

Part I

6:

All of us make decisions daily. Most of these decisions are unimportant--what to wear, what to eat, where to go Friday night--in terms of long-term effects. Sometimes though a decision presents a real dilemma because of its possible consequences: entering the service before going to college, playing high school sports or working after school, ending a relationship.

In your essay tell about a time when you or someone you know faced such a dilemma.

Make sure you describe the dilemma and the consequences or the way in which the decision was made with specific details.

The Day My World Stopped Turning

It's six in the morning. I wake up, as I do every morning, to an alarm that reminds me that I should have gone to bed before midnight last night. It is a Wednesday. Wednesdays are easy days in the life of a Southeast Missouri State University baseball player. Last night we played Saint Louis University, and got beat pretty bad. It's been a tough year for us so far, but we still keep hope that we will turn around in the last two months of the season. I'm playing well at this point in the season. I'm leading the team in just about every major offensive category, and life is good. I stumble to the kitchen to grab my pre-workout cup of Joe. My coffee maker is old and does a terrible job filtering out the grounds, but I still enjoy my morning coffee as it gets me going for weight lifting, class, practice, and whatever else my day may hold. I take this moment of peace and clarity and I pray. I pray for my family, I pray for my team, I pray for my girlfriend of over a year now, and I pray for my soul. I truly find myself staring into that cheap coffee mug with the watered-down grounds-filled excuse for a decent cup of java. These are my last few minutes of peace and quiet before my day gets going. My roommates will be awake in a matter of minutes, and after a quick breakfast we will be greeted by our team—our broken and battered team with its cliques and factions and phony politeness. We pretend to all get along, but deep down we are divided. I just hope that we can make it through the season in one piece. We may not like each other, but we do share two things: a team name and a common goal of winning a championship. For these reasons, we remain civil and try to get along.

Weight lifting is as therapeutic as always, Adam, our fitness trainer, puts us through a good upper body workout consisting of bench presses, curls, and pushups with a few other small, less important lifts thrown in there. We are all tired and sore, but we love it. We just finished playing a game in forty degree weather less than twelve hours ago, and here we are, leaving the weight room at a time when most college students aren't even awake for their first class. Tired, both physically and mentally, I grab a quick shower and head off to class. I don't have much time after my shower to go home and eat so I always pack a banana, granola bar, and a protein shake to hold me over until I have time to eat again after class.

I've never found school to be that tough. Maybe because I picked a major that isn't very tough, but I'd like to think that it's my brain that makes it easy and not the professors or curriculum.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are easy days for me in this spring semester. I only have one class at nine and then I am free to do whatever I wish until practice at 2:30. I usually take this time to do some online homework, but on this particular day I decided that I would rather head down to the field and take some extra swings off the tee. You see, for me, hitting off the tee alone is almost therapeutic as my morning coffee. Baseball is my second religion, and sometimes I may worship it a little too much. At least that's what I'm told. I think it's just passion for the game and a strong drive to perfect a sport that rewards even the greatest of players only three times out of ten.

Practice is at 2:30 every day during the spring season. We get Mondays off, play a game on Tuesday, have a long fundamental practice on Wednesday, just take batting practice on Thursday, and we play on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. This being Wednesday, we will have an elongated practice, but it's nothing that we dread by any means. We finish practice at about four, and this is always when I'm hungriest.

I have a few options for dinner. I can go home and make a healthy meal of grilled chicken, veggies, and potatoes, I can go to Qdoba with my best buddy Trent, or I can call up Renee, my girlfriend, and see if she would like to grab a bite to eat with me. I decide to do the latter and call up Renee. I really do love her, but we have had a bumpy past. She has broken up with me on multiple occasions, but we always find ourselves back together and everyone knows this. At this point in time we're doing great. We have decided to really work hard on not being so offended by the little things and to focus on the big picture a little more. She is really a great girlfriend when she's not drinking.

Renee's dad was an alcoholic. He has been sober now for over a decade, but that hasn't erased the past. I fear that Renee is also an alcoholic as she always takes her drinking to the extreme. We always seem to have our fights when she is drunk. She starts yelling and saying anything to make me mad, and I usually do get mad, but I let it slide because I know she doesn't mean it. My friends and family don't really like us together because of some of the things she has said and done to me, but she is working on her problems and is trying to better herself for me.

Renee and I decide to go eat at McAllister's Deli. I order the usual, a McAllister's Club with potato salad. We sit there and talk for about an hour or so before I take her back to her dorm room so she can get ready and meet up with her friends. They are going to Pour House tonight to hang out and drink. I opt not to go because I am not a fan of drinking during the season.

Normally I worry about Renee drinking when I am not around, but tonight I have this sense of peace with it because she has promised me not to drink too much. She is coming over to spend the night when she is through hanging out with her friends.

It's eleven now. I have been watching TV with my roommates and playing Call of Duty on my Xbox, when I receive a text message from an old high school friend. I am taken aback by this because I hardly ever see or hear from her. She tells me that she is sorry Renee and I broke up. I inform her that we haven't and imply as to why she would think that. She tells me that Renee told her friend that we broke up, was sitting on his lap, and asked him for his number to hang out. I am seeing red.

I call Renee, and I tell her that I am not about to let her act like that and that she better leave me alone for awhile. She starts yelling at me before I abruptly end the call.

It's midnight and I get a pounding at my door. It's Renee. She bursts in and punches me in the nose, twice, fracturing it in two places. I run to the bathroom to stop the bleeding. My friends finally get her to leave and I am in pain. It's not my nose that hurts, though, it's my heart. I thought we were in love. I thought the pain was behind us and we were headed to bigger and better things.

I was numb to the world for weeks after this incident. I couldn't believe this. Time stood still and my world was no longer turning. I can't keep loving her, but I can't stop either. I need my coffee.

The rest of my season goes poorly. I go from the best hitter and player on the team to a guy who lost his starting spot to his best friend, only to get it back due to an injury. I can't do anything right. I end things with her for good in the summer. We tried to move past it, but it was unhealthy. I had to make a decision to make myself and my life better, and I knew that the immediate pain of losing someone who didn't care about me was worth the lasting happiness I will someday find.