Teacher Sunday scaries

Teacher Sunday scaries turn a free day into Monday with the halls still empty. Saturday can still be a day. Sunday night, the tote is already packed.

Tonight, when the dread lands, catch it first: there it is, the alarm. In for four, hold for seven, out for eight. Then empty the tote onto the table and make two piles: required, with a real due date, and the rest, which goes back to school.

Already drowning, with grades due Monday? Then the required pile comes home and the rest still does not. Two piles works best on the worst week.

Saturday morning you are a person. You make something that is not a handout. You laugh at a thing that is not a student's joke you are grading for effort. The building is a building you do not work in, for a few hours.

Saturday evening the first leak starts. You remember a parent, or a stack, or a Monday that went badly the last time Monday happened. You tell yourself you will not work. You move the tote closer to the door so Future You is not rushed. Future You has heard this before.

Sunday afternoon you open "a few." The few have a way of being the ones that need a comment, and the comment needs a lesson, and the lesson needs an example. The day tips. You are not resting while thinking about school. You are at school, in your kitchen, in socks.

Sunday night the body arrives before the thought. Chest, stomach, the particular tired that is not sleepiness. You are already in first period. The lesson you have not finished becomes evidence that you are behind, and behind becomes the kind of person you are.

You are short with the people you live with, over a dish or a question, and the apology you can offer is thin because part of you is already gone. They are having Sunday. You are having Monday.

You pack the bag with more than Monday needs, because extra feels like safety. The tote rides buckled beside you, the way Shannon buckles hers, because once a stack slid off at a stop sign and a whole class ended up under the brake pedal. A belt on a bag of essays is funny until it is the truest thing in the car.

If your stomach just clenched, you are in the right room.

If you have spent the back half of a free day preparing for a day that was going to come whether you prepared or not, and called the preparing love of the work, you are in the right place. Some of it was love. Some of it was the alarm, hiring Sunday so Monday could not surprise it.

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What is riding in the tote?

Shannon teaches high school English. She is 44. Her tell is the glasses, up into her hair when she is thinking, down when she is sentencing a sentence. On a Tuesday she sits in the faculty lot with 88 essays belted in beside her. 14 are done. At her usual rate, the other 74 want 37 more hours. She does the arithmetic in her head, though she is the English teacher.

The reason her pen runs long has its own page, Why grading takes so long. This page is about the Sunday it eats.

The dread on Sunday night is a surge. The body is in Monday. The tool for a surge is not a new planner. It is the short catch. There it is. The alarm. Then one breath: in for four, hold for seven, out for eight. Once. If it is still loud, twice more, and then you stop. About a minute, not a new evening practice that becomes another thing to dread. A teacher's ten seconds are already in the week: the walk to the kettle, the zip on the tote, the minute the copier warms up on Monday. Not a new ritual you will skip at 9:40 on Sunday.

Why don't Sunday tips work?

The usual advice says protect your weekend, and then lists hobbies. The hobbies are fine. They lose to the alarm for a specific reason. The alarm has a piece of evidence. The stack is real. The parent email is real. The sentence on the old form is real, even if it is old. "Don't work on Sunday" asks you to ignore a real pile, so you feel dishonest the whole time you are ignoring it, and dishonesty is exhausting, and you open the pile to make the feeling stop. The feeling stops for 20 minutes and then the pile is larger, because you are now in it.

The missing move is a sort, not a ban. Some of what is in the tote is required. It has a due date that is not your anxiety. Some of it is the pen answering a sentence from years ago, one essay at a time, at 30 comments each. Those are not the same objects. A ban cannot tell them apart. You can.

In the chapter called The Tote Bag, the rule on the board is *You go home.* The corner you drop is high effort, low impact, where a Sunday goes to hide and calls itself rigor. Mandated work never goes in that corner. Shannon empties the tote on the table and sorts it. That is the practice. Not a personality transplant. A bag, turned out, with the required work put back in and the performance put back on the desk where it can wait for contract time.

Where do the three circles sit on a Sunday night?

Circle 3 is the building. Class size. The schedule. What a student does with a comment. What an administrator wrote once, near the bottom of an observation, and never revisited. Whether Monday is hard. You can sort a tote perfectly and Monday can still be hard. That is not a failed Sunday. That is a school.

Circle 2 is the colleague who will hear "I am not taking this pile home," the department that can share a comment bank, the family who can be told that Sunday after 8:00 is not grading time. Influence. They may not clap. Penny, in the same book, learns that a no to the extra is not a no to the people. The

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people in your house are not the building. Tell them which hours are off, and then keep the hours, or the sentence was a wish.

Circle 1 is the sort, the breath when the surge hits at 9:00, and the decision to leave the performance pile on the desk. Worth lives in Circle 1. Nowhere else. Not in a Sunday that looks like a magazine, and not in a Sunday that looks like a second job you hired yourself for.

Why will a new planner not hold Monday?

When Sunday tips, the alarm often offers a productive way of coping. A new planner. A color code. A Sunday routine with a name. The routine feels like the opposite of dread, which is why it is so easy to buy. Look at what it does. It spends the free hours organizing the unfree ones. The stack is not smaller. The stack has a legend. Shannon's comments have a history like that: one sentence near the bottom of an observation, and then years of a pen that will not risk *adequate* again. A prettier system on top of that pen is still the pen.

The book does not hand her a planner. It hands her a sort, and eventually one weekend where the bag stays in the building. Sunday night is where you practice the catch before Monday needs it.

There is a second way of coping, and it is the grading itself, which deserves its own page because it feels like craft. 30 comments, a lesson in the margin, a comma splice taught in full to a student whose phone could define it. That pattern eats Sundays and calls itself standards. If that is the leak, go to Why grading takes so long after you have sorted the bag once. Do not try to reform the pen and the weekend in the same hour. The alarm loves a double project. A double project is how 8:00 becomes midnight with both jobs unfinished and the moral score at zero.

If Sunday night is not a pile at all, if it is only the body in Monday with no stack in sight, you still use the catch and the breath, and you do not invent a pile so the feeling has an object. A dread without a tote is still dread. Give it the minute. Do not give it a new unit plan at 9:30 to justify the adrenaline. The unit plan is Circle 1 only when you are the one choosing it in daylight. At 9:30 it is often Circle 3, the week, wearing your handwriting.

What do you do with the next Sunday?

Name the hour it tips. Not "weekends." The hour. For a lot of teachers it is late Sunday, after the light goes. For some it is Sunday morning, which means Saturday was the only day. Write the hour down. When it arrives, the first move is the catch, not the tote. There it is. One breath. Then you are allowed to look at the bag. If you look at the bag first, the alarm will have already decided the evening.

Empty the tote once, on a table, and sort two piles only. Required, with a real due date that is not your fear. And the rest. The rest goes back to school, on the desk, for contract time. Required can come home if it cannot be done in the building, and it comes home with a finish line: a time you

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stop, even if the pile is not adorable. Shannon's 37 hours are what happens when a finish line is missing. One Sunday of two piles will not fix the pen. It will show you how much of the bag was the pen, answering an old form.

One weekend, the bag stays at school. Not forever. One. If the thought of it makes you angry, the anger is information about how long the alarm has been the one packing. Tell the people you live with what you are trying, so they are not surprised by a person who does not know what to do with her hands. The hands will want a pen. Give them a dish, a walk, a foolish show. Do not give them a "few" essays. The few are the way back in.

If the dread is not Sunday but the email that ruins a weeknight, that page is The angry parent email. If the hours are the whole problem and not only the weekend, start with How to stop taking work home.

The opening is on the teachers page.

The book is sixteen Wednesdays, and the one weekend Shannon's tote stays on her desk.

Be first to know when *Stop Grading Your Sundays* is out

More reasons

How to stop taking work home

Why grading takes so long

Teacher guilt

Should I quit teaching?

The angry parent email

I feel like a bad teacher

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Tonight's move

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What to do

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Come home after the bell

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The person still grading at the kitchen table. Send this page. They can read it without an account.

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