

BLISSFUL SOLUTION

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He couldn't bare it any longer; he needed the poison. He needed that booze, the one that calms him down and the one that can bring an oncoming storm. Already he drank a whole bottle of red wine his father had hidden and two cheap beers he bought on his way home. But he craved for more; he needed more. He got up from the sofa and went to his father's secret minibar. There he grabbed the whiskey a friend of his father got from Tasmania. He grabbed the glass and poured it in. Then, he sat on the sofa and began to drink his favorite poison, an expensive stolen whiskey. One sip and it all began.

He remembered how his father would make him a list of math problems to solve. Sometimes the list would take two days for him to complete. He recalled the first slap he received from his father.

"You're the most stupid little boy I've ever met! It's a shame that I am your father! Use your brain; understand this piece of crap! It's easy! All you got to do is practice. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! Look, you take the x and the y and sum its value and then, that value you multiply it by z . That is the first damn step! Isn't that simple?"

In his father's anger, the little boy began to cry. "Why are you crying? Crying won't solve the problems!"

"Dad, I don't understand this. Stop screaming at me, please."

The impenetrable man slapped the soft cheek of the child. "Don't ever tell me what I should do, you dumb creature."

Another slow sip of the whiskey and he remembers when he was a young male. They moved to the city where his father worked. He works as a professor in a prestige University. In this place, the Mathematics Department coordinates one

of the biggest tournaments known for math lovers. The famous *Pi Tournament*. “How many Pi digits can you remember?”

The man was older and the boy he slapped more than twice was now seventeen. His father wrote on a board, $\pi=3.14...$

“C’mon boy, do what you can. We’ve been over this for a long time.”

His father hoped he would write many numbers, the boy didn't. He only scored until 3.1415926. But the father looked angry at the sad soul.

“All this time, all these days trying to make you know as many numbers of Pi as you can, to win that damn tournament... All for nothing! You're worthless mathematician! How is this even possible? You are the only son of one of the best mathematicians ever! How can you be this dumb?”

While his father was making a whole play out of the situation, the boy's mother came to the scene.

“I can hear your goddamn melodrama upstairs! Leave the poor child alone! How many times do I have to tell you that you are pushing him too hard and that he doesn't like mathematics!”

“Don't get into this, woman! Nobody asked for your damn opinion!”

“I don't care if you asked for it or not, he is my child and I will protect him!”

“Shut up, you worthless slut!” He said as he slapped the woman's face.

She looked at him in terror, but the man was so angry with her that he kept slapping her. The boy stood there frozen. All the sudden, he went to rescue his mother from the beast. But his father punched him in the head and knocked him down.

While he was staring at the pale wall, he took another sip, but this time with anger. Compressing his wrath on the glass, thinking *I could have prevented that, if only I knew the damn thing*. He stopped squeezing the glass; he had one last sip of the whiskey. “That damn bastard.” He whispered, while looking at the glass.

When the boy finally woke up, a nurse gave him the sad news that his mother

committed suicide because she was "ill." His father was praying for him in the waiting room. In haste, he said, "I don't want to stay with him! He makes me do horrible things! He makes me do difficult math problems and I hate to solve them. If I don't do them right, he'll beat me."

The nurse laughed and said, "he's doing you good. You'll be an intelligent boy, you'll go to University, and you'll become one of the best!"

The boy started to scream, like if he could see crystal clear what she just said. The nurses ran to him and gave him a tranquilizer. Immediately, he fell asleep.

“If everybody knew that she did not commit suicide, that *HE* was the reason! I know it was him –I know–.” He said while pointing at a picture of his father, which was hanging on one of the walls of the room. There was a long silence in remembrance of his mother and then he spoke, “The last gulp of the night, I suppose.” He swallowed it and there he was moribund on the sofa. Almost gone from the face of the world.

The competition is at the end of the year, and his father knew that there was still some work to do with his son. His father wanted to win the competition, no matter what. So his father spoke with his good friend who was a doctor and got him some pills to enhance the boy's ability to pay attention.

“Take two tablets daily; it will help you improve with the goddamn numbers.”

“What are these, dad?”

“Don't ask, just take them.”

It was finally the day of the tournament a few months after his mother's death. It was his turn to write as many digits as he could. He was nervous, sweating and trembling.

“What's your name, my boy?”

“Richard Dedekind¹ Harvey, sir.”

“Oh you're Robert Harvey's son, a pleasure my boy. Please, begin.”

The boy, still nervous, he grabbed the chalk and before he could write any number he looked back to see his father. His father looked at him dead serious, without making a single facial expression. Not surprised at his father's nonexistent reaction, he turned to face the blackboard. He felt lonely in that room full of pretentious young boys and egocentric old men. The boy took a deep breath and started writing, $\pi= 3.1415926$. He stopped for a minute that felt like hours. Concerned, he took a glance back at his father and saw the disappointed angry gesture he always makes. The boy then remembered the last time he saw his mother, the last time he was with her, and the last time he saw her alive. He remembered the look on her face, how sweet and caring she was with him. But then the bitter memory came up in his head, when his father slapped her, and slapped her, and slapped her. The boy pressed the chalk and it broke in two pieces. In his rage, he continued writing numbers on the blackboard, $\pi= 3.14159265358$. He took a glance at his father's face, and saw how he devilish smiled.

$\pi= 3.141592653589793$.

$\pi= 3.14159265358979323846264338327$. He continued,

$\pi=3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105$.

He continued writing,

$\pi=3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105820974$
94459230781640628.

$\pi=3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105820974$
944592307816406286 20899862803482534211.

The audience kept in silence, until a man complained about the inhuman behavior of the child. Of course, the parents thought the child was cheating. But the boy still felt the rush of adrenaline in his body and kept going.

¹ Richard Dedekind (1831–1916), German mathematician, one of the founders of abstract algebra and modern mathematics. His father named him after this mathematician.

$\pi=3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105820974$
 $9445923078164062862089986280348253421170679821480865132823066$
 $47093844609550582231725359408128481.$

Between the sound of the chalk on the blackboard and the tumult that the men were doing, the boy stopped.

$\pi=3.141592653589793238462643383279502884197169399375105820974$
 $9445923078164062862089986280348253421170679821480865132823066$
 $47093844609550582231725359408128481$
 $1174502841027019385211055596446.$

He stopped as a result of a memory. His mother said to him “my darling, there will be a day that you will have to break with your father's rules. Do what you must, be free.”

His father rose from his seat and began to slowly clap with a devilish grin. The boy felt light and fainted.

“If an eighteen year old boy drinks a whole bottle of red wine, two beers, a bottle of whiskey, and some pills. Will he survive the night? Well, I guess I'll have to practice scoring the answer.”

He took a handful of pills, threw them in his mouth, and swallowed them all with the rest of the whiskey. Some whiskey fell from his mouth and it was running over his neck, his shirt began to get soaked by the alcohol. His head was full of thoughts, numbers, feelings, pain, memories and that damn sign, π . He fell to the floor, almost with his eyes closed. He began to feel warm and then he got colder by the second.

“Pi, Pi... 3.14...159...2...653...58...9...7932...3...8.”