

Statute of Limitations

Craig Silverman shivered on a narrow ledge overlooking the Falls, three-hundred feet or so below him. He had calculated it a dozen times. Two-hundred pounds would fall into the frothing, white water caldron in four seconds, whether he went feet first or head first.

He would swallow ten of the pills along with the little bottle of vodka left from the flight back from Honolulu. The internet said he would fall asleep in twenty to thirty minutes. If he sat with his weight forward, it was likely he would hit the water head and shoulders first.

That morning he had mailed a final letter to Jamieson Morgan, the client who served the malpractice lawsuit on him. He told Morgan he could have his judgment by default.

The note he left for his sister made it clear that she would have no duty to satisfy Morgan's judgment when she wrapped up his estate, beyond the life insurance payoff and the few hundred bucks in his office checking account. She had no personal liability. Every second year law school student learned that in Trusts and Estates.

In Civil Procedure they learned that failing to file a lawsuit on behalf of a client before the statute of limitations kicks in is usually irreversible. Morgan had learned that when he called twenty other lawyers, asking if they could undo Craig's failure to timely sue the insurance company that denied Morgan's fifty-thousand dollar homeowner's insurance claim, for damage from a tree that fell into his living room during the Hundred-Year Storm of 2009.

His ass was starting to ache from sitting on granite for an hour. When he shifted around, he nearly pitched forward. Only grasping a slender root that had forced its way through a crevice saved him.

When he pulled the bottle of Ambien tablets out of his shirt pocket, his hands were shaking so badly he nearly sent the pills tumbling over the edge. If the law of gravity was as certain as the statute of limitations, it would take the bottle the same four seconds to hit the water as would his body. He stuffed the pills into his mouth and sucked down the vodka.

He pulled out his cellphone and surfed around on the Internet until he found the nearest Suicide Hotline. He would have them call his sister, save her days of anxiety before she found the note in his apartment, or his body snagged on a beaver dam or rolled up on a river bank.

He dialed the number and an older-sounding man answered. "SnoValley Life Hotline. My name is Jim. Would you tell me your name?"

"Of course," Craig said, "my name is Craig Silverman. If I give you my sister's name and number can you call and tell her I left a note for her on my pillow?"

"Wait," the man said, "you mean a suicide note? Can you tell me about what's in the note? You know she'll ask."

"It's boring," Craig said, "as mundane as yesterday's weather report. Nothing that matters."

"So why lose your life over something that doesn't matter?" the man asked.

"I cost somebody a shitload of money," Craig said, "because I was too fucking lazy to do what I needed to do. *Craig Lazy Silverman* should be on my birth certificate. It's time for me to stop breathing air other people could use. I'm a waste of oxygen."

The man cleared his throat. "I'm not supposed to tell callers my own story, but two years ago my nephew, Connor, stepped in front of a train down by the airport. He's my only nephew, my brother's boy, and we were close. We were supposed to go to lunch the day he died, but I took the morning off to hit golf balls. I was in the middle of a bucket when it was time to go back to meet Connor, and I figured he could wait a few minutes. He was going through a divorce, about to lose custody of his two boys. We'd talked about it a hundred times. I knew he was distraught, but I thought his lawyer was doing a pretty good job calming him down. He told my secretary he had something else he needed to do, so he wouldn't wait for me. She kept him there while she tried to reach me, but I had my phone turned off. I didn't want any distractions. Two hours later he was a news item on Twitter."

They were still for a few seconds, just breathing. Finally the man spoke. "You know, there's something I call the chain of forgiveness. Is there somebody you need to forgive, so you can feel like it's possible to be forgiven for whatever you did?"

Craig thought about Camille. It was only five months since he'd caught her horsing around with his partner in the hot tub at the Royal Hawaiian. It turned out the horsing around was nothing new. "Yeah," he said. "I should call my ex. Even though she literally screwed me over she deserves to know she had nothing to do with this."

"Why don't you do that right now, Craig," the man said. "Promise me you'll call her, then call me back and let me know what happened. Can you make that promise, Craig?"

He said nothing.

"Let me say something else, Craig," the man said. "Talking to you has made me realize there's somebody *I* need to forgive, to keep that chain of forgiveness going. Let's do this: We'll hang up and I'll make my call while you make your call. Then I'll call you back, say a half-hour from now. You want to hear about the call I need to make?"

"Fine," Craig said, "Just so it doesn't take too long. There's someplace I need to be in about fifteen minutes." He could feel his head starting to fog up.

The man laughed. "If I can forgive the dumbass lawyer who cost *me* fifty-thousand bucks, whoever you think you hurt can surely forgive *you*. I'm going to call him and tell him it's his lucky day, that my priest told me there's no statute of limitations on forgiveness. In a way, you're that priest, Craig. What do you say?"

Craig touched the screen on his phone and ended the call. He leaned back and watched the mist drifting over the Falls. He could smell aging leaves and feel a late September edge to the breeze that was picking up. He remembered meeting Camille during halftime of the first football game of the season, his senior year at Redmond High. It was feeling like football weather.

He thought of Manoa Falls, a city bus ride from Waikiki, where Camille made him take a picture of her and Ed, arms draped around each other. It had bothered him, but he didn't say anything to her. That was the day before the hot tub. They thought he was out buying shirts. All she had on was her bikini bottom and Ed was giggling like a loon. It took them five minutes to see him standing in the doorway.

He was a hundred yards down the trail, leaning on a rock, trying to clear his head enough to remember where he parked, when his phone

rang. He'd call them back after he caught a little nap. He eased his body down the face of the rock and propped himself against it.

He dreamed he was a priest and Camille was confessing. She was kneeling, wearing her wedding dress, the one her grandmother wore. Her eyes were streaming. Her lips moved, but he couldn't hear her. He raised his hand and touched her forehead, her shoulders, beneath her breast.

He forgave her.