

The Night The World Ended

It's Wednesday, the 8th of August 2018. \$13,000 in debt to the IRS, working for an abusive boss. You've been late on rent and receiving pay-or-quit notices. You go out every Wednesday with friends to drink in San Francisco. Your friend who lives in the same neighbourhood is out this night, so you're on your own. You've previously promised your partner you'd be more responsible.

Work's been slow, and you've been looking for a normal 9-5 job. You've been borrowing from friends for food money. You're also borrowing from friends for money to go out drinking.

You're living in Alameda on the opposite side of the bay. You have a phone interview scheduled for Friday as a backup. You're trying to get a client to let you and your co-contractors take over maintenance of the phone system and save them a lot of money.

You take BART to San Francisco and catch a bus to Beer Basement on Hyde. You're early so you pace around a bit. Ride or Die by The Knocks starts playing in your headphones. As you walk up the street you pass someone. They shout at you and call you a fag. You walk back the other way and head in to the bar.

Beer Basement does a comedy show on Wednesdays - comedians stand up in the basement and tell jokes for a bit. You're probably drinking a nice sour beer and then a cider. You're pretty drunk by the time the comedians come on - you didn't eat much that day. You do this every Wednesday, anyway. It's not new, just sometimes the bar is. You know almost nobody there that night.

The comedians come up and tell their jokes. Two of them tell jokes about suicide - it's jarring to hear those kinds of jokes. You've been sorta hugging your friend, you got wayyyy too drunk and are not doing well. The jokes didn't help. She calls you a Lyft, you both head out to wait - but first you stop in the bathroom. You vomit everything up.

You arrive home, uneventfully. You dial in to the telephone conference you are a part of and chat with your friends. You message a friend on Discord to say interesting things. You feel the need to vomit and run to the bathroom.

Nothing comes up but your heart rate hits 180 BPM. You tell your friend you need to run to an ambulance - scaring her. You hang up the phone conference and dial 911. You tell them your heart rate is very fast and irregular. They tell you to chew

some aspirin - which you have.

EMTs? Paramedics? arrive quickly - you're near a fire station, thankfully. You're still curled up on your giant beanbag. They put probes on you and start an ECG. They attempt to administer adenosine and warn you it will feel weird. It does. It doesn't fix the problem, though. They try again with a different dosage. No change. You're put on a stretcher and carried down the stairs and through the complex.

You're in the ambulance, attached to monitors. You mention you're a Kaiser patient and would prefer to go to a Kaiser hospital to avoid difficulty with insurance claims. They ask if it's a STEMI centre (heart attack specialisation - appropriate for cardiac issues). You arrive at the hospital.

You're quickly taken in to the ER and many nurses crowd around you. Some tell you Kaiser covers transgender surgeries. You mention you've been drinking. They attempt to lower your heart rate through various means - various body repositioning, medication etc. You need to pee - you're too anxious to use any kind of medical implement however so a catheter is inserted. That solves that problem. A benzodiazepine is administered and mercifully as a result you lose the ability to form memories temporarily. At some point you claim you're stable, and the nurses say you aren't - you're in the ER with a serious issue. You're admitted to the hospital proper and transferred to a room. The night passes, with you on an IV.

Your heartbeat is irregular and you are weak. Eating is hard, yet you try it, anyway...it's a chore. A friend comes to visit and there is discussion with nurses, you, and your friend. You are going to be put on a different med - Amioderone. Previously you were on Diltiazem, which lowered the heart rate but rhythm was still irregular. You've informed a partner you were hospitalised - you'd broken your promise to be responsible, so she breaks up with you. The new medication has to be kept in a bag - it's sensitive to light. The new medication corrects your heartbeat, though. You've been in atrial fibrillation.

You're given a scan - you don't remember which kind. Apparently bubbles on your liver are identified. You're put in a tight little tube, laying down - It's terrifying. You're taken back to your room. Your friend and her partner visit - they bring a charger cable and some stuffed animals. Another friend visits in the evening - someone you may have a crush on. She brings a stuffed animal and visits for awhile. You're happy and feel safe.

You head to sleep, a medication to help you sleep is administered - it doesn't work. You wake up screaming for help...alone at 4am with the spot the IV is in hurting. You are terrified. Alone. Nobody there to hold your hand or comfort you.

You're to be discharged today - you've got a ride all lined up. First however, they want to re-scan your liver...but after you drink something the scan can pick up. The scan is uneventful aside from it being another time in a cramped tube. You call up your friend and chat for awhile. You get Chipotle for lunch, and head home. You miss your phone interview.

You get home, and fight through the day. You head down to sleep. Your neck/shoulder hurts. You're panicked and scared...you poke a friend who is going to come by after work. They got stuck at work later than expected. You go on hold with the advice nurse line, asking if it's safe to take over the counter pain meds. Your friend isn't able to show up.

You catch a Lyft to a friend's place in the South Bay - you'd previously met this person at the vintage computer festival. You fall asleep for a bit, and wake to a panic attack. You're convinced your heart rate is way too high along with your blood pressure, so you call an ambulance...again. You get to the hospital and they check you out. You're physically fine so they administer a benzodiazepine again. You calm down and head home. You stay a few days and become unable to return home without having a panic attack.