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A Simple Question

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Cover Page Footnote

This piece was written and workshopped in 17F. This piece was presented as a branch to a 17F Week 6 trunk piece.

A Simple Question

What had the student been avoiding?, we ask. We ask, you ask?

Why do you ask, “we ask,” I ask?

Is it because you see it differently? You don’t see any avoidance but instead only nostalgia, and a love of the present and of the past? Love of the present? He talks of hope, the student, which is of the future, but also of the weather. It’s nice out. Love of the past – notice how his favourite music is the classics, or at least that’s what he listens to. But what of the future – there is hope, and he is driving there, you see. To somewhere.

Wait, we all say, say I, to you, that makes no sense and you’ve only been rambling incoherently. Ah-ha! And precisely! And that makes it all the more powerful when I emphasise avoiding. Because it is more clear. Because it is the not driving to where you ought to be first, because it is all at once the past present and future. Because avoiding is the action which is punished.

I know, okay, say I to you. We, an inclusive we, can all learn from this boy his lesson – avoid the punishment. Oh, and before I go on, I just want to say also: avoiding because not-avoiding is just so clearly dreadfully boring, or else just plain dreadful.

The student, I know, had work to do. He had the paper to deliver, a lab report to compile, which was more than he had first anticipated, breakfast to eat, a problem set to turn in, and class to attend. But it was so, at least it seemed, so dreadful. Wouldn’t sleep have been better?

So what does the student do, despite knowing he had work to do (Which really, was not so bad. The student like his work. He just had gone to sleep late the night former and would have liked an extra twenty minutes or so, for morale’s sake), but decide he ought to go back to sleep. So go back to sleep he does, launching himself face first onto his high-rise bed, and landing his face into his favorite pillow.

Wonderful, we say hypnotically. (Please stop talking <says who?>).

Less wonderful (is the story continuing? <who again?>) was the student hitting the wall behind his bed head first, and being forced to ice it immediately after. Forced to complete his lab report regardless. Forced to be late to class. Forced to have headaches through class. Forced to nap for four hours in the afternoon. Forced to get 11 hours of sleep that night, and ten the next. Forced to abdicate, for the most part, the use of screens, and forced most of all to find himself in the position of having most of his homework done by Sunday at 2, having still had a moderately enjoyable weekend, and having had plenty of time to spare to boot.

So, beware such punishments! We must do as we must. Elsewise, we may be faced with tragedy beyond measure. The student, if he had only gone home, if he had only begun work right away instead of retreating to bed, would not have met with an avoidable, and self-defeating fate. Learn from this, I admonish you. You?, you ask. We, I correct. You, you say.