

Erik and the wrist watch

At seven O'clock AM the wrist watch Erik wore beeped. The watch's face and its strap were orange, the digits green, and the clasp was metallic. Erik was fascinated by it. Erik quickly pressed the side button to deactivate the programmed alarm as soon as it beeped.

He yanked the bed sheet that covered his body and got up with the diligence of someone who knows that they have an important mission to accomplish.

Last night, Erik had hid some things under his bed. He reached under the bed and retrieved them one by one: an empty cereal box, a ball of white wool, a pair of scissors some tape...He ordered the objects in front of him and thought for a moment. He took the cereal box and cut a small rectangle. He wrote his name in it with a tick tip marker. He punctured the cardboard on one of the short sides. Erik, then, cut a piece of wool and passed it through the puncture. He tied both ends. He hanged it around his neck with his name visible.

He repeated the task twice. This time he wrote the name of his parents in the cardboard pieces. He cut several more pieces and wrote: "kitchen," "living room," "fridge," etcetera. He also drew a house map indicating the location of every room.

At eight thirty something his parents told him breakfast was ready and he interrupted his work to go to the kitchen. As he ate a piece toast with jam and a glass of milk he listened in his parents conversation. His mom will leave at ten and would return an hour later. His father will wait at home. Erik calculated the time using his fingers, he had a little over two hours left.

He finished the glass of milk and climbed the steps that led to the bathroom two at a time. As he washed his teeth he fished in his pockets for some of the labels he had printed. Once finished he went to his room to get dressed. His parents left the clothes he had to wear for the day prepared for him every day. It was mid-summer and his parents had left for him a pair of deep blue short trousers with six pockets he loved, and a white T-shirt with a bicycle that his aunt had brought him back from Menorca. He didn't wear them.

He instead went to the mahogany closet and rummaged through his clothes until he found a pair of green pants from last fall and the jersey with color stripes he had worn at his grandpa's last birthday in November. He was hot and the pants were a bit short on him, but he knew it was the clothes he had to wear.

He glanced at his watch green numbers and read ten fifteen AM now. His mom had already left, his father was reading in the living room. The stairs that connected the two floors were clear. He went to his mom's office and grabbed a block of yellow post-its. He put one on every step of the stairs. The steps, made of dark wood, were now signaled by the post-its.

It was time for the hardest part of his plan: get his hands on the family's photography album. His parents didn't allow him to take them without asking for permission first since the day he had looked through them with chocolate on his hands.

Lying was bad, he knew it, but in this case it was necessary. Erik went to the living room and told his father that his sister had fell from her crib. Disheveled his father jumped up and left.

He had to be quick. He dragged a stool to the piece of furniture where the family albums were and got one of them.

Once back in his room he unstuck from the plastic pages a photo of his mom as a kid with her parents, one of his grandparents wearing straw hats, and another one of his grandpa holding him when he was a baby. He took the photos to the guest room and stuck them to the wall one by one.

His mom would be back soon from the nursing home where his grandpa stayed. The old man would stay with them during the summer. A few days ago his parents had explained that grandpa had Alzheimer's disease, they had told him it was possible grandpa didn't remember him or the house. He would have troubles with names, and some mobility troubles. But he had prepared for it. Grandpa would come and see him with the same clothes he had seen him the last time and would remember Erik was his grandson. He could also read his name in name tag he wore around the neck.

Every room had its name written down and the yellow post-its stuck in the stair steps would allow him to clearly see the steps and not trip over. The pictures in the guest room would help him remember they were their family.

Erik went over every detail again on his head and remembered one last thing. He took off his watch, went to the room where his grandpa would stay and left it on the nightstand programming an alarm at eight thirty AM. Maybe it was a bit early for grandpa but this time he was only thinking of himself and how much he missed having breakfast with his grandpa.