



Driving Me Crazy (A True Story) by Sydney Schur

He'd never screamed shut up at me before that day, and it seemed unfair but I couldn't look away from him. My dad has always been the one to punish me for yelling that same phrase to my siblings. I realize now that singing the song "Dumb Ways to Die" on a car ride to see my Grammy was inappropriate. Of course, I didn't know at the time that she had stage four pancreatic cancer. And knowing that has been detrimental to both my mental and physical wellbeing.

Many people are perfectionists artistically. When they make a mistake, they HAVE to erase it because, well, they have to. Their brain is guiding them to. I've been suffering in a similar way, but with my feet. It's obsessive, and it's literally driving me crazy. My feet forcing the rest of my body to follow wherever they want to go. Every time I walk past a certain nick in the soft wooden kitchen floor, I MUST step on it. I MUST hit the top ledge above the stairs while running down them. I MUST place my foot exactly so that my big toe is inserted into a metal groove in the floor. If I don't, the cancer will worsen. But if I do, it will help her; improve her health. I can't stop it. It's not even a voice. Just a tug. I try not to oblige. To tear that thin line of obsessiveness that's connecting me to it. But I always end up running back. Retracing my steps against my will and making sure I walk on the dent. I snap back to the craziness inside my brain like a rubber band attempting to launch, but retracting to its original form.

It's getting worse as Grammy's getting worse. Harder to talk about. Each layer of oriental carpet leads to more steps. Some patterns need two, while others call for six. I'm constantly getting slowed down. I skip around, consciously yet submissively. My brain is trying to help the situation the only way it can. Controlling me differently, threatening me if I don't follow its authority. I can't medically help my grandmother, but I think I need to help myself.

My room is a safe place for reasons I don't know. No obsessive pulls. I can breathe. There is a small pull, but it's weak enough so I can usually ignore it. Now I'm sick, but then again, so is she. Different ways, different levels, different stress, yet I'm crying for the both of us.

Every night, as I close my eyes, they tear up, creating discomfort in my own body. Falling asleep, the same horrifying thoughts continuously flashing in my mind. I must be going insane. This will go on until I die. How will I get a job if I'm always stepping compulsively? Will I be good at those dancing arcade games? When will I see Grammy again? Will I be there when she passes away? Why do people say "passes away" rather than just dies? How long do we have left? Will the stepping end when Grammy di-passes away? Die is a hard word to say, I guess.

They all tell me to celebrate her life. To not be constantly stuck on her coming death. They tell me that it's okay. But every time they do, I scream. I scream and yell at them, telling them it's not okay! It's not okay. Why couldn't a terrorist have this awful disease? That wouldn't have been totally okay, but at least it would have been better than cancer practically stealing my Grammy's life. She doesn't deserve it. Out of everyone, she deserves it the least. A grandmother who lovingly always put others before herself. A gorgeous woman, tall and thin. A hilarious lady, with a sense of humor no other can possibly match.

When my grandmother dies, will it be like a gradual release? Obviously not a cheery one. It will feel like the devil is removing his bloody hands from the tense, stressed mess that is my brain. I've already cried until my eyes burned. Stayed in one room for the entire day, refusing to communicate or express my feelings to others. I'll walk past the same nick, the same ledge, and I'll just breathe in. My body will be expecting to touch them, my limbs may partially extend, but they'll quickly recede as I purposely attempt to forget. Attempt to forget my habits, but NEVER my Grammy.