# POTATOES

*by* Kyle Scot Martinez

The hospital was a welcome relief.

A short ambulance ride, a nice man holding your arm in a make-shift tourniquet, the red sirens flashing and screeching.

Then you were there.

The paramedics wheeled me into a cozy corner.

Privacy is one thing you do not get in an emergency room. You get a space of hard linoleum flooring and an uncomfortable bed. Who could sleep in that mechanical bed? It makes you sit up in a way that is unnatural. It's like the ER is deliberately keeping you awake. They will be checking on you. Yes, every fifteen minutes.

"I need to check your vitals." said the nurse.

"I need to adjust your bed." said the orderly.

"I'm the hospital psychiatrist, how are you?" he muttered.

"You need to eat something." said the other nurse.

"Hi, I need to take your blood." said the third nurse.

"*Sorry, already tried that--didn't work,"* I thought. "*And by the way, how many nurses do you need in this place? No wonder are health care system is fucked."*

I thought I was going to get some rest; no chance.

Not to mention, noises from the other side of the drawn curtain. Shared rooms are inventions of architects and space planners. Only the rich and famous(or infamous) get privacy in this world.

Pop, pop, pop.

Constant talk about popping this, popping that. I got to know my curtain buddy better than his own Mother. I knew what he popped, how many milligrams he popped, and how many times he had tried to perform this same popping function.

It was his sixth.

This time, he popped twenty, (20) milligram Zyprexas, all at once.

*Pop, pop, pop, that's what we do all day long..*

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My thoughts were still insane.

I have taken Zyprexa before, and one (5) milligram pill made me quiet and tired *all day.*

So, multiply the (5) milligrams I took by (4) milligrams. That equals curtain buddy's (20) milligram dose. Now, multiply that (20) milligram dose by 20 pills. Simple 5th grade math tells you that's (400) milligrams of pure, psychotropic heaven.

No wonder curtain buddy drooled and muttered.

Funny thing, I understood him more than the doctors and nurses did. Because I was in the same state. A different city, maybe. But definitely the same state. He was in Pills, Idaho. I was in Alcohol, Idaho. Same place really, just different inhabitants.

Both dirty, just like Potatoes.

The psychiatrist came into my drawn curtain.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"I want a cigarette." I said.

"You hurt yourself bad. Any reasoning behind it?" he asked.

I considered.

I was beginning to sober up. Clarity was being restored.

"Reasoning? I didn't want to commit suicide if that's what you mean. Let's just say I was testing God. I've been doing that all my life. I wanted to see if he was really there or not."

I glanced at his clipboard.

"What's that say?"

"It says your blood alcohol content was .351. That's pretty close to death. Do you know that? It also says they had to put you in restraints after they brought you in here. Do you remember fighting with anyone last night?" he asked.

"Bits and pieces. Want I really want is a cigarette. Badly." I said, still thinking of myself.

"Yeah too bad, we don't supply those here, as I'm sure you probably already know." he smiled.

"Do you know what a 51/50 is?" he asked.

"*He's trying to have me committed permanently.*" I thought.

"No." I said.

"I'm putting you on a 51/50. It's a 72 hour hold at SMHTC." he said. He pronounced it *s-m-i-c-k-e-d.*

"Do you know what SMHTC is?" he asked.

"No." I said.

"It stands for Sacramento Mental Health Transfer Center. I see here you don't have any insurance. Is that the case?" he asked.

"Yes, I don't have any." answering in reverse.

"SMHTC is basically a free mental facility for people with no health insurance." he said.

I pictured the looney ward with people in sheets. *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* flashed into my mind. *I'm going to be Randall fucking McMurtry hanging with the mute Indian...*

I laughed inside.

I silently hoped Nurse Ratchett would be there--handing out meds especially designed for me. I would fake taking them by hiding the pills under my tongue. Except they always check under your tongue. That's standard operating procedure for looney bins.

As if he read my mind, the psychiatrist said, "It's not that bad really, all things considered. Pretty clean facility, all things considered." he said again.

"*Now you're really scaring me. I don't like when people says things twice like that. That's always bad news baby.*" my brain flashed. *"And what does PRETTY CLEAN mean? It's either clean or it's not clean. Is there shit everywhere? Do people eat their own shit there? I am going to a place where people eat their own shit."*

My brain told me this in one second.

"Do I have a choice?" almost pleading.

"All things considered, no." he said a third time.

"*You say those words again, and I'm gonna jump out of my bed and break your nose. How would you like that? You ever have a*

*busted nose? I have, twice. It feels like dogshit. That's why I respect boxers. Boy can they take pain. They eat it like candy."*

"What now?" I sighed.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

"I could eat." I replied.

"I'll go and ask the nurse what we can rustle up for you. Not going to be anything special. But we'll see what we can do." he smiled again, then departed.

"*Those psychiatrists are always smiling at people. Personally, I think they have a screw loose themselves. Everyone does in one way or the other. When he goes home he probably puts on woman's pantyhose. That's his thing--I just pegged it."*

The nurse came in and delivered the sandwich.

Turkey, with mayo and mustard in little packets on the side. The soda was Fanta Orange.

I ate with gusto.

I fell asleep.

I dreamed. Mostly, of S-M-I-C-K-E-D.

Two hours later, there I was.

No escape.

From.

Myself.

end