

When It Was Hard

You are sitting in a basement watching Trailer Park Boys and you feel like crying. Your best friend sits in a chair and you are on the couch, and it is silent apart from the TV. He is just ahead of you at an angle that obscures his face, and you are glad of it because you know *your* face is broken and tortured and he must not see you like this.

His mother is in a hospital dying and there is no way to save her. A miracle might do it, but it is at the point where a miracle seems very unlikely, no matter how hard you all have hoped for one. He is a brother to you, and it feels like you are losing a mother too. It has been a long five days, the longest in your life. You desperately want to cry and you are screwing up your face in pain, so as to not to let a single tear fall. Your eyes burn from the effort and your lips tremble. No, you say to your stubborn self. No, you cannot cry. Not now, not when he is being so strong.

You force composure. A few minutes pass and you catch his hand wiping at his eyes. Your lips tremble harder and your throat tightens. It's like a ball has been shoved down your throat— it's choking you painfully. You mustn't let pain break you. You have to be strong for him, and for yourself. You cannot break down. You take a slow shuddering breath and will yourself into calmness [numbness]. Your will isn't enough tonight.

He is sniffing loudly, too loudly to not be crying. The pattern starts again. You fight it and control it, fight it and control it, until you cannot stand it any longer and the night is beckoning dawn. You mutely hug him goodbye — hug him hard — and only have to fight for a few more moments. You are out the door, walking fast, sucking air greedily from the balmy night. You are on autopilot — these legs are controlling themselves, but you climb into your hatchback and back out the long driveway.

Your resolve is crumbling now, but you aren't in the clear yet. You have to go a little farther. You reach the end of the driveway and switch the car into drive. You leave that place behind and don't look back.

And you are crying.

Sobbing.

You are crying so hard that you can't drive as safely as you should, but you will not stop driving. Deliriously, you switch on the windshield wipers, but it is not going to help your eyes, you silly girl. You are wailing and you are too inconsolable to wonder at the rawness leaking out of you. The drive is long and short at the same time. You make it safely home, but you wish you hadn't.