



Chapter 5: Bums, Balls n' Beyond

Cooper has found himself in an unpleasant predicament. He's now in Coney Island, which I can assure you is not particularly inviting during the Winter (to say nothing of the neighbouring crime-infested town of Seagate).

His opiate receptors are going into overdrive, he is semi-conscious at best while puking sporadically into nearby bushes, trash cans and handbags.

Notwithstanding the faults of NYC living, the thing that Cooper found himself most grateful for was the operational Subway - available to be ridden twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Checkin' his gratitude for a moment, Cooper crossed over to the other side of the cold, desolate platform, stumbled onto the next arriving train and put a stamp on his arrival back in Brighton.

While others were hidden behind curtains, busy indulging their secret holiday shames, namely midnight snacking, Cooper was trying to stay alive. After a few moments, his

breaths became heavier to the point where each marginal breath - transformed something as involuntary as breathing into one deeply strenuous activity.

As far as he was concerned, something was evidently wrong. The scenario didn't equate with just another average drug experience. Every step he took in the direction of Grace's apartment was met with a sharp pain in his chest as oxygen yearned to escape from his lungs.

Suspending his predisposition to jest at all subjects heavy. He couldn't imagine the horror on the faces of his cousin the following morning... pure horror he imagined.

And gentleman, just so we don't find ourselves marching across a meadow of familial tangents... let me stress how important Grace, Cooper's cousin was to him.

You see Cooper never grew up with any brothers or sisters, he was an only child who felt (both figuratively, and literally) picked up by the scruff of his neck, and relocated around the world, typically to countries and continents thousands of miles away from where he was born.

He adored Grace like a sister for whom he would without trepidation have taken a round or two if such a situation were to arise. And in return, Grace offered reciprocal sentiments.

Grace was one year older than Cooper, and although they hadn't seen each other since they were two, the minute she greeted him at the door (three years before the night in question) Cooper felt blown away at how easy, warm and unobtrusive she was. Hence, their relationship instantly began to mirror the same qualities. It was fascinating to him.

The two of them possessed enough familial and cultural similarities that there wasn't a single awkward or uncomfortable moment that Cooper could remember the first time they met. Grace looked after Cooper like a mother, whilst simultaneously acting more akin to that of a non-judgemental big sister.

In fact, in a story that will be covered in more detail in a future chapter, Cooper once got into a heated (drunken) fistfight on the subway tracks of an NYC station with one of his best friends at the time, Stuart, after he had learned that Stu had hooked up with Grace as payback for Cooper sleeping with Stu's cousin, Samantha.

But I digress...

It was around 1:00 am when Cooper first entered his room... if you can call tripping up the stairs and falling, flailing face forwards towards the door, entering.

Nevertheless, for a moment a wave of euphoria and pride rolled over him as he mistakenly thought that the difficult part of the night was over.

He had never felt so simultaneously euphoric and dysphoric before. For a moment, Cooper's eyes would shut, and he experienced some of the most vivid, and alarming hallucinations he had ever witnessed.

One could liken it to the experience of tripping on DMT - the chemical that is released in the moments preceding death. In hindsight, this may have very well been what was happening, because having experimented with handfuls of hallucinogens before (*including DMT*) Cooper maintained that what he saw that night topped all the visuals he had ever seen.

Perhaps, he was in fact dying...

This unrealized hypochondria quickly evolved into a mania that enveloped Cooper as he repeatedly forced himself into the bathroom and eviscerated the contents of his stomach.

By 2:00 am, Cooper's mind began contemplating its evolutionary failure to self-preserve. A thought he would normally chuckle to internally was now greeted only by the deafening silence of the apartment, reverberating like helicopter blades above his head. Only to be momentarily interrupted by his gasps for air.

So he did what any *twenty-something* on the brink of overdose and unhealthy existentialism would do.

First, in an effort to counter the CNS and Respiratory depression Cooper crushed up two Adderall pills (40mg collectively) and insufflated them.

He oughta' have known better because, in his compromised state, the burst of Adrenaline sought to merely drive him into a harsher panic, making it more difficult to inhale the oxygen his body so desperately craved.

Cooper, realized that he was living on borrowed time with perhaps only a few minutes remaining until the debt was to be recalled and he would be plunged into unconscious oblivion.

So, he wrote a message to Sophie, one of the girls he met in London with whom he had felt an inexplicable connection.

The message read: *Sophie, it is not my intention to disturb your slumber with this prose. Yet, I feel like you deserve to know that I may not awake from my own slumber. And if that is the case, I wish I had gotten to know you better. You're kind, beautiful and undoubtedly a smarter human being than I am. I wish you and your brother my very best. Love, Cooper.*

He tapped the send button on his multilaterally cracked smartphone and started typing out another message.

The message read: Maa, I'm sorry. I know I'm not a son one would refer to as being a '*walk in the park*', to raise. I know my carelessness and frivolity has kept you on high alert for almost a decade. I'm sorry. The most important thing I need to tell you is irrespective of what may, or may not happen after this message is finished, please, please, please do NOT blame yourself. You didn't fail me as a mother. That's a ridiculous thought. Please, never forget that. And, please remember that I love you so much. Thank you, and I'm sorry... Your only son, Cooper.

As Cooper hit send on the final message, a genuine feeling of sadness swept over him. A gulp in his throat. A tear crystallizing upon his eyelid. It was peripheral to fear. Not for fear of dying, but for fear of dying selfishly.

He believed that the death of someone resembled the feeling of something being taken away. At least, when he remembered the premature deaths of many great writers, musicians, poets, philosophers and scientists, in his mind they had already given something back to the world, be it their music, their research, or their prose. Thereby, making their premature, unexpected and potentially controversial death less selfish.

Whereas, if he was to die now, what could he attest to? What could one say when discussing Cooper's impact on the world? Some humorous anecdotes? An innovative marketing plan? A substance laced foundation of conforming, non-conformity?

So, against the protests from his ego, he concluded that irrespective of the fact that it was nearing 3:00 am and his relatives were asleep in adjoining rooms, most oblivious of any evidence which incriminated Cooper as a drug user, he would rather risk them finding out than be discovered dead by them in the morning.

Struggling to breathe he got out of his bed, opened his bedroom door, and left the apartment. Once the door shut behind him, he picked up his phone and dialled 911.

Operator: *Emergency services, how may I help you?*

Cooper: *I... can- can't, can't breathe..he. I to-too-took something...*

Operator: *Ok sir... please stay calm. What's your name?*

Cooper: *Jesus...* How is this relevant? He thought to himself. *I can't br-br-breathe.*

Cooper made his way down three flights of stairs to the lobby in the hope that if, and when an ambulance did arrive he would be easier to find.

Operator: *Your name is Jesus, sir? Ok then. Where...?*

Cooper: *N-nn-no!*

Operator: *What is your location, Jesus?*

Christ... if he wasn't dying Cooper thought to himself, he could have really run with that setup. It's not every day, somebody asks, '*What is your location, Jesus?*' with zero inflexion in their voice.

Cooper: Err.. ugh, 23rd... Street, Brighton Beach, Brooklyn.

Operator: *Thank you, sir. Paramedics are being dispatched. Now... can you describe some of your symptoms, please?*

Upon hearing this request, Cooper could no longer continue the conversation with the dispatcher. He exclaimed to her (*in very few coherent syllables*) that he couldn't breathe. Did they need three points of ID too before choosing to assist? Perhaps, this was a regular occurrence, and they didn't want to waste public resources on people that cried wolf.

Regardless, Cooper whispered, “Thanks” into the receiver and hung up the phone.

It was only when he reached the lobby and sat down on stairs opposite the entrance, did Cooper realize that few things were amiss.

- He was dressed solely in his underpants and shirt. Needless to say, the rush for the door impeded his recollection of the necessity of pants.
- Similarly, his recollection of the usefulness of house keys must have been affected, because he had locked himself out.
- And finally, sitting beside him was the spitting image of the *crazy cat lady* from The Simpsons. Homeless. Unintelligible. Disjointed. Yet, somehow endearing...

Suddenly, Cooper’s ears perked up at the sound of sirens approaching...