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“Elevator Pitch”

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Troy stepped into a crowded elevator on the way up to his apartment. It was the type of “crowded” where you don’t even have enough room to reach into your pockets to grab your headphones. Troy would’ve usually waited for the next round because he wasn’t a huge fan of the awkward silence that tends to arise in elevators, but he was really anxious to get home and plop into bed.

It’d been a weird week. Troy had to put his beloved dog Bagel down, and he wasn’t going to get over it anytime soon, if ever. On the flip side, his manager finally gave him a raise. It wasn’t much for filling out spreadsheets all day, but it made Troy’s curiously escalating monthly cable bill look a little less jarring. TV was one of the only things that could possibly cheer him up.

Troy tried not to make eye contact with anyone in the elevator. It was moments like these when he wished he could speed up time. Or teleport.

“It’s a beautiful day out there,” said a voice from the corner.

Sometimes the small talk was even more painful than the silence. Troy wondered why someone would choose to bring up the weather while in an elevator, of all places. You’re inside of a tiny room — inside of another room — inside of a building.

It was also impossible not to overhear the phone conversations transpiring around him.

To the right, a woman seemed to be ranting to someone about a sour breakup with a friend. “At least I don’t have to pretend to like coffee anymore,” she quipped.

To the left, there was a man in a suit carrying an unkempt box of office supplies while speaking into his Bluetooth device. He seemed to be having some sort of breakdown. “They completely blindsided me,” he said. “I don’t know what the hell I’m going to do now.”

Maybe the stock market plummeted again.

In front of Troy, there were a pair of teenagers that smelled of smoke and looked higher than the 15th floor. They weren't talking, though. Just scrolling.

Behind Troy, someone was planning a Friday night celebration. "Bring the good champagne," they said. "This is monumental."

As the people all eventually dispersed to their respective floors and went off on their own ways, Troy stood there as the last person in the elevator. He suddenly felt a ringing sense of loneliness. And much to his surprise, he somehow missed the strangers that he was surrounded by for a few minutes.

During the final ascent to his floor, Troy thought about the ups and downs of life, what his future would hold or not hold, and just how empty his apartment felt without his beloved dog Bagel.

When Troy exited the elevator and got to the door of his apartment, he reached into his pockets and realized that he accidentally left his headphones in his car