

Adrenalin Run, Surviving a Blue Monday

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Anneke Eising©

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This is the story of Jessie Artem.

It is a fictional story, built on my encounters with beautiful people and sometimes difficult situations.

It was written for all the kind strangers I met in my life.

Thank you for being kind, without wanting anything in return.

The story in this book, is particularly meant for all the young people I got to know over the years.

You inspired me, may all your dreams come true!

And then, when there is nothing left to say, listen to 'the song'.

Anneke Eising

The Netherlands, April 2017

Blue Monday

It is a windy Monday morning in March. Jessie Artem is lying on her bed. It is a rather messy bed. The covers are all scattered on the floor around the old metal bed. The only thing left, is the sheet she is lying on and the beat-up pillow underneath her head. Her blond hair is a mess. The mascara she put on yesterday morning, is now making her eyes look like those of a raccoon. This is the result of the sadness she felt last night. She cried until she fell asleep. And just a few minutes ago, she awoke from a disturbing dream.

In it, she had boarded a small helicopter. For some reason, she sat behind the pilot. And from her seat, she could see cottages and a very green pasture. Lots of grass and lots of trees. And then, when she glanced sideways, she noticed something odd. The pilot, a young man, was crying! He wept silently. Jessie didn't remember ever hearing a sound in her numerous dreams. So, he wept silently. And when she asked him why he was crying, he told her, that it was, because of the policeman who had died.

Jessie had then told the pilot to take the helicopter down. And he had done so. He had landed the thing in a street. There was a long line of cars behind them. And they stood near the traffic lights. The lights had just turned yellow. Jessie remembered feeling a sense of surprise when she noticed that the pilot had opened his door. He had then jumped onto the asphalt and then he had disappeared. Jessie had told the other passengers, that they had to get out and that they had to walk back to the airport. She remembered, that her voice was very harsh. Very strict and determined. So, unlike her.

And then she had gotten out too. Then she had stood there and she had watched how the people were walking back to the airport. She remembered the cars lining up behind the helicopter. And she remembered, how she wondered why no one had phoned 911. So, she phoned and while she waited for the operator to answer her call, she stood beside the helicopter to make sure, that no one would enter it.

So, when the alarm clock on her bedside table suddenly rings its disturbing tunes, she wakes up feeling exhausted and also anxious. Where did this dream come from? Was it supposed to warn her of some imminent danger or disaster? And why was she dialing 911? Here in the Netherlands, one is supposed to dial 112 in case of an emergency!

Jessie slowly opens her eyes. The memory of the strange dream is still distracting her. Then, she turns her head to search for her alarm clock on her bedside table. As usual, the clock is surrounded by books and makeup. The clutter is making it hard to see what time it is. She actually has to get up to be able to see the numbers on the clock. Seven - thirty! O no! She is supposed to leave the house at seven forty-five!

It is amazing what a person can do when she is in a hurry. Jessie decides to skip her morning shower. Instead, she brushes her teeth in record time, then she brushes her hair and with some effort, she removes her old mascara from underneath her eyes. She decides to forgo a fresh layer. After all, it is Monday! For her, it is already a Blue Monday. So, who cares about mascara? Her day has been ruined already.

At seven -forty, she walks into the kitchen. Her dad, Mike, has already left for work. Jessie decides to grab some buns and a package of cheese slices. She packed her books last night and now she only needs to put the bread, the cheese and a couple of bottles of water into her big backpack.

At seven forty-five she is ready to go. While she takes her bike out of the garage, she puts the heavy backpack into one of her bike bags. They are so handy! When you bike twenty kilometers a day, then you need to be prepared. The big bags protect her backpack and her books from rain, hail, and snow.

Of course, she doesn't think about all of those advantages. Why should she? All of her friends have a bike and bags like these. It is considered to be pretty normal when you bike every day through the polder in the Netherlands!

After she has locked the door of the garage and also the front door of the house, she jumps on her bike. She swings her long strong legs over the saddle. She is using a men's bike today. It is her dad's. She prefers this bike to her own, because it is sturdier and it is easier to handle. Without looking, she tries to find the pedals with her feet. With the top of her feet, she moves them into the right position. Then she puts her feet down on the, now horizontal, pedals and she pushes her bike forward. Across the driveway, down the street.

It is now is seven fifty. She is now running five minutes behind schedule. It is a very tight schedule. The thirty-minute bike ride will have to be completed in twenty-five and it is very windy today! The east wind pushes hard against her.

It is March, but it is very cold for this time of year. Her long, knitted scarf covers part of her face. Especially her mouth needs protection. She doesn't like to get cold teeth. Now she looks like a burglar, her eyes are just barely visible. Her hat covers her ears. She doesn't care if she doesn't look very fashionable right now. It is cold. It is windy. And she hasn't had breakfast yet! She is craving for coffee.

Jessie is pretty grouchy by now. And the cold wind in her face doesn't help. When she turns onto the bicycle path next to the highway, the wind is gaining power. Out in the open, between the long fields, Jessie cannot take cover from the freezing cold east wind. But she is used to this. Her strong legs pump hard. She bends her head and she holds on to the steering wheel of her bike. Her breath is heavy. After ten minutes, she is finally starting to warm up.

Jessie keeps checking her watch. She has to be at school around eight fifteen! But, the wind is strong today. And after eight kilometers, she knows she is going to lose this battle. It is already eight ten and she still has two kilometers to go!

By now she is sweating profusely. And to her horror, she realizes, that she forgot to use her deodorant this morning. She curses softly underneath her scarf. 'Shit!'. She is going to be late, she is hungry, she hasn't had her coffee and on top of that, she is going to have to stay after school, because this is the third time in a row, that she is going to be late!

When she finally arrives at school, she is four minutes late. The schoolyard is completely deserted. A few hundred bikes are the only witnesses to Jessie's arrival.

She hastily throws her dad's bike between the bikes of her classmates. She'll lock it later. Every second counts. Maybe she is in luck. Maybe her watch is running fast. Maybe the big clock in de school corridor has broken down. Maybe.

The school secretary is frowning at her when Jessie closes the big door behind her. It is a heavy door. With a loud bang, it slams shut. De sound echoes through the empty hallway in the silent school.

All of its students are where they are supposed to be. Except for Jessie. "You're late again!" Mrs. Van Dalen eyeballs her with her beady little eyes. Her opinion of Jessie is clear. Her eyebrows raised, she expresses her disgust with this seventeen-year-old, who has made it clear, that she is not going to adhere to the school rules.

Hence her tardiness. And with her opinion set in her mind, the woman has no sympathy with the blond girl in front of her glass window. The child has a very red face. Sweat is pouring from her brow. Her bright blue eyes seem even brighter now. Jessie senses the disgust in de woman's voice, when she states, that Jessie has to report to the principal's office before she is allowed to continue to her math class.

Jessie's belief, that this is a doomsday, is hereby confirmed. The principal's office! Not even she had reckoned, that this would be the consequence for her tardiness!

A minute later, she drops into one of the little red plastic chairs in front of the office of the man she hardly knows.

Instead, she has heard different stories about him, from students who are very up to date on the inside of his office. Now, Jessie wasn't a regular troublemaker. She liked to do what needed to be done and she never had a problem with her teachers. Only since her mother decided to leave her and her dad for a more exciting venue, Jessie had trouble to arrive at school on time. Since her mother left, she was responsible for most of the chores, like cooking and doing laundry. Her mom had only left a few weeks ago. And Jessie and her dad Mike had trouble getting used to the new rhythm.

Jessie also felt very sad about her mom's sudden departure. It was like she was the one who got punished the most for her mom's 'midlife crisis'. This is what her father called it. Jessie was not so sure. There had to be more to it. Why else would her mom, the sweetest woman in the world, leave her and her dad? Without any prior warning, she had packed her bags and was gone.

It happened on a Friday. When Jessie got home that Friday afternoon, she noticed right away, that the house seemed different. It was quiet. Their house was never quiet! Her mom had a habit of tuning the radio to a very modern music station. All day long! She would only turn it off when she had to go somewhere. And, although she was already fifty-three, she loved modern rock music. She would often dance to it. Jessie would love it and she would watch her mom, while she made all kinds of groovy moves in the middle of their wooden living room floor.

But, that afternoon it was quiet. Too quiet. Jessie's mind tried to tell her, that something was terribly wrong.

She walked through the house, searching in every room for her mom.

But, when she got to her parents' bedroom, she was in for a nasty surprise. The room was tidy. Too tidy. Her mom was, like Jessie, a slob. Creative people often are. And her mom, a writer and a painter, was a major slob! But this time, the bedroom was tidy. It looked like a bed in a hotel room. Clean, sterile, cool and empty. The bed was made. Probably for the first time for as long as she could remember! Her parents' bed had been so welcoming, so accessible. Even at her age, she would sometimes lie in between her parents, to cuddle or just to chat about things. But now, the bed was made. It was as if, by fixing the sheets and blankets, invisible doors had been closed. Doors that would never again be opened.

Something told her to open the wardrobe. A walk-in wardrobe. Usually, her mom's clothes were scattered on the shelves and on the floor. But now, most of the shelves were empty. The clothes hangers were also empty. Her shoes and boots were missing, as well as her jewelry.

When Mike got home that day, he found his daughter in that wardrobe. She was lying on the floor cradling an old and forgotten sweater. Her mobile phone lay in pieces next to the wall. Mike knew instantly what had happened. Then he tried to call his wife too. Her phone number had been 'taken out of service'! What had she done? And why? Why had they not noticed anything? When had his wife started planning all of this? Where had she gone?

It took two days, before they knew, that she had found a new friend. An internet friend. A man who liked to travel the world.

And she thought that she deserved the attention which he was able to give her. But what about us? Jessie had thought.

She had not been able to ask her mom that. Her mom had sent that cold and very distant email. That was all. No more, no less.

This is how Jessie lost her mom. It felt like she had died. Maybe even worse. Her mom had dumped her and her dad. Jessie often felt worthless. Lately, she considered herself to be a reject.

At school, they had started to notice this too. Her marks had gone down dramatically. She was tardy and she neglected her friends.

But, the truth was, no one knew about her mom's departure.

But that was about to change.

Grief

It is already a quarter to nine that morning when the principal finally opens the door to his office. He is standing in the doorway and he is looking down at Jessie. The tall man in his jeans and navy sweater is checking his watch. 'As if I don't know what time it is!' But, Jessie is keeping this thought to herself. It is probably wise, not to anger the man who holds such an important position at her school.

She holds out her hand to shake his. A Dutch custom. You shake hands to introduce yourself. His name is Rob. This is making her feel more at ease. A stricter man would never mention his first name to a mere student!

Then he tells her to take a seat. Jessie sits down in a metal chair which is facing his desk. He sits down in the big black chair behind it. His big hairy hands are folded on top of the black metal desk. Jessie now takes a quick scan of the office. It is very basic. Very tidy. Very metal. A computer, a printer and a radio. The presence of the radio is making her feel more confident. Ordinary people listen to the radio. Hence her principal must be an ordinary person! A normal person perhaps. She lets out a big sigh. Right now, she is feeling a bit weak. She is hungry and thirsty. The sweat on her body has already dried up. She is hoping that she not emitting a bad odor since she forgot to use a deodorant.

While she is worrying about her physical appearance, her eyes wander to his steaming cup of coffee. And, as if he can read her mind, he places the fresh cup of coffee in front of her.

“Koffie?”, with a smile, he offers his own mug of steaming hot coffee to her. “Do you have milk?”, she asks with a shy smile. Maybe this guy is not as bad as she had feared. “Is it okay if I eat in your office?”, she continues. She is really ‘pushing her luck’ now. But she takes the risk. Her stomach is complaining loudly now. He must have heard the rumbling sound too! In response, he makes an approving gesture with his right hand. “Thanks!” She is truly grateful. She can’t believe her luck. Hot coffee and a bun with old Gouda cheese!

So, when he tells her, that she has been late too often and that there needs to be a severe consequence for her tardiness, she really couldn’t care less! The warm drink and the food are making her feel drowsy. The bike ride from that morning, the disturbed sleep, the stress and grief due to her mother’s departure, have taken their toll.

“Jessie, can you tell me why your marks have dropped lately?” This is a question she had been expecting. Yet, she had not expected to have to come up with an answer it so soon. She hadn’t mentally prepared herself!

So, she just sits there staring at a big poster on the wall behind her principal. She doesn’t see it, however. Her mind is now rehashing the events of the past weeks. The mug with the hot brown liquid sits forgotten in her hands. The mug is tipping to one side. The coffee is moving dangerously close to the rim. In a few seconds, it will spill on her blue jeans.

“Jessie?” The question snaps her back to the present. “Um, I, eh”, she stammers. She takes another deep breath and then she sits up straight.

In a quick motion, she places the coffee mug a little too quick and a little too hard on the metal desk. It sounds angry. And the coffee spills. He doesn't seem to notice. She does, however. It is making her voice falter. She suddenly feels like crying. His eyes seem surprised, but calm. They are gray, she thinks. Funny, how one notices trivial things when one is in trouble. He has long nose hairs too, she thinks. Like her dad. Now, she shouldn't have made that connection. Now she remembers, how her dad had been crying that Friday afternoon, when he found out, that the love of his life, had taken off. Without a word. Without so much as a goodbye!

Jessie is suddenly letting out a big sigh. As if that sigh is giving her the 'okay' to let out all of her bottled up sadness. The strong emotions that have taken a hold of her, are making her cry. She cries for ten whole minutes. The principal says nothing. He just places a box of tissues in front of her. And he listens.

After ten minutes, a big pile of used tissues is laying in her lap. She has told her story. Has said 'sorry' about a dozen times. Now he knows. And so, the other teachers will know before the end of the day. And so, her calm, regular life is over. Now they know and they will feel sorry for her and so they will treat her different than before. And all she wanted, was to be normal, regular, the same as all the rest of them. Thanks a lot, mom!

This moment is a turning point. Jessie experiences a sense of disgust. Disgust for her mom and what she did. But, and she doesn't know why she hates herself most of all.

Life hurts sometimes

Rob takes the box of tissues from her. She doesn't need them anymore. Her tears have dried up. In the past ten minutes, she seems to have aged though. She seems older than the seventeen-year-old girl that walked into his office this morning. She looks tired, with a slightly worried look. A look that is making her seem older than she ought to be. She seems wiser too and a little tougher than before.

The hurt and the loneliness from the past few weeks have taken their toll. Jessie has lost a bit of her innocence and a lot of her softness.

The principal wishes he could help her. But he knows that she is not the only teenager in his school who has experienced this kind of rude awareness, due to the divorce of parents who suddenly can't seem to get along anymore. So, he'll inform the other teachers and he is hoping Jessie will recover from this hurt.

Her marks are not the most important things in the world right now, but studying may help her to focus on other things.

Minutes later, Jessie enters the classroom at the end of the hallway. Her math teacher nods her head when she notices her. Without having to say a word, Jessie sits down at the table near the door. Nobody wants to sit there. Usually, the students like to move to the back of the classroom as much as possible. As if that could prevent them from being called to the white board. It usually doesn't make any difference.

Mrs. Van Pelt somehow seems to know, when her students haven't done their homework. And when she finds out, they can be assured, that she will give them, even more work and she will inform their parents too!

She has just started on a new chapter. And, before Jessie even has a chance to find her book in her very messy bag, Mrs. Van Pelt calls her name. "Jessie, can you tell us how to solve this math problem?" Jessie doesn't hear her right away. But, when the teacher asks her the second time, she suddenly realizes, why her classmates are laughing. She quickly sits up straight. The book has not been found yet. So, she is a little confused. She doesn't have a clue what the teacher is talking about! So, she decides, to be honest. Today is clearly a day filled with problems, but she is going to be honest nevertheless!

"Mrs. Van Pelt, I didn't do my homework. I am sorry!" Jessie looks at the face of the older woman. She has red hair met white streaks. She must be about fifty. "Jessie, that was not my question! Can you solve the problem?"

Only now, Jessie focusses on the screen in front of her and then her eyes wander to the whiteboard next to it. Math is one of her favorite subjects and this morning she is going to prove her skills! So, she gets up and she picks up the whiteboard marker from the table in front of it. Every student is now watching her with interest. Minutes before Jessie entered the classroom, no one wanted to volunteer to solve this math problem. They didn't want to, because they didn't know how!

A few minutes later, she is sitting down again. Jessie has solved the problem and she has explained to the class, how she got to her answer.

They listened to her and they copied her notes. Mrs. Van Pelt is pleased with her. But, because she didn't do her homework assignment, she will have to stay after school today. It is going to be a very long day. But, Jessie doesn't mind. Her dad will be home late anyway. And this way she won't have to spend too much time alone, in their big old house.

Thieves!

Jessie is one of the last students to leave the school today. It is getting late already and with the slight drizzle that is starting now, the journey home doesn't look too promising. She will have to bike for half an hour in the rain before she can call it a day!

The school yard is rather empty. Here and there, a deserted bike is waiting for its owner to return. Jessie suddenly realizes that she forgot to lock her dad's bike this morning! And now, she is scanning the school yard in order to locate the bike. But she can't find it! How come? What happened to it? She decides to walk around to see if someone has put it somewhere else. Why? As a prank? To help her? What?

But, after five minutes of searching, she realizes that her dad's bike has vanished. It must be stolen! She left the key in its lock this morning. How stupid! And how is she going to get home now?

When she walks back to the school building, she discovers, that the big doors have been locked already. It is five o'clock. The lights in the school have been turned off as well!

Jessie reaches into her coat pocket to take her phone out when she realizes that she broke it a few weeks ago. Her dad has not yet bought her a new one. He too has been preoccupied, because of her mom's departure. He has become very forgetful. Hence, she has no phone!

She is in big trouble now! How is she going to get home? All of her friends have left already.