

Death averted ; or, happy days are here again

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **28 (1960)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **11.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-569140>

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... It was certainly the dark night of the soul for me. Granted, we all have differing depths to go down into depression and despair—the 'bottom' that one person hits is not necessarily as deep as that of another. My alcoholism was the result of an unadjusted personality; I could not face the fact of my homosexuality. But my bottom was deep enough for me: true, I had never lost my job nor been in a sanatorium for drunks, but I was consuming a fifth of whisky a day *at home*, and heaven knows how much more as I staggered from bar to bar. And my memory was going, slowly, surely ...

That night I was alone in my apartment. The bottle was almost empty; I could not see the walls of the room, but only a blurred kind of swimming movement. I remember my violent sobbing, lying face down on the floor with the dust from the carpeting sharp in my nostrils. And suddenly I knew the time had come. This was the night of my destruction; I could face life and its problems no longer. And sobbing still, I wriggled slowly on my belly, pulling against the carpet with the flat of my hands, headed towards the kitchen.

My goal was two-fold. One, the hypodermic needle with which I had been giving massive injections of thiamin chloride to myself, so that my ragged nerves could face each new day's old pain; and two, the small bottle of quarter-grain tablets of morphine sulfate that I'd stolen from my grandfather, a country doctor, after he had died—stolen them just for this day, this night, which even then I obscurely sensed was coming.

Blinded with tears, shaken with sobbing, I pulled myself to my feet when I reached the kitchen stove. From force of habit I took a small pan, put a little water in it, and dropped the hypo in, to boil and sterilize it.

Then—swaying and unsteady, as I looked down at the water bubbling in the pan, I sensed a great light burst inside me. Just what the hell was I bothering to sterilize the needle for, when I was all set to commit suicide? What has a corpse to fear from staphylococcus?

And so from my horrid despair, I leaped suddenly to the peak of laughter—and holding my sides, gasping for breath and with tears streaming, I roared until I collapsed weakly on my bed.

I have not tried self-destruction since. I'm afraid I might giggle.

(From a subscriber's letter.)