

## Tuesday

I look around the room one final time, like a prisoner leaving his cell; only I'm unclear if freedom awaits me. My window taunts me with a cheerful blue sky and sunlight, like the prize that keeps people playing the lottery knowing it is doubtful they will win. It's already 7:30. School will be starting soon; I'm forced to leave.

Moving to the door, I prepare myself. The door, weathered and aged, looms at me like a portal to another dimension. I become filled with uncertainty; what awaits me on the other side? Is it freedom or detainment? I open the door.

It is quiet. Blessedly quiet.

Taking my first steps I realize there is no going back. I walk down the hall and enter the kitchen. The skylight distorts the normally golden rays of the sun into a cold gray, as if a magical barrier blocks any warmth from reaching inside my house.

A familiar smell reaches my nose. Walking over to the coffee maker I see the last of the coffee is bubbling, burning at the bottom. Removing the coffee pot from the burner I become aware of its fragility, its brittleness. I feel like the pot, ready to shatter or break at any moment. In the corner by the phone I see empty beer cans lying on the counter. As I move towards the phone I hear its eerie shriek warning me that something is wrong. I place the handset back on the receiver to silence the noise. The counter is covered with open beer cans, snot covered wadded up pieces of Kleenex and an overflowing ashtray. The phone book is open on the counter. It's opened to the Yellow Pages; Airlines-Animal is the subject matter. There are many stains on this page. I assume them to be spilled beer or tears; whichever one it is doesn't concern me. There is heavy underlining of one number, Alcoholic's Anonymous.

From the kitchen I can look through to the living room. The heavy curtains block all light from entering the room, thus making it difficult to see. I hear sounds from the TV; Oral Roberts is doing his best to save sinners. Moving towards the living room, the smell of cigarettes overtakes me. A fear arises in me like a deer sensing a predator nearby. I carefully enter the cave, the darkness, the danger.

On the couch the dragon sleeps as I walk through its lair. Wrapped in her robe my mother lies breathing deeply. In her left hand is a cigarette with a two-inch ash. It has burned out; no life is left there. Her face looks oily and unhealthy. Her eyes: swollen and misshapen. My ears force my attention to the alarm clock on the table, ticking like a bomb threatening to go off. Tick, tick, tick. I must get out before the alarm sounds, waking my mother from her hibernation. Looking to the front door I get my first notion of freedom.

Moving towards the door I watch my mother to see if she stirs. If she awakes, I'll freeze like a deer caught in headlights. My only chance of escape is to not draw her attention. Reaching the door I slowly slide the security chain along the four inches of metal to release it. Finally I open the door. The sunlight crashes through as if I am 200 feet under the sea and opening a hatch. Knowing the flood of sunlight must be stopped from entering, I move quickly and go outside. My senses overwhelm me. The downpour of sunlight, the deluge of sounds, the flow of smells, all brutally hit me, yet caress me. Freedom! Today I made it. Today is a good day. Unfortunately today is only Tuesday.