



**Right Time to Die in Manhattan**  
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## Right Time to Die in Manhattan

By Holden Wilde

Ervin only noticed the red light after his car had already leaped onto the intersection. He smiled happily. The day had finally come, the relief was here. Time stopped and then moved in snapshots: he saw the sunset over the Manhattan skyline, then myriad holes in asphalt, greasy pillars on a corner building, and finally the scared face of a driver he was about to hit. Ervin's last thought was that he would look quite dapper being dead in few moments: open sports car, new haircut, tanned face, a slim-fit French shirt hugging his v-shaped torso, Tiffany's cuff links, Diesel's jeans, "I would look hot..."

His nightly death ritual had started about ten years ago, right after he'd arrived to Manhattan. Ervin was lying in bed, trying to fall asleep. He'd had an okay day, but something was bothering him. Ervin was lost – he had just graduated from a top law school and gotten his choice job, he was dating several amazing girls, he had great friends, and his parents were healthy, but he couldn't run away from the "unbearable lightness" of himself. He drifted along with no certain goals or strong desires. At night, he would usually fall asleep right away, but that night was different. He would have loved to throw back a few tequila shots, smoke a cigarette, and forget reality, but that seemed too cliché. Ervin was thinking about his day and remembered that a school friend had invited him to a shooting range. Suddenly he felt a revolver appearing from the muggy air next to his bodiless head, coming closer to his right temple. The trigger was pulled, and Ervin felt soothed and relaxed, a quick braingasm took all his worries away and he fell asleep...

Ervin was supposed to die a long time ago. He made millions in a contraband business at a very young age while his competitors had been murdered, died from heart and liver diseases or simply disappeared. Having tasted gun barrels on a couple of occasions and escaped from more elaborate murder threats, Ervin simply assumed that he had used up all his lifelong luck and there was no way he would die naturally at an old age. Coming to Manhattan was not really his chance for a second life, but a way to die in a less stressful environment. But without the high of a ubiquitous danger, Ervin needed another vice; drugs, alcohol, and women seemed passé, so he began thinking of ways to die.

His nightly "suicide" routine continued no matter what kind of day he had, where he slept, or whether or not he slept alone. Ervin had to have his fix before falling asleep. After about three years, the single revolver shot was no longer enough. One sleepless night, he managed to imagine a second revolver closing in on his left temple. Both revolvers shot at the same time, and Ervin felt relief again...

Constantly thinking about death in Manhattan, Ervin developed two simple rules to ensure that it would happen in the right way. Rule #1 stated that he must not commit suicide. Rule #2 stated he must apply reasonable measures to avoid dying. These rules limited his options, but also ensured that his last moment wouldn't happen in a pathetic or cliché way, and would help to avoid embarrassment and endless questions from his family and friends. Ervin used any chance he had to ride a subway late at night, walk alone in Alphabet City, nap in remote areas of Central Park, but despite a few altercations, nothing even remotely dangerous ensued. He blamed it on his heavy accent — when he kept silent, his potential killers would leave him alone, worried about hidden danger; when he spoke, they would leave him alone sensing a fellow criminal.

Month after month, his nightly death ritual was becoming more chaotic: two revolvers were joined by another two, one in front and one in back of his head, then he had additional guns joining in, aiming at his torso. In the last few months, he'd started to imagine the same executions during the day just to avoid diving into depression. But such accelerated "firepower" was still leaving him unsatisfied. Just few minutes ago, driving his car through Central Park, Ervin had looked at his shadow cast on the asphalt and thought, "Maybe I should get a real gun? No bullets of course. Just to press it against my temple, to see how it feels."

Ervin didn't hit the car, Rule #2 reared its ugly head and the driving instructor of his security detail many years ago had been too good. Pulling up on the manual brakes while swirling to the left, Ervin zig-zagged into upcoming traffic and back into his lane without a scratch. He felt only sadness. "Another night to live through... Maybe tomorrow."

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