

In Style

By Sopphey Vance

WHY WE LIKE IT: *There's almost a visionary quality to this dark-themed discerning memoir of an inpatient detox facility. We like the spin Vance puts on 'style' and how he plays it out. The cloistered voice and fractured prose create a sense of anxious isolation but there is a silver lining with the emergence of empathy and the prospect of resolution. A nicely controlled confessional with just the right amount of 'drama'. Quote: '...vitamin and mineral deficiency due to poor eating habits. Sleep style, insomnia since childhood. Ride to inpatient facility? State trooper style. Seated in the back seat while crying all the way and trying to make proper conversation.'*

Style. Hair style, buzz cut without the buzz on the top. I preferred to keep my mane. Clothes style, the clothes appropriate for the day. Blue top, as per the uniform recommendation by the director. Black capris to compliment my frame and budget as an overweight person who shops at discount stores. Flat tennis shoes with tied in shoelaces that didn't make it through inspection. I couldn't forget the nurse's look of disgust when he saw the soles. A giant, flattened ghost of gum, rocks, and hair right dab in the middle.

A lot of things didn't make it through inspection. My markers, a bag of snacks for the children at work, my wallet with 300 dollars and change. Credit cards, phone, house keys, medicines, and supplements. They all went in contraband. I didn't know what to expect. I started

that morning by going to my caseworker appointment at the low cost mental health clinic. I had a few to drink the night before. And my first psychiatrist at the clinic prescribed an array of medications to help with my binge eating disorders. A half of this and a half of that, I had diligently cut in half the appropriate amount of pills. Expertly I placed them in my pill box inside my sequined purple pouch.

Gone for broke, the night before I purchased a multi pack of flavored wine coolers. Peach, coconut-pineapple, cherry, strawberry...the four flavors of summer packed in a box at the gas station. They were even chilled. One bad idea in the video series of my life. Thirty seasons in, I finally decided that drinking was always a great idea, though it wasn't.

That morning I walked into my caseworker's office. Sat in the chair, still buzzed from the night before. Nodded blindly to the questions. Nearing the end of the appointment my brain froze. My defenses down by the questioning, antidepressants and medication in my system: I did it.

"I'm fine now." I put my hands on the chair and grasped the edge. "But, I can feel that I won't be."

More questions. And a realization from one mind to the other.

"That's exactly what I'm saying." I began crying, the familiar pounding in my heart. "I'm fine now, but in the back of my mind I'm thinking about my stash of pills at home."

The next few hours lapsed into moments of tears and moments of silence. Physician cleared me first, after prodding in four different locations for blood. Obviously, one becomes dehydrated after being a heavy drinker. The probing needle left shot glass sized bruises. Crying, waiting, and finally an inpatient facility has an opening.

Style. Suicidal ideations with a plan. Type: overdose with pills. Substance abuse style alcoholism. Top 5% of all alcoholic users. Vitamin and mineral deficiency due to poor eating habits. Sleep style, insomnia since childhood. Ride to inpatient facility? State trooper style. Seated in the backseat while crying the whole way and making proper conversation.

The state trooper had my ID. But I could still run. I knew the way back home. I had my stuff in my arms. I'd still be on time for work. But I follow into a holding room for admissions. The front door obscured from view.

There were four green chairs in the room and a drawer with my stuff under lock and key. I've been in one of these rooms before. I've done this before. Cop ride, inpatient center, holding room. Then I got to go home. I was cleared to be safe before. But I wasn't safe. Not this time.

That's the first I became acquainted with the routine questions.

- How are you feeling?
- Are you hearing or seeing things?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you rate your depression?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 how do you rate your anxiety?

From holding room to adult hall. Everybody's away at an activity but I'm standing in front of the charge nurse's booth. A tech tells me I can't go anywhere after a skin test. I had to pee. She pointed to the direction of the restroom but I had to leave the door open. The restroom, a two part room where a wall divided a bathtub and toilet from a sink and mirror. No shower

curtain or rod. Top of the toilet locked in with nowhere to hide anything. Toilet paper readily available but not locked in. Mirror nothing but steel that reflected.

I pushed down the knob for water. A small sprinkle tinkled in the light of the small room. I wiped my hands, dried in time for the skin test. Into the laundry and hygiene room. One tech and one nurse and me. Arms out. Gloves on for the two. One scooping behind my neck, double checking for anything foreign. For rashes, for anything that would be unsafe for me. I couldn't help but cry. To them they only saw the body of a female, but deep down I never saw myself as such. The thought furthers my misery.

Silently, tears streaming down my face. I finally joined the day room. More crying and more tears. I sat in a chair. Sobbing, closing my eyes to the world. Wondering why I did this to myself? Was I feeling so awful that I wanted to die? Did I hear or see things, no never. On a scale of 1 and 10 my depression sat at an 11. My anxiety level made new records on the Richter scale.

Lifestyle. Respectable member of society with a full time job. Member of the local Rotary Chapter. Future seminarian. Graceful individual with published poetry books under his name. Low budget outfits, but stylish nonetheless. Friends with people who live in country clubs.

Forlorn poet. Tame party animal that dances till the lights turn on at clubs. Devilish romantic. Prey to the kindness of others. I only stopped crying when a kind person brought me a snack to my chair. Graham crackers and pudding. The whole lot of us were in there for the same things. Maybe in different regards, with different back stories, but ultimately under stress.

Keeping each other afloat.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *It is a distant memory but there are things I will never forget about the first inpatient facility I went to. The patients and staff brought me into their world day after day. And though I have never spoken about it to anyone 'In Style' is the beginning of an adventure and a nightmare I'm finally learning to understand.*

BIO: Sopphey Vance is a poet and literary editor escaping life to live in the wind. He is neither here nor there but has made guest appearances in anthologies and magazines. He boasts star spotlight in his very own chapbooks available on Amazon. You can connect with Sopphey Vance on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.