Tap, tap, tap, tap, and tap…. My fingers were rapping on the keys. “Nah, that shit sucks,” I thought to myself, “Erase it.” The buzzing noise of the laptop was drowned out by little giggles and screams. “You gotta get this shit done,” I thought, “Focus… focus.” The sun shone through the window behind me and reflected off of my lap top screen, creating a glare. My son, a two-year old blonde haired little boy, was standing on the top of the couch adjacent from me. He let out a screeching scream as little hands gripped and slid down the curtains as he lifted his legs and flopped his bottom on to the couch. “Simon! What are you doing? I told you no curtains!” I looked up at the naked window behind me. Two holes above the window on the brown painted wall revealed where a curtain rod once hung. “Simon, I can’t keep replacing these brackets”, I said.

“What’s all the noise up here”, my wife asked as she walked up to the living room from the kitchen. Her blonde was hair pulled back in a ponytail. She pulled a tissue from the pocket of her blue robe and blew her nose.

“Shannon, Art was yelling at Si Si for jumping on the couch”, my three-year old son Arthur said.

“No, I wasn’t. Well, I was but I was yelling at him for pulling on the curtains. And Arthur, call us Mommy and Daddy, not Art and Shan,” I said, “I’m sick of replacing these freaking curtain rod brackets. It’s ridiculous!”, I exclaimed.

“Well, he’s bored. You can’t just sit on your computer and ignore him like that. He’s gonna get into things”, Shannon said.

“I gotta get this stuff done for school. What do you want me to do?”, I asked.

“I don’t know, but I can’t have them screaming when I’m on the phone with providers. I have to work and approve these cases and I can’t concentrate when I got kids screaming and walking in and out of my office all morning”, Shan said.

“Pshhhhh… I can’t either!”, I exclaimed. “I gotta get the hell out of here. I’m walking to the Wawa for a coffee”, I said.

“Can you grab me one,” Shan said, “but don’t put any cream or sugar in it. You made it too sweet last time.”

“Pshh… Yeah”, I replied as I slammed the door behind me.

The walk was a blur. All I remember was seeing the naked trees and roof tops in the forefront of a cold gray sky. The autumn was transitioning to winter. I went on autopilot. “Where’d the sun go?”, I thought, “Can I do this? Can I juggle these roles? Can I be a father, a student, a husband, and a hairstylist? I hate juggling all this shit right now. Why the f\*\*k is my wife ragging on me? I can’t take this shit. F\*\*king curtain rods and chasing kids up and down steps, and writing papers, and dealing with the f\*\*king public. All they do is bitch. Everyone. How am I going to handle being a nurse? Can I do this shit? Do I have the compassion? I wanna move to a cabin in the woods by myself, I swear to god”, I thought.

I passed by the funeral parlor and headed towards the Wawa parking lot. Cars patiently waited for parking spaces to open up as I walked right on by. In front of me was a girl wearing a black hat and an apron. She sat on the ground with her back against the wall. A cigarette hung from her lips as she played with her phone. To my right was a blue 1995 Chevy Cavalier, the same car I owned when I was 21. Nastalgia. I took a quick glance in the window. The interior was gray, just like the car I once owned. A tall black man held the door for me as I entered the store. Feet trampled around.  While filling the cups I felt a hand on my shoulder. “Excuse me dear”, She said with an Irish accent. Her eyes were the bluest of blue, the color blue casted by shadows on snow. She wore a long blue skirt, a blue blouse and a blue winter hat. She headed towards the register. I poured sugar and cream in one cup and left the other black. I headed behind her in line. The cashier put a half gallon of milk and two bananas in a plastic bag.

“Can you bag the bananas separately”, the old woman asked. “I don’t want the milk to freeze them. I like them to freeze in my tummy”, the old woman said. The cashier smirked and responded, “sure.” Her hair was pulled back in dreadlocks and she wore librarian style glasses. She gave me a funny look. I got the impression that she was making fun of the old woman.

“I would have assumed that you’d want the bananas in a separate bag so they wouldn’t get squashed”, I said to the old woman.

“I usually buy my bananas in Aston. That’s where my husband likes to get them. But he died two days ago”, she said. Her eyes filled with tears. The store went silent.

She continued, “I hope the church gives him a proper burial. I don’t know what to do without him.”

I leaned in. “Come here”, I said as I gave her a big hug. Her body so tiny and frail. I whispered in her ear, “Everything is gonna be okay.”
“Thank you for your love and kindness,” she said, “God bless you.” She paid for her items and left. I paid for my coffees. The cashier gave me a nod. As I exited the store the smoker girl held the door for me. I guess her break was over. I proceeded to leave with coffees in hand when I heard, “Thank you again for your love and kindness.” The old woman was opening the driver’s side door of the blue Cavalier. “Come here”, she said. I walked over. She walked to the back of her car, popped the trunk and lifted up a blue blanket. Under the blanket was a cardboard box filled with Christian pamphlets. She handed me one.

“Jesus is the answer. Love is what is most important in this life, not money. You remember that”, she said. Her blue eyes peering into mine. “The Church won’t save you, they only want your money”, she said. “It is only Jesus that can save you. Be kind to others. Love other people”, she said.  The sun pushed the gray clouds aside as it beamed from behind her, and landed on my face, casting a shadow on the parking lot behind me. Her withered mouth smiled.  People scurried in and out of the store as we stood behind her car. Steam rose from my cup as I swallowed a sip of coffee and responded with, “I will.” She closed the trunk. “I have a television set at home that I’m looking to get rid of, if you want it. I never use the thing”, she said. “Thank you, but please give it to someone who needs it,” I replied, “TV rots your brain.” “Yes, it does,” she said, “It brainwashes you. But he loved watching his baseball.”

She leaned in, hugged me, and gave me a cold kiss on the cheek. I walked home with two cups of coffee, a Jesus pamphlet, a renewed sense of self, a clear mind and a purified spirit. Sometimes, even though I feel alone with my thoughts, little reminders pop into my life to remind me that we are all connected. Each one of us are little collective pieces of the universe. To see the blue sky that exists behind the gray clouds, sometimes all you need is a warm cup of coffee and a hug.