Duracell Bunny. Adam studied her with his eyes, attempting to unravel the enigma before him. He couldn't fathom that this creature, so full of life, is here to deter his plans. It's been years since he could just get up with ease and actually have a conversation with anyone in the morning, and now here she was. The girl tried to peek inside his apartment. Adam quickly closed the door, leaving only himself in the frame. He realized that he was only sporting his boxer shorts so he backed away a bit more inside.

- "So, neighbor. Can you help a girl in need?" - she smiled.
- "What do you need? Sugar. Let me check."

The door slammed in the girl's face. Adam, seeking loneliness, pressed his back against the wall, yearning for the visitor to fade into oblivion. After a short moment, a surge of curiosity propelled him to peer through the keyhole, and to his astonishment, the girl was still waiting on the other side.

Adam ventured into the kitchen, shuffling through the cabinets in pursuit of the girl's simple request. Amidst cans of beans, bolognese sauce, instant soup, and a dubious wedge of cheese, he could not uncover the elusive treasure of sugar. Desperation coursed through his veins, his trembling hand betraying his mounting anxiety. Beads of perspiration began to form on his forehead, tracing a path down his face. Time seemed to stretch infinitely as he racked his memory, desperately recalling the potential whereabouts of sugar within his apartment. Finally, a recollection led him to the bathroom, where the sugar was nestled upon a shelf beside the toothpaste.

As he went into the bathroom, a noose was hanging from the ceiling. Adam passed it, disregarding for a brief moment its future purpose. Clutching the jar tightly, he blew a gasp of air to remove the heavy veil of dust that had accumulated atop its surface. With purpose, he hastened toward the door, pausing momentarily to steady his racing heart. In the hallway, the patient girl awaited his return. In a gesture of surrender, Adam extended his hand, delivering the sought-after sugar into her waiting grasp. He hoped, with all his fading strength, that now she will leave him alone.

- "Here you go." - he almost threw the sugar jar into her hands.
- "Thank you so much!" - the girl was excited and continued - "Would you like a cup? I'm making one just for myself. Such a waste of water!"
- "No, thank you. I have some things to attend to." - Adam glanced back at the laptop behind him.
- "Are you sure? Come on, it's Sunday. Whatever you are doing can wait." - she wasn't taking no for an answer.
- "No. I told you! Maybe some other time."
- "Some other time?" - the girl was puzzled. - "But I'm going home tonight, I have a train to catch. I'm not sure there will be another time. Are you sure?" - she blinked and smiled, in a manner which would make even the toughest concert bouncers soften.
- "No. Enjoy your coffee." - Adam slammed the door yet again.

With practiced bravado, Adam peeped through the keyhole again. The girl looked a tad upset, but went away into her apartment. A fleeting sense of relief washed over Adam,

granting him a brief respite from the tumultuous encounter. His gaze shifted, fixating on the laptop that lay before him. A surge of determination propelled him to take a seat, ready to resume his interrupted endeavor.

- "Where was I? Oh, yes. One of the key reasons for my decision is that I have fallen out of love for humanity. We have all become mindless consumers, fuelled only by greed and instant gratification. A society of walking zombies, glued to their phones, with headphones on, everyone living in their own virtual reality. I cannot take any longer the meaningless pursuits that everyone is indulging in, day in, day out. Just consuming. It feels like..."

Once more, Adam's attempt at recording was abruptly halted by the intrusive sound of the doorbell. Frustration surged within him, compelling him to slam the laptop shut full of anger. In a fit of restlessness, he stormed towards the door, his movements reminiscent of an enraged bull charging towards its adversary. Adam's eye pressed against the keyhole, and to his dismay, the persistent girl remained stationed outside his door, an unyielding presence that defied his longing for solitude.

- "Open up! I know you are in there!" - she was smiling.

Adam, ill at ease, shut his eyes tightly, his mind swirling with dark thoughts. The girl's persistent presence was doing a number on his nerves, as she once again sought something from him. A glance towards the bathroom revealed the haunting sight of the noose hanging ominously from the ceiling, enticing him with thoughts of a swift escape from this overwhelming despair. The very notion of his video suicide note lost its significance in that moment, all he yearned for was the cessation of existence, the extinguishing of his inner turmoil.

Yet, his despairing contemplations were abruptly interrupted by the piercing noise of the doorbell, followed by the muffled voice of the girl resonating from the other side. Adam, his heart heavy with trepidation, reluctantly opened the door to confront her yet again.

- "Look. I really just want to be left alone. I have very important things to finish up. Work related things. Yes, that is it, work stuff." - In a moment of swift thinking, Adam marveled at his own ability in conjuring a plausible lie. With a faint trace of satisfaction, he proceeded. - "I really have to finish what I'm doing, so please, sugar on top, can you please leave me alone?"

- "Not a people person are you?" - the girl was not backing down. No was an answer she was not prepared to take. - "I have to pay you back for the sugar so I figured that I will take you out for a drink!"
- "A drink?" - Adam was puzzled by this statement.
- "Yes. You know, water, coffee, chai, pear cider, whatever. Get dressed and let's go!" - the girl struck a pose and extended her arm towards Adam. - "I am not going anywhere without you!" - she finished with an innocent smile.

Dark thoughts were occupying Adam's head. It was hard for him to focus on this innocent creature who was a nuisance to his plans. The notion of going out was not something he planned. In fact, he didn't plan to go out ever again in what little time remains of his existence, which some refer to as life. Yet, the girl still stood before him, like an unsurpassable obstacle.

- "Are we ready?" - the girl quickly asked, trying to break the ever growing awkward silence.
- "Give me a moment." - Adam closed the door.

Adam's feeble body slumped against the wall, succumbing to the force of gravity as he collapsed onto the unforgiving floor. He put his head in his hands and closed his eyes. Dark thoughts started to mix with fresh glimpses of the girl on the other side of the door. An overwhelming desire to rid himself of her presence, to resume his fateful design, gripped him tightly. The design, when executed, will reduce him to nothing but a rotting body, his soul forever lost in the vast nothingness of the universe.

Yet, he was unable to shake off the faint echoes of the girl's muffled voice beckoning him to partake in some shared time together. She was younger, full of life and, most worryingly for Adam, she was persistent. In a moment of clarity, he spotted his disheveled clothes scattered over the room. In the silence that followed, he whispered a silent decree, almost to himself: - "I'll be out in a minute."

Adam slowly settled himself into the chair, his gaze fixed upon the laptop before him. With a deliberate touch, he archived the recording, bestowing upon it the name 'suicide.note.final.final.v3'. In the dim-lit room, where shadows danced like ghosts, a heavy silence enveloped his actions, echoing the profound depths of his contemplation.

In the bustling streets of Rynek, Adam and the girl ventured forth, their steps colliding with the constant flow of bodies. It was a scene reminiscent of a packed Tokyo train during rush hour, where bumping into others became an inevitable task.

Despite the crowds of people, disorienting noises, various smells and the overall vibe of a hectic place which was seconds away from disaster, the girl was cheerful. At every stall, she paused, engaging in brief yet warm exchanges with the vendors.

Adam, on the other hand, trailed behind her reluctantly, akin to a hapless child, as if this excursion were his punishment. Each accidental interaction with a stranger heightened his agitation. He wanted to get away. Drawing nearer to the girl, nearly within the range of a hushed breath, the only way to reach her ears, he whispered, "Let's get out of here. I hate crowds!"

A few streets away from the bustling epicenter of the suffocating crowds, Adam and the girl strolled together. Though a semblance of calm had settled over him, a restlessness persisted within Adam. His trembling hands betrayed his inner turmoil, while beads of perspiration materialized upon his pale face. With each passing moment, his breathing quickened, escalating into a full on panic attack.

Suddenly, Adam halted abruptly, he sat down upon a worn set of cobblestone steps. Burdened, he cradled his head within his trembling hands, surrendering to the overwhelming weight of his distress. It was at this juncture that the girl, observing the depths of Adam's anguish for the first time, retraced her steps. Wordlessly, she extended a tender touch, her delicate fingers gently caressing his disheveled hair. As the slowly passing seconds turned into a brief respite, Adam's breath gradually found its natural rhythm.

With a tentative gaze, he lifted his head, finding solace in the sight of the girl's radiant face bathed in the warm embrace of sunlight. Her hair danced gracefully upon the gentle breeze, casting a halo of serenity around her. In this fleeting moment, a glimmer of a smile tugged at the corners of Adam's lips, an unfamiliar gesture that revealed the faintest semblance of joy within him for the first time in a long while.

On the banks of the Oder river, nestled upon Słodowa Island, a gathering of young souls unfolded. This haven, sought after by those who cherished genuine conversation, critical thinking, and the art of sipping spirits under the open sky, was a respite from the grip of mindless materialism that slowly consumed society. Here, students, artists, musicians, and a handful of contemporary beatniks formed intimate clusters, enjoying the company of each other.

Even though they had an anti attitude towards society, they still weren't sure what *anti* really meant. They were still playing music from their Spotify accounts, discussing movies and TV shows they saw on Netflix, posting selfies on Instagram. Their iPhones served as constant companions, capturing their moments of pseudo-rebellion while drinking the same, basic, cheap beer which was consumed all over the world, Heineken for example.

Adam and the girl found solace in the company of their pear-flavored Somersby ciders. They sat upon a rustic bench fashioned from logs, and gazed upon the tranquil Oder river. Its calming presence was a medicine for Adam's troubled mind. As the sun descended, its golden rays danced upon the water's surface, casting a mesmerizing reflection. In this epic moment, the girl closed her eyes, allowing the cool breeze to fill her lungs with a rejuvenating breath.

- "This place is so lovely. Do you come here a lot?" - the girl inquired.
- "Not as much as I used to. It's just... lost its meaning somehow." - Adam responded, his words straightforward.
- "So, does that happen frequently?" - the girl asked, pausing briefly with a sincere smile, making sure not to sound judgmental. Adam hesitated for a moment, then replied. - "Panic attacks? Not as often. They occur when... I feel uneasy in crowded situations."
- "May I ask when it first began?" - she inquired, attempting not to sound too intrusive.

Adam took a deep swig of his pear cider, his eyes scanning the surroundings. The air was thick with the vibrance of youth, a palpable energy emanating from the crowd as they enjoyed the simple pleasures of existence. Their voices intermingled with clinks of glasses, punctuated by bursts of laughter. Amidst this sea of liveliness, Adam's eyes settled on the girl, but his gaze betrayed a hint of sorrow.

- "I honestly can't pinpoint the exact moment it began. The passage of time has blurred those memories. All I recall is the overwhelming sense of disillusionment, the weariness that settled within me, witnessing a world where material possessions took precedence over genuine human connection. I started feeling hopeless around people."

Adam expressed, his words carrying an air of rehearsed reflection. The girl remained silent, understanding the significance of his confession, and she encouraged him to continue sharing his thoughts. Adam pressed on with his narrative.

- "I look around and I keep seeing people mindlessly consuming their life instead of living it. We have all become mindless consumers, fuelled only by greed and instant gratification. A society of walking zombies, glued to their phones, with headphones on, everyone living in their own virtual reality. People go to work, to get money, to buy things they don't need, to impress people they don't even like. You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. And when does it stop? Will it ever stop? People just compete against each other, like in a shopping contest. To get some kind of gratification. Until a shiny new *thing* comes out that everybody wants and then the circle starts again and again and again, forever. I really don't see a future for me in this world."

Adam exhaled deeply and took another sip of cider in silence. His gaze was focused on the river flowing by. He felt a bit easier hearing his thoughts out loud. The girl, sitting beside him, absorbed his monologue, her features displaying a mixture of attentiveness and introspection, as she carefully considered the words he had shared.

- "It sounds to me like you are living a very lonely life." - the girl remarked, her gaze fixed on a distant point rather than directly at Adam.
- "What do you know about my life?!" - Adam raised his voice. "You met me today. How could you know anything?!"
- "It's true we know each other only for a day. Not even that long, but I have seen something in you with which I can relate." - the girl was calm. Adam was taken back by her words.
- "You lament the state of people immersed in their screens, akin to walking zombies." - the girl continued calmly. - "Perhaps there is truth to your observation. However, how does their behavior directly impact your life? Are these individuals causing you harm? Get on and live your life. Who cares what others are doing? Focus on things that make you happy. Things that you want to do. That is the only way you will find something which resembles happiness. Trust me. I've felt the way you feel, not so long ago."

The silence hung heavy in the air, enveloping them both. The only sounds that broke through were the gentle rush of the river and the indistinct chatter of nearby youth. Adam turned his gaze towards the girl, his eyes a mix of curiosity and confusion. What

did this kind-hearted soul mean by her words? His disillusionment with humanity was deeply personal, a sentiment he believed he alone possessed. Yet, a spark of intrigue ignited within him, urging him to delve deeper into her perspective.

- "What exactly do you mean?" - Adam's voice carried a genuine sincerity
- "I was once one of those, what did you call them, zombies. I cared more about my social media, my followers, creating this perfect image that honestly never existed. I was more focused on what people would think of me, how many likes I would get, how many views in an hour, day, week. It was all that I did. It consumed me completely. It became more important than anything else. More important than my real life. My real friends. My health. My family. My brother."

The girl's voice nearly broke as she neared the end of her sentence. A single tear appeared in her eye, tracing a path down her cheek, which she brushed away with the fabric of her sleeve. Adam remained motionless, his eyes fixed upon her, silently urging her to share the rest of her thoughts.

- "See, I was what they call an influencer. I traveled to places and gave reviews of hotels, you know, high class. I had sponsors, sponsorships. They paid me to travel basically. One time they paid me ten thousand euros to go to Belize for a week. Can you believe that? I stayed in a ridiculous penthouse. Everything was free. I was partying. Booze, drugs, sex. Not a care in the world. And, I remember vividly, because I was smoking a bong at the time, some amazing weed, my mom called me. She told me that my brother killed himself."

A heavy sigh escaped the girl's lips as she raised the glass of pear cider to her mouth, seeking solace in its intoxicating embrace. The drink, like an elixir of truth, infused her with a newfound courage to continue her narrative. Adam's gaze shifted between admiration and fear, an enigmatic blend of emotions swirling within him. With each word she uttered, his fascination grew.

- "He was depressed for some time. For years actually. He was always a bit sad, you know? When we were growing up, he was three years my junior, I was always the queen of the show, causing mischief, running around without a care in the world. But, he was quiet, withdrawn even. But he could just see you. He was the one that listens and hears everything. The one that looks at you and sees right into your soul. The one that makes you believe in every fairytale that you've ever been told. But we grew up, grew apart. You know how it goes if you have a brother, sister, sibling. And I was partying, having the time of my life while he felt

alone and desperate. He would text me sometimes, just to check up on me, and I would just ignore him. 'Yeah, everything is good, love you, say hello to the parents'. Standard crap. But I never asked him how he was feeling. Never. And that will be my regret forever and ever."

The girl turned towards Adam, her eyes watery, holding back a flood of emotions. Adam, stunned into silence, found himself at a loss for words. In a thousand years he couldn't imagine this. As the night was getting thicker and the cacophony of voices faded into distant murmurs, they fell into a warm embrace, both holding each other. The girl, now resting on Adam's shoulder, whispered softly in his ear: "You must always try to push on."

At the main railway station in Wrocław, known as dworzec główny, Adam and the girl found respite on the wooden bench by platform two. The clock neared midnight, and the impending arrival of the train bound for Prague infused the air with a sense of anticipation. Amidst the hushed surroundings, Adam savored the final drag of his cigarette, exhaling a cloud of smoke, while the girl's words weaved through the stillness.

- "It takes time. And effort. For me it was therapy. Drugs. Prescription drugs, not *those* drugs. Antidepressants." - Enveloped in the girl's words, Adam relinquished his urge to speak, immersing himself in the depth of her wisdom.
- "And after a while it gets easier. Not a lot, but still. Easier." - the girl smiled.

The number nine train entered the station and slowly stopped on platform two. The automated announcement echoed through the platform, beckoning passengers bound for Prague to embark upon the waiting carriages. The girl, her heart heavy with the impending departure, rose from the bench and ventured a few hesitant steps toward the awaiting train. But then, as if pulled by an invisible force, she turned back. And there, standing before her, was Adam.

In a wordless understanding, they drew each other into an embrace that transcended time and space. Their bodies melded together, exuding a warmth that radiated through their beings. In that tender moment, the world faded away, consumed by their shared affection. Only the harsh intrusion of the computerized voice, screaming its final call, severed their intimate connection.

- "I don't know how to thank you for this amazing day?" - Adam spoke honestly.
- "You don't have to thank me. I enjoyed it too." - The girl smiled.

As the girl prepared to step onto the train, Adam's heart sank with the weight of impending separation. His hand instinctively reached out, pressing firmly against the sliding doors, unwilling to let her depart just yet. With a desperate plea in his eyes, he silently begged for a few more stolen moments together.

- "Can we stay in touch? Facebook, Instagram, Twitter?" - Adam was almost rambling.
- "I don't use that stuff anymore." - the girl was sincere.
- "Of course you don't. Smart. Me neither. I mean almost never." - he was scrambling for words.
- "I can give you my number if you want. Messages are a nice way to stay in touch. Or calls."
- "Sure!"

Adam retrieved his phone from his pocket and swiftly typed in the number, his fingers dancing across the screen. As he did, a thought struck him with the force of a sudden revelation, piercing his mind like a bullet fired at close range. Though they had shared a day of unparalleled authenticity and connection, a crucial detail remained absent. He gazed into her eyes, a mix of curiosity and yearning reflected in his own, and uttered the words that hung heavy in the air. - "I don't even know your name."

- "I'm Angel," - the girl spoke with a gentle smile, her words carrying a hint of mystery and enchantment.

Adam erupted into genuine laughter, his voice echoing with a long-forgotten joy that had been concealed within him for what felt like an eternity. The girl's laughter intertwined with his, filling the air with a shared warmth and creating a beautiful moment of connection between them.

- "But c'mon, really. What is your name?" - Adam persisted.
- "I did say Angel, didn't I?" - The girl's tone carried a hint of playfulness, though her words held a touch of gentle seriousness.
- "Really?"

As the doors slid shut, Adam reluctantly withdrew his hand. Just before the final click of closure, the girl's voice pierced through the shrinking gap: "I'll forever be your Angel." With that last sentiment, the doors sealed tightly, separating them. Adam's gaze locked with hers through the glass, their eyes lingering in an unspoken connection. As the train

gradually departed from the station, a surge of vitality coursed through Adam's being. He saved the girl's number in his phone and embarked on his journey home, a newfound buoyancy accompanying each step.

Adam stepped into his apartment, still enveloped by the lingering impact of the encounter. A radiant smile adorned his face, accompanied by a surge of optimistic thoughts. However, as he entered the bathroom, his gaze was drawn towards the noose hanging ominously from the ceiling, a reminder of the unresolved task that had consumed his mind before this most pleasant of days. The expression on his face changed. The smile was gone.

Seated at the table, Adam sank into the chair, his heart brimming with emotions. In a moment of reflection, he closed his eyes, retracing the footsteps of the unforgettable day he had shared with an extraordinary young woman. A wave of joy washed over him, only to be replaced by a hint of sorrow that crept into his features. With a profound sigh, he reached out and lifted the laptop's lid, the soft glow of the screen casting an ethereal light upon his puzzled face.

He opened the folder with the saved suicide recordings and selected them all. With a lingering fingertip, he hesitated above the forsaken button of deletion, until resolve overcame him, compelling a decisive press. A feeling of relief filled him up. The profound sensation of release coursed through his being, as if liberation had finally struck through. Picking up the chair, he ventured toward the bathroom. Ascending its precipice, he disengaged the noose from its suspended perch, his gaze transfixed upon its haunting presence. In hushed tones, barely audible to his own ears, he murmured, "Not today, old friend."