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(THE HARDEST DECISION)

“The journey of a 1000 miles begins with a single step.” ~ Lao Tzu

It's 3:17am, Tuesday morning. I sit with a cooling cup of tea staring at the freshly written letter. It's sealed, the envelope carefully placed next to her phone where I know she will see it.

I take a deep breath. This is the hardest decision I've ever had to make and having made it doesn't offer me any comfort. I've decided to not only leave my relationship, but walk away from one containing an unborn child. My girlfriend is five and a half months pregnant – I'm the father.

I'm not just leaving her... them, but this city. A city I've never warmed to. One that is so frigid and uninviting, I've often wondered if it reflects my own state of mind or a mirror for the relationship I endured.

I take one last sip of tea. The liquid now tastes bitter. I move from where I've been sitting with guilt reflecting on the gravity of my decision, and as quietly as I can, I place my cup in the sink and wash it. Ironic, given that after all these months I would leave it in the sink until there were a few more things to wash, but today is different. Today I am breaking the heart of the woman I love.

I place the cup in the dish rack to dry. I gaze one last time through the expansive windows that stare out into a part of Toronto that I'll never miss. Endless concrete, steel and glass. It's one tall, soulless building after another. They're all devoid of any imagination or creative design. I won't miss it.

I gather up the only bag I was able to secretly conceal the night before, with what things I could, all packed tight inside. It won't be enough but it will have to do.

There's a heaviness in my heart when I stand at the front door, a door I've opened a million times.

My hand rests upon the cold metal handle of the front door and lingers, unable to move, before my fingers slowly wrap around it. With a slight twist I step into the open corridor, where the rush of air from the building's heating system hits me. It takes me a second to catch my breath. I close the door as quietly as I can behind me before I place the key into the lock and turn it. Once it clicks, I gently open the mail slot and slip it back inside. The clang as it hits the tiled floor below, reverberates around my head long after the key comes to a quiet rest.

Despite the early hour the elevator takes much longer to arrive than usual. Perhaps it's a sign. Maybe it's not too late to turn around, knock on the door, ask for forgiveness. Is it possible I can make it work? Or that she can be less reproving?

The elevator dings, then opens. I stand immobilised.

Right before it closes I slink forward. It swallows me with a thud. The sudden descent makes me stumble and I reach for the side rail to brace myself. I catch my sad reflection in the surrounding mirrors, knowing this decision will haunt me for a long time to come, possibly the rest of my life.

When I arrive at the ground floor, the doors slide open and cool air rushes in towards me, though the coldness I feel isn't from the outside. I take one last look back at myself. My eyes can't hide the anguish.

I walk out of it into the foyer before I'm faced with the last door and the final thing between me and... I can't find the words. It's not fear, nor is it even remorse. It feels more like cowardice, yet it's deeper than that.

I take a beat. A lone tear stains my cheek. I don't wipe it away as I step outside, preferring instead to feel the sting. The freezing winter wind whips up around my face, a temperature that seems fitting.

I turn up my collar, zip the winter jacket up as high as it will go. I take a look back at the place I've called a home for the past three years. Other than fleeting moments, there are few happy memories here. I reach into my pocket, fumble inside, then press

play on my iPod. Moby's haunting '[Memory Gospel](#)' sears through me while its deep pipe-organs seem to echo throughout the still sleeping city.

I take a single step, and just like that, I've begun a new journey. One where I hope to rediscover myself, seek absolution for what I am sure will be construed as an arsehole act, or at the very least, an uneasy peace. Anything!