

Tod
Michael Burns

Let me introduce you to my depression. His name is Tod. Tod is sitting in the corner, wearing a black suit with a loose tie and flipping through a worn book while smoking a Lucky Strike. This is how he is most of the time: calm, quiet and just... there.

Often he just sits in the room with me, but every once in a while, something makes him change. It's something different every time, but for whatever reason he'll move from his perch, give me a sad glance and then start taking slow, soft steps towards me.

He keeps walking until I can feel the heat from his cigarette and see the tinges of blood just inside his sleeves. Then he'll sigh and lay his hand on my shoulder.

You would think that his hand would be cold, but it isn't; it's warm, soothing, and that warmth flows throughout my entire body. It's never any use to fight, it just takes over and you can't even move. You just lie there, sometimes curled up into a little ball, and sometimes just collapsed haphazardly on the floor.

The most difficult part is that there's so little I can do. No matter what, I can't make him let go, but I can stop him from going too far. I can stop him from putting the blade to my wrist or the rope around my neck and I can stop him from pulling the trigger against my temple. I can stop him from finishing the job, but I can't make him let me go.

Tod doesn't scare me like he used to though. I know now that I'm just as strong as he is. And I know what he fears. So whenever I feel his worn hand on my shoulder, and his breath in my ear, I don't try and fight, I simply pick up the phone and call them. They're my secret weapon; their voices come out of the speaker strong and Tod quickly draws his hand back. Then he gives a quick smile that seems to say, "until next time," and then strides out of the room. He walks farther and farther with each word said into the phone until he's gone.

Until next time, old friend.