

The Triflers

For Wojak & Pepe

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Chapter 1

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*The Letter, the Journal, and
the Manifesto*

Dawn Bracken

March 28th, 2013

Mother,

I imagine you must be worried sick due to my sudden disappearance. I can assure you that as of writing this letter I am doing just fine. I brought the entirety of my cashed out bank account with me, so I have been able to purchase food and drink, and I should be able to continue to do so for quite some time. I feel comfortable enough to tell you that I am currently travelling by train, but I will not disclose my anticipated destination or even the direction in which I am migrating for the obvious reason that this letter could easily be intercepted or read by the police.

I am sure by now you have heard a jumbled mishmash of troubling rumors about me and the company I have been keeping recently. The main intention of this letter is so that I can set the record straight. I am going to be upfront with you from the beginning, Mother. The things I have experienced, participated in, and organized within the last year or so are sick, vile, and inhumane, and they are surely the last things you would have expected from your precious little girl. I just want to ensure that you have access to the full, unadulterated truth, and whether this truth is more or less pleasant than the rumors and speculations being spread is of no concern to me. I care only that you know exactly what happened so that you can live with the truth rather than the course of events imagined by the investigators.

For the last year I have been a member of a group composed of several school associates of mine known as the Triflers. Of the six of them (with myself excluded), you are most knowledgeable of Mason since he visited our home so often and Mario for obvious reasons. The other members were *Donovan*, Truman, Chao, and Chao's uncle. Surely you are aware that all of them, with the

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exceptions of Mason and myself, are now dead. While I am willing and planning to detail all of the actions I performed within the last year, I will not disclose where *Donovan* and Truman's bodies can be found. After what happened to them, their bodies are likely unrecognizable at this point. But I will tell you much more about the Triflers later. What is important for you to understand now is that none of this is your fault.

You raised me as best a single mother in your condition can raise a daughter. My fall from grace and current circumstance had nothing to do with your lack of motherly ability or affection. These circumstances initially began to rise due to the Triflers' particular interest in the morbidly grotesque that obviously grew way out of hand. As I sat in that freezer waiting to die, I was filled with regret that I had not spent my life pursuing my wildest desires—desires that directly corresponded with the unsettling interests of the Triflers and myself in particular. When I was given my second chance at life, I knew that I had to do everything in my power to make my dreams a reality.

These dreams and desires have existed within me ever since I was a young child. In psychology there is often discussion about whether certain traits are the result of nature or nurture (ninety-nine times out of one hundred the answer is an anticlimactic both). I feel, however, that my passion for the physical and psychological limitations of humankind was an innate function of my being, and as I have stated above, in no way the result of how you raised me. I cannot stress this point enough because it is very important to me that you do not feel any guilt or responsibility for the tragedies that resulted from my behavior. I claim full responsibility for all of my actions in life, and I plan to disclose every last detail of my recent actions within this letter.

Dawn Bracken

I love you, Mother, and I am deeply apologetic that I had to leave you without even saying goodbye. I know that you have suffered from many sudden departures within your life, and it pains me to know that you get to add me to the list of lost people. I am almost certain that we will never see each other again. Additionally, apart from this letter, I am afraid I will not be able to contact you for fear that police interference will result in my capture. With this introduction out of the way, I shall now detail my previous year's perturbing hijinks with the Triflers.

Mason Elliot

November 14th, 2012

Dawn introduced a new member to our group today. He's a freshman named Mario. I've seen him all the time in the hallways and in sociology class, but I'd never actually spoken to him before. I'm actually pretty sure he was the kid who made the student teacher cry at the beginning of the year. But he seems like a nice enough guy, so maybe it was somebody else. I hope she doesn't have a crush on him or something.

Tao had a new slew of videos for the gang to watch today. Dawn, as always, was giddy as can be for them, while Truman, Dorianne, and I braced ourselves for the worst.

The first video featured a man dousing his dick in gasoline, lighting it on fire with a match, and then masturbating his flaming penis. The lot of us were pretty much at a loss for words while watching this one. I suspect that this video had to have been faked somehow, but I just can't figure out how he did it. The video quality was grainy and poor enough to suggest legitimacy, but how a man could put his hand in contact with fire (let alone his penis) for longer than a second without immediately trying to put out the flame is beyond me. Tao once told us that most of the people making these types of videos are likely high on angel dust (another name for PCP) and apparently their pain tolerance is increased tenfold because of it. Which does make sense. You'd have to be high out of your mind to think that lighting your dick on fire while jerking off and then uploading the video to the internet would be a good idea.

This isn't even the worst fire related video we've watched, though. A few months ago Tao showed us a video that I think was filmed by a bunch of kids in

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Russia. I assume this because the language they were speaking sounded Russian, but then again I don't speak any languages other than English, so what do I know? The kids (they looked to be about thirteen, but the video was pixelated to shit so it's hard to tell) doused a small, white dog in gas and then lit it on fire. They then filmed the dog running around as if it were trying to out run the pain it was feeling while yapping and squealing sounds that I've never heard a dog make before, and the kids were laughing the whole time. After about a minute, the dog stopped running and just laid down to die. What was once a white, fuzzy dog was now a black steaming pile of death. It was really sad, and I even started to tear up a bit.

Anyway, Mrs. Patton said I should try to write about a thousand words a week, and this is about 500 words, so I guess I'll write more later.

November 16th, 2012

Dad had already left for the casino by the time Lilly and I had gotten home, so it was nice not having to see him today. Last night he and I got in a big fight and he ended up head-butting me in the face. Now my bottom lip is puffed up and bruised. A few guys at lunch joked with me that it was probably a hickey from Jessica and I just went with it.

The fight started when Lilly asked Dad if she could get a cellphone for her birthday. He blew up like he usually does and started yelling at her about how twelve year olds are still too immature to use phones and that she'd probably just use it to send naked photos to boys at school. I get really riled up when he makes any sort of

suggestion that Lilly is a slut (she's fucking eleven for Christ sakes), so I stomped down the stairs and told him to stop talking to her like that. He grabbed the collar of my shirt and yelled, "Who the fuck do you think you are?" Of course, I could smell alcohol on his breath even though it was only four in the afternoon.

I tried to respond in a way that would break through to whatever logic still existed behind his drunken state. I said, in as calmly a way possible, "She's your daughter. You shouldn't speak to her that way." Evidently my calm nature invoked his pugnacious one, because my statement was met with a railing forehead to the mouth. I didn't want to fight him (because I'd probably lose terribly like every other time I've tried), so I backed off and made Lilly follow me to my room. I think I'll try to get a job so that I can buy her a cellphone and pay for the bill each month. We'll just have to be super careful to hide it from Dad. I don't even want to think about what he'd do if he found out we were hiding something like that from him.

Lilly and I are going to Dawn's house tomorrow morning to hang out for the day. I'm glad she's never suggested that we hang out over here because I think it'd be hard to come up with good excuses all the time. It's bad enough that Jessica knows how fucked up my dad is, and I wouldn't want Dawn or anybody else at school to know.

I feel really conflicted about my feelings for Dawn. She's definitely one of the stranger people I've ever met. Her skin is super pale and its contrast with her dark, black hair is kind of bizarre. Plus she has these bags under her eyes like she never gets enough sleep. And obviously she has a really strange obsession for disgusting internet videos. But for some reason I'm so

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extremely attracted to her. I spend most of my time thinking about her. Which is awful since I'm dating Jessica. And the strange thing is I like Jessica too. I know I'm bad for liking two girls at once, but I don't know what I should do about it.

Extermination Justification or: The Rants and Ravings of That Chubby Spic Who Probably Killed Your Kid

By Mario Quintanilla

If you're reading this, then I'm probably dead, and hopefully a lot of other people are too. As the text above states, my name is Mario Quintanilla, but you probably heard my name long before first laying your eyes on this document. I imagine by the point in time somebody other than myself is reading this, my name will strike fear into people's hearts and will be synonymous with Harris, Klebold, and Cho. This supposition warms my lonely heart, for to be compared to these boys, some of my greatest idols, would be an honor. I plan to follow in their footsteps and execute a school shooting for the record books.

My current plan is to begin my rampage tomorrow morning at eleven a.m., the first day back from spring break. Because writing this manifesto was a last minute decision, you'll have to forgive me for the crudity and potential rambling of the writing, for I won't have much time to write my entire story and proofread it before beginning my last minute preparations for tomorrow.

I decided to write this for several reasons. First of all, people are going to want answers as to why their children are now deceased, and I intend on providing those answers

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in as detailed a way as possible. However, they likely won't discover the answers they're expecting due to my second reason.

Secondly, I want to strike fear into the hearts of people worldwide. Throughout my unfair, excruciating life, I've come to conclusions about the world and existence itself that I want the masses to comprehend. While I could write about these contentions without committing a massacre, people would have no reason to care about my message or to take it seriously. Once this document is attached to the name of an infamous killer, then people will be curious and driven to read this work and absorb the words within it. I will use this manifesto to explain the philosophies I've developed due to my unjustifiable existence on this earth, and hopefully these teachings when juxtaposed with my deadly actions will terrify people into changing their ways for the better.

Thirdly, I want this document to be an inspiration for other people like myself. I want people worldwide to understand that they are not alone in their suffering. In my darkest hours, I felt as though nobody in the world could comprehend my pain, and it would have been comforting to know that there were other people who felt the same way I did. When other sufferers like me read this story, they will understand that their suffering isn't in isolation, and it doesn't have to be in vain. They can see me as a shining example, a catalyst, who decided to stand up against the system oppressing them and causing them such terrible feelings. They, too, will know that a course of violent action is a viable solution to their problems. I hope to inspire dozens, if not hundreds, of murder sprees similar to my own. This way society will shake

in its boots and be forced to conform to the ideals that we hold. If it doesn't, then people like us will simply continue to murder them until they adapt. We will pay back our pain and suffering for their pain and suffering, and eventually we will create a society void of loneliness, depression, and anguish. People will learn that they need to include us, respect us, and love us.

For those of you reading this document looking for insight into the psychotic mind so that you can find a way to prevent future tragedies from happening, you can read no further. Tragedies like this will continue to happen indefinitely, and no amount of gun restrictions or increases in mental health services will prevent them from occurring.

We will always find ways to kill people in mass quantities. If you take away guns, then we'll just kill people with knives. If you try to take away our knives, then not only will you be unable to open boxes or make sandwiches, but you'll be getting blown to hungry pieces by our bombs. And how do you plan on taking away our bombs? By banning pipes? So now you have no running water, no sandwich, no package from grandma, and your insides are burning up from the anthrax we sent you in the mail.

As for trying to "treat" our mental illnesses with your normie¹ diagnoses and treatments, pharmaceutical science can only numb the pain of isolation and depression. Your drugs may impair our perceptions of the world, but at some

¹ I've decided to exercise the use of footnotes in order to explain things that the majority of the population wouldn't understand. The word "normie" refers to anything relating to normal people (AKA: people who fit in with society/aren't depressed/aren't suicidal/etc.)

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point the drugs' effects will subside or we'll decide to stop using them altogether. You shouldn't be trying to "treat" our perceptions; you should be "treating" the society that is causing us our misery.

While depression is often the cause of a chemical imbalance in the brain, artificial stabilizers in the pills you force down our throats don't permanently fix the problem. A person's brain has natural ways of resolving these chemical issues through other means. For example, if a person is suffering from depression that was triggered by their isolation from society, then pills that temporarily stabilize their emotional state will lack severely in comparison to that person feeling accepted and loved by the people around them. Once the issue that triggered their depression is resolved, the depression will be no more. But instead "professional" mental health physicians prescribe a plethora of pills that are said to treat depression, anxiety, and all of that other shit.

We aren't the ones that are broken, and we don't need to be fixed. Society is the problem here. Society ignores and mistreats outcasts like us, and these behaviors cause our pain and anguish. Society must learn that it needs to treat everybody equally in order to prevent feelings of depression and loneliness to fester within people. And this is a lesson that I intend to help teach.

Chapter 2

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The Triflers

Dawn Bracken

I suppose the best way to introduce you to the members of the Triflers and their various dynamics within the group would be to explain a kind of “Day in the Life” of the group and its activities. I will narrate a day I remember from December. It will be a good example because it was one of the days within the brief window of time wherein all seven members were accounted for.

It was the day before winter break and the entire student population had been gathered onto the bleachers in the gymnasium for an assembly. These “End of the Semester” assemblies were more or less always the same ordeal. The students, for some particular reason that I still do not fully grasp, were segregated by grade onto the cheap, plastic bleachers in the gym. Understanding the reason why we were forced to only sit with students our own age is beyond my mental capabilities. It is as if the faculty is aware of a chaotic social paradigm wherein the amalgam of different age levels upon plastic bleachers would lead to the destruction of civilized society as we know it. But I digress.

The principal would then give a short speech about how we had a great semester (which, given the record number of hallway brawls, school property vandalism, and teenage pregnancy, seemed as though it was a forced statement), the cheerleaders would perform a twelve minute rendition of what I assume they thought was a well-choreographed celebration of our football team’s 5-4 record set to the beat of whatever teeny-bopper music was popular at the time, the school would recognize its monumental achievement of raising 230 cans for the most recent food drive by allowing a student to push a pie into the face of a teacher chosen by random draw (and by pie I mean a pie tin filled with shaving cream), and finally the principal would address the students yet again (who by this time would be antsy in their seats with the shared anticipation of being released from the clutches of public education for the next

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two weeks) and inform them of his desire that they have happy holidays before dismissing them until early January. However, during this particular End of the Semester assembly there was a surprise.

During his final address to the school, Principal Norton announced that he would like to introduce to us all a new foreign exchange student who had just arrived earlier that week and would be joining us in class for the spring semester. Upon hearing this news my mind began to buzz with the hope that we could use this foreign student to further diversify our small group. The Triflers currently consisted of four whites (Truman, *Donovan*, Mason, and myself), two Asians (Chao and his uncle), and one Mexican (our latest addition, Mario). Other than a small population of Asians and Hispanics, our school was practically void of cultural diversity, and I was hoping that this new foreign exchange student would be something exotic that could add a new flavor to our meetings.

My largest desire was that the exchange student would be from India with the trademark red dot on his forehead and the telemarketer accent. My second choice would have been an African girl. I have never in my life met in person a black girl who was not overweight and sassy. It would have been very interesting to spend time with one who did not meet these two criteria.

Alas, the foreign student approached the podium where Principal Norton stood so that he could address the student body, and to my major disappointment, he was from Mexico. We already had a Mexican in our group, and no offense to Mario (although he would have surely agreed with me in this regard), but we did not need another one. Thus, it seemed as though we would have to wait for another opportunity to expand our horizons through cultural diversity.

Dawn Bracken

When the student body was dismissed for the semester, Truman and I navigated our way through the ocean of our rambunctious peers until we found Mario waiting for us in the cafeteria. Since Mario's joining of the Triflers a month prior, the three of us had met together before group meetings so that we could walk to Chao's domicile together.

Because you have probably never heard anything about him since I never spoke of him at home, it would probably surprise you to learn that Truman Sinclair has been one of my closest friends since grade eight. I recall first noticing him during study hall one day. I, of course, had seen him before (for it is hard to ignore the lankiest eighth grade student in the entire school), but it was not until then that I actually *noticed* him. The reason why he now intrigued me was because I recognized the book he was reading. In his hands he held Spitz's *Doctors from Hell*, a book detailing the most gruesome of Nazi human experimentation. It is one of my personal favorites.

During passing period, I approached him and asked what he thought of the book. He appeared very surprised that I was speaking to him, and his face flushed bright red. I concluded that he held secret affection for me, felt nervous about speaking to a girl due to his awkward lankiness, or both. Whatever the case, I made a mental note of this but returned my attention to discussion of the book.

He answered, "It's pretty messed up. It kind of makes me sick to my stomach to read this stuff, but for some reason that only makes me want to read it more."

This answer caused a mighty grin to appear on my face, and evidently that embarrassed him. He then spoke again, flustered. "I'm sorry, that made me sound weird, didn't it?"

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“Not at all,” I answered him. “In fact, I have a similar fascination for the gruesome and morbid.”

It was from that interaction that our relationship blossomed. It turned out we had the same lunch period, so we would eat together and discuss the experiments in the book. Freshmen year when Chao and I decided to start a group dedicated to watching gory horror films, there was no doubt in my mind that Truman would be invited to join the fun. All the while, I could sense his crush on me growing, but he was so socially awkward that he never spoke to me about his feelings. Which, of course, was for the best. My rejection of him would have likely led to the downfall of our relationship, and due to how simple it was for me to manipulate the boy, Truman was definitely somebody I wanted to keep around.

That is all the Triflers were when we first began. Just the three of us, Chao, Truman, and me, watching horror movies in Chao’s basement every Wednesday when our school had an early dismissal. Slowly, one by one, more members joined the fold, and the material we engaged ourselves with evolved as well.

Mario was also a boy that I met at school. He was a year younger than me, so I never had a chance to meet him until we shared a psychology class during the first semester of my sophomore year. It became apparent to me very early on that Mario did not have any friends.

He was grotesquely overweight, the lone Mexican in a room of Caucasians, and had a profoundly pronounced social issue. The problem was not that he was shy, but that he was too loud. He always wanted to be the first to answer the teacher’s questions whether or not he knew the right answer, and whenever he spoke aloud in class there was a general atmosphere of discomfort shared among our peers. He had this repugnant desire to outsmart the

teacher, and whenever he disagreed with something she taught to the class, he would speak up with his counter-argument. This behavior caused even further discomfort, and the students in class tried their bests to convey to the teacher that they were on her side and in no way wanted to be associated with him.

I first spoke to Mario when we were randomly paired together for a partner project. The assignment was that each pair would choose a topic from the textbook and prepare a twenty-minute presentation about it that they could teach to the class. This was going to be a semester long research project, and we were expected to provide sources, write a paper, and create a PowerPoint presentation. As I sat down beside him, he informed me that he wanted to do the project over depression and that he specifically wanted to focus on a study involving isolated monkeys. Where most students would be bothered that Mario had not waited for their input before choosing a topic, I found myself rather impressed by his obvious passion for such melancholy interests. We exchanged cellphone numbers so that we could work on the project outside of class, and I began to think that his interest in off-putting subject materials might make him a perfect candidate for the Triflers.

By this point, the Triflers had evolved from watching horror films to watching real footage of similar content. However, I had a feeling Mario would enjoy our meetings despite diving right into the thick of true bawdiness without the gradual journey from fake to real that the rest of us had experienced, and I was correct. It appeared as though I had met my match as far as loving the sight of gruesome, bloody, unsettling images goes, because Mario seemed to enjoy the videos we watched as much as I did.

As the three of us entered Chao's domicile, we were greeted by his mother, Li Feng. I know that her name is Li Feng because when I first met the woman I attempted to be polite by referring to her as

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Miss Chao, but it turns out that in Chinese culture surnames work differently. Evidently women do not take the surname of their husbands, so although Chao's last name is Chao his mother's is Feng. I also learned on that day that Li Feng is not a fan of formalities, and would prefer that her son's friends referred to her as Li rather than Miss Feng.

"Good afternoon, Li," I greeted as we walked through the front door. The first thing I noticed upon entering Chao's domicile was the assortment of shoes on the floor—it seemed as though the rest of the Triflers had already arrived—and the second thing I noticed was the aroma of fried fish. "How are you today?"

"Very good, very good," she answered. "I went to market today and bought crappie. I get some for you before you go downstairs."

Being a native of China, Li spoke mostly good but often broken English. I personally found this feature of hers to be adorable. Another feature of Li's that I enjoyed was her insistence on cooking us various snacks whenever we visited her home. Crappie was Li's favorite type of fish, and it smelled as though she had fried some up for us.

She dashed to the kitchen and returned moments later with Dixie cups full of fried crappie pieces. "Andy has napkins downstairs," she informed. We thanked her for the food and famously wonderful hospitality before descending the stairs into Chao's basement.

Andy, of course, is Chao's first name. Named after the actor Andy Lau (who was evidently one of Chao's father's favorites, so much so that he named his second-born son after the man), Chao has been a good friend of mine since he moved here back in grade three.

Dawn Bracken

As children on the playground, Chao and I were one of the few gender-mixed friendships in our class. For most children in grade three, students of the opposite sex were not worth playing with. Boys would play games like touch-football out in the field, and girls would play hopscotch on the cement. Chao and I, however, had no interest in these types of games, and spent our recess time creating games of our own.

I remember once we created our own little game show and would go around the playground trying to recruit contestants. When we had enough participants, we would pit them against each other in a series of competitions wherein the champion would win some sort of prize (typically a dollar or a piece of gum, whatever we happened to have in our pockets). They started off being fairly innocent. “Whoever hangs from the monkey bars the longest wins,” or “Who can climb up the slide the fastest?” Chao and I never participated in these competitions, but that was out of choice. We much rather preferred running the operation in lieu of competing in it.

However, after a while the competitions in our game show grew more dangerous. They were not just dangerous in a “Who can jump off the swing from the highest point?” kind of way (although I definitely recall that being one of the challenges), but they also grew dangerous in a “breeding contempt among classmates” kind of way (or at least that is how the principal put it when we were eventually sent to his office). One challenge we created was, “Whoever steals the football from the boys on the field and throws it over the fence into the street wins.” Chao and I relished in this game because not only would it cause great distress for many of our peers, but the target of their vengeance would be the student who threw the ball, not us. We were essentially causing conflict

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and somebody else was suffering the consequences, and we loved every moment of it.

After a boy got beat up by the football kids, we decided to up the ante. The next challenge was, “Whoever can sneak a pocketful of sand into Miss Levi’s coffee mug wins.” This was the first time that a challenge of ours extended beyond the playground, and it was the first time that we directly included a teacher in it. In hindsight, we should have known that victimizing the teacher for our game was a bad idea, because it was a surefire way to get us caught. Of course, when that clumsy boy with a pocketful of sand approached Miss Levi’s desk, he figured his best strategy would be to place the sand into her mug while she had her back turned to the desk rather than when she left the room altogether. He, of course, was caught in the process, and he, of course, cried out upon being reprimanded, “Dawn and Andy told me to do it for their game!” Then all three of us were in trouble, the school administration found out all about our game show, and it was officially put to an end.

When we entered the basement, we found the rest of the Triflers scattered about the room. Chao and Chao’s uncle were crowded around the laptop that was plugged into Chao’s television, Mason was lying upon Chao’s lengthy faux-leather couch, and *Dorianne* was emerging from the bathroom.

Now I should explain myself, for I just realized I have been writing *Donovan* when really I should have been writing *Dorianne* instead. The reason for this repeated mistake is that *Dorianne* is the most special of the special snowflakes, and for this reason I feel great distain for him/her. I, and many other people, define a special snowflake as somebody who goes out of their way to seem different or strange in comparison to most people, and I feel as though this term was crafted with *Dorianne* in mind.

Dawn Bracken

For starters, *Dorianne*'s real name is *Donovan*. Less than a year ago, *Donovan* decided to come out as transgender. This essentially means that *Donovan* was born a male with a penis and testicles, but then at the age of fifteen decided that he was actually a she. He then decided to start dressing like a girl (skirts, dresses, lipstick, earrings, etc.), to use the women's restroom, and to change his name from *Donovan* to *Dorianne*.

My hatred for *Donovan* has nothing to do with her being transgender and everything to do with how he behaves because of it. Allow me to set things straight, Mother. I have nothing against transgender people, or gays or lesbians for that matter. In fact, I would like to think I am supportive of the LGBTQIA (and whatever other letters they have tacked on by the time you receive this letter) community as much as any other tolerant, intelligent person. However, it is the way *Dorianne* treats other people due to his transgenderism that engenders my frustration towards her.

To decide that one identifies with the opposite sex is fine and dandy, but to expect other people to identify you as something you physically are not is something else entirely. For example, it irks me to no end when *Dorianne* becomes angry with somebody who refers to her as *Donovan* although *Donovan* is still her legal name. Unless you get your name legally changed, then you have no right to become angry with people for calling you by it.

The other thing that infuriates me about *Donovan* is the other word game she plays. Evidently people within the LGBTQIA community expect people to refer to them using their "preferred pronouns." In case you are not aware, preferred pronouns are words like he, she, it, this, etc. Thus, although *Donovan* is a male, he expects people to refer to him by his preferred pronouns: she and her. This annoys me for the same reason the *Dorianne/Donovan* conflict does. If *Dorianne* wants to personally

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identify as a girl, then that is acceptable in my book, but for *Dorianne*, a physically male human being, to become outraged and defensive when somebody refers to him as “him” or “he” is disgusting. As you may have noticed, I have been using *Dorianne/Donovan* and him/her/he/she interchangeably when referring to this person, and I plan to continue to do so out of spite and unwillingness to conform to the language rules that she is trying to impose on the world.

Donovan joined the Triflers after being invited by Mason. Mason and *Donovan* are in the same grade, and from what I have heard, they have been friends since kindergarten. *Dorianne* had yet to come out as transgender when I first met him, so I had no reason to be annoyed by her presence, and I allowed her to join the group without much thought behind it. When the Triflers began to watch real gore rather than gory movies, he was definitely the most vocal against the change. I sincerely hoped that increasing the gore factor would entice her to leave the group, but he stubbornly continued to attend meetings.

I suppose that brings us to Mason, but he needs little introduction to you after how much time we have spent with him and his sister. I met Mason last year at Chao’s domicile. Mason was friends with Chao’s older brother Theo. They were both on the football team and spent most of their time hanging out in Theo’s room playing Xbox. Mason noticed Chao, Truman, and I going into the basement every Wednesday after school, and something about it must have piqued his interest because one day he came downstairs to see what we were up to. When he saw we were watching horror movies he became excited and started watching them with us. Because Theo was a senior, he graduated in May and left for college, but Mason continued to come to Chao’s domicile as a concrete member of the group. During that time, he and I became

close friends, and we began having him and his sister over for dinner at least once a week.

Finally, we have Chao's uncle. He is the one who caused the transition from fictional movies to non-fictional videos. He came into the basement during a Triflers meeting in search of a T-shirt and arrived just in time to see a man getting his arms hacked by a chainsaw. He grinned a devilish grin and asked, "Do you guys want to see the real deal?" We were not sure what he meant by this, but we agreed to his offer.

Chao's uncle then plugged his laptop into the television and pulled up an internet video for us to watch. The video was of two Hispanic men sitting in front of a brick wall with their arms tied behind their backs. They were wearing dirty, white, sleeveless undershirts, blue jeans, and brown sacks over their heads. I immediately had a feeling that what we were watching was not filmed for a movie—this was real.

A third brown man entered the frame and lifted the sacks from the men's heads. The man on the left, who was clearly more heavyset than his counterpart, wore a cold, stern expression upon his face. The man on the right looked visibly ill, and his hair was soaked with what I assumed was sweat. The third man pointed at the camera and said something in Spanish. The two tied men then spoke to the camera as well. My freshmen semester of Spanish was failing me because I did not understand a single word any of them were saying.

When the speeches were done, the third man was handed a chainsaw by somebody from off screen. All of us sitting on the couch then became very tense as we realized what we were watching.

"Oh shit," Mason whispered.

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“No, turn it off,” *Donovan* ordered. Tears were becoming visible in his eyes. “Turn it off!”

But, to my great satisfaction, Chao’s uncle did not turn the video off, and we watched as each man’s head was disconnected from his body. The large, stone-faced man was killed first. The chainsaw made easy work of his neck. It did not cut quite as smoothly as it would through butter, but it was not as difficult as a slab of wood. It was a happy medium of blood-squirting terror.

Upon hearing his companion being decapitated, the smaller captive began to cry audibly. Somebody behind the camera began to laugh, and he then said something to the man with the chainsaw. The chainsaw man smiled at the cameraman’s request, and after he finished flaying the large man he approached the smaller one. My guess is the cameraman told the killer to torture the smaller man for crying, because that is exactly what he did.

The executioner pressed his chainsaw into the man’s shoulder. The victim began to scream with great conviction. Instead of cutting the man’s arm completely off, the killer settled for only digging halfway through his victim’s shoulder, and he then pulled his weapon out. The smaller man screamed for what I can only assume was death, but if that were the case, then evidently his killers were not feeling merciful. The executioner pressed his saw into the man’s neck as he had done with the first, but he again only completed half of the job. The victim fell onto his back, his shoulder and neck both bleeding profusely. A low-pitched gargle, bubbly sound was heard, and we realized it was the sound of the man trying to breathe through the blood-filled remains of his half-neck. The remainder of the video was the man lying in a pool of his own blood as the sound of his attempts at breathing slowly faded away.

When the video ended, Chao's uncle stood from his seat beside his laptop and asked, "What'd you guys think of that?"

It seemed that my companions were speechless, but I had no issue with finding words. "Spectacular. Do you have more videos like that?"

"My dear, the internet is filled to the brim with videos like that."

It was from that day forward that Triflers' meetings were dedicated to watching whatever horrifically graphic videos Chao's uncle had found for us to watch. I later learned that Chao's uncle was named Tao Feng, was thirty, and had served two tours in Afghanistan. I was under the impression that Chao's uncle was the type of man who joined the military with the hopes that he would be able to legally kill people, and I now know that I was right in that regard. After serving in the military, Chao's uncle got a job at O'Hare International Airport as a taxi driver.

I suppose one last aspect of the Triflers I should inform you of before continuing my narration is the origin of our name. The name was my choice, and it was one that came to me from a middle school social studies textbook. We were reading a chapter about the Old West, and there was a section specifically about gangs. I read through the list of gangs, and the name that was most striking to me was the Triflers. I had never heard that word before, so I looked it up. I learned that the word is synonymous with amateur, beginner, and pretender. When we started our club of watching horror movies, I felt that the word was a perfect fit. Chao, Truman, and I were initiating ourselves into the world of gore and suffering, and within that world we were triflers.

"Winter break twenty-twelve!" Mason ironically exclaimed upon our entrance, raising his arms into the air from his relaxed state on the couch. Mason often behaved as a stereotypical frat boy for

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humorous effect, which is odd considering that most people would consider him to be the quintessential frat boy. At school he was a popular student. He played on the football team, had until recently been dating a cheerleader (which, from my estimates, was an attraction composed completely by her physical attributes considering the fact that she had the personality of a lampshade), and was known by name by nearly everybody in school. Surely if any of his popular friends knew about his association with the Triflers, or even myself, then they would be deeply puzzled. Even I was puzzled by his presence. The Triflers were almost exclusively composed of social outcasts, but he was the one exception. He was the sociable, amiable, high-status jock who spent his Wednesday afternoons watching graphic videos in a basement of losers and most of his Saturdays in our home. It was due to Mason's social status that the rest of the Triflers respected him, and they almost always went along with anything he had to say. This troubled me.

"That assembly was complete shit," Mario said. "Do we really need ten minutes of the cheerleaders throwing each other around and proclaiming chants that a fucking nine-year-old could have come up with? Like the jocks need any more recognition or attention. I mean, no offense to you Mason, but our football team fucking blows, and yet we still have to spend ten minutes celebrating their existence? It's as if the huddled masses of hundreds of people showing up to their games isn't enough for their fragile egos, and now we have to further show our support and gratitude for their supreme sacrifices by giving them a slut show at the end of the season? I mean for fuck's sake. Where are the male cheerleaders celebrating our girls' soccer team who was undefeated last year? But no, just because football is more popular we have to give it more attention."

Mario often spoke in elongated rants of bottled up frustration and teen angst. Although I am not a fan of his language choices, or even logical processes, I never intervened during these tirades against whatever trivial issue had been bogging his mind that day (and, of course, the English language) because I thought they were amusing and cute.

“No offense taken. We really got our asses handed to us this year,” Mason responded. “But you do realize that the cheerleaders aren’t just performing for the football players, right? They practice just as hard as anybody at their sport, and assemblies like those are among the few opportunities they get to show their skills off. Really you should say they are performing in celebration of the entire school rather than just the football team.”

“Which is why half of the cheers exclaim, ‘Go Bulls!’ right? You know, the Bulls, the name of the football team.”

“Well it’s not just the football team. The baseball team is the Bulls too. Really the word Bulls extends to the entire school.”

Typically, I tended to side with Mason when he and Mario got into friendly discussions, but in this case I actually agreed more with Mario. The cheerleaders’ performance that afternoon was clearly focused on congratulating the football team rather than the baseball team that had not played yet that year or the entire student population in general. However, I did not voice my opinion because I am above participating in such frivolous dialogues.

“You’re right about that, Mason. You guys fucking sucked this year,” *Dorianne* commented.

Now as you know, I am not a fan of profane language. I believe that the English language is chock-full of a wide selection of beautiful words that can be strung together into elegant, well-

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crafted sentences, and to limit one's vocabulary to a handful of four-letter words is sickening. However, as I have articulated thus far, nearly all of the Triflers (with the exception of myself) resort to using such words. I, of course, have expressed my opinion of them and wish that they not be used in my vicinity, but of course, due to human nature, this request was unfulfilled (not, I suspect, because my associates wanted to openly defy me, but because their tongues had become so accustomed to resorting to foul language that they could not control themselves and the words just slipped out). Per contra, as I explained before, dearest *Donovan* became an indignant and judgmental boor when one did not succumb to the language rules she had dictated for the rest of us. Thus, because *Donovan* had such high expectations for us following her language rules, I became quite frazzled by the hypocrisy established when he, and he alone, ignored the language rules that I had set forth.

“*Dorianne*, what did I tell you about using such coarse language in my presence?”

As a close friend of both Donovan and myself and a general keeper-of-peace, Mason sensed the tension brewing between the transgender party in the room and myself, and in an attempt to lighten the mood he tried, and succeeded, to distract the group with something else.

“So, Tao, what do you have for us to watch today?”

Chao's uncle looked up from his laptop and flashed his teeth at us. “I think you guys will like this one. Have you ever heard of Albert Delconte?”

It did not seem as though my fellow Triflers had, but I had indeed heard of Albert Delconte. In fact, after first learning about the man, I had done extensive research into his life. Albert Delconte was a serial killer in the Nineties who tortured his victims before killing

them and recorded all of his torture sessions on his camcorder. This collection of footage is infamously known as The Delconte Experiments, and despite my greatest attempts at finding the footage online so that I could view it for myself, it seemed as though the footage was lost forever. But from the look on Chao's uncle's face, it appeared as though my hypothesis might have been incorrect.

"No, who's he?" Mario asked.

"He recorded many videos of him torturing people in very interesting ways. I found some of his footage online, and I think you guys will want to see this."

How Chao's uncle had managed to find this footage that I myself had spent hours on end searching for was beyond me, but I was positively ecstatic that he had. All my life I have been obsessed with torture and the unknown limitations and abilities of the human body. While anybody can admit that the experiments performed on prisoners by Nazi doctors were morally and ethically bankrupt, one cannot disagree that some of their findings were fascinating.

For example, the Nazis were curious about finding cures for hypothermia with the intention of using these cures to their advantage in cold climate battles. Of course, in order to test potential cures for hypothermia, the Nazis first needed test subjects that had fallen victim to it in the first place. These test subjects were, of course, the imprisoned Jews and Russians.

With the necessity of having hypothermic patients, suddenly the one experiment became two. The newly formed experiment was simply this: How cold can a person get without dying? The Nazi doctors decided to test this in two environments: A vat of icy, cold water, and the natural extreme winter climate of Auschwitz. Test

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subjects had thermometers anally inserted so that the doctors could monitor the decrease in their body temperature.

Of the two freezing methods, submerging subjects in a vat of icy water proved much more effective than stripping them naked and tying them up in a winter wasteland. The results found that the majority of patients died when their body temperature fell to seventy-seven degrees Fahrenheit. With a proper method of freezing a person established, the resuscitation experiments could begin.

Believe it or not, the Nazis actually found success in reviving victims of hypothermia. However, many of the attempted methods proved to be fruitless. One such example of a failed attempt is referred to as internal irrigation. For this method, doctors forced boiling water into the stomach, bladder, and intestines of patients. Internal irrigation proved itself to be fatal each time it was administered.

The most successful method also implemented the use of hot water. The hypothermic patient was placed into a vat of warm water, and the water was slowly heated. This hot bath was able to effectively cure the symptoms of hypothermia for many patients, but that result was not found without some trial and error. At first the experimenters heated the water too quickly and many patients died of shock. The experimenters then warmed the water at a slower rate, and the answer that they had been seeking was found.

The hot bath was not the only successful result found in the hypothermia experiments, though. Dr. Heinrich Himmler hypothesized that the transfer of body heat through sex could defrost the men. The experimenters then quite literally forced women to copulate with icy, corpse-esque patients. Positive results were found with this experiment, and although it was not as

successful as the hot bath, it still revived many of the hypothermic patients.

I have always dreamed of performing my own human experiments in the spirit of the Nazi experiments or those of Delconte. To read about or witness such experimentation is one thing, but to be able to perform them yourself seemed like something else entirely. To develop and test my own experiments on real, living test subjects sounded as though it would fulfill my life's purpose. I feel that it is my life's calling to perform such experiments to test the versatility of both the human body and the human spirit. But I would not be able to fulfill this dream alone. I would need the full support of several accomplices. I hoped that eventually the Triflers could evolve from watching torture footage to performing real torture. But it seemed like a pipe dream, especially with moral captains like Mason and *Donovan* controlling the majority of the decisions made aboard the S.S. Trifler.

Everybody, with the exception of Chao's uncle, plopped down upon Chao's faux-leather couch and waited patiently for him to start the video. He used an HDMI cable to plug his laptop into Chao's fifty-inch flat screen television, and he then pressed play.

The footage was grainy and featured classic VHS tape fuzziness throughout. It began with a naked woman lying upon a metal table, and it appeared as though she was in a deep sleep (likely caused by some form of anesthesia). Her genital area was red and barren (I presumed he had recently waxed it) and her hair was coarse and thick as if she had not bathed in a very long time. Her wrists and ankles were tied down to the table with thick, gruff ropes that looked as if they would be very itchy upon one's skin.

The camera operator, Mr. Albert Delconte himself, held the camera with one hand and a scalpel with the other. He carefully made five

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short but deep incisions into the lying woman's body: one into her neck, one into her left breast, one into her stomach, one into her right bicep, and one into her left calf. All the while the only sound being emitted from the footage was that of Delconte's steady breathing.

With his incisions complete, Delconte took five unexpanded red balloons and meticulously stuffed them within the gashes he had created in the woman's body. He left the ends sticking out so that the balloons could still be inflated with air. At that point I had a pretty good idea where the video was going.

The shot cut to the next, and now the woman lying on the table had her eyes open. She said nothing, her brain likely still hazy from whatever drugs she had been forced to consume, but nevertheless she now appeared to be conscious.

"Experiment twelve," Delconte spoke, "balloon inflation beneath the skin."

Delconte placed the camera on a stand (likely a tripod of some kind) so that his hands could be free. He retrieved a bicycle pump from beneath the table and forced the air hose into the balloon imbedded within the woman's leg. He then wrapped both hands around each side of the pump handle and looked into the camera. "Balloon number one ready."

He began to pump up and down. The woman's leg began to expand around the balloon, and things seemed to be going smoothly for the first few pumps. However, once the balloon had reached a small size, the pressure of the inside of her leg must have been too much for it to handle because the expansion began to peter out (the balloon must have gotten a hole in it). Delconte appeared to be very disappointed by this result. Evidently he had expected the balloon to blow up to full size within this woman's

body and then pop due to a surplus of air. He did not let this failure keep him down, though, and he continued to try the experiment within each of the incisions.

As the footage of experiment twelve came to a close, my fellow Triflers began their usual commentary.

“Look at how hollow and creepy his eyes are. It’s no wonder he got caught doing this shit, anybody who looked at him would know he was crazy,” *Donovan* stated.

“Actually, *Dorianne*, the Georgia Killer, a.k.a. Albert Delconte, was at large for seven full years and experimented on over thirty victims, all the while working as a construction worker in Atlanta. Thus, your hypothesis is clearly fallible because assuredly thousands of different people would have laid eyes upon him during that time frame,” I informed.

“I wonder how far into those seven years this video was taken,” Mason said. “If this is only experiment number twelve, then how many different experiments do you think he performed on each of his victims?”

“Do you have more of these videos, Tao?” Mario asked.

“Yes, I found many more. But we will save those for other days. I want to make Delconte last as long as possible for you guys.”

“Could you imagine if we were able to perform something akin to this?” I asked.

“Dawn, don’t,” Mason interjected.

“Just hear me out Mason, I think we could definitely improve on his technique. I have seen videos of a procedure wherein doctors inflate a small balloon within a person’s sinuses in order to restore

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drainage pathways. With this in mind, what if instead of small incisions made all over the body, we instead—”

“Dawn, that’s enough. I don’t like it when you talk like that. It’s scary,” Mason interrupted again.

I gritted my teeth and remained silent as the rest of them continued chatting. Mason was a good friend to me, and I enjoyed spending time with him and his sister, but within the Trifler environment he was a cancer. Not only did his code of ethics prevent me from furthering my goals of evolving as a group of observers to a group of participants, but due to his high status the rest of the group respected his decisions. I knew that Chao’s uncle would be interested in human experimentation as much as I was, and I had a good feeling that, if unrestricted by the likes of Mason and *Dorianne*, the rest of the Triflers could be convinced as well.

Mario was clearly mentally unstable and emotionally torrid enough to latch onto the possibility of torturing another person, Truman was so blinded by his affection for me that he would agree to do whatever I said, and Chao cared so little for the feelings of others as long as it led to his own personal enjoyment that he would surely be supportive of the change as well. But until the day came that Mason left our group (and hopefully took *Donovan* with him), it seemed that I would be trapped in a humdrum existence of casual observation.

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Chapter 3

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In the Dark

November 20th, 2012

Thanksgiving is on Thursday, so school gave us the next two days off. Unfortunately for me, this extra day off from school is more of a curse than a blessing. It seems like I've accidentally committed to too many engagements all at once, and now I have a choice to make.

With tomorrow being a Wednesday, I am expected to go to the Triflers meeting. As much as I would enjoy spending my day with Dawn and Dorianne, I think it's unfair for the group to expect me to show up. Typically, our meetings take place after school when we have early outs. Since we don't have school tomorrow, and therefore there is no early out, I think it would be justified if I didn't show up. Especially considering all of the other options I have.

Tomorrow is my six-month anniversary with Jessica and I'd completely forgotten that I promised to take her out to dinner on that day. Because dinner implies going out at like six or seven, I could probably easily go to the Triflers meeting around one and make it home in time to get ready for dinner. The problem is that Jessica is probably expecting us to hang out all day and *then* go out for a nice dinner together.

I know that this date is important to her and that as a good boyfriend I should go through with it, but lately I've been debating on whether or not I want to break up with Jessica. My feelings for Dawn, as odd as they may be, are real, and I feel like I need to end my relationship with Jess in order to pursue one with Dawn. The biggest problem with that is it's a huge gamble. I have no idea if Dawn likes me in the way that I like her, and if I were to dump Jessica for Dawn only to get rejected, then I'd find myself alone and heartbroken. I definitely do have

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feelings for Jess, but I think I have stronger feelings for Dawn. I can't figure out what I should do.

The other people that want to hang out with me tomorrow are Anthony and Dave. They said they're throwing a party with the rest of the team and that I should definitely come. I imagine there's going to be beer and weed like at all of the other parties those guys go to. As much fun as all that stuff is, given my circumstances I don't think it would be healthiest to participate in that sort of life style.

Speaking of Anthony and Dave, another problem I have in regards to the Dawn issue is what those guys and the rest of the team will think of it. Jessica is hot and popular, there's no doubt about that. People at school expect us to date each other. But Dawn isn't that way at all. She's a major outcast at school and a lot of people spread nasty rumors about her.

And although I would never call her ugly, I can admit that she is unconventionally attractive to me. Like, I can't put my finger on exactly why I'm so attracted to her, but I still am. Her skin is pale as a ghost, her dark black hair is thick and mangled, and her nose seems to be a size or two too large for her face, and yet I still find all of these things to be very alluring when it comes to her.

I imagine whatever good reputation I had at school would be tarnished if I started dating a girl like Dawn. She wouldn't fit in with any of my friends at school, and by virtue of me spending time with her I would likely lose many of them. But realistically I don't think I care about any of that. I would rather be Dawn's boyfriend than continue living the lie that I'm a normal, happy jock in high school. I'm sure at some point people are going to figure out where I've been spending my Wednesdays and

Mason Elliot

Saturdays every week, so I might as well reveal it myself before it gets revealed unintentionally. The one crucial thing that I need to know is whether or not Dawn would date me.

I'm still not really sure what I'll do about tomorrow. I'll probably just end up hanging out with Jessica all day and just let the Triflers (mostly Dawn) be upset with me. And the guys will understand that I can't go to their party since I have to go out with my girlfriend. Or better yet, maybe I can take her to the party with me and then hopefully she'll fall in love with one of the other guys there. That'd help things immensely.

November 22nd, 2012

I'm stuck at the bottom of a pit, a very dark and deep pit, where I am completely alone. A rope once appeared before me, seemingly a way out. I grabbed the rope and began to climb, but before I could get far at all the rope snapped and I fell, hurting myself as I landed. Time passed and I recovered from the pain of falling, and then another rope came. Without hesitation, I grabbed the rope and began to climb again, and I got farther than I had with the first rope, much farther, but again it snapped, and because I'd climbed so high it hurt exponentially more when I hit the ground. I now feel as though even if a third rope appeared before me I wouldn't attempt to climb it to escape the pit, because if I did, then who knows how high I'd get before it broke, which it would surely do. I feel as though I would be better off staying here in the lonely darkness than hurting myself by falling again, even if there was a chance that the rope would safely lead me to freedom.

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I haven't been able to cry for a long time. No matter how sad I get, no matter how deep in my pit of despair I have fallen, I can't cry. I mean I've dry cried before, but the tears never flow. I get them to appear every once in a while when I'm driving alone in my car and the lyrics to a song really hit me deep, but they don't flow. They just get my eyes wet. Why can't I cry? For some reason the fact that I can't cry is making me sad.

That fucking word. Sad. That word makes me feel like a baby, a useless little fucking baby. I hate that word. And yet I'm feeling it. I'm feeling so sad so often and I don't know what to do. Maybe that's part of the reason why I'm so against telling anybody about it. I would just feel so embarrassed and ashamed to speak the words aloud to another person. "I'm sad." Or, "I'm depressed." Because if the person I were speaking to had the same reaction that I have when I hear somebody say those things, then it would just make things worse.

When I hear somebody complaining about their problems or even post a status on Facebook claiming that they are depressed, I feel no pity for them. Instead I resent them because I assume that their problems are nowhere near as bad as other people's. And what scares me the most is that if I were to gather the courage to tell somebody about my depression, then they would write it off as not being important in the same way that I do when I hear and see other people talk about it.

They would take one look at me and think, "That guy? Depressed? That tall, athletic, popular, cheerleader-dating, handsome guy is complaining about how sad his life is? What a pathetic fucking piece of shit. What could possibly be so sad about his life? He's got everything I could ever want." And the thing is, I can't blame them for that thought process because it's the same one that I

have towards other people. It truly feels like there's no way out of this pit. Each rope, no matter how promising, is ultimately only going to lead to more pain.

Fuck Thanksgiving.

November 25th, 2012

Lilly and I spent yesterday at Dawn's house again. I find it cute the way Lilly admires and looks up to Dawn almost like she's her older sister. On the other side of the coin, Lilly's reverence of Dawn worries me because Dawn isn't necessarily the best role model for a preteen girl (or for a person of any age or gender).

Dawn often gets a little too carried away with her sense of dark humor. Oftentimes while we're watching a video that features torture she will explain how she would perform the act differently. Watching videos of horrible stuff is one thing, but actually performing them on another person is something else entirely, and I know that Dawn is aware of this and must be making suggestions in jest, but sometimes she goes into so much detail that it seems clear she's spent a lot of time thinking about these kinds of things. I'm not too worried about this dark fascination with pain and despair spreading from Dawn to Lilly, though, because as far as I can tell Dawn does her best to censor these types of topics while non-Triflers members are within earshot.

One of my biggest fears, however, is that one day Dawn will try to invite Lilly to a Triflers meeting. Lilly would become super excited at the prospect of not only hanging out with Dawn but with other high school kids as well, and she'd become upset with me when I refused to let her come without providing any sort of good

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reason. I don't know how she'd handle learning the truth about how Dawn and I spend our Wednesday afternoons. She'd probably be disgusted and frightened by us, and I definitely don't want her to lose respect for two of the only role models she has.

I think Dawn knows better than to ever make that sort of suggestion, though. When she's around Lilly, Dawn enters a mode of communication that she never exercises around other people. She seems genuinely interested in the goings-on of middle school life—from the gossip to the teachers to the exams—and the Lord knows Lilly loves having an audience. I try my best to seem interested, but half of the time what Lilly has to say is so shallow and silly that it must seem obvious that I'm zoning out. So I'm glad that Lilly has Dawn to speak to about her eleven-year-old girl issues. I think Lilly actually used to write in a diary until we started going to Dawn's every week and then stopped because I haven't seen her use it for a few months now.

I guess it goes to show that everybody needs some sort of outlet for their innermost thoughts. Lilly now has Dawn for that, and I have this journal. I'll admit, when Mrs. Patton first announced that in addition to our scheduled creative writing assignments we'd also be responsible for maintaining a weekly journal to "keep the writing juices flowing" I thought it was pretty stupid. But now I'm actually appreciative of this thing. Although I'm not actually expressing my feelings to anybody who can understand or respond to them, I do feel like it's helping to get some of these thoughts out of my head.

Would I prefer upgrading from a journal to a human being like Lilly was able to do? Perhaps. But the thought of saying any of these things out loud to somebody else really makes me feel sick to my stomach. Maybe

someday, if by some miracle Dawn and I fall in love with each other and are officially together, I'll be able to confide my innermost feelings to her. But I don't foresee such a future.

November 26th, 2012

I hate to say it, but ever since Dorianne came out as trans I haven't gotten along with her as well as I used to. I'm not prejudice or anything, but it has just been really weird. I'm still not entirely used to seeing my lifelong friend dressed up in skirts and dresses and wearing makeup. I fondly think back to the kid who I'd watch *Dragon Ball Z* and play PlayStation with, and the person that little boy has become seems completely different. It's funny to think that back when we were children we used to laugh about how gross and stupid girls were, and now he is a girl.

I'm not sure how she feels about the change because I haven't asked her about it. She seems to carry on as if our friendship isn't different, but it really is. We don't really do any of the things we used to do together. It's as if in an attempt to embrace her feminine side, Dorianne is purposely avoiding all of the masculine things of her past. She has lost interest in football and video games, and I have a feeling if I asked her to marathon a season of *Dragon Ball* with me this weekend she'd say no.

Really the only time we hang out together anymore is at the Triflers meetings, but we don't really get to bond very much when we're among like five other people. One of my biggest fears is that she might develop a crush on me. I know that's kind of awful to say, but the thought of my kindergarten pal Donovan asking me out on a date

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gives me a kind of sick feeling. Again, it's pretty bad of me to assume that she would have feelings for me like that just because she's a girl and I'm a boy. For all I know she still likes girls. But again, that's not something I've asked her about.

November 28th, 2012

I got into a bit of an argument with Mario at today's Triflers meeting. For whatever reason he felt inspired to make an offhand comment about the supposed sluttiness of Lauren Brown, and I took the liberty of defending her.

Lauren isn't even really much of a friend of mine, more of a distant acquaintance really, but to hear such vulgar things about her coming out of the mouth of a kid who knows nothing about her really set me off. Evidently the freshmen rumor mill had come up with the idea that after the last home game there had been a party at one of the player's houses, and Lauren had gotten so drunk she sat down on a bed and sucked off every guy that came into the room. It wasn't just the fact that such a detestable lie existed that made me so angry but rather that Mario felt the need to spread it as though it were the gospel truth. Don't get me wrong, I still think that generally Mario is an alright kid, but his utter disrespect for women and/or general gullibility got a bit under my skin.

I didn't yell at him or anything, though. I just firmly told him that he had no idea what he was talking about and that he shouldn't try to spread rumors. I think that my authoritative tone surprised and frightened him a

little because he stayed quiet for a few minutes after that.

November 30th, 2012

Dad was feeling pretty high and mighty when he got home last night because he'd finally gotten his "big break." After several years and countless dollars wasted at the casino, he'd finally come home with more money in his pocket than he'd walked out with. Evidently, as his story goes:

"I was walking from the slots to the blackjack table and along the way I noticed a group of people crowded around a roulette table and I thought to myself, 'Hey, I'm always playing on the slot machines and blackjack and I ain't won shit, maybe I should give the roulette wheel a spin.'

"So I went over to the table but I didn't bet nothing, I just watched it. The ball spun around and eventually landed on 19 red. The winners get their money, and everybody starts betting for the next go around. But I'm smart, see? I've got the strategy. I don't bet again.

"The ball spins around again and ends up in the 30 red spot. See, that was two reds in a row. And in my mind I know that statistically it wouldn't be likely that the ball would land on red three times in a row, so now I finally make my bet. I throw a ten dollar chip down on the black part—'cause the thing with roulette is you don't have to just bet on numbers, you can bet on entire colors or sets of numbers like odds and evens and all that—and I only bet ten dollars the first time around because I sort of wanted to test the waters, you know, since I never played this game before.

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“The ball spins around and wouldn’t you know, it lands on 2 black. So the dealer gives me back the ten I bet plus an additional ten for betting on the right color. And I thought to myself, ‘Shit, I just doubled my money and all I had to do was get statistical about it.’ There ain’t any statistics with pulling the crank on the slot machine. You can get statistical with blackjack, but fuck if I know how. Anyway, this roulette thing really made sense to me, and I kept playing my strategy all night.

“I got more diverse and strategical with my bets, and I lost some but I mostly won, and by the end of my hot streak I’d won eight grand! Can you kids believe that? Your pop’s some kind of roulette savant! I ain’t going to waste time on the slots anymore, that’s for sure.”

I wasn’t all that impressed with my dad’s story (mostly because A: he was drunk, and B: he had yet shown us his winnings, so I had no reason to believe him), but Lilly was extremely excited by our dad’s stroke of good luck. She immediately began asking him for things that she wanted him to buy for her. I felt as though it would have been best for the money to go straight into Lilly’s college fund and locked there so that there was no possibility he’d lose it betting everything on a double zero, but she seemed to have other things in mind.

Now not only was she asking him for a phone, but for the brand new iPhone 5. I had a feeling Dad wasn’t going to take kindly to yet another request for a cellphone, and I was right. Any sense of pride and joy Dad felt about his big win vanished and evidently converted into anger, because he started yelling at Lilly almost instantaneously after her request had been voiced.

“Your pop finally accomplishes something with his life and all you can think about is yourself? What the hell is

the matter with you, you ungrateful little shit? And didn't I tell you that there's no chance in hell you're getting a phone until you're sixteen?"

"Lay off her, Dad. She's just excited for you."

"Don't defend her, goddamn it. We both know perfectly well what girls her age do with cellphones these days. I'll be damned if I'll let my daughter stand naked in front of the bathroom mirror and send photos to a guy four years older than her. It's disgraceful, it's disgusting, and it's illegal."

"I already told you a million times, Dad, I would never take a picture like that. I think it's disgusting too!"

"I don't doubt that you believe that about yourself," Dad began, "but the unfortunate truth of the matter is that sluttiness and unfaithfulness is in your DNA. Your mother was a slutty cheater, and you're bound to be one too. It's in your genes. Maybe you get a phone and don't send any naked pictures for a few months, but eventually you'll meet a guy who will convince you that you're in love. It only takes one, Lilly. And once you break the mold it stays broke. Suddenly sending naked photos won't seem like such a big deal, and even after Mr. Perfect breaks your heart and leaves you in the dust you'll be used to showing off your naked body to guys, and you'll keep doing it."

I wanted to argue with Dad about how faulty and disgusting his reasoning was and that accusing his daughter of being a future slut was a horrendous thing to do, but something that he said struck a chord with me. Could it be that my mother's faithlessness had rubbed off on me? Here I am in a relationship that most people would love to have, and yet I can only think about my feelings for another girl. Am I a bad person for having feelings for two girls at once? Or can my conscious

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remain clean until I actually perform an action that would be considered cheating? Do emotions, which I have no control over, dictate my guilt, or do my actions?

After continued arguing, Dad ended the conversation. “You’re not getting a phone, Lilly. End of story. In fact, I’m not buying anything for either one of you with this money. I won it fair and square myself, and I’m gonna use it how I want.”

After this, Dad stumbled into his bedroom and thankfully didn’t come out for the rest of the night. I can’t stop thinking about how fucked my current situation is. As for my domestic life, my sister and I are trapped with an irresponsible alcoholic who loses his cool faster than a Gobi Desert ice cube, and as for my social life, I’m dating one girl who has done nothing wrong but I’m in love with one who might feel nothing for me. We’re just a few months away from being able to move out of here and escaping Dad forever, so that’s good, but in the meantime I have no real solution to these issues. Hopefully one day I’ll be able to look back and laugh about how trivial all this shit is. But it sure doesn’t feel trivial.

December 3rd, 2012

I’ve decided that I’m done sitting around feeling sorry for myself. If I expect my life to improve, then I’ve got to take action. There’s no use in crying myself to sleep every night about problems that I could be solving in the daytime.

On Wednesday I’m going to offer to give Dawn a ride home from the Triflers meeting, and on the way to her house I’m going to tell her how I feel about her. She’ll

Mason Elliot

either reveal that she likes me back or she'll reveal that she doesn't. Whatever her response, I'm going to have to accept it and move forward in life.

If she likes me, then I'll break up with Jessica. If she doesn't like me, then I'll try to make it work with Jessica. Sure, it'll probably be awkward around Dawn for a while, but she doesn't seem like the type of person who would let something like this affect our friendship.

I know that I'm going to be super nervous when we're alone together in my car, so luckily I'll have the next couple days to think about what I'm going to say. It's really odd. Every other time I've asked a girl to date me I've felt nothing but confidence, but with Dawn I feel like a nervous wreck. How does she enchant me the way she does?

December 4th, 2012

Tomorrow is the big day. I'm still not sure what I'm going to say to her. Hopefully I find the words soon because I'm starting to worry that I might run out of time.

We don't usually interact with each other at school very much, but I went out of my way during lunch today to say hi to her. Despite the crowded commons area, Dawn usually somehow found a way to sit all alone. I'd offered to sit with her in the past, but she assured me that she "enjoyed the isolation." However, ever since Mario joined our club he has been sitting next to her at lunch. They never touch or anything, or at least I've never seen them act affectionately towards each other, but it still worries me.

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Could they have something going on together that the rest of us don't know about? They seem to have grown awfully close in such a short amount of time. I have to hope that they're just good friends and nothing more. It would really crush me if I'd silently loved Dawn all this time, and then the moment I finally gathered the courage to tell her she got swept off her feet by another guy.

And what also bothers me about this is that Dawn specifically told me not to sit with her during lunch because she likes to sit alone, but now she's sitting with him. I can't help but take that personally. Obviously she feels more comfortable being with Mario in public than she does being with me. Is it because I'm part of the "popular" crowd and she doesn't want me to tarnish my status by abandoning them at lunch for the "weird girl"? Maybe I'm thinking about this too much.

I'm planning on buying Lilly a secret cellphone sometime this weekend. I've got a little stash of money saved up, but it isn't much. I'm not entirely sure how much phones cost these days, let alone how much a texting plan costs, so I'm not sure how much I'll be able to do with what little I have.

Another issue with the potential phone bill is that Dad might stumble across it one day by accident. With work and gambling, he's usually out of the house early in the morning and doesn't return until pretty late at night, so it's not likely he'd ever get to the mail before us, but there's still the slight chance. I don't even want to think about what he'd do if he found out we'd gone behind his back like that.

There must be some cheap alternative that doesn't send a monthly bill in the mail, but if there is, I'm not sure what it is. I'll have to ask around a bit to find out.



Chapter 4

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Boyhood

Part I: Boyhood

I was born on May 7th, 1998 to a single mother in Seton Northwest Hospital in Austin, Texas. My mother, being the 22-year-old, high school dropout, scum of the earth, white trash slut that she was, got knocked up after having a one night stand with some dirty spic she met after what I can only assume was a long night of grinding on men's dicks in a bar. This being Texas, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the Mexican who fucked and chucked her was an illegal border jumper who likely spoke no English. But judging by the stupidity of my mother, especially when she has been drinking, she probably had no idea that the man shoving his brown cock into her didn't speak a word of the same dialect that she did. As it goes, the dumb bitch had unprotected sex with a stranger, he came inside her, and nine months later she squeezed out a mixed race baby boy.

As luck would have it, when my mother discovered she was pregnant, she realized she needed to find a man to marry immediately in order to help her raise the child (see: beta provider²), and she just so happened to find and marry *another* Mexican. After knowing him for only five months, my mother married a man named Ernesto Alberto Quintanilla. Thus, when I was born I was named Mario Alberto Quintanilla. Not only was I cursed to be born a disgusting Mexican, but fate was going to force me to have a Mexican surname as well.

² Beta—the opposite of an alpha male.

Beta Provider—a man who raises another man's child.

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For the first nine years of my life, I lived with my mother and Ernesto in a shitty trailer thirty miles outside of Austin. Despite living in slight poverty and not having a real father, I can still affirm that the first four of these nine years were the greatest of my life. This is primarily due to the fact that at the age of five I began my journey through the public education system of the United States.

My upbringing wasn't completely terrible I suppose. My mother didn't have a job until we moved to Illinois, so during the earliest years of my life I received plenty of attention from her. Her friend Suzanne had also had a child around the time I was born, a daughter named Aubrey, and we often got together with them for "playdates." How ironic that the first female friend I ever had was at the age of two, and I then spent the rest of my life trying and failing to receive attention from the opposite sex.

As far as I can recall, Aubrey and I had plenty of fun playing together as children. I faintly remember she had a baby doll and we would pretend we were parents taking care of the child. Why two and three year olds are so obsessed with playing with baby dolls is beyond me, but I certainly was, and it's a trend that I've noticed continuously.

You would think that after having so many years of experience interacting with another child my age that my social skills would have ripened, and I would have had no issues developing connections with my peers once I started school, but no. Almost my entire school experience was complete and utter hell. While I was a child I don't remember being under the impression that things were that bad, but in

retrospect I realize that my school experience has always been shitty.

I can actually remember my first day of kindergarten. You know that kid who cried on the first day of school because he didn't want his parents to leave him? That was me. Having spent literally every single day of my life with my mother, I couldn't cope with the realization that she was leaving me there alone with a bunch of kids I'd never met before. The dumb bitch should have done more to prepare me for that day, but she didn't. I never attended preschool or daycare or anything of the sort, and because of it I wasn't prepared for my first day of school. Just the thought of it even to this day brings my stomach to a boil.

Because of her retardation, I got to embarrass myself in front of the whole class on my very first day by crying like a baby, PLUS my emotional state due to the absence of my mother caused me to be a very anti-social and frightened student. Any social skills I'd developed with Aubrey were thrown out the fucking window, and I was severely socially and emotionally stunted from the get go, all because of the choices made by my stupid mom.

It wasn't enough that I was fat and Mexican in a classroom full of mostly average-sized, white students, but now I got to carry the stigma of being a crybaby and I was too emotionally distressed to even attempt to form relationships with my peers. Thus, I never stood a fighting chance at making any friends throughout kindergarten. Although I do recall having a decent time in kindergarten, what with the crafts and the snacks and the stories and all

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that, I understand now that I never once made a friend during that time.

As if my mother couldn't fuck up my social life enough, evidently around this time she and Suzanne got into a major fight. I later learned that my whore mother had been sleeping with Suzanne's baby daddy behind her back (this is what eventually led to her and Ernesto's divorce). So now, thanks to my mother's imbecility and superhuman thirst for cock, the only friend that I had in the entire world, Aubrey, was out of my life for good.

I recently looked Aubrey up on Facebook to see how she's doing and to find out if she even remembered me, and it turns out she's in a relationship with a Mexican guy who is five years older than her. At first I didn't know if I should have been flattered or disgusted that after all these years she was attracted to a guy who was the same race as me³, but I then disregarded the race of the man altogether and focused my attention on the fact that he was a man! She was only 16, a sophomore in high school, and she was in a relationship with a 21-year-old man! I felt sick to my stomach thinking that the pure, innocent Aubrey who I'd spent my formative years playing with was currently getting fucked by a man five years older than her! I can't say I'm surprised that the daughter of the stereotypical white trailer trash mother ended up this way, but I have to say it hurt me deeply to learn about this. Deep inside I'd been hoping that there was a chance we could maybe be together someday, but it looks like that ship sailed a long time ago.

³ Spoiler: I ended up being absolutely disgusted.

I continued my existence as the quiet, shy, chubby, Mexican boy through all of kindergarten and first grade without making any real friends.

For my sixth birthday, my mom and Ernesto bought me a Gameboy Advance SP, and it became my source of companionship in life. I brought it with me everywhere I went and made my best efforts to keep it well charged as often as possible. I must have clocked in nearly one thousand hours of playtime during the summer break between kindergarten and first grade.

The Gameboy replaced any desire I had for a social life at school. During lunch and recess I would hide in a bathroom stall and play it until it was time for class again. I figured at some point somebody would notice that I was never present during recess, but nobody did. Whenever the class was leaving for specials (gym, music, etc.), I would always make sure I was the last person out of the room so that I could plug the Gameboy in to charge in order to ensure it wouldn't die on my bus ride home, and consequently I also made sure I was the first person back in the room when we returned.

My school bus driver was a complete asshole, and he banned all electronics from the bus under the excuse that it could be stolen, but if one of my fellow bus-riding peers stole something from me, then wouldn't it be a matter as simple as informing the bus driver of the theft before the student exited the bus? Evidently the old man was too lazy to fulfill his authoritative duty of solving childish conflicts and instead found it simpler to ban all possible conflicts altogether. Thus,

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I was forced to hide my Gameboy from him whenever I rode the bus.

By placing my backpack on the bus seat just right and leaning my head against the seat in front of me, I was able to get away with playing my Gameboy for two whole months without anybody noticing. Then one day in November a girl two seats in front of me threw up on the floor and her friend sitting next to her had to find a new place to sit. Since I always sat alone, my seat was open, and upon plopping down next to me she noticed my Gameboy in my hands. Without hesitating, the little bitch yelled, "Bus driver! Mario has a Gameboy!"

Six-year-old me began to swell with anger. I wanted to punch that goodie two shoes little bitch right in the face. It was the first time I'd ever felt rage for somebody of the opposite sex who wasn't my mother, but as you will all see later on, it certainly wasn't the last.

The bus driver took my Gameboy from me and said I could have it back when we reached my stop. He also added that if he caught me with it again he was going to contact my parents. Well I certainly wasn't going to spend my twice daily twenty-minute trip not playing my Gameboy while it sat idly in my backpack, so I mentally accepted this challenge.

I managed to sneak playing my Gameboy for the remainder of the semester. Even on days when I didn't feel like playing it on the bus, I did so anyway out of spite against the little cunt who'd ratted me out, the bus driver, and his ridiculous rules.

That Christmas I received two new awesome games, and I played them almost nonstop for the rest of winter break.

Evidently my stupid mother began to grow concerned about my relentless gaming habit because all of a sudden she was forcing restrictions on me. She declared that I was now limited to only two hours of Gameboy each day (with four hours allotted on the weekends). I was disturbed by her newfound sense of tyranny, and I loudly protested this rule by use of crying and slamming the trailer walls with the palm of my hand. Despite my efforts, she did not have a change of heart on the ruling.

Ultimately, the new rule didn't have a huge effect on me. I used up the two hours of playtime that she allocated me each day, but those hours didn't include the time I spent playing at school, on the bus, and under my covers while I was supposed to be sleeping. Thus, while she thought I was only playing for two hours every day, I was actually racking up closer to six.

This trend continued until March when everything came crashing down. I was riding the bus on my way home, and I was so concentrated on the game I was playing that I didn't notice the bus had already arrived to my stop. The bus driver waited for me to exit the bus, but when I never did he came back to see if I'd fallen asleep or something. It was then when he discovered the Gameboy.

He called my mom that night, and she was beyond pissed. Not only was she angry that I'd broken the bus rules, but she was double angry that I'd been breaking *her* rules as well. Her punishment was beyond unfair—she took my Gameboy and all of my games and eventually sold them. I cried in my bed all night, and I refused to speak a word to her for an entire week. It was one of the most traumatizing

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experiences of my life. My only source of companionship in the entire world was gone. Once again my mother had destroyed my only opportunity at avoiding crippling loneliness.

I spent the remainder of the school year and most of the summer drawing in my notebook. It wasn't nearly as fun as playing my Gameboy, but it was something I could do without getting in trouble from the bus driver, the teachers at school, or my mother, and it did give me something to pass the time with.

At first I started drawing pictures of my mother dying in the funniest ways I could imagine. In one of the pictures she drowned in a swimming pool full of poop, in another a poop monster force fed her his poop until she exploded, and I distinctly remember one where she was tied to the stocks Renaissance-style, but instead of tomatoes everybody was throwing poop at her. Come to think of it, I think the underlying theme of the drawings was poop rather than death.

In the weeks leading up to second grade, I felt determined that I would do whatever it took to make friends. No more would I be the lonely fat kid who sat alone at recess drawing under a tree or would I be the one boy who never got invited to birthday parties. I was going to socialize. I was going to fit in. I was going to make friends.

The most popular trend in my second grade class was the art of ridiculing one another, and the boys in my class were merciless with their teasing. The more hardcore somebody's joke was, the more laughter and respect he gained from the other guys—even if the joke was at the

expense of the person laughing at it! The jokes ranged from bizarrely mild to life-cripplingly rude.

For example, one day in class we were working on a project with crayons and a boy asked one of his friends if he could “borrow a red.” His friend responded, “Even if I had one I’d say no.” It was a joke so outlandish in its stupidity and obvious in its attempt at being rude that even today it makes me grin a bit.

On the other side of the spectrum, many of the jokes at other people’s expense focused on making the lowest blows possible. Due to this, I received an abundance of fat jokes, all of which were supported by howls of laughter. Our teacher tried to step in on many occasions with her anti-bullying decrees, but she could only do so much. Besides, it wasn’t like I was going to go and tell on these boys if they teased me at recess. I was trying to join their posse.

However, whenever I tried to join in on the fun and make fun of somebody, I never received any laughter. The boy that I was teasing would just reply back with, “at least I’m not an elephant hot air balloon” or something retarded like that, and then *his* joke would be met with bouts of laughter. I tried my best to join their fold, but the boys had no respect for me or my jokes.

I can’t complain too much about getting teased, though. There was one girl in our class that got made fun of more than anybody. Her name was Marissa, and she was in a wheelchair. She was a sweet, kind, and even sort of pretty girl. The only thing wrong about her was the chair. But man oh man did she get teased a lot for being in it. I sat next to

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her when we went to the art room, so I was able to witness a lot of the teasing first hand.

“Hey cyborg!”

“You look great on that sign in the parking lot!”

“Is your brain retarded too, or is it just your legs?”

And my personal favorite: “Why do you let those guys pick on you so much? You should really stand up for yourself.”

Despite being treated so poorly, Marissa never once teased anybody back. She instead tried her best to ignore the comments and focus on her artwork. Now I’m no art critic, and I especially wasn’t one at the age of seven, but even I could tell that Marissa’s work was leagues above the rest of the class. It was almost as if the bullying she received motivated her to succeed rather than broke her spirit. The dedication and intricate focus to detail she put into her art was astonishing for somebody of her age, and I was thoroughly impressed. One day after she’d finished a painting, I mustered up the courage to compliment her.

“That looks really good.”

She looked up from gazing upon her latest work and smiled at me. “Thank you so much, Mario.” She then glanced over at my painting and, without missing a beat, said, “Yours looks great too.”

Obviously I knew she was lying because my attempts at art always have been and always will be⁴ complete and utter

⁴ Which is a strange phrase to use considering I’m planning on dying tomorrow.

shit.⁵ However, her gesture of kindness warmed my sad, lonely heart. It was the first time that somebody at school had actively gone out of their way to be kind to me. All of the social anxiety I'd felt in regards to talking to her melted away, and I had no problem continuing the conversation.

From that point on, Marissa and I started spending time with each other outside of art class. We sat together at lunch, I kept her company during recess, and in the classroom I even convinced the teacher to let me sit next to her. Strangely enough, despite how much time we spent together and how much we talked, I never asked her why she was in the wheelchair. Even to this day I have no idea what was wrong with her.

I was filled with joy that I'd managed to make my first real friend without any assistance from my mother. Spending time with Marissa was much better than playing on my Gameboy. Only having a handful of games often made playing it feel repetitive, but even when Marissa and I ran out of things to say our time together never felt that way. I felt that we were both handicapped in a way: Her to a wheelchair and me to an overweight, brownish body. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the boys in our class to take notice of our newfound friendship, and the barrage of insults began to charge our way.

"You gonna give fatso a ride home because he's too lazy to walk?"

"If you mixed them together you'd have enough for two and a half people!"

⁵ Ironic considering some of my best art pieces from that time literally were drawings involving shit.

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“Do you think her legs don’t work because he accidentally sat on them?”

I was clearly getting flustered by the boys’ comments, and Marissa took notice of this. “Don’t listen to their dumb jokes. They’re just stupid. My mom says boys like to be immature because they aren’t smart enough to be normal yet.”

I understood what she was saying, but that doesn’t mean I liked her message. Those were the same boys that I wanted to be cool with, but now I was the ultimate butt of their jokes. Marissa used to be that butt, and now I was a part of it too. Things got even worse when Marissa asked me to come play at her house in front of the whole class.

“Mario, do you want to come over and play GameCube with me after school? My mom said you can stay for dinner if you want.”

This question was met by the boys in my class with shouts of:

“Oohh! Mario has a girlfriend!”

“They’re going to play on her ramp all night!”

“Don’t kiss her too hard or you’ll break her lips too!”

“I can’t believe he’s cheating on Princess Peach⁶ with a robot!”

“Mario and Marissa *sitting* in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G!”

Where I should have felt ecstatic that I was being invited over to somebody’s house for the first time ever, I instead felt intense shame. I wanted to run away and never see any

⁶ I fucking hate my mom so goddamn much.

of them again—Marissa included. But that wasn't an option for me. I quietly and reluctantly accepted Marissa's offer.

At the end of the school day, Marissa and I went to the office so that I could use their phone to call my mom. I asked her if I could go to Marissa's place for dinner, and my mom sounded very excited for me. She asked for Marissa's address and then told me to call her when I was ready to be picked up.

Marissa and I hurried out of the school so that we could make it to the bus on time. As I followed her, I came to the haunting realization that she rode the short bus. As she rode the lift up onto the bus, I walked up the stairs feeling more humiliated than I ever had in my life. I just knew that those boys from class had probably seen me boarding the short bus, and in turn they were going to tease me about it the next day.

On the bus ride to her home, Marissa excitedly told me about all of the games she had available for us to play together. She told me she was most eager to play *Mario Kart Double Dash* because she'd never had a friend to take advantage of the two-player functions on it with before. She told me that I ought to be really good at the game since they named it after me.⁷ I tried my best to show enthusiasm towards our playdate as well, but my mind was fixed on foreboding thoughts of the day to come.

When we arrived to her home, I took the special precaution of walking up the stairs rather than the ramp in order to avoid allowing even a portion of the earlier ridicule

⁷ Of all the times in my life I've been mocked or ridiculed because of my name, this was one of the few times I didn't mind it.

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to come true. We went inside and she introduced me to her mother and father. They were both very kind to me and had large, genuine smiles that were just like Marissa's. They, much like my mother, seemed very pleased that their child had made a new friend.

Before playing any games, Marissa wanted to give me a tour of her house. I first saw the family room where the GameCube was set up, then the kitchen, and then the living room. I noticed how conscientiously spaced all of the furniture was in order to allow room for Marissa to navigate through her home.

After taking me down a hallway and showing me one of the bathrooms, Marissa opened a door and introduced me to her bedroom. My eyes were immediately filled with a vastness of color and style. All of the art projects Marissa had ever worked on at school (as well as many that she'd done at home) were on full display all around the room. The walls were practically covered with elegant, skillfully crafted pieces of artwork ranging from pencil sketches to paintings to miniature sculptures to origami. It was no wonder why Marissa was so good at art—she'd obviously spent hundreds, if not thousands, of hours on all of the projects in her room. I realized that if I'd dedicated all the hours I'd spent playing my Gameboy towards developing a skill, then I could have probably been really good at something by then, too. Marissa must have noticed that I was standing in awe because she then asked, "What do you think?"

"I think... I think your art is really amazing, Marissa."

She blushed at me and said, "Wait right here, I made you something." She then rolled over to her desk, opened the top

drawer, and retrieved a piece of paper. She returned to me and presented it proudly. “It’s of us.”

I took the paper from her, and my eyes began to swell with tears. It was a pencil-drawn sketch of the two of us sitting in art class together. I could tell she’d spent hours and hours working on it because the attention to detail was outstanding. Although it was a drawing of me, I oddly didn’t feel ashamed of my size or race for the first time in a long time. It was the most heartfelt gift I’ve ever received in my entire life.

“Thanks. I think it’s my favorite one you’ve done,” I said, trying to nonchalantly wipe my eyes.

“I’m glad you like it. I’ve been working on it all week. I thought it’d be neat to have a memory of the first time we talked since we didn’t take a picture of it or anything.”

“Yeah, it is neat.”

In that moment, I felt closer to Marissa than I ever had to anybody else. The only other human friendship I’d had up to that point was with Aubrey. Perhaps I only felt these immense emotions because I’d just spent two years alone and my brain was finally able to release endorphins or whatever other chemicals trigger emotional responses. I felt very happy.

“Now come on,” she said, “let’s go play *Double Dash!*”

We went into the family room and started playing the game. Marissa’s mom asked us if we wanted any snacks before dinner, and I gladly accepted the offer. We ate our Fruit Roll-Ups and continued to play *Mario Kart*, and after an hour of playing it was time to eat.

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It was a strange experience sitting around the dinner table and eating dinner with Marissa's family. At home my mother rarely cooked anything (I was mostly fed fast food⁸), and even when she did we never ate it together as a family. Unless the three of us sitting in front of the television with our own TV tray tables counts as eating around the table.

The spaghetti that Marissa's mom had made was pretty tasty. I finished my first plate before anybody else had, and her mother noticed and asked if I'd like seconds. I yet again accepted her kind offer of food, and she scooped me another plateful.

Meanwhile Marissa's dad was cracking out a great assortment of jokes. He told us that he'd gone out for a business lunch earlier that day and when he received his check it was for nineteen dollars. He then showed the check to his boss and asked, "Do you think this looks odd?" Marissa and I laughed pretty hard at that one, but her mother didn't seem too impressed.

I decided that I, too, would attempt to make a joke, but as I tried to formulate one in my head the only things that were coming to mind were insults. I wanted to tell Marissa's mom that her spaghetti and meatballs tasted like peeghetti and poopballs, and I wanted to make fun of Marissa's dad for having a bald head. My brain began to refill with doubt and worry about the insults and teasing I would receive from my classmates the next day, and all of the warm, happy feelings in my stomach began to evaporate. I didn't want to go to school the next day just to be tormented by those boys. I

⁸ Mother of the Year for 15 consecutive years

didn't want to go anywhere. I just wanted to curl up and disappear for a while.

After dinner, Marissa and I returned to the living room to resume our game, but I was no longer in the mood. I felt nervous, almost panicky even, at the prospect of showing my face at school the next day. I told Marissa I wasn't feeling well and excused myself to the bathroom.

I began to walk down the hallway towards the bathroom feeling a peculiar sensation in my stomach that I'd never felt before. It was like some sort of heavy electricity that was twisting around my insides like a prickly, buzzing wire. This coil turned and twisted its way through my body, and I almost felt like I was losing control of myself.

I absent-mindedly walked past the bathroom and into Marissa's bedroom. I stood in the middle of it and reflected on the marvelous artwork that surrounded me. I recognized many pieces that I'd watched her create from scratch in art class. With those, I also recalled the vile insults that had been sent her way while she had been creating them. The juxtaposition within my brain of beautiful artwork and disgusting, demeaning taunts only caused the electric coil within my stomach to twist tighter and tighter, and at that point I lost all control.

I grabbed a pair of scissors from Marissa's desk, and I proceeded to cut all of her paintings and drawings in half. I'm not entirely sure why I did it, but the sight of them was making me angry, and somehow cutting them down the middle gave me a mild sense of relief. After I had cut as many pieces of art that I could, I returned the scissors to their place on the desk and rushed out of the room.

*Extermination Justification or: The Rants and Ravings of
That Chubby Spic Who Probably Killed Your Kid*

Feeling quite exasperated, I returned to the living room and told Marissa that I was feeling terribly sick and that I needed to go home (which wasn't even a lie at that point). The look of concern that developed on her face upon receiving this news only made me feel worse. I called my mom and told her to pick me up as quickly as possible. She arrived within fifteen minutes, I gave my rushed thanks and goodbyes to her parents, and I hightailed it out of their home and into my mom's car.

When I got home I lay down in my bed and managed to calm down. I knew that I'd just done a horrible thing, and I was waiting for Marissa's parents to call my mom at any second. Surely I would receive the punishment of a lifetime for what I'd done. A call, however, never came, and I somehow managed to get to sleep that night.

The next morning as I sat at my desk watching the rest of the students enter the classroom, I anxiously awaited Marissa's arrival. What was she going to do or say when she saw me? The better question: What was I going to do?

A few of the boys walked in and immediately began to pester me.

"How did your date with the cyborg go?"

"Did you kiss her on the wheelchair?"

"Are her parents in wheelchairs too?"

These were the very teases that I'd been dreading since the day before, but instead of filling me with despair they filled me with an unexpected sense of hope. There was still hope for this atrocious situation! Marissa was the ultimate butt of their jokes, and when they found out what I'd done to her they'd praise me as some sort of god! I would finally earn

their respect and praise! After all that time I would finally fit in with the cool boys from class.

With two minutes before class beginning and everybody in their seats, Marissa rolled into the room. Her eyes were filled with tears and it was obvious that she'd been crying a lot. Everybody in the room looked at her as she entered with confused expressions upon their faces. She then spoke.

"Mario..." she said as she tried to choke back her tears, "did you cut all of my art in half?"

Everybody immediately focused their attention on me. Here it was—my moment to finally shine! My entire life had led up to this moment! I would finally join the cool clique, and I would have more friends than I'd ever imagined. I donned the biggest grin I could muster and said, "Yeah, I wanted to make them look like you."

In response to this, Marissa began to bawl, and she backed out of the room. To my great dismay, instead of a bounty of laughter I was instead met with cold, disgusted stares from my fellow classmates. They weren't impressed, they were appalled.

Marissa never talked to me again after that day, and I never tried talking to anybody in that class again either.

Chapter 5

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The Deep Freeze: Part 1

Now that you are knowledgeable of the Triflers, our weekly activities, and my formerly hidden desires, the next logical step in my story would be to tell you about the event that inspired me to actually pursue my life's goals. The event in question is something that you should feel well informed about already—my time at the Deep Freeze.

Having recently earned my driver's license, I felt that my most responsible course of action would be to acquire a part time job. With you trapped at home receiving your disability payments and no other source of income for our household, I knew that if we ever needed money, we would not be able to rely solely upon you, so in the days leading up to winter break, I began to apply at as many establishments as I could. Winter break seemed like the perfect time to start a new job. I could spend my first two weeks focused primarily on learning the duties of my newfound trade without the interruption of school and homework so that when school resumed again I would already be well equipped to adequately perform my job.

I sent online applications to every store and restaurant within ten miles that claimed the willingness to hire sixteen year olds. I did not expect to hear back from any of the potential employers for at least a week, but on the morning of the very first day of winter break I received a call. The man on the other end of the line was, of course, Blake Ricardo of Ricardo's Deep Freeze.

I was honestly surprised that Ricardo's Deep Freeze was even open in the middle of December. I had sent in my application just in case, but I did not expect that a restaurant focused primarily on selling ice cream would be open in winter. One would think a privately owned ice cream shop would be closed for the winter season. However, as I soon learned, Ricardo's Deep Freeze also

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sold low quality burgers, chicken tenders, and mozzarella sticks along with its ice cream.

“Hello, could I speak with Dawn Bracken?” Ricardo asked.

“Speaking,” I responded, curious as to who was calling at such an early hour in search of me.

“Hi Dawn, I’m calling from Ricardo’s Deep Freeze about an application we received. Would you have time to come in for an interview?”

His voice sounded a bit winded as if he had just finished exercising. It seemed as though he was anxious about talking to me on the phone.

“Sure, I am available all week to come in. What day is best for you?”

“How does today work?” he asked.

I was surprised and suddenly felt a tinge of nervousness. I had never been interviewed for a job before and, of course, that type of important skill had not been taught in school, but I figured it could not be too difficult. I felt a bit rushed, however. His tone of voice suggested a sense of desperation, and his request that we conduct a job interview that very day seemed odd. Perhaps, I figured, somebody had died.

“I can make it in today, sure,” I answered.

“Great,” he responded. “Can you be here at noon?”

I looked at the clock and saw that it was ten thirty. A deadline of noon would give me approximately an hour to shower and get dressed. Normally this would not be an issue, but the requirement

of wearing professional clothing was going to force me to dig through my closet in order to find some. I figured this task was achievable though, and I agreed to the noon meeting time.

As I hung up the phone, I felt a sense of excited anticipation. From what I had read online, earning an interview at a part-time job essentially meant you had it cinched. If they gave you a call, then they must have liked your résumé enough to hire you. The interview was essentially just a formality in order to ensure you were capable of dressing yourself and arriving to work in one piece. As long as I did not insult the interviewer or accidentally set the building on fire (oops), the job was as good as mine. Soon I would be earning eight dollars an hour to vend ice cream sundaes to overweight families while internally mocking my older coworkers who had chosen not to go to college and would instead be doomed to a pathetic, hourly-waged existence.

As I undressed and stepped into the shower, I began to ponder what it could have been about my résumé that had set me apart from the other applicants. I then recalled an intriguing detail that had set the Deep Freeze application apart from all of the other applications I had filled out. The application for Ricardo's Deep Freeze was the only one that had asked for my high school GPA. I suppose it is not the worst question in the world to ask on a part-time job application, but I found it peculiar that none of the other establishments had been curious about it. I figured there was no way the management at the Deep Freeze would be able to gain access to my school records, so I had lied and claimed to have a 4.0. It then occurred to me that it was entirely possible my white lie had resulted in me getting the job interview over somebody else who possibly deserved it more than I did. This thought put me in high spirits.

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After digging through my closet, I came across a Navy blue sweater that you had gifted me for Christmas two years earlier (my apologies for not wearing it sooner), and in the bottom drawer of my dresser I found a pair of khaki pants. Knowing next to nothing about fashion trends or even which colors “matched” other ones, I hoped that these clothes would be acceptable because I had neither the time nor desire to elongate my search for formal attire. Fully dressed, I snatched the car keys from the lily pad and headed for Ricardo’s.

I entered the building at 11:55 and was immediately greeted with, “Welcome to Ricardo’s, how may I help you?” When I say this greeting was immediate, I do so with no hyperbole. I had literally been pushing open the front door of the establishment when the cashier behind the counter had exclaimed this pseudo-friendly acknowledgement. How bizarre, I thought, was it that this cashier had offered to help me the very second I had entered through the doorway. This offering of, “How may I help you?” was an unfortunate combination of helpfulness and impertinence. Did this cashier expect customers to already know what they wanted the *exact moment* they walked through the door? Shouldn’t customers have the opportunity to look at the menu before being offered assistance? A better greeting would have been, “Welcome to Ricardo’s. I can help you whenever you are ready.” The greeting offered to me instead was surprising in that it put an unexpected amount of pressure upon the potential customer. When I was working the register, I mused to myself, I would use my own greeting rather than the one used by the young man behind the counter.

I approached him. He was black and donned a nametag that read: TyCarr. As much as I would love to discuss my fascination for African-American culture’s need to quite literally throw random

syllables together in order to name their newborns, I am afraid I should try to just stick to the story instead. “I am here for an interview,” I informed.

“Oh, alright then. You can go wait at that booth,” TyCarr responded, gesturing towards one of the many open spots in the dining area.

I sat at the booth TyCarr had pointed out and took a moment to take in my surroundings. For being a Thursday during the prime lunch hour, the place seemed pretty empty. There were a couple of teens sitting at a booth on the other side of the room and a table full of elderly people solemnly staring at one another, but otherwise the building was void of customers. I saw a woman with dyed red hair (who I would later know as Maranda) wiping a table with a blue rag, so it could be assumed that there had been customers earlier in the day, but as far as I could tell business at that restaurant was terribly slow. This pleased me. If I could get paid to stand around doing next to nothing while immersing myself in my thoughts, then that would be fantastic. I would later learn, however, that during this time of day most customers were going through the drive thru rather than dining inside.

It seemed as though arriving early to secure my status as a potential good employee was for nothing, as Ricardo himself did not meet me at the booth until 12:10. Ricardo was a craven-looking white man (I was expecting some sort of other ethnicity with a name like Ricardo) with dark brown hair and shaky fingers. In his hand he held a manila folder with my résumé inside. As far as I can currently attest, Blake Ricardo has no idea what I look like because for the entirety of the interview he never once looked up from the folder or my résumé.

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“You must be Dawn,” he said as he sat down across from me. “It’s nice to meet you, I’m Blake. I own this joint.”

Typically, a greeting of, “It’s nice to meet you,” was accompanied by a handshake or, as I mentioned earlier, eye contact, but Ricardo offered neither.

“It is nice to meet you as well. Thank you for offering me this interview.”

“Your résumé looks great. Would you be able to work on Christmas?” he asked.

This was not a question I had been expecting at all, and to my astonishment it ended up being the only one he asked of me. After I answered that yes, I would be available to work on Christmas Day, Ricardo responded, “Perfect, you’ve got the job,” and asked Maranda to set up a schedule with me before walking away. I was honestly dumbfounded. My job interview had lasted literally less than a minute and the employer had not looked at me once. I felt pride that my résumé was good enough to earn me the position without a real interview, and I was glad that my non-existing interview experience was not going to be put to the test, but I felt cheated in some way. It was as if I had been used and immediately thrown away to the side like many of the promiscuous cheerleaders from school. That was the first and last time I saw Blake Ricardo.

“That’s a cute sweater,” Maranda commented as she approached me. “I’m Maranda, spelled with an A instead of an I. I’m the front-end manager.” She, unlike the restaurant’s owner, offered me eye contact, a handshake, and a smile. Maranda was young, probably somewhere in her mid-twenties, and had a spunky attitude. Typically, these types of girls (the ones with the overly-amiable attitudes and dyed hair) rubbed me the wrong way, but I liked Maranda.

Dawn Bracken

“Thank you, my mother gave it to me. I am Dawn.”

“Well, Dawn, if you have some time, I’d like to introduce you to everybody and figure out a schedule for your first couple of weeks. Plus I gotta get you your uniform too. What size shirt do you wear?”

We concluded that I would work every day for the next week from 5 to close (and Maranda double-checked that I would be available on Christmas). She then formally introduced me to Tycarr. “For your first few days you’ll just shadow either Tycarr or me,” Maranda had explained. “You’ll get the hang of this place real quick—it isn’t very hard.”

“Easy enough that I can come in to work high every day,” Tycarr said with a grin. He was not joking.

Maranda then took me into the kitchen to introduce me to the fry cook. “Joe, I’d like you to meet Dawn. She’s going to be starting up front soon.”

“Yeah, and she’ll be right back out the door pretty soon too I bet,” Joe responded. He was a funny looking character. He wore a hairnet despite being bald and had his own name tattooed on his forearm. He gave off the impression of a man who had spent some time in prison, and I later learned that this was actually the case. “You look pretty tired, Dawn. Ain’t you been getting sleep? You remind me of a zombie.”

“Joe is the kind of guy that likes to push people’s buttons,” Maranda would later tell me, “so it’s best if you don’t show him any.”

After giving me a tour of the place, Maranda asked me if I had any questions. “Nothing inherent as of now,” I answered. “Although I

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am sure I will have forgotten a lot of what you showed me. Everything is feeling a bit rushed.”

“Yeah, you’re right about that,” Maranda responded. “We just had somebody walk out yesterday, so we were in need of a replacement fast.”

This reminded me of Joe’s earlier comment. “Does that happen a lot?” I asked. “Employees spontaneously quitting?”

“More often than I’d like to admit. I try my best to make everybody here feel comfortable and happy with their job, but I guess a lot of people just find that this place isn’t for them.”

The uniform Maranda gave me was quite similar to the getup I was already wearing. I was handed a blue polo shirt with “Ricardo’s” stitched upon the right breast and a blue baseball cap embroidered with the restaurant’s logo. “For pants what you’re wearing now is perfect,” Maranda told me. “Oh, and the shoes. It’s absolutely mandatory that you get the shoes.”

The shoes she spoke of were black, slip-resistant sneakers that I was to purchase from Wal-Mart for twenty dollars. Upon buying and wearing these shoes, I quickly arrived to the conclusion that they were more slippery than my normal tennis shoes and that we were only required to wear them so that upon slipping we only had the option of suing the shoe company and not Blake Ricardo. How unfortunate, I thought, was it for those poor adults so desperate in need for money that they applied at an ice cream shop only to learn that they would need to make a twenty-dollar payment in order to get on the payroll. Even in my current state I cannot imagine becoming so pathetic. How some people allow their lives to become so pitiful is beyond me.

Dawn Bracken

I returned the next day donning my newly washed uniform (now complete with the “slip-resistant” shoes) and instantly began learning the ins-and-outs of working at Ricardo’s. My first lesson was with the cash registers. They were touchscreens that primarily had square pictures of food on them rather than words (in case the high school dropouts forced to work there for the rest of their lives did not know how to read, I imagine). The registers were also used for clocking in and out of our work shifts. Maranda showed me how to access the Clock In/Out screen and then informed me that we had to punch in a code: 168 + the last four digits of our Social Security number.

As one would expect, the job was not difficult. I got the hang of using the cash register “super damn fast” as TyCarr put it. When I was not taking orders my duties included cleaning the dining room tables (as I had witnessed Maranda doing during my interview), refilling all napkin and lid dispensers, filling the soda fountain with ice from an ice machine in the back (I always thought those soda fountains generated their own ice—who knew?), and occasionally running to the back to help Joe with some menial task. It was not until my second day at work when Maranda introduced me to operating the drive-thru that I began to feel even an inkling of stress.

For starters, I hated wearing the headset. There was no adjustment for the sound level, so it was always terribly loud in my ear, and it did not help that the overweight, white trash customers were so desperate and/or excited for food that they screamed their orders into the speaker as loudly as they could. The stress kicked in when I would be standing at the window receiving one customer’s payment and then another one would drive up to the speaker box. When the dinner rush came it came hard, and I found myself juggling the tasks of taking orders, receiving payments, preparing

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their drinks, preparing ice cream orders, and handing them their food all at the same time (and if my register ran out of pennies or whatever the entire line would be held up as I waited for Maranda to bring me a coin roll). Whenever I had more than three cars waiting in line at once, I felt a lump forming on the back of my neck that I wished I could squeeze to oblivion.

Maranda attempted to help me as often as she could, but due to her status as manager she was needed elsewhere. It was her job to place the food passed to her by Joe through the window between the kitchen and the front onto/into the correct trays/bags and to make sure the correct orders got to the correct customers. All the while jumping onto register two in order to help TyCarr when the indoor line got too long, listening to customer complaints, answering phone calls (usually call-in orders but also quite often people complaining that they had gone through the drive-thru, driven home, and opened their bag to find that they were missing some of their food—an issue that I will never sympathize with. It is your duty to make sure you received what you ordered under the pretense that mistakes *do* happen you miserable whiners), and making sure that Joe did not need further assistance in the back.

After witnessing how busy the restaurant could become and how strained our efforts were at keeping customers happy, I decided I would try to convince Joe to speak to Maranda about the issue. I did not want to complain to Maranda myself because I did not want to come across as weak or to gain the reputation of a complainer, so my plan was to manipulate Joe into convincing Maranda to hire more help.

“You know, Joe,” I said to the man a little before closing time, “we do get terribly busy during that dinner rush, huh? There are three of us up front and even we have trouble keeping up with the orders. I can only imagine how difficult it is for you to make all of

the food back here *by yourself*. Why have they not hired more people to help out?”

Joe found this amusing. “This job is a fucking paradise compared to my life outside of here. Those dinner rushes ain’t nothing, Dee. You think I care if I slip up and some guy gets mustard instead of ketchup? I couldn’t give less of a shit. There’s no real consequences back here. It’s a breeze, Dee, it’s a freakin’ breeze. You wanna hear about real problems?”

I nodded my head. Joe had lived an interesting 28 years up to that point, what with the frequent “vacations” to prison he often liked to reflect upon (I remember he once told me that he had a private television in his cell. I was not sure whether or not to believe him), and I was always interested in listening to him speak about his life.

“Here’s the shit I’m going through right now. According to my parole, I’m not supposed to be around any alcohol—like at all. And so my parole officer calls me yesterday and asks, ‘Joe, if I were to come to your house tomorrow would I find any alcohol?’ And I answer, ‘Well no shit.’ But see, I’m not the one drinking it. I don’t touch the stuff. I live with my dad and he can’t live without it. And I talked to my dad about it and he knows damn well about my parole, but he doesn’t give a shit. So now I’m faced with two options: Move out or go back to prison. I’m pretty much homeless now, Dee. So yeah, grilling burgers and frying cheese sticks ain’t too bad.”

Given this answer, I gave up on trying to manipulate Joe into doing my bidding and I began diverting my attention to TyCarr instead.

My favorite part of the shift was closing time when all of the customers were gone. Then it was just Joe, Maranda, and I left in the restaurant to complete all of the nightly duties. From 10pm to 11:30pm, it was my job to clean the dining area completely

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(wiping down the tables, vacuuming the floor, etc.), mop the front end of the store where the registers were, clean out the ice cream machine and reset it for the next day, and refill the frozen goods from the storage freezer. Maranda was in charge of counting all of the money from the registers, accounting for it in the back office, and locking everything down before leaving. Joe, who typically started shutting down components of the kitchen thirty minutes early with the hopes that late night customers would not come rolling through (this rarely paid off), took care of all the kitchen duties and was usually out the door by eleven.

With Maranda in the back office and Joe in the kitchen (or already on his way home), that hour and a half of closing gave me the alone time that I desperately needed after five hours of interacting with rude, self-entitled customers all day. I have never minded cleaning (as you know, I have always found it peaceful—like some strange form of meditation), so I truly enjoyed myself during this time. When I finished with all of my tasks, I would knock on the office door to say goodbye to Maranda and then walk out the front door congratulating myself on another fifty-two dollars well earned (minus taxes and gas).

When I got around to trying my shtick on TyCarr, I learned why I would not be seeing any additional help anytime soon. “They be greedy as sin, those two.” The two he was referring to were Blake and his wife Jill. According to TyCarr, the two of them refused to have more than four people on the clock at once in order to maximize their income. This, of course, makes absolutely no sense, and I will explain why.

Common sense states that customers who are happy will return to the establishment that made them happy and henceforth spend more of their money there. However, due to a lack of employees, customers are faced with things that make them unhappy. Long

lines, delays, mistakes with their orders, you name it. Thus, for the low cost of only eight dollars an hour, Blake and Jill could have increased customer satisfaction, thus increasing customer loyalty and ensuring that they would return more often to spend more money. It completely baffles me that this concept was foreign to them. Their abhorrent greediness was causing great stress not just to me and my coworkers but to the customers we were serving (not that I personally care seeing as I am pretty much in the same boat Joe was when it comes to lacking empathy for disappointed customers, but this thought still should have crossed their minds). Not only had Blake Ricardo shown disrespect for me, but he was now proving himself to be selfish and greedy in a way that was detrimental to my happiness. And, as such, I took it upon myself to take revenge in the form of stealing (through the form of eating) as much product as possible. It is probably for the best that my time at Ricardo's did not last long because at the rate I was feasting upon Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and M&M's my health would have depreciated quickly.

Christmas came and passed at the same rate as any other day. I was unpleasantly surprised with how busy we were despite the holiday (I remember being tempted to scold customers for eating our greasy filth rather than preparing a nice meal for their families). I ultimately was not too agitated, however, given that the day after Christmas, a Wednesday, was going to be my first day off—just in time for a Triflers meeting.

It was during my Christmas shift that Maranda approached me with a plethora of customer complaints to discuss. "Some of our regulars have told me that you're scaring them," she said as kindly as she could muster. "You should try smiling more—even if you have to fake it." Imagine my surprise to learn that I—a five foot

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three white girl working alongside a late-teens black man—was considered the more menacing of the two.

Evidently not all of the customers thought I was scary, though. During my ten-minute break one day, an old woman sitting alone at an adjacent table struck up a conversation with me. “Would you like to hear the story of my near-death experience?”

There was no way she could have known how beautiful that sentence sounded to me. For perhaps the first time ever I smiled a genuine grin at a customer and answered, “I would love to hear about it.”

“I was walking down the stairs of my basement with a stack of coats in my hands,” she told. “This was maybe ten or eleven years ago—or I think it was the last spring before the World Trade Center attacks. And the weather was finally starting to warm up so Randy and I didn’t need all of our winter garbs clogging up the front closet anymore, so I was carrying them down to the basement to store them.

“Anyway, when I reached the bottom of the stairs there was one more stair than I remembered, and given the pile of coats in my hands I couldn’t see my feet anyway, so I took a bit of a tumble on that last step. Luckily I fell onto the coats so it didn’t hurt a bit, but I distinctly remember thinking to myself, ‘It’s a good thing I didn’t fall and break my hip because there’s no way Randy would be able to hear me from down here.’ You see, Randy at that point was practically already deaf, and he had the television turned up so loud that there was no way he would be able to hear me over it if I was yelling for help all the way from the basement.

“The funny part of this is that even though I had just acknowledged that if I were to have an accident in the basement Randy wouldn’t have been able to hear me, I didn’t have any second thoughts when

I noticed the treadmill and decided to take a walk on it. I very rarely used the treadmill at all, and neither did Randy. Our grandsons played football you see, they were on the varsity team at school, so they ran on the treadmill a lot. Anyway, the treadmill was in the corner of the basement so it was right up against the wall, and when I stood on it and turned it on it was like getting blown over by the most incredible gust of wind—like a tornado. The boys had it set to such a fast speed, and I hadn't thought the need to dial it down.

“So now I'm lying on the treadmill stuck up against the wall and I have no way of standing back up on my feet without the running deck knocking me back over. And this thing is spinning so fast against my bare skin that I know it's going to skin me down to the bone. It hurts terribly bad like when a child falls off of their bike and skins their knee on the pavement, except this was continuous. So I know that I need to get up fast or else I'm going to be in real trouble.

“Despite knowing it was pointless, I tried yelling for Randy's help, but he had no way of hearing me. Then I think that maybe if I reach far enough I can unplug the machine to make it stop. I reach forward above my head as far as I can, but the cord is completely out of reach.

“I looked up to see how far away the buttons were, and I noticed a large red Stop button at the bottom of the display, so I try to reach up there to hit it, but my arm still isn't long enough. I actually cursed out loud, believe it or not, on account of being so frustrated. One of the only times I've ever done that.

“And now I feel that it is starting to pull my shorts off of me, and I know I don't want it to do that, so I have one hand in my pocket holding on to my shorts so that they stay in place and protect my

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thighs from getting skinned. And as I put my hand in my pocket I discover one of my knitting needles! I had forgotten that I had put it in my pocket before getting the coats out of the closet. So I reach up with the needle and it is just long enough to hit the button and stop the machine.

“I crawl off of it and my left arm and my left leg are just red and tattered and dry and nasty and bloody, and I make it up the stairs into the living room and I collapse onto the couch next to Randy. And Randy looks over at me and sees me all scratched up and bloody and sweaty and he says to me, ‘Coats must not have appreciated being put away, huh?’”

I laughed along with her upon the story’s end and thanked her for giving me company during my break. Although I have a feeling she was the one who wanted to thank me. I wonder how long ago Randy passed away.

After my day off and an unusually eventful Triflers meeting (one of Mario’s comments had sent Mason into a tizzy and he had left the meeting early) I returned to Ricardo’s Deep Freeze for what would be my last shift there. My ice cream preparation skills must have gotten a bit rusty during my day off because I had accidentally covered a customer’s sundae with Reese’s Pieces rather than M&M’s (to be fair, who puts two identical looking candies side by side on the candy wall?). Upon my sundae being rejected by the customer, I realized my mistake and was about to dispose of it when Maranda took notice of the situation and said to me, “Hey, don’t worry about it. You can put it in the back freezer for now and take it home tonight if you want.”

I did not particularly want the sundae, but given my desire to steal as much from Mr. and Mrs. Ricardo as possible and my newfound respect for Maranda’s willingness to allow me to do so, I placed

the sundae in the storage freezer after preparing a new one for the customer.

Come closing time, I finished all of my duties and then said good night to Maranda as I normally did. Upon exiting the building, entering my car, and pulling out of the parking lot, I realized I had forgotten all about my waiting sundae. I pulled back into the lot and entered the building. I considered informing Maranda that I had returned, but obviously, given the history of this account, I neglected to do so.

I entered the storage freezer and found my sundae exactly where I had left it. Bits of ice particles had already begun to form upon the top—frozen ice cream is never quite as good as the freshly made stuff. Using the spoon I had placed in the dish for the customer, I took a bite of the reward of my failure. Disappointed that I had wasted my time coming back for a dish that I ultimately did not want, I attempted to exit the freezer and was astonished to find that the door would not budge.

I figured I simply was not pushing hard enough, so I pressed harder. I then attempted to shove my body against it to no avail. I arrived to the conclusion that Maranda must have locked it during the short time that I had been inside. It was upon realizing I was trapped inside that the freezing temperature really began to make itself known. It is as if the conscious discovery of pain or suffering increases it tenfold. I find that to be very interesting.

I banged my fist against the door and screamed as loudly as I could in order to get Maranda's attention, but she was either too far away to hear me, I was too quiet to hear, the walls of the freezer were so thick that very little sound could get out, or some combination of the three, because she did not come back. At that point I had a sinking feeling that I was in for a long, bitterly cold night.

A decorative border composed of a series of concentric circles, creating a frame around the central text.

Chapter 6

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Pandora's Box

Mason Elliot

December 5th, 2012

Things did not go according to plan today, but it's not really my fault. I was unable to focus in class at all today because I spent the entirety of my mental processes on trying to craft the perfect statement to use when telling Dawn I loved her. I'm considering writing down what I had in mind, but I'm starting to feel like a real cheeseball about the whole thing. Maybe it's good that I didn't get the chance to talk to Dawn alone because I probably would have just embarrassed myself. But then again, is there any way to vocally express your feelings to someone without sounding like an embarrassing cheeseball?

When the school day ended Dorianne and I got into my car and headed over to Chao's house. I've been hanging out over at the Chao's place for so long that I'm practically family now. When Theo moved out and I started hanging out with Andy instead, his mother didn't bat an eye. It was as if to her I was friends with the house itself and came over to hang out in it regardless of who was home.

She's a really nice lady. She pretty much always makes delicious, authentic Chinese food for us to eat when we come over. Her obsession with her family only eating traditional Chinese meals is kind of amusing. She seems to have integrated to American customs in every way except for the food. I remember one time Theo and I picked up some McDonald's on our way to his place and we were eating it in his room. When his mom saw what he was eating, she started yelling at him and actually took it from him and threw it in the trash. I'm not sure what her deal is, but I'm not complaining since the food is free and delicious.

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Today she'd prepared sea cucumbers for us. Where she goes in Elmhurst to buy sea cucumbers, I have no idea (I suspect she drives all the way to the Chinatown in Chicago to buy most of her food?). She'd prepared the sea cucumbers with shitake mushrooms, and Dorianne hates mushrooms, so she kindly rejected the offer. I, however, gladly took Dorianne's portion along with my own since the six chicken nuggets from our school lunch had done a terrible job of filling me up.

We went downstairs and found that Chao and Tao were already setting up. Dorianne and I usually arrive before Dawn and the others, so this wasn't out of the ordinary. Although, I've been becoming suspicious of the amount of time it takes Dawn and Mario to show up. We all get out of school at the same time, and although I drive and they walk, there is so much traffic as I try to get out of the parking lot that the amount of time it takes to travel from the school to Chao's should be nearly the same. I know this to be true because back before Mario joined and it was just Dawn and Truman, they arrived a minute or two after we did. But now they show up nearly ten minutes later than usual. I know it's stupid, but I can't help but wonder if they're so much later now because Dawn and Mario make out after school or something. Like I said, I know it's stupid and pretty petty to think in that way, but I can't help but think that something is going on between them.

That's another thing, too. I've always offered to give Dawn a ride to Chao's place after school, but she said she'd rather walk with Truman. It's clear as day that Truman has a huge crush on Dawn (and I think everybody knows it except for him), but I'm not threatened by him because Dawn has made it perfectly obvious that she doesn't feel that way about him. But it's

just like the lunch thing. She didn't want to be seen eating lunch with me at school, but she has no problem being seen with Mario. She doesn't want to ride with me to Chao's, but she'll walk with Truman and Mario. Does she really not want to be seen in public with me, or am I just overthinking this?

Anyway, it's ridiculous to think that Dawn and Mario are doing anything out of the ordinary together after school since Truman is with them. And I have a feeling if Dawn and Mario were making out in front of Truman, we'd all know it by now. But despite being cognitively aware of this fact, I still can't help but think of the worst possible scenario. Love makes you a stupid, jealous idiot.

Typically, I enjoy the time we spend with Tao as we wait for the rest of the Triflers to arrive because I'm interested in his war stories. Back in 2008, Tao enlisted in the military and was sent to serve a tour in Iraq. Then at some point in August he was one of the soldiers selected to be reassigned from Iraq to Afghanistan. I've never traveled out of the country before (let alone the Midwest), so I'm always interested to hear stories from Tao since he's been all around the world it seems. However, I was still so focused on what I was going to say to Dawn that discussing war stories was one of the last things on my mind.

I was internally debating whether it would be better to be abrupt with my declaration of love or to give a long speech that eventually led to the revelation. Once alone with Dawn, would it be better to say, "Dawn, I'm in love with you," or "Dawn, you and I have known each other for well over a year now, and during that time you've become my best friend. But my feelings have evolved and I've found myself almost dependent on having you in my life. A smile from you is worth a thousand smiles from

somebody else. I've felt this way about you for a long time, but I haven't had the courage to vocalize my feelings to you until now. I'm madly in love with you, Dawn." After that I wasn't sure what would happen. Either she'd feel the same way and tell me or she wouldn't. In order to prevent an awkward car ride home upon her rejection of me, I thought it would probably be best to wait until we'd arrived at her house before I confessed to her. But then again, if she did love me back, then I'd want to relish in the moment as long as possible and the drive home would allow me to capitalize on that. There were just so many possibilities and variables swirling through my head that I thought coming to a concrete answer would be impossible.

I was still in the midst of contemplating these things when Dawn, Mario, and Truman arrived. They each had a plate of sea cucumbers in hand, and unlike Dorianne, they all seemed pleased with what had been prepared. The seven of us exchanged greetings and small talk before Tao decided it was time to start the video.

The video began with a black screen accompanied by an ambient, eerie siren that served as the score. Unlike most of the videos we watched during Triflers meetings, this one had a title. Big, red capitalized words popped onto the screen: PUTRID SEX OBJECT.

Then, in quotes, the video provided a description. I'm not sure if this is word for word, but as always with these entries I'm paraphrasing the best I can. The text read, "The story of a lost, lonely girl, wandering through the halls of an old decrepit house. In her feverish delirium she finds ecstasy." As we learned later on in the video, this self-imposed description wasn't completely honest.

The footage began. At first everything had a green tint to it as if it were being filmed with night vision. At the

end of a hallway, a woman emerged from a doorway looking dramatically frightened. I say dramatically frightened because her acting was something straight out of one of those old silent films where the actors had to over-articulate their movements in order to get their emotions across.

Something seemed off about the woman from the get-go. Her hair was blue—quite obviously a wig—and she had an over-abundance of makeup on her face. It's kind of like if a clown became a prostitute or vice versa. She walks down the hallway a bit and then bam—the shot cuts to a decapitated skinned horse head with the tongue hanging out. This isn't some sort of fake movie prop either, this is the real deal. If it weren't for the distinct shape of a horse head, it would have been difficult to decipher what the bloody, muscly heap with eyes and teeth had originally been.

The woman kneels down in front of the head and starts making out with it. She's rubbing her face against the horse's mouth, getting covered in blood in the process, and she's stroking the horse's giant tongue like you would a penis. As per usual when watching these types of videos, I completely lost my appetite for the delicious food that Chao's mother had provided. I typically try to scarf my food down before we start watching videos, but I hadn't yet completed my second portion. And after this I wasn't going to.

With foreplay completed, the woman began to hump the horse head against her crotch. I came to the sudden realization that she was probably going to have actual penetrative sex with the horse head, and I wasn't completely wrong. It was when the woman pulled down her skirt and revealed her penis that we realized the video's earlier description had been very liberal with its

definition of the word “girl.” The video then continued (and ended) with the man rubbing bloody entrails from the horse’s insides against his dick and then having sex with the horse head until he finished.

All in all, Putrid Sex Object wasn’t the worst thing we’ve ever watched. All of the participants of the video were willing to perform whatever actions were necessary (if we assume a dead horse doesn’t need to give consent) and that’s a lot more than I can say about the dog from a few weeks ago. The group had a discussion and they seemed to agree that the video might have been physically grotesque, but from a moral standpoint there hadn’t been much harm done. What makes videos like these truly terrifying is when they are disgusting visually, mentally, and morally.

As things were generally wrapping up, I began to feel the pressure in my stomach increasing. Now was the moment in time that I had to ask Dawn if she wanted a ride home. There shouldn’t have been any pressure at all in asking that question. I’d given Dawn rides home from Chao’s many times before. But this time was different because I knew once I was alone in the car with her I would have to do one of the most nerve-wracking things I’d ever done.

I gathered up the courage and just spit it out. “Do you need a ride home, Dawn?”

To my utter dismay, she answered, “Not tonight. Mario and I are studying for our psychology final at his house. Thank you for the offer, though.”

I felt crushed and relieved at the same time. The pressure in my stomach dissipated and was replaced by disappointment. On one hand, I no longer had to tell Dawn how I felt about her, but on the other hand, I wasn’t going to be able to tell Dawn how I felt about her.

Mason Elliot

It's really strange to feel happy and sad about the same thing like that.

So, through no fault of my own, I was unable to open up to Dawn tonight. But that's fine. I'll get more chances in the future. It didn't have to be done today. But now I'm worried that once that pressure starts building again it'll grow so powerful that it will cripple me and that by the time I have an opportunity to tell Dawn my feelings I will be too weak to do so.

We are going to her house on Sunday. I'll have to do it then. No matter how I feel about it, I have to do it then.

December 8th, 2012

It turns out a cellphone wasn't the best option for Lilly. In order to buy a cellphone that was capable of doing what she wanted plus getting into a contract with a cellphone company, it would have cost hundreds of dollars. Plus, with that would have come the monthly paranoia of Dad coming across the phone bill in the mail. I simply don't have that kind of money available nor the capacity to deal with an extra source of stress, so we threw out the phone idea in search of an alternative.

After doing some research, I discovered that touch screen iPods can download apps and stuff when connected to Wi-Fi. Not only are there a bunch of apps for games, but there are apps that allow users to send text messages and pictures for free. There wouldn't even be a monthly charge for the service, it's just completely free! So I went to Craigslist to see if anybody was selling one of these iPods and I found a guy in town who was selling his older model for fifty bucks. I emailed him and we met at a Starbucks to make the transaction.

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I know it's not a cellphone like she wanted, but Lilly seems extremely happy and grateful. There are just so many advantages to using this iPod instead of a phone that I can't believe we didn't think of it sooner. The iPod was insanely cheaper, the apps are free and accessible as long as she is connected to Wi-Fi, and even if Dad noticed the iPod (although I've made it very clear to her that she has to keep it hidden from him), she can just tell him that it's only used for music and he'd probably believe it.

I'm just glad that I was able to make Lilly happy while going behind Dad's back at the same time. He's an abrasive moron who knows nothing about raising a daughter, and anything I can do to counteract his shitty parenting will be considered a win in my book. We're so close to being able to move out that I can almost taste it. I just need to find a steady source of income so that we can afford an apartment.

We're going to Dawn's tomorrow, and at some point I'm going to tell her. I've decided that no matter what the outcome, whether she rejects me or not, I'm going to break it off with Jessica on Monday. This whole thing totally isn't fair to her, and I can't continue dating somebody who I don't feel monogamous affection for. It's going to be difficult, and she's going to be heartbroken, but it's for the best.

December 9th, 2012

My thoughts and emotions are in turmoil. Dawn canceled on us today because she and Mario needed to spend the day studying for their final. I can't fucking believe it. This is exactly what I've been worried about.

There's something going on between them. The thought that Dawn has fallen in love with somebody else makes my stomach plunge into cold darkness and my entire body want to shrivel up and disappear. When I think about them touching or embracing or kissing in any way, I want to vomit profusely. As I write these words, I feel myself becoming more and more sick.

They can't just be studying. They've been doing that since Wednesday. Obviously Dawn enjoys spending time with Mario more than she does spending time with me. In all the time that we've known each other, she has almost never canceled on Lilly and I coming over to hang out for the day on Sundays. She's in love with him and not me and I just want to fucking die. I've always thought that if killing yourself was as simple as flicking a light switch from on to off, then I'd have died a long time ago. If that were the option, then I'd be furiously flipping that switch right now. As furiously as one can flip a light switch, I suppose.

I'm just so completely baffled about what she could see in him that she doesn't in me. We've always gotten along great; we're best friends, so it can't be that she doesn't like my personality. When we're together, we always talk and have these deep conversations that I've never had with anybody else. And I can always make her laugh, and she's really funny too, when she wants to be.

Is it because she doesn't find me attractive? I've never thought of myself as hot, but shit, I'm athletic, I'm tall, I have clear skin. I don't like to judge people based on their looks, but Mario is really fat. His hair is greasy and always looks like a mess, he smells like he only showers once or twice a week, his clothes are dirty. How the fuck could she find him more attractive than me? Is his personality really that much better than mine? All he

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does is complain about shit that he doesn't like and everything he says is so vulgar. Dawn is always saying how she hates it when people cuss around her, but he does it all the fucking time and she doesn't bat an eye.

Could it be possible that she gets along with him better than with me? We get along so well. At least I thought we did. Maybe our connection has just been in my head this whole time. Maybe I view her as my best friend, but to her I'm just another normal friend. All of these thoughts make me wish that I could disappear. I don't want to exist anymore. It feels like there's nothing left for me.

Was it just that he had the balls to ask her out before I did? Was she just waiting for me to reveal my feelings this whole time and when I didn't she assumed that I wanted a platonic relationship? Maybe this is all my fault for being too scared to tell her that I love her. And I can't really blame her for assuming that I don't like her in that way. I have a girlfriend for God sakes. What else is she supposed to think? It's no wonder that she wants to be with Mario. Goddamn it, I just want to cry.

If I had a gun, I would honestly just shoot myself in the head right now and this journal would have to be my suicide letter. This would be my last message to mankind and it would be nothing but me crying about how fucking pathetic I am. The pain in my stomach is so intense that I want to scream, but I don't want Lilly to hear me. Fucking goddamn my life. I'm a worthless, pathetic loser. I don't even deserve Dawn. She's too good for me.

Mason Elliot

December 10th, 2012

I broke up with Jessica today. She started crying in front of everybody. When people came to console her, she told them why she was crying. Most of our friends took her side and essentially ostracized me from the group.

I sat alone at lunch today. I saw Mario and Dawn sitting together. It made me want to hang myself right there in the commons. It's clear to me now that she has always liked him more than me. She has no issue being seen with him in public, but she was too ashamed to be seen with me.

I think I might actually go through with killing myself. The only thing that keeps me going is my desire to save Lilly from our Dad. My only purpose in life anymore is to get her as far away from him as possible. But once she's old enough to take care of herself, I won't have anything left going for me.

I don't want to go to the Triflers meeting on Wednesday, but I have to save face and do it. I just have to act like nothing is wrong. I still want to be a good friend to Dawn because I love her so much. Even if I have to watch her date somebody else, I still want to make her happy.

December 12th, 2012

WE ARE SO FUCKED. Lilly really fucked up this time. I have never been angrier in my entire life. I just want to snap her neck right now. I can't believe she was so FUCKING STUPID.

Dad walked into her room and found her posing naked in front of her mirror taking a picture with her

iPod. God fucking damn it, I just want to tear out my hair and slam my face into the wall over and over again until it kills me. He was fucking right! That son of a fucking bitch was right to not give her a cellphone! Lilly is a stupid fucking little slut! I can't believe it! I didn't even make her promise not to do that sort of thing because I thought it was heavily implied that she wouldn't! I thought that it wasn't even worth mentioning! How could she do this? What in the fuck could have been going through her mind?

Naturally, Dad went fucking berserk. He stole the iPod from her and evidently pushed her onto her bed, called her a "fucking whore", and told her to put her clothes on. He had to have known by then that I was the one who had bought her the iPod behind his back, but his rage was instead focused on the guy she was sexting. It was fucking Chance Morgan, a sixteen-year-old sophomore. And she's fucking eleven! I want to kill him, and I know Dad wants to, too. He found out where Chance lives and he drove Lilly over to his house so that they could all speak with Chance's parents. Dad told them that their son was essentially raping his daughter and he showed them the naked photos that he had sent her and all of the dirty messages. Dad promised that he's going to contact the police and press charges against the kid, too. If he lasts long enough to get charged. Between me, Dad, and Chance's dad, I wouldn't be surprised if he was killed sometime soon.

While Lilly and Dad were gone, I was a nervous wreck. I knew what was happening judging by the screaming that Dad had done, and I was pacing the house like a man on death row. I was so scared of what Dad was going to do to me that I was trying to think of a way to kill myself before they got home. My options were either

to run away, kill myself, or endure whatever punishment Dad had in mind for me.

I dug through the entryway closet hoping to find a gun or something, but there wasn't anything in there. I couldn't even find a lousy rope to tie into a noose. I went into the kitchen and retrieved a butcher knife. I was either going to use it to cut my throat or to defend myself from Dad when he came home. I knew that he probably wanted to kill me for going behind his back like that.

I hid the knife under a pillow in the living room so that it would be near me in case I needed to make a grab for it, and I sat on the couch waiting for Dad and Lilly to get home. My heart stopped when the headlights of Dad's truck shined across the window. I waited in sickening anticipation for the handle of the front door to start turning. I tensed up with my eyes glued to the door. The seconds felt like hours as I listened to the sound of their footsteps approaching the door.

When the door opened, Dad didn't hesitate to throw the iPod at me as hard as he could. It missed me by a couple inches and left a gash in the wall behind the couch. As he marched towards me, screaming, I slipped my hand under the pillow in case I needed to defend myself.

"You think you're so fucking smart for going behind my back and buying that thing for your stupid fucking sister? What the fuck is the matter with you? This is my house and these are my rules, and if I say she can't have a cellphone, then you fucking respect that, or you can get the fuck out and live in the gutter. Now stand up."

I was too terrified to stand. I had no idea what he was going to do to me once I stood. I also didn't know how he would react if I pulled a knife out on him. I remained still.

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“Stand up you little fucking shit!”

I released the knife and reluctantly stood from the couch. As I did, Dad swung his fist into my stomach and I fell back down. The punch knocked the wind out of me and it hurt like hell. I couldn't breathe. I was trying to suck air into my lungs, but it just wouldn't go down my throat.

“Now get the fuck up to your rooms. Both of you. And turn off the lights and go to bed. I don't want you reading or playing games or anything. Go to sleep.”

And now I'm lying under my covers writing this with help of the streetlight shining in my window. I hope to God Dad doesn't walk in on me and find me awake writing because who knows what he'd do. He's so pissed. And I am too. I can't believe Lilly would do that. She's a fucking kid! I didn't think that sexting would even cross her mind! And now we're both fucked. Dad is beyond angry, and he's surely thinking of the harshest ways to punish us for this. Our lives are going to be a living hell and it's all her fault.

If the opportunity presents itself, I am going to end my life. There's no reason to stay alive anymore. I don't give a shit if Lilly is stuck with Dad for the next seven years. She deserves it. But I don't deserve any of this. I want to die.

They say the world is supposed to end on the 21st. One can only hope.



Chapter 7

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Transitions

Part II: Transitions

The next phase of my vile, wretched life can be best described as a transitional period. Between the ages of eight and twelve, I fundamentally changed as a person physically, philosophically, and emotionally as most children do, but evidently my pathway of adolescent transition led to a far more depraved destination than everybody else's.

Not much else happened during the remainder of second grade. I informed my mom that I'd had a falling out with Marissa (leaving out the exact details, obviously) and she felt so sorry for me that she bought me a Nintendo DS. Evidently I had "matured" since getting my Gameboy taken away, and she felt as though I deserved a second chance at console companionship. Thus, the majority of my second and third grade life was spent playing on the new handheld.

It was during the summer between third and fourth grade that my life changed forever. My mom, my disgusting, whore, penis-obsessed mom, was caught cheating on Ernesto yet again. He had forgiven her years before when she'd been caught riding Aubrey's dad's dick and she had begged him for forgiveness and promised, cross-her-heart-and-hope-to-die⁹ that it wouldn't happen again. Well, once a degenerate, cheating whore, always a degenerate, cheating whore. When Ernesto caught wind of what was going on behind his back, he, rightfully so, decided to end the relationship.

⁹ If only.

*Extermination Justification or: The Rants and Ravings of
That Chubby Spic Who Probably Killed Your Kid*

Being the owner of the trailer, Ernesto kicked my mom and me out onto the street. Now homeless and jobless, my mom felt desperate and turned to her mother, my grandma, for help. It was decided that we would move to Illinois to live with grandma until my mom was able to “get back on her own two feet” again. It’s seven years later and we’re still at grandma’s place.

I was completely aloof to the reality of my situation during that time. When my mom told me what was going on, she made sure to paint Ernesto as the villain of the story rather than herself. Because why inform your child that you are a selfish cumslut when you could simply lie and say that your adopted father who worked his ass off for eight years to raise you one day decided out of the blue to kick you out?

I can’t say I’m surprised by my mother’s actions though. Over the years I’ve done extensive research into gender studies, and I’ve come to the overwhelming conclusion that all women are whores. Every single female is born with some sort of slut virus that starts working its way through their system (these days at younger and younger ages) and the only way to cure this disease is by working it out of their system. The majority of women work sluttiness out of their systems by riding the cock carousal¹⁰ in college, and come graduation make claims that they are “tired of the party life and ready to settle down” (also known as: “Now that I’m visibly aging it is going to become more difficult for me to

¹⁰ Cock Carousal: An aspect of College Party Culture wherein slutty girls hop from dick to dick every weekend.

ride a different cock every night so I need to find a wealthy loser to marry stat.”).

My mom, being the high school drop-out retard that she is, got pregnant at such a young age that she never had the opportunity to work the sluttness out of her system. Having been forced to settle down and get married early, the only way she could get the whore out of her system was by cheating on her beta-providing husband with as many men as possible.

The move from Texas to Illinois was excruciating. It was two straight days of riding in the car with my mom. My DS was there to keep me company, but once its battery died I was screwed. I specifically remember trying to fill the time by drawing, but ever since my incident with Marissa even the thought of creating art made me sick. My mom tried to talk to me about how amazing my new life would be in Illinois and how we would finally live in a real house, and these projections of enthusiasm rubbed off on me a bit.

Just as I was the summer before second grade, I felt optimistic about having a new start in life. Those years of lonely solitude were surely behind me. Nobody up here in Illinois had any idea who I was, and that would be to my benefit. Nobody would know me as the kid who cried on the first day of kindergarten or the boy who destroyed the paraplegic girl's art projects. I was going to be a blank slate with limitless potential.

Unfortunately, I arrived to the tragic conclusion that only thin, white people get blank slates. Despite not knowing me personally, people have always been able to arrive at conclusions about my personality based completely off of my

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race and size. As a child I understood that I was different—that I wasn't a member of the majority group—but it wasn't until this transitional period that I realized how deep the rabbit hole goes.

They don't teach you about true racism in elementary school. The Indians were a noble group of people with cool feather headbands and beads who ate Thanksgiving with the pilgrims. Nobody mentions to a six-year-old the part where Andrew Jackson ignored the ruling of the Supreme Court in order to force the Cherokee onto the Trail of Tears. They don't expect children to understand racial genocide. So how was I supposed to understand at the age of eight that people would outright hate me due to my race?

On the first day of fourth grade, I decided to go all out. I would approach a group of students and befriend them immediately, an operation I'd never had the courage to try before. I walked up to a collection of boys and girls and kindly introduced myself. The response came from Hannah Wilkinson. Fucking Hannah Wilkinson, just the thought of her name brings my blood to a fucking boil. The human body does not have the capacity for the amount of rage I feel towards Hannah Wilkinson and her entire fucking family. If it weren't for her pathetic existence, my life in Illinois could have been completely different. Alas, she existed. And she responded to me: "Don't talk to us, you're illegal."

"I'm what?" I answered, astoundedly perplexed.

"My daddy says you people are illegal and you're only good for gardening."

I was devastated. My courage had vanished, my self-confidence obliterated. In hindsight, her words don't seem as

soul-obliterating as they did back then, but because of her immediate reaction to meeting me, a sense of self-hatred began to grow and fester inside of me. Often I'd been teased for being overweight, but I hadn't yet experienced outright racism for being Mexican. Over time I began to hate myself for the color of my skin. Even looking in a mirror would drive me crazy—the sight of my disgusting, imperfect skin caused me to swell with anger and I wanted nothing more than to burn myself in an effort to remove my tainted flesh. To this day I still despise the race of people that I unfortunately have to share a skin color with.

Over the years I've felt a lot of hatred about Hannah's comments. At first I hated myself, and then I decided that her racism was the problem, not me, so I hated her. But now I've grown to understand what the target of my hatred should be. Don't get me wrong, I still hate Hannah. I don't hate her for what she said, however. I hate her because she was right.

Mexicans (and Hispanics in general) are a disgusting race of people. They fucking stink, they are loud and oblivious as fuck about their loudness, and so many of them sneak into this country with no knowledge of the language, culture, or customs. Their brownness taints the white water. I wish I were born white. I don't even need to be thin. If I were just born white, then I know everything would have been different for me. But my stupid fucking whore mother had to ruin that for me. She ruined me. She never gave me a fucking chance.

After this encounter with Hannah, I essentially gave up on trying to make friends. I came to the conclusion that the reason why I'd failed for so many years to make any friends

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had to have been because of my race. I was brown and they were all white. I didn't belong with them, and for the first time this knowledge had been revealed to me plain as day. I wasn't the only person of color in that class, however. There was one black kid in there too. But even back then I knew better than to talk to a fucking nigger.

Hannah continued to torment me for the next few months. Whenever she passed me in the hallway she would make a rude comment about my race or my size. I'd been picked on by other students in large packs before, but I'd never been bullied by an individual—and especially not by a girl. I was so taken aback that I didn't know what to do.

Television had taught me there were two methods for dealing with bullies: (1) Fight back or (2) Ignore them. Well, when getting picked on by packs of children, fighting them was generally out of the question purely on the basis of numbers, so I generally tried to ignore them. In this case I was being picked on by a specific individual, however my bully was a girl, and I had also been taught that boys aren't allowed to hurt girls.¹¹ Thus, my only option in dealing with Hannah was to try to ignore her.

Her harassment of me slowed down a bit as the school year went on, but it never petered out completely until the day Hannah died in a car accident. A drunk driver had rammed into the Wilkinson's car and Hannah had been the only fatality from the crash. I remember it was the first time in

¹¹ I have since changed my stance on this completely and plan on murdering several girls tomorrow morning.

my life that I felt joy, pure joy, about the death of another human being.

School was miserable. It was as if the feeling of death had transcended Hannah's being and infected the hearts of the faculty and students. Everybody's tone was somber, glum. It appeared as though I was the only one relishing in Hannah's death. No more would I be bullied in the hallways, at the lunch table, during recess. I felt free. Perhaps now that this obstacle was out of my way, I would finally be able to make a friend.

Everybody in school was given permission to miss class in order to attend Hannah's funeral. I didn't particularly want to go, but I definitely didn't want to be in school either, so I chose the lesser of two evils and asked my mom to take me.

Everybody at the funeral was miserable. I've been to an assortment of funerals and visitations in my life, and I've observed that the mood of attendees directly correlates with the age of the deceased. It's the visitation of an elderly man? Fuck it, smiles and jokes galore! It's the funeral of a child? Shit does not get more serious than that.

Everybody was taking their seats for the funeral and evidently all of the kids from school were being asked to sit together for some reason. I definitely didn't want to sit with them, but my mom told me that I should. The funeral proceeded as normal. The insipid priest gave his spiel, they played some shitty country song accompanied by a slideshow of that little cunt riding horses and playing with her friends, blah blah blah. But then the priest informed the crowd that if anybody wanted to say something about Hannah, now would be the time to do so.

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Her parents spoke first, saying things along the lines of, “Hannah was our precious little girl and now her little brother has to grow up without having his big sister” and all that other generic parent stuff, but then something awful happened. The kid at the end of the row stood up and said something nice about Hannah and sat down. Then the kid next to him stood and did the same. And then the next one. And I quickly realized that all of the students sitting together were going to take a turn saying something in remembrance of Hannah.

I started to panic. I didn’t want to say a goddamn thing about that horrible girl. I didn’t want to be at that funeral at all, and I definitely didn’t want to be sitting in the student section. What the hell was I going to say? It was my turn soon and I still had nothing. My brain was freezing. The girl next to me said her comment and sat down, and now all eyes were on me. I slowly stood up, desperately trying to think of something to say. Unable to think of anything kind, I decided to stick to the truth.

“Hannah was never nice to me, and I didn’t like her very much. I’m glad she’s gone.”

Oh my fucking God. You would think I’d just pulled the pin off a grenade and thrown it into the crowd. Hannah’s mom began to howl in distress and somebody yelled, “Get that kid out of here!” My mom was quick to grab me and we left the funeral immediately.

She was absolutely irate with me on the drive home. She chewed me out like she’d never done before. Her emotional state was such a complicated mixture of outrage, sorrow, and shame that you’d think I was the drunk driver who killed

Hannah in that crash. My DS was taken away from me, and the incident at the funeral ensured that nobody wanted to be my friend. I was back to square one all over again.

I can't say I was completely alone during that time though. The best immediate aspect of the move from Texas to Illinois was that I got to meet my older cousin Dakota. He is five years older than me, so he quickly became my male role model in life. He has certainly had the biggest influence on my life, and his anarchic ideologies rubbed off on me in a big way.

One of the first things Dakota did on the day I met him was show me his knife collection. He had a bunch of really cool blades that his parents had bought for him. He had a bunch of different pocketknives, hunting knives, even a machete. I was pretty impressed that he'd convinced his folks to buy him that kind of stuff even though he was only fourteen. He even gave me a pocketknife and told me I could keep it. I really appreciated that.

Dakota also had a BB gun and on weekends we would go out into the woods behind his house and shoot stuff. Instead of teaching me how to shoot using cans on a fencepost as target practice like you always see in movies, he taught me how to shoot with living targets. Squirrels, rabbits, those sorts of things. I was never any good at it despite his instructions, but thankfully I've improved over the years.

During the summer after fourth grade, Dakota introduced me to some of his friends. I was really nervous since they were all cool teenagers and I was just a dumpy ten-year-old,

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but Dakota assured them that I was cool. His best friend, Ezekiel, was sixteen and had a car, so he drove us around whenever we wanted to do something. This was especially helpful since I'd never gotten my DS back; otherwise I'm sure I would have died of boredom that summer.

I was extremely thankful that Dakota had introduced me to his group of friends. I thought it was crazy that I couldn't make any friends my own age, but I fit in with a crowd of teenagers just fine. Dakota, Ezekiel, their other friend Trevor, and I did a bunch of fun, illegal stuff that summer. We snuck into R rated movies, dined-and-dashed at distant restaurants, shoplifted cool shit from stores, and a bunch of other activities, all thanks to Ezekiel being old enough to drive. Up until that point I'd always considered myself lesser than my peers at school, but now I was spending my summer break committing crimes with cool teenagers while they were probably at home reading or doing chores. It was then when I came to the conclusion that my inability to fit in wasn't because I was lesser than my peers; it was because I was greater.

The best thing we did that summer was on the day Trevor bought a new Super Soaker water gun. Not even a minute after he showed it to us did Dakota say: "Let's fill it with piss and squirt stuff with it." And the rest is history.

We each took a turn pissing into the gun. I remember Ezekiel made a comment about his urine being "ripe with asparagus" and that made me laugh really hard. Once we'd all emptied our bladders, we began to deliberate on who the intended target should be.

"I know where Mrs. Caston lives," Trevor said. "We could spray it all over her door." Evidently Mrs. Caston was an old, bitchy computer science teacher at the high school, but I'm guessing she has retired because I've never seen her.

"I was thinking we go out to a public place and find somebody whose car window isn't rolled up all the way," Ezekiel suggested. "Let our piss soak into their seats all day. They'd never get the smell out."

Dakota's idea was to spray it all over the church across the street from the high school. He has always hated religion with a deep, burning passion, and often did everything possible to fuck with religious people. It was due to his influence that I became a full-blown atheist as well, but I'll get to that in a bit.

Everybody liked everybody's ideas, but there was no consensus.

"It's my gun, so I think I should be able to decide," Trevor stated.

"Yeah, but it's my car that we're driving, so it should be up to me," Ezekiel countered.

"May I remind you guys that it was my idea to fill it with piss in the first place, so if it weren't for me we wouldn't be doing anything at all?" Dakota added.

Unable to make a decision, the guys turned to me. "What do you think we should do, Mario?"

I'd always simply gone along with their misadventures, never once had they asked me of my opinion, let alone allow me to be a deciding factor. I honestly thought all three ideas were hilarious in their own right, but I had one of my own.

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“These ideas are all funny, but we don’t get to see the person react to the piss with any of them,” I said. “What if we drove downtown and sprayed somebody on the sidewalk?”

The guys thought it was brilliant. I’d never been so proud before in my life. I had come up with a plan that impressed the three coolest guys I’d ever met before, and we were going to go through with it.

Ezekiel covered up his license plate with a piece of trash bag and the four of us loaded into his car. He had a destination in mind—one of the rich suburbs of Chicago. Because if we were going to blast somebody with piss, it might as well have been a rich person.

The drive there wasn’t too long, probably a little over half an hour, but we couldn’t get there soon enough. On one hand we were giddy with excitement about blasting somebody in the face with our piss, but on the other hand the smell was starting to get to us. That piss was rank. The stench was not contained by the plastic walls of the Super Soaker. And if it smelt that bad through the gun, we could only imagine how terrible it would be directly underneath your nose.

When we arrived to the suburb, we drove up and down the streets slowly in search of a potential victim, all the while calculating the best possible escape route in order to get as far away as possible after committing the deed. We saw a man walking his dog but continued past him, keeping his existence in the back of our minds in case nothing better turned up.

The next street over we found our answer. A woman in her mid-twenties was jogging on the sidewalk dressed in

skimpy shorts and a sports bra. “That’s the bitch,” Ezekiel said.

Looking back, I’m glad we decided to drench that woman with our piss. She was fairly attractive and lived in a rich neighborhood. Her life had been set on Easy Mode¹² ever since the day she was born. I guarantee you she’d never been rejected for anything a day in her life. Every guy she wanted to fuck pulled his dick out for her in an instant. If she ever wanted a gift that she somehow couldn’t afford with daddy’s money, she could convince a beta orbiter¹³ to buy it for her. A woman like that never would have faced a real problem a day in her life. That is, until we came along.

Trevor, who was sitting in the passenger seat, stuck the gun out the window and fired as we drove past. Her face, hair, and boobs were coated with our yellow, rancid piss, and she began to scream as if she were in agony. I hope that as she was screaming some of it dripped into her mouth. I can’t know for sure because as soon as she’d been sprayed Ezekiel put the pedal to the metal and we were out of there.

I spent the next two years hanging out with those guys on the weekends until they moved away for college. I have no idea what they’re up to these days, but if you guys are reading this (I know you are), I hope that you’re doing great.

By the age of nine I had come to the conclusion that God wasn’t real. Growing up, my mother very seldom took me to

¹² The majority of women have life on Easy Mode by default.

¹³ A beta who a girl strings along but has no real intention of ever dating. Uses him for emotional support, gifts, compliments, etc.

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church¹⁴, so I didn't have the opportunity to get completely brainwashed from a young age like everybody else did. I'd known that Dakota was an atheist, but I never put much thought into questions of religion, so for a while that knowledge about him never really fazed me.

I knew the gist of Christianity, and I believed every word of it. Why wouldn't I? It isn't a child's place to question the truth behind what adults teach you. That's why kids believe in straight up nonsensical shit like Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy—because their parents, and the whole of society, tell them that it's real. What four-year-old has the mental capacity to deduce that the entire world is lying to them? It just doesn't happen. And unfortunately the vast majority of people never learn the truth. It's like there's this rite of passage of transcending from childhood to adolescence by means of discovering the truth about Santa and fairies, but no such bridge of discovery is crossed when it comes to religion. Most kids never grow out of religion like they do with Santa, so they grow up and become adults who believe in fictional nonsense and they in turn teach it to the next generation. From the perspective of somebody with a logical mind, this is absolutely maddening. Insane bullshit is being constantly perpetuated in society and there's nothing that can be done about it.

Anyway, back to my story. The first time I really began to doubt religion was when I was lying in bed unable to sleep one night at the age of nine. I was under the impression that there was a God who could see and hear everything I ever

¹⁴ Thank God.

did or thought and when I died I would go to either Heaven or Hell. A random thought entered my mind. The sentence: “I hate God.” I had no idea why I thought of it, but it had just popped up. And I became frightened. Petrified. I knew that God could read my thoughts, and that I was probably going to go to Hell for accidentally having that thought. I began to weep in my bed and I asked God for forgiveness. It was a very rough night.

The next morning I had an epiphany of sorts. Why was it that I’d made myself so miserable the night before? What was the use in being terribly afraid of a being that I had never actually seen evidence of? Could Dakota have been right about God not being real? I decided I would seek guidance from him.

And that was that. Dakota explained to me how ridiculous and insane Christianity was (as well as every other religion) and how it was nothing more than just another fairy tale. Since that day I began living my life in a completely different manner. No longer did I fear my thoughts or private actions because I understood that nobody was spying on them. I was free to be my own person without fear of eternal judgment.

In the years since, I, much like Dakota, have grown to hate religious people, and I’ll explain why. Religious people, and Christians specifically, disgust me. This is a group of people that *actually believes* that upon their deaths their souls will transcend into Heaven—eternal paradise—wherein they will experience everlasting bliss for an infinite amount of time. I can’t say I don’t blame them for wishing this were true. If it were real, then it would be the ultimate experience

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in all of existence. That being said, and I simply can't emphasize this enough, these people ACTUALLY BELIEVE beyond a shadow of a doubt that they will be going to this place once they die. And yet, astonishingly, they still find room to complain.

Every time I've ever heard a religious person complain about ANYTHING at all it has brought my blood to a boil. How in the FUCK can anybody find something to complain about when they "know" for a fact that upon their deaths they will be in ETERNAL PARADISE? Holy fucking shit, it's infuriating. It's fucking nuts. All you have to do is exist on this Earth for about eighty years without being bad and then you receive an eternity of nonstop joy and happiness, and you still find things to complain about? I just don't get it; I don't get it at all. If I knew that I was going to eternal paradise upon my death, then I would be happy every single fucking second of my life because I would know that none of this matters. The only people who have the right to ever complain about anything are the folks who know that there is no Heaven. For us, this is the entirety of our existence, so if it sucks, then we have a right to be miserable about it. I know for a fact that my existence won't span more than about eighty years, and you are literally under the impression that your existence will never end, so how the fuck are you justified in ever complaining about anything or even feeling sad at all? You Christian complainers are fucking scum.

Oh, and when somebody dies it's a fucking tragedy to these people? WHY? You *literally believe* that your dead loved one is now experiencing eternal bliss. Their existence

has never been better, and you're fucking crying for them? Absolutely pathetic. How the fuck can you be sad that your loved one is now in paradise? How fucking selfish is that? "Man, I wish they were still stuck here on shitty Earth with us just so that I could see them every once in a while." Go fuck yourselves!

Anyway, it's nearly 2:30 in the morning and I still have a lot of this to write, so I'll have to end my rant there for now. Maybe if I finish writing this earlier than expected I'll come back and expand my thoughts on the subject.

I continued trekking through elementary school without making any real friends or connections. Once my teenage buddies left, I was alone again. I felt as though once I entered middle school I would be able to make friends with the older kids since evidently I had a knack for doing so, and I desperately waited for elementary school to be over. Slowly but surely, time passed, and I became a 6th grader at age twelve.

Although I had been hopeful that entering middle school would be a positive change for me, I was unfortunately terribly mistaken. This was the beginning of the darkest era of my short life. Around the age of twelve I became infected with a vicious, invisible monster known as clinical depression—a nefarious disease that drained me of my happiness and will to live.

Chapter 8

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The Deep Freeze: Part 2

The thermostat on the wall read -6 degrees Fahrenheit. Already I could feel my fingers stiffening—moving them was requiring more effort than usual. The freezing air licked my exposed flesh—my hands, arms, neck, and face. I felt like an imbecile for leaving my jacket in the car. Despite being the end of December, the harsher of winter temperatures had not yet arrived, so I felt comfortable without donning the jacket. If only I had known how badly I was going to need it.

It was not just the absence of my jacket that made me feel stupid, it was the entirety of my situation. I had been so completely foolish. From the beginning, it had been my mistakes that had brought me to this fate. I had prepared the wrong sundae. I had forgotten to retrieve the sundae at the end of my shift. I neglected to inform Maranda that I had returned to the building. I had decided to leave my jacket in the car. However, I knew that I could not focus on my stupidity for too long. I was going to need my intelligence in order to save my life.

I understood that there were three distinct ways that I could die that night.

- 1) Hypothermia.
- 2) Frostbite.
- 3) Carbon Dioxide Poisoning.

As you know, I had done extensive research into the Nazi freezing experiments, and I knew that the information I had gathered from them would benefit me in my attempt at survival.

Hypothermia occurs when a person's body temperature is reduced to any temperature below 95°F. The average body temperature of a healthy human being, of course, is 98.6°. From what I remembered, hypothermia occurred in four stages.

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	Body Temperature	Symptoms
Stage 1	90-95°F	Shivering & Mental Confusion
Stage 2	82-90°F	Shivering Stops & Increased Confusion
Stage 3	68-82°F	Unconsciousness
Stage 4	<68°	Death

It was absolutely critical that I remained conscious at all times, or I was as good as dead. This being said, I had a lot of factors to consider. The current time was approximately 11:30pm and I recalled being told by Maranda that despite the restaurant hours being ten to ten the morning manager was required to arrive at seven in order to set up shop. That left me with approximately 7.5 hours (a safer bet being eight) until I would be found and rescued.

As you may recall, of the two freezing methods used by the Nazis, the more effective was submersion in icy water. Many of the test subjects died after only an hour within temperatures of 40°. Luckily, my current situation was more akin to the other freezing method—stripping people and leaving them tied up in 21° weather. I, however, was faced with a much colder climate (nearly thirty degrees colder), but on the bright side I was at least clothed and unrestrained. I figured if I did everything possible to retain body heat, then I might have a chance at keeping my internal temperature above 82°.

Unfortunately, there were a number of ways that freezer was going to suck the heat out of my body, and I only had a matter of time before severe mental confusion was going to kick in. Funnily enough, during that time my biggest fear was not death but rather losing control of my mind. My brain has always been my most

powerful weapon and to lose control of my mental functions seemed like a fate worse than death.

First and foremost, I was going to lose body heat by breathing. I became very conscious of my breathing and tried my best to do so at a slow, steady rate. It was unfortunate that I had wasted so much breath and energy screaming and banging on the door upon first discovering my entrapment, but at that point it was far too late to cry over spilled milk.

My next concern was covering all of my exposed flesh. Heat would radiate from any bare skin, and I definitely did not want that happening. However, all of my current clothing was already essential for covering the other parts of my body. I needed to search the freezer for something to cover my arms, hands, and face.

The freezer was filled with metal shelves stacked with cardboard boxes full of candy, ice cream mix, hamburger patties, etc. Already shivering, I dumped a box of brownie candy pieces onto the floor and wrapped the plastic lining around my arm. I found another identical box and followed suit for the other arm. The plastic, of course, was freezing cold, but ultimately it was going to be better than having my arms exposed to the air all night.

I let my hair down and it definitely helped cover my face and neck. For the first time ever, I was thankful for having thick, mangled hair that was difficult to brush. I desperately wished I had some sort of ski-mask instead, but for the moment my hair was doing a slightly adequate job.

With my limbs somewhat protected, my next focus was on reducing my physical contact with the freezing metal walls of my icy prison as much as possible. Contact with any freezing surface extracts heat out of you like some sort of magnet. I flattened the

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two cardboard boxes I had emptied so that I could sit on them rather than the metal floor of the freezer. I then sought out the biggest box I could find with the hope of placing it on top of me as a source of shelter. Hopefully by being surrounded completely by cardboard in a tiny space, I would be able to conserve a considerable amount of body heat. Unfortunately, I could not find a box large enough to cover my entire body.

I then had the idea of stacking the boxes around me to form a box fort, but I was not sure if doing so would be worth exerting a large amount of energy. Lifting all of those boxes and stacking them in the middle of the freezer would increase my breathing, perspiration, heart rate, and a number of other things that would speed up the process of losing heat. Which was more beneficial: Losing this heat in order to possibly preserve some with the fort or retaining this heat and not having the possible benefits the fort would grant me? I did not know for sure which would be best, but what I did know was that I really wanted a cup of hot chocolate.

I ended up flattening two additional boxes and using them as the worst blanket in the world. Content with the work I had done to hopefully prevent Stage 3 Hypothermia, I lay down on my flattened boxes, covered myself with the others, and began to focus intently on conserving energy and steadying my breathing. In an attempt to prevent frostbite of my fingers, I stuck my hands down my pants. There was not much I could do for my toes, however. Their only protection was my socks and “slip-resistant shoes.”

With hypothermia and frostbite taken care of as best I could, I now had one other possible cause of death to deal with: Carbon Dioxide Poisoning. As you may know, people breathe in oxygen, this oxygen is consumed by the body, and they then breathe out carbon dioxide. What you may not know is that carbon dioxide becomes fatally poisonous to human beings if its concentration in the air

reaches at least five percent. Even at two percent, moreover, the effects of carbon dioxide poisoning are noticeable. At two percent, a person's breathing rate increases significantly and they become much weaker physically. The weakness was not going to be an issue, but the increase in breathing definitely would be.

I had no way of measuring the size of the freezer, so I was unable to perform even a rough calculation of how long it would take for the amount of carbon dioxide in the air to become problematic. Was it possible that I could reach the deadly five percent mark within the next eight hours? I figured it was entirely possible. However, unlike the issues of hypothermia and frostbite, there was absolutely nothing I could do to reduce the risks of carbon dioxide poisoning.

At this point my body had begun shivering intensely. It seemed as though every inch of my being was violently vibrating in an attempt to ward off the surrounding coldness. I felt helpless—here I was trying my best to conserve energy and my body was responding by exerting as much of it as possible. I know that shivering occurs in an attempt to create heat, but once my energy had been completely used up I would be left with nothing at all. This is why the body stops shivering in Stage 2 Hypothermia—the body has used up all of its potential energy.

As I lay on my cardboard bedspread violently shivering, I began to notice my brain becoming fuzzy. The mental confusion was definitely starting to take effect. I was thankful that I had managed to get my matters organized before losing my mind, but I was still terribly frightened of what the next eight hours held for me. It was absolutely imperative that I remained awake throughout the entire ordeal or else I was as good as dead, but if I lost control of my mental functions, then there would be nothing to prevent me from

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lulling to sleep. I knew I had to try everything in my power to retain control of my mind and to stay awake.

I again thought of how imbecilic my actions had been leading up to my current state of frozen imprisonment. I had made mistakes in the past just as everybody else has, but never before had they been this catastrophic. I then recalled the story I had heard from the elderly woman and found myself smiling. Our situations were terribly similar. The main difference was that I did not have a Sewing Needle Ex Machina in my pocket to save my life.

I had no method of telling time, so what were probably mere minutes seemed to stretch on for hours. As time went by, the vibrations of my body continued to worsen. I had begun to create a steady beat of *ratataratataratata* of my body against the cardboard. I, of course, retained a very realistic view of my situation. I knew I was very likely going to die.

My mind now began to fill with regrets of a different nature. Rather than replaying the events leading up to this chilly downfall, I now thought of the regrets I had about my life in general. I had such grand dreams, such worthwhile aspirations, that I had ultimately never pursued. And now that death was quickly approaching, I felt shame for having never even tried to accomplish my goals.

I knew I was destined to contribute to the science of human experimentation. I had no desires of world domination as the Nazis did, I simply had an overwhelming fascination with the limitations of the human body and the human spirit. Very few people in the history of humanity were capable of performing such experiments, but I was one of them. And I had just allowed my life to come to a bitter end without pursuing my destined pastime. The thought of this made me sick to my stomach.

Watching videos of torture and self-harm in Chao's basement with the Triflers was one thing, but actually performing my own experiments was another thing entirely. I had spectacular torture methods in my mind that nobody else had ever tried before, and if I died in that freezer, then they surely never would occur. It was in that moment, as the shivering suddenly halted and I knew that I had entered Stage 2, that I decided I would pursue my dreams if I managed to escape with my life.

I had all of the resources I needed. Chao's uncle would surely assist me in my ambitions. His job at the airport would put him in a beautiful circumstance for finding potential test subjects. I knew for a fact that Chao would go along with it, and Truman would agree to anything I said. Mario, of course, would be ecstatic about the idea. The only real issue I would face would be Mason. Whenever I discussed even the prospect of performing my own experiments, he shot my ideas down immediately. If I were going to go through with this, then Mason would have to be permanently eliminated.

As much as I appreciated the time spent with Mason and his sister Lilly, my desire to achieve my goals were far more important to me. I would miss the time spent engaging with Mason and Lilly, but it was going to be for the best. One way or another, Mason was going to have to go.

Now that the shivering had stopped, the intensity of the freezing climate began to lessen. I was either adapting to my environment or my body was shutting down (you can guess which was the case). Not only was my body becoming numb to the pain, but my brain was numbing as well. More and more I was struggling to keep my mind clear. The developing brain fog was powerful though, and I knew it was only a matter of time before I fell asleep. And once I was asleep I would have no control over my breathing

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pattern—thus significantly increasing the risks of both hypothermia and carbon dioxide poisoning. Which would kill me first, I had no idea, but falling asleep was a surefire way to ensure that one of them would.

Having contemplated my hopes for the future upon my survival, my mind now wandered to a much more likely subject: My inevitable death. By this point I had surely been in the freezer for hours, and I could feel Death's cold hand wrapping around me. Slowly but surely his icy grip was going to squeeze the heat out of me and I was going to fade away. If only I had had a pen and paper with me. After a lifetime of being obsessed with death and dying, it would have been fabulous to document the gradual stages of my demise. Although realistically I had by then lost all feeling in my hands, so writing something would have been out of the question.

I did not fear death, and still to this day I do not. It is ridiculous to fear the inevitable. I can understand the innate animalistic fear of death—one of the purest functions within all living creatures is a desire to exist—but from a logical standpoint the fear of death is silly.

I suppose an important factor for most people is their understanding (or lack thereof) of what occurs after death. Myself being under the impression that nothing waits for us after death, I see no reason to fear it. Others, of course, are under the impression that upon their deaths a fiery hellscape awaits them. I have no issue with other people having their own ideas on what awaits them on the other side of life, so I will not waste your time detailing why I disagree with other perceptions. I, of course, know your beliefs and respect them regardless of my own, Mother.

With the brain fog growing stronger by the minute, I found myself unable to focus on any subject for too long. I thought of Mario and

his uproarious rants about his attitudes towards the world. I then thought of *Dorianne* and how he would surely use my death as a means of drawing attention to herself. “Dawn was such a close friend of mine,” she would claim. “Please give me your support in my time of sorrow.” I laughed weakly at the thought of his pathetic, attention-seeking life. Surely she would even start some sort of social media hashtag along the lines of #RememberDawn. That deplorable loon.

My thoughts then drifted to you, Mother. I knew that you were probably fast asleep and had no idea that I had not returned home that night. You would wake in the morning to learn that your daughter had died in a terrible, excruciating accident, and you would not even be able to leave home to see her for yourself. My death would leave you utterly alone in life with nobody to care for you. It is unfortunate that despite my miraculous survival on that night I have now, five months later, ensured your loneliness yet again. I know that I have stated it several times earlier in this letter, but I cannot articulate enough how sorry I am for what is happening. Hopefully somebody comes to take care of you in my absence. I wish there was something I could do, but given my present circumstance, I am afraid I am useless to you.

I then found myself thinking of Lilly. I had always been so remarkably intrigued by that girl and I did not understand why. For whatever reason, our lengthy discussions about even the most trivial of middle school matters enthralled me. Perhaps it was because Lilly valued and respected me so highly that I felt as though I had control over her. When she came to me for advice, she would follow through with it despite how ridiculous it was (I often suggested random, crazy ideas to her and she took them seriously). Other than Triflers meetings, Lilly was my greatest

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source of entertainment in life. I fancied that perhaps one day, after the elimination of Mason, Lilly could join the group in his place.

Lastly, as my mind succumbed to an impenetrable haze, I imagined being snuggled up warm in my bed with my teddy bear pressed against my chest and my legs wrapped around my body pillow. Buried beneath a stack of thick, cushy blankets and listening to a little Transatlantic while fading away into a cozy slumber. Part of me knew that these thoughts were extremely dangerous and would lead to unconsciousness, but a greater, now extremely powerful part of me felt comfortable with these escapist thoughts. It was as if thinking intensely about this illusion was enough to make my pain dissipate. Those were my final thoughts as I drifted off to sleep.

When I awoke, the first thing I saw was Mason watching over me—his expression an intense mixture of great sorrow and utter relief. As he saw my eyes open, a huge smile grew across his face. I was surrounded by people. By Mason's side was Lilly, to my right stood Chao, Mario, and Truman, and near the doorway I recognized Maranda speaking to a nurse. It quickly occurred to me that I was lying in a hospital bed with an IV in my arm.

With tears in his eyes, Mason exclaimed, "Oh thank God, she's awake!" I noticed that Truman's eyes were wet as well.

"Oh my God, Dawn, I am so sorry!" Maranda cried, approaching the bed. "You must hate me so much! I can't believe I let this happen!"

"Everyone step back, please," the nurse ordered. "Please give her some space; I'm going to get the doctor."

I learned that Brad, the morning manager at Ricardo's, had found my dormant, frozen body on the floor of the freezer at

approximately 8am (making my total time in there a staggering 8.5 hours). He panicked and immediately began to attempt resuscitation (the last thing I needed was more carbon dioxide being forced into my lungs). After minutes of failing to have any effect, he came to his senses and dragged me out of the freezer. He then buried my body in a heap of aprons, towels, and any other nearby objects in an effort to warm me up as he called 911.

My condition was so severe that I was placed in the ICU upon arriving at the hospital. Interestingly, my body was submerged in warm water, a human defrosting method used by the Nazis (except the Nazis, of course, tried it with boiling water). The doctors concluded that my internal body temperature had at its lowest point fallen to 70°—two degrees colder than the temperatures of those who had been pronounced dead in the Nazi experiments. I felt intense pride in myself for out-surviving hundreds of Nazi prisoners who had been dealt similar circumstances.

You had been immediately informed of my condition and were evidently “worried to death” as Mario put it. From the sound of it, I looked pretty awful in the early stages of recovery, so it is probably best that you were unable to come see me.

The doctor informed me that I was a ways away from a full recovery, and he wanted me to remain hospitalized for a few days so that they could continuously check my vitals. Mason and Lilly promised to remain by my side as long as I wanted, and I appreciated their offer of companionship.

Everybody told me how worried they were about me and that they were incredibly grateful that I had survived. They were interested in what had happened to me, Mario in particular, and I articulated the exact events in a nearly identical way to how I have presented them here to you. Maranda continued apologizing, and I could tell

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she was being genuine. I repeatedly assured her that it was in no way her fault and rather completely my own, but she still felt obliged to apologize.

Nightfall was approaching, and Maranda and Chao had already left. The rest of my guests remained and seemed to be in very high spirits. Whatever disagreement Mario and Mason had had during the last Triflers meeting seemed to have been swept under the rug. These high spirits remained until a new guest arrived in the doorway.

He was a middle aged man with short, grey hair. Dressed in a suit and tie, he appeared as though he wanted to come off as being highly professional. In his hand he held a manila folder.

“Mind if I pop in for a moment?” he asked. I nodded.

“Hello Dawn, my name is Rodney Rosenberg. I am Blake Ricardo’s attorney. I must say, it is wonderful to see that you are on your way to making a full recovery. Blake and Jill were terribly worried about your condition, and they were relieved to learn that you would return to full health in good time.”

“If they are so worried about me, then why are they not here themselves?” I wondered, but did not say.

“I see you have quite a bit of company, so I’ll try to be quick here,” Rosenberg said. “Blake simply asked me if I could get you to sign a waiver relinquishing all liability from the restaurant since this accident was entirely due to your own negligence rather than that of him or his company. If you could just sign this quickly as a means of claiming responsibility for what happened, then I can get out of your hair in a jiffy.”

My body may have still been cold, but my anger was white hot. I had nearly died and Blake Ricardo was only concerned with not being sued? He truly was as despicably greedy as TyCarr had claimed. It seemed as though every action he and his wife ever performed was to benefit themselves while harming others. And now I was going to be his latest victim! I was so terribly angry that I felt as though I could explode. Luckily I did not have to—Mason did for me.

“You get the fuck out of here right now!” Mason barked, marching towards the lawyer. “If I see you in this hospital again, you better believe I’m beating your ass! Out!”

Rosenberg was quick to comply.

“What a fucking asshole,” Mario stated. “I should follow him home and murder him in his sleep.”

“I can’t believe some people,” Mason said. “I’m so pissed right now. I just can’t believe it.”

I, too, felt an intense anger—not for Rosenberg, he was simply doing his job, but for Blake and Jill Ricardo. My newfound passion for vengeance instantly joined the ranks of achieving my deathbed goals. I had somehow survived my near fatal ordeal and had been granted a second chance at life, and I now had two distinct goals that I wanted to achieve. I wanted to get revenge on the Ricardos, and I wanted to perform my own human experiments.

These two goals were now my primary reason for living, and I knew I would let nothing get in the way of my efforts towards reaching them. However, there seemed to be one major obstacle in my path regarding both—Mason. Despite that he had just defended me from Rosenberg, I knew that in order to achieve my dreams, I was going to have to somehow eliminate Mason Elliot.

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Chapter 9

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The Rope

December 14th, 2012

I feel terrible about the things I wrote about Lilly the other day. What kind of brother accuses his own sister of being a slut? I've spent all this time hating Dad for how he treats her, and it seems like I became exactly like him. That terrifies me. The last thing in the world I want to be is like my dad. I'm just glad I never said those things to Lilly because I know it would have crushed her. Although, given everything that has happened lately, I doubt she could get any more crushed. Anyway, I let my anger get the best of me, and I definitely don't intend on letting that happen again.

Life is a miserable, disgusting mess. Time at home feels like I'm living in a penitentiary. Dad has grounded us from everything possible. We aren't allowed to use any electronic devices whatsoever—television, computers, music, etc.—and apart from meals and using the bathroom, we aren't allowed to leave our rooms. Dad's insanity even led him to take all of Lilly's books away since he knows she enjoys reading. That's just completely freaking bonkers to me.

Luckily, Dad spends most of his time away from home either at work or at the casino, so we get away with undermining his punishments for the most part. There is always an intense feeling of anxiety that Dad might arrive home any moment and catch us out of our rooms, but we're pretty good about listening for the sound of his truck pulling into the driveway. Even so, I'm extremely frightened at the prospect of being caught. I can't even imagine what he'd do to us.

Lilly won't even give me eye contact. I don't know if it's because she's so ashamed or she's afraid of me or what, but she seems very withdrawn. Maybe she's suffering from some sort of PTSD from all of this. I wouldn't blame her. Dad is a vicious, rampaging monster when he's angry, and I'd never seen him quite as angry as he was the other day. I offered to give Lilly one of my books for her to read while Dad isn't home, so hopefully that shows I don't feel any hostility or resentment towards her. I don't really want to talk about the situation with her, though. Dorianne taught me about triggers and how even the mere mention of something representative of a terrible life event can trigger a person into having an anxiety attack. I definitely don't want to bring the subject up to her only to trigger a reenactment of Dad's anger to play through her mind.

I'm not sure if there is an end in sight for this punishment. Dad seems perfectly content with treating us like prisoners forever. The only option I have now is the one thing I've been holding on to all along. I just have to wait it out. Once I turn 18, I can take Lilly and we will live on our own without Dad. We just have to endure this torture for three more months.

And we definitely can't tell anybody about what is happening. I need to at least have a talk with Lilly about this sooner than later so she understands that we'll be in big trouble if people find out about how Dad treats us. If Child Services or whoever catches wind of our situation, then we're screwed. We're still minors with no close extended family, so if they take us away from dad, then we're going to be put in some sort of group home or orphanage or some shit. And that definitely cannot

happen. So our best course of action is to act as though nothing is wrong. Through dealing with depression, I'm surely an expert by now at pretending as though everything is alright when it really isn't. I just need to make sure that Lilly can play her part as well.

December 16th, 2012

We spent the day at Dawn's house for the first time in a while. It was definitely nice to get away from our place for the day. I know that Dad wouldn't approve if he knew we were going to a friend's house, but he never knew where we were on Sundays regardless because he was never home during them. We figured the worst case scenario would be we arrived home to discover Dad there and simply explained that we'd made a run to the grocery store to buy milk for making dinner. We even went as far as pouring the remaining milk down the drain and stopping at the store on our way home to purchase a new gallon, but it was all for naught since Dad wasn't home when we returned.

I kept a close eye on Lilly the whole time we were with Dawn. I could tell she was bursting at the seams with the desire to tell her about everything that has been going on. The other day I explained to her why telling people about our situation is a terrible idea, though, and I think she understood. It seems clear that she won't tell anybody at school about it, but Dawn is a different story completely.

Dawn told us that she's considering looking for a part-time job. I understand that she could use the

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money—who couldn't?—but I can't help but feel a little selfish about the situation. If Dawn gets a job, then she'll have even less time to spend with me. Especially considering how much time she spends with Mario lately. But like I said, I know it's completely selfish to feel this way. I just want her all to myself, I guess. Does that make me a creep?

December 19th, 2012

Winter break started today. I'm not really looking forward to the two weeks off. I know that most people love having tons of free time, but I don't. Sitting at home for two weeks hoping that Dad doesn't catch me out of my room isn't exactly my idea of relaxation.

The Triflers meeting today went alright. Got into another argument with Mario, but that's nothing new. Tao has a new series of videos that he's going to start showing us. They're the real home videos of a serial killer named Delconte performing experiments on people he kidnapped. The first one wasn't so bad, but I have a feeling the series is going to become worse and worse as it goes on.

Dawn made another comment about how she would be interested in performing her own experiments. She has to be kidding, right? I mean, Dawn has always had a dark sense of humor, so I have to assume she's just joking. I know that she isn't really capable of that sort of thing.

I'm tired, and Dad should be home any minute.

Mason Elliot

December 21st, 2012

Well the world didn't end today. Who would have guessed? I can't believe that there were actually some people at school who believed it would. Or maybe they were just playing along for the fun of it.

Evidently Dawn started her new job yesterday. She's working at that ice cream place across the street from the abandoned drive-in movie theater. She told me she's working every day through Christmas which means we won't be seeing her this Sunday. Which is too bad since Lilly seems like she could really use Dawn's company.

Lilly has seemed really out of it lately. It seems to be growing worse by the day. I hope she's not as depressed as I am. I wouldn't wish my feelings on my worst enemy. I wish I could do something to help her. I've tried talking to her about it, but she says that nothing is wrong. Which of course means something is terribly wrong.

December 24th, 2012

Well we're in for the most depressing Christmas ever. Dad has today and tomorrow off, and it sounds like he plans on staying home both days. To make matters even worse, despite the festive holiday, he doesn't seem to be in a lenient mood. Our punishment is still in full effect, which means for the next 48 hours or so Lilly and I will be isolated in our rooms with no means of entertainment whatsoever.

I suppose now would be a good time to get a book read for LA11 so that I don't have to find time to read one

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during the semester, but I don't really have the motivation to read right now. I especially feel bad for Lilly. She would kill to have a book to read, but she's likely too scared of Dad walking into her room to pull out the one I loaned her. I can't even imagine how bored she is right now. She's probably drawing or writing poetry or something.

It's probably safe to say we won't be getting any presents tomorrow morning, which is fine by me. Dad has never been very good at giving us presents. Last year he gave me a few scratch offs, which is pretty stupid considering if any of them were winners he would have to turn them in. None of them won, but I have a feeling that if they did win, I would have only seen a fraction of the money.

I guess I'll spend the next two days trying to write something. I feel like everybody has at least one good story inside of them, and now that I have almost literally no other options on how to spend my time, I might as well give writing a shot. Wish me luck, journal.

December 26th, 2012

I swear to God I'm going to fucking kill Mario, and Chance, and probably half of the guys at school. I'm so angry, and I know that Lilly is going to be mortified when she finds out.

I went to the Triflers meeting today only to learn that Chance sent one of Lilly's nude photos to some of his friends and since then they've been getting distributed around the school. Somebody eventually posted it online,

and Mario was in high spirits to tell everybody about it. I just want to beat every single guy who looked at that photo to a bloody pulp. I want to make their bodies unrecognizable to the point where even the most skilled autopsy specialist couldn't make heads or tails of their remains.

Chance is going down for distributing child pornography, and that's just a fact. I'm going to make sure he gets serious jail time for this. I kind of want to tell Dad, but I can't for two reasons. 1) He wouldn't try to get Chance arrested, he would just drive over to his house and murder him, and 2) He would know I broke the rules of his grounding, and then he would murder me too.

Stupid fucking Mario, that fat pig of a human being, had a huge smile on his face as he told us about the "biggest slut in middle school." Obviously he had no idea that Lilly is my sister, otherwise I doubt he would have had the balls to say anything.

"You guys know Chance Morgan? Haha, well evidently he's been chatting with some little slut in middle school and she actually sent him naked pictures. Can you believe that? Girls are getting sluttier and sluttier at younger ages than ever. I mean fuck, at this rate I wouldn't be surprised if babies started sucking each other off. That's what's so fucked about our generation, the girls are all whores obsessed with cock, even in middle school!

"Anyway, turns out he shared the picture with a couple of his friends and they kept the slut train a-rollin' and now somebody posted it online. I just found it on Imgur anyway. That little bitch is probably going to kill

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herself when she finds out, haha. Pretty nice tits for an eleven-year-old though. You guys wanna see?"

At that point I'd reached my absolute breaking point. The only way to stop myself from killing him right there and then was by leaving. I have no idea what I'm going to do about this. Surely Lilly has no clue what has happened, and I hope she never does. But it's inevitable. Probably most of the high school and middle school guys have seen her naked by now, and thanks to fuckers like Mario those who haven't seen the picture yet will soon. She is going to be completely devastated. Maybe Mario is right, maybe she will kill herself.

I need to figure out what I'm going to do, but I'm too angry right now to think clearly. I need to get that picture taken off the internet, but that's going to be next to impossible. Once something gets uploaded, it stays there forever one way or another. And I need to get Chance punished in the worst way possible without Dad finding out what has happened. And I have to somehow prevent Lilly from ever finding out what happened, too. And I need to fucking break Mario's legs. God damn it, fuck me.

December 28th, 2012

It's almost midnight, and Lilly and I are still at the hospital. I think we're just going to stay here. There's no use going home to where Dad is going to rip our heads off. And I think Dawn needs our support anyway.

Dawn had a terrible accident at work. She was locked in the freezer overnight and nearly died. The doctor said

it's going to be a few days, if not a few weeks, before she fully recovers.

Thank God for Truman. If not for him, then I would still be at home right now with no idea that anything had happened. He stopped by our house on his way to the hospital to let us know what had happened. Evidently the hospital had called Dawn's mom, but since she was unable to leave home, she tried to call me. When I couldn't answer (my phone being locked in Dad's room), she looked through Dawn's things and found Mario's cellphone number. She called him and asked if he would go look after Dawn. Then he called Chao and Truman.

I almost fainted when Truman told me what happened. He told me about the accident and that Dawn was in a critical state and they weren't sure if she was going to make it. Anguish filled my heart, and I felt like it was going to explode. My knees became weak and trembled—I stumbled for a moment. I then immediately yelled for Lilly, and the three of us left for the hospital.

Dawn was still asleep when we showed up. Her usually bright white skin was tinted blue, and her lips were cracked and scabbed up. The doctor said they were able to elevate her internal temperature to a safe level by submerging her body in warm water, and that she would hopefully be waking up any minute. Evidently she was lucky that none of her fingers or toes had to be amputated. Even though she was right in front of me, alive and breathing, I still felt that sick feeling in my gut as if she were dead.

Most of us were in her hospital room at that point. Dorianne couldn't make it because she was working, the same for Tao, but the rest of the group was there. Clearly

that idiot Mario didn't recognize my sister from the photo he had seen of her, and I'm extremely grateful for that. Lilly finding out about her photo leak is the last thing I need right now. The anger I feel towards him is still there, but I'm holding it back for now. There's no use tearing his head off when Dawn is in such a terrible condition. Thankfully, Mario wasn't his usual obnoxious self.

Dawn's boss Maranda had shown up as well, which I thought was really nice. She, too, looked physically ill in response to Dawn's condition. She said that the accident was all her fault and she felt incredibly guilty and sorry about the whole thing. A few times she even burst into tears. I feel bad for her. If I felt responsible for somebody's near death experience, I would feel terrible about it too.

After a couple of hours, Dawn woke up and seemed happy to see all of us there. Words can't really express how happy I was to see her wake up. I wouldn't have been able to sleep again until I knew she was going to be okay.

Dawn told us all about what happened to her and her experience. It was strange the way she spoke about it. Where I imagine most people would be shaken up by their brush with death, Dawn seemed excited. It was almost like she was proud, as if she had gone head to head with death and came out victorious.

She told us she tried everything she could to protect her body from the cold. She used cardboard boxes she found in the freezer to lie on top of and wrapped her arms and legs with plastic. She also told us about how she tried her best to control her movements and

breathing in order to conserve heat while at the same time trying to conserve oxygen in the freezer. I can't help but feel that if I'd found myself in the same situation, I wouldn't have had such a cool head. I would have wasted all of my energy and oxygen screaming and trying to bust down the door. In fact, I bet most of us would have. The feeling of being trapped in a cage would motivate most people to try their bests to break out, but Dawn was smart enough to wait for somebody else to open the door. Out of all of us, she is probably the only one who could survive such an ordeal.

Later that night, some asshole lawyer representing the restaurant came in and tried to get Dawn to sign some papers claiming she took full responsibility for what happened. Unfortunately for that guy, I still had a lot of pent up anger towards Chance and Mario, and I completely unleashed it on him. I yelled at him, "Get the fuck out of here right now! If I see you in here again, I'm going to beat your ass! Get out!" He took off immediately, and I have a feeling we won't be seeing him again anytime soon.

I could tell Dawn was impressed by my outburst. If there's any silver lining to this nightmare of a situation, I guess it might be that Dawn will truly understand how much I care about her. I love her so much, and I feel as though if she would have died, then I would have killed myself. It's as though without Dawn I don't really have a reason to live. When I reflect upon my life, I feel like she's the one thing that really means everything to me. It's like everything in my life can be categorized into two groups: Dawn and Obstacles From Being With Dawn. I hope one day Dawn and I will be happily married, and I'll look

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back on all of the terrible shit that has happened to me and laugh. But that hope is pretty farfetched. With all the shit in my life right now, what with Dad's fury, Lilly's picture, Dawn's condition, etc., I feel as though I'm going to be trapped in this hole for a long, long time.

December 29th, 2012

Dad had no idea where we had gone to, and I was pretty terrified to call and tell him. I knew he was going to be furious that we'd left the house, but when I heard about Dawn I knew I had no choice but to go be with her. We stayed the night at the hospital, and for all Dad knows we disappeared off the face of the Earth. I knew I was going to have to call him sooner or later, so I did it this morning.

I could tell by the tone of his voice he was beyond pissed that we were gone, but when I explained the situation to him I was pleasantly surprised to hear him calm down. He even told me if he were me he would have done the same thing. He said we could stay with Dawn until she got better, but the moment she did we were back to our punishment. I guess Dad isn't 100% evil. Maybe just 99%.

Dawn is looking better already. Her skin has mostly returned to its typical color, and she claims she feels as good as ever. The doctor still wants to monitor her vitals and temperature, however, so they're going to hold onto her for a few more days. Dawn suspects that they're just trying to rack up the biggest hospital bill possible, but

she claims it should all be covered by insurance anyway, so she doesn't care.

Mario came back to visit this morning, and Dorianne even popped in for a couple hours. As much attitude as Dawn typically gives Dorianne, she seemed genuinely happy to have her visit. Maybe Dawn just likes having people give her attention, but after surviving a brush with death, who wouldn't want to be surrounded by people who care about them? It's too bad that Dawn's mom is unable to leave the house. They both must be worried sick about the other. I've been thinking about taking Lilly to go visit Dawn's mom for a while, just to keep her company and update her on Dawn's condition and all that, but on the other hand, I don't want to leave Dawn. I can tell she's really glad that Lilly and I are planning to stay the night in her hospital room with her until she gets out. Otherwise she'd be left all alone.

Dawn, obviously, will no longer be working at Ricardo's. We did the math, and before taxes she earned about three hundred dollars during her short stint there. I asked what she planned on doing with the money—either blowing it on something fun to make up for her terrible experience or saving it for college or something. She laughed and joked that she was going to use it to hire an assassin to murder Blake and Jill Ricardo. I told her I was willing to offer my services, but my going rate was 500 a head, so she would have to save up a lot more cash.

The way those two treated Dawn really does rile me up, though. How heartless do you have to be that after one of your employees nearly dies your first thought is, "I better make sure I don't get sued!" Some people are just

unbelievably pathetic. To be so obsessed with money that the wellbeing of other people is of little importance must be a joyless state of existence. But I can't really say I'm surprised by this behavior. This world is filled to the brim with people who would choose money over other people every single time. It makes me sick.

Maybe we can get revenge on them by hitting them where it'll really hurt—their wallets. Obviously they aren't afraid of lawyering-up, so maybe we should too. We could sue them for negligence or something, I don't know. Surely some lawyer will find an easy way to drain them of all their cash in exchange for their store nearly killing Dawn. It seems clear that they know they're guilty, otherwise they wouldn't have sent their lawyer in here in the first place.

And while I'm at it, I can use that lawyer in my case against Chance, too. Now that Dad knows I'm with other people, he'll have no reason to question why I know about Lilly's photo leak. I can tell him about it, and we can hire a lawyer or call the police or whatever we have to do to get Chance in prison for what he's done. My only problem with this, though, is that there is no way we can bring justice to Chance without Lilly finding out. But then again, Lilly is bound to find out sooner or later anyway. I'm sure as soon as she logs into Facebook she'll know what has happened. For her own sake, I'm going to try my best to keep her away from the Internet as long as possible. Then again, maybe it would be best if she did know. In which case, should I be the one who tells her?

I need a woman's perspective on this, I guess. Maybe I'll talk to Dawn about it tonight once Lilly falls asleep. I'll ask her whether or not she would want to know, and

how she would want to find out. Although Dawn would never find herself in this situation in the first place, so the question probably would be about as relevant to her as it would be to myself. But still, Dawn and Lilly seem to have some sort of connection, so I think her insight would be valuable. Maybe Dawn will want to tell Lilly about it. That would certainly take a major load off of my shoulders.

I just know it's going to destroy her. That poor kid trusted a scumbag with images of her naked body—images that she thought were going to be private between the two of them—and he hadn't hesitated to share them with the world. Surely he coaxed her into taking and sending them. He probably went on and on about how she was beautiful and maybe even said he loved her. Girls are so impressionable and naïve at that age, especially when it comes to older guys. He tricked her into sending nude pictures, and then he betrayed her trust. And now the entire school district is going to see her as nothing but a little whore despite the fact that Chance likely tricked her into sending the photos in the first place. The next seven years of her life are going to be hell. Throughout the rest of middle and high school, she is going to carry the status of slut around with her. As if girls didn't receive enough sexual harassment, she's going to be the victim of it more than anybody. Guys are going to think of her as easy, and they're all going to vie for an opportunity to stick it in her whereas the girls will be catty and jealous about the attention she's receiving, and they'll harass her just as much as the boys do. What really sucks is that by the time she enters high school I'll already be graduated, so I won't be there to protect her.

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Maybe what we'll do is move to a new school district. That might work, if she's willing. Once I turn 18 and we move out of Dad's hell hole, we can go anywhere in the country we want. We could move entire states away if we wanted to. Then she wouldn't have to be labeled as a slut wherever she went. Although the only problem with moving far away is that I'll be away from Dawn, and I definitely don't want that. I guess we'll just see what we want to do when the time comes.

January 1st, 2013

Wow. Today was the greatest day of my life. Dawn loves me. We had sex. We're going to be together. We've shared the most special night together that I think either of us has ever had. I've never been so happy before in my life. It's as though all of my other problems have completely melted away and no matter what life throws at me I'll be fine because I know that I have Dawn. I'll have more on this tomorrow—I'm too excited and happy to write much right now. For the first time in a long time, I feel as though everything is going to be alright.



Chapter 10

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Depression

Part III: Depression

Depression is something that is nearly impossible to describe to somebody who has never experienced it. Those of you reading this who suffer from depression know exactly what I'm talking about. It's like a toxic virus that infiltrates your brain and takes you prisoner. It convinces you beyond a reasonable doubt that you are worthless, undesirable, unlovable, pathetic, disgusting, completely alone, and worthy only of immediate death. Its effects may lessen or increase from day to day, but don't be fooled—depression is a life sentence. Once it takes hold of you, it is impossible to fully recover from. The symptoms of depression can be treated, not cured. These are the lessons I began to learn at the age of twelve.

You normies can't possibly hope to understand the mental turmoil of true depression—and I envy you for it. Yes, naturally normies think that they feel depression, but they don't. Sadness and depression are not synonymous. Sadness is an emotion; depression is a terminal disease that eats away at you until the day you die. Sure, normies might feel extended periods of sadness, but they are far from depressed. Oh, Chad broke up with you and now you're single? How fucking sad you must feel! How on earth do you deal with such a traumatic situation? Your eight close friends and five beta orbiters must feel so sorry for you!

Normies are always giving normie advice for dealing with depression as though it's something that can be fixed through sheer will. "You just have to look at the bright sides

*Extermination Justification or: The Rants and Ravings of
That Chubby Spic Who Probably Killed Your Kid*

of life! Obviously you are too focused on the negatives!”¹⁵
Wow, you’re right! And cancer patients are just too focused on the cancerous cells of their internal organs. If they just focused on the good ones, they would be right as rain! What sage advice from somebody who clearly has an understanding of what they’re talking about!

What you’ve got to understand is that nobody facing true depression can ever possibly overcome it. Anybody who is truly depressed knows there are no patches for their sinking ship. It’s clear that the counselors who advise students have never felt real depression a day in their lives. It could be, however, that they are simply giving normie advice out with the understanding that they are speaking with a normie. Surely a normie can just stop thinking about sad things and then feel happy again. Perhaps these counselors assume everybody is a normie. But I doubt it. They can’t be *that* ignorant.

In middle school, as I began my descent into depression, I thought it was just a phase of sadness. I felt social alienation from my peers, and I figured my sorrow was a direct result. Except as time passed I noticed my mood was never improving. I’d always had negative thoughts about myself since childhood, but they were now increasing at a rapid rate. I was too caught up in comparing myself to my peers who had socially rejected me, and my internal self-hatred burned brighter than in years past.

¹⁵ Actual advice from Mrs. Damman, the middle school guidance counselor.

I can recall the exact moment when I first thought about killing myself. I was in the locker room before gym class, and one boy¹⁶ was bragging about his sexual escapades to the rest of us. Evidently he'd gotten a blowjob from some girl in my math class. As I considered this knowledge—that fellow twelve year olds were already engaging in sexual behavior with one another, an expression of social interaction so advanced that I, unable at that point to even speak to another student, was light-years away from participating in—I came to the conclusion that I was so pathetic I might as well have been dead. I looked at Bryce and saw a tall, white, athletic, popular, outgoing, well-liked, and evidently now sexually active guy, and I began to compare myself to him. My existence compared to his was so pathetic and my envy of his life was so powerful that I felt as though I didn't deserve to live. I hated him, but more importantly, I hated myself. I could have shot myself in the head right there and then. Only later did it occur to me that Bryce could have been lying, but it didn't matter, and it still doesn't.

And for those of you thinking, “Oh Mario, don't be ridiculous! You could have gotten a girlfriend if you wanted! All you need is confidence, bro,” who the fuck are you trying to fool? If you woke up in the morning, looked in the mirror, and saw me in your reflection, would you be able to feel any confidence about yourself? For years I've tried my best to avoid seeing my reflection because it would always ruin my day. Even catching the slightest glimpse of the fat, shit-skinned, greasy, yellow-teethed beast looking back at me

¹⁶ A popular jock named Bryce Sheller who will hopefully be dead within the next ten hours.

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would fill me with utter despair, and any hopes I had for enjoying my day would be obliterated. You think I could get a girlfriend? What girl would ever want to lower her standards for a guy like me? What girl would subject herself to being seen in public with a disgusting monster of a person when guys like Bryce Sheller exist? So go ahead, tell me that attraction is all about personality and attitude, but we both know that is a lie. Guys like me never stood a chance.

The worst part about depression for me has always been nighttime. I have faced no greater agony than lying awake in bed for hours at a time alone with my thoughts. Depression turns your thoughts into the most terrifying enemy imaginable. This is an enemy that knows all of your secrets, all of your insecurities, all of your desires, and it uses this knowledge to beat the fucking shit out of you every single day. Oftentimes you can distract yourself from these thoughts with school work or games or television, but when you're lying awake in bed at night there are no distractions to save you. Existence becomes a fucking cage match against a raging bull, and you have no weapons to defend yourself. The only way out is to fall asleep, but fuck if that doesn't take an upwards of three, four, five hours. Until then it's nothing but pure, agonizing torture.

Thoughts of loneliness and insignificance pound you into submission. You desperately wish you could fall asleep or simply just die in order to end the pain. You feel the desire to scream in agony at the top of your lungs, but you know you can't because you'll wake up the whole house. More often than not, you'll weep into your pillow recalling your failures or

inabilities and perhaps even physically harm yourself as a means of self-punishment. And I don't mean some normie form of self-punishment like cutting your wrists.

Let me talk about that for a moment. Nobody suffering from true depression cuts themselves unless they intend on dying from the wounds. Cutting is strictly a normie practice of crying out for attention. Those who cut themselves on the arm do so with the hope that somebody will notice the scars and grant them the attention they feel they are owed. It is no different from posting a sad status update on social media. You simply want other people to know you feel sad so that they'll give you attention. It's about as normie as you can get. That's why I feel no sympathy for cutters or any of those other people who "attempt suicide" in ways that are sure to fail.

Here's a lesson about the difference between men and women. Women have a higher rate of suicide attempts than men do, but men have a far higher rate of successful suicides. Hmm, I wonder what this data could possibly mean. One may conclude that women **MUST** have harder lives than men and that's why they're trying to kill themselves more often, but that's obviously complete bullshit. As I've explained, women live their lives on Easy Mode. No, the reason why women have more recorded suicide attempts is because they aren't *actually* trying to kill themselves. They're simply vying for attention. "I drank a sip of bleach because I was trying to kill myself!" Jesus fucking Christ.

Men, on the other hand, kill themselves with strict intent on actually ending their lives. They don't want to be rushed

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to the hospital and saved and receive praise and love and shit from their friends and family like women do—men want to make sure the job is done right. And that’s why men are more successful at killing themselves.

Anyway, back to my story. As I began to understand that my sorrow wasn’t just a phase but rather an illness embedded deep within my brain, I knew I needed to seek help. In my mind there were two viable options for me—counseling and medication. I sought out help from my school’s guidance counselor, Mrs. Damman.

Before speaking to her about my issue, I made it perfectly clear that we had a sense of student-faculty privacy. I definitely didn’t want anybody to know about my depression—especially not my mother. I knew if she learned about how I was feeling, it would make my life even worse. Just the thought of my stupid fucking mom trying to talk to me about my depression made me feel like vomiting.

She told me she would only contact somebody if she felt as though I or anybody else were in immediate danger.¹⁷ I decided then that I would be unable to discuss my thoughts of suicide with her, but I still sought out help for my depression. I explained my thoughts and feelings to her, and that’s when the normie advice train left the station. Once she began advising me to “try to be more optimistic” and “keep a list of the things in life that make you happy so you can read through it during times of sadness” I knew she had no idea what I was going through. But how could she? She was a filthy normie.

¹⁷ Immediate? Not so much. Danger? You betcha.

I then decided I needed to get on some sort of depression medication. I didn't know anybody who was on any, but I'd seen several commercials on TV about them. Now that I'm older and far wiser, I know depression medications are complete and utter bullshit, but back then I really thought they could help me.

I've never actually taken depression medicine, but I have to imagine it's something like those creepy ass commercials. It's pretty fucking ominous shit. The lady takes the pill, but her depression still hangs around—always lingering over her shoulder. It's still this dark blob on her life, but now it's just smaller and floats a little higher. That hole in the ground shrinks a bit as well, but it never goes away. See, like I said before, depression can't be cured, only treated.

But that's not all. According to the announcer on the commercial, this medication can give you colon, liver, or blood cancer! Better yet, it may cause your depression to worsen! Oops! Sorry about that! Our poison we made to improve your life actually made it infinitely worse! Our bad! I'm thankful I never received a prescription for those pills, I can only imagine the lifeless shell of a human being I would be by now.

I knew the only way to get a prescription would be by talking to a real doctor, but at the age of twelve I had no discernable way of doing so without talking to my mom about it, and I certainly was not going to do that. I needed to come up with a scheme to get me in that doctor's office and prescribed the pills all without my mom being any wiser. It would be very difficult, but luckily my mom is a complete fucking moron, so deceiving her wouldn't be impossible.

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The first step of my plan was pretending to be terribly ill. My mom woke me up for school that morning, and I groaned in response claiming of an awful stomach ache. She took my temperature and found nothing wrong with me, but I persisted that I was in immeasurable pain and that I needed to go to the doctor. After some pleading¹⁸, I finally convinced her to take me to the local clinic.

We were in the waiting room of the place, and a nurse opened the door and said my name. I stood, and my mom did as well, but I told her I felt as though I was old enough to handle seeing the doctor by myself. This was a critical part of the plan. If she came into the doctor's office with me, then the plan would be ruined. Luckily she complied with my command that she stay put, and I followed the nurse into the back.

She weighed me, measured me, and all that other shit before taking me into an actual office. She then started performing little tests on me like taking my temperature and checking my pulse and all that. She, too, must have concluded there was nothing wrong with me, because when the actual doctor came in she claimed there was nothing to report.

This doctor woman seemed to be in a hurry. Evidently she had a whole line of patients waiting to see her, and she wasn't in any mood for my faker bullshit. She handed me a cup of some liquid medicine and told me to drink it so that my stomach would feel better. I could tell she was raring to

¹⁸ What kind of fucking mother has to be CONVINCED by their child that they need to see a doctor?

move on to the next person as quickly as possible, and if I was going to say something, I had better do it fast. I gathered up every ounce of courage I could possibly muster and said, “I know you’re probably super busy, but there was one other thing I wanted to talk to you about.” To this she stopped her mad dash immediately and sat down on the stool in order to humor me.

“I’ve been talking to my counselor at school and she thinks I have something called clinical depression. She told me I should probably talk to a doctor about getting some medicine for it.”¹⁹

The doctor’s response has haunted me for years.

“I’m sorry, but I’m just the urgent care physician. You’ll have to talk to your regular doctor about something like that.”

I felt my internal walls of Jericho come crashing down. *You killed me!* I thought to myself as she walked out of the room. *You stupid bitch! You just fucking killed me!* I knew then that I would most likely be forced to end my life in order to end my suffering. But my first real attempt wouldn’t come until years later.

This period of my life wasn’t all bad, though. It was around seventh grade that I came across something I’ve cherished to this day. On the internet I stumbled across an anime called *Death Note* and I was intrigued enough to check it out. I would highly recommend watching this show to absolutely anybody—it’s brilliant.

¹⁹ I was lying, obviously, but I figured it would help my case if the doctor thought another professional adult had suggested this.

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Death Note is the story of a genius teenager named Light who finds a supernatural notebook that grants him the power to kill anybody in the world simply by writing their name within it. Light uses this notebook to become a god. He kills criminals worldwide in order to make the world a better place, and out of fear of being killed, many people stop committing crimes. I strongly identified with Light's character and was glued to my screen for the entire 37 episode run.

I began to daydream about having my own Death Note and all of the people I would kill with it. The majority of the kids at school would have been exterminated within an hour. I would finally be able to get revenge on every single person who had ever wronged me. Everybody who had ostracized me or teased me or ignored my affections or disregarded my worth would get what they had coming. I would be able to mold the world into one that I wanted to live in. I knew for a fact that if I were to acquire a Death Note, my depression would be cured. Within an hour, I would go from a depressed loner to the god of a new world.

Unfortunately, the Death Note isn't real. But now that I'm older I understand it doesn't need to be. I don't need to rely on magic in order to achieve my goals. As Gandhi once said, "You must be the change you want to see in the world." Instead of killing those who deserve to die with a magical anime notebook, I should instead kill them with my guns and knives. And much like Light, I will use my powers of death to teach the world a lesson. Once normies learn of what I've done and they read this story, they'll know they need to treat everybody with kindness in order to prevent future Mario's

from rampaging their schools. I might not become a god, but I will certainly be the martyr of a new world.

The worst weekend in my entire life occurred when I was thirteen. My mother and grandmother were going away for the weekend to put flowers on the grave of some relative who I didn't know, and I sure as fuck wasn't going to spend an extended period alone in the car with them, so I stayed home alone.

I came across a bottle of super cheap, drugstore, over-the-counter sleeping pills inside of a drawer. The bottle was covered in dust and I assumed it had been sitting there for years completely forgotten. Something inside me told me to down the entire bottle. I wasn't specifically suicidal at that moment, mind you, but I wasn't fond of being alive either. I figured I would consume the entire bottle and then whatever happened happened. Maybe I would live, maybe I would die, maybe my liver would explode, whatever. I didn't care. Anything seemed better than wading alone in depression for another weekend.

I swallowed all twelve of the pills and quickly felt the urge to vomit. I controlled myself, however, intent on digesting the pills and falling asleep for the entire weekend. If only I had allowed myself to puke.

I began to feel the effects of the pills pretty quickly. My perceptions became blurry and life began to move at a corrupted frame rate. My body was shutting down.

I lie down on my bed and closed my eyes, ready for sleep to take me away. I would take a weekend getaway of my own—one away from my depressive thoughts. But as I lie

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there in bed, I slowly became aware that I wasn't feeling drowsy. I wasn't tired at all. Evidently the pills were outdated or just too cheap to work, because I wasn't falling asleep. I tried to sit up, but my body wouldn't move. I tried and tried with all of my willpower, but my body was completely paralyzed. The only thing that seemed to still be operational was my mind.

There are no words that can adequately describe the suffering I endured over the course of that weekend. For two full days I remained paralyzed in bed—both unable to sleep and yet horribly sleep deprived—completely and utterly alone with my thoughts and no possible escape.

I lied there in torment as my depression took full control over my mind. I had nothing, no distractions, not even the sound of the television on in the other room, to divert my attention elsewhere. I was chained up at a table for two—my depression and me—and tremendous sorrow was the appetizer, entrée, and dessert. My relationship with Marissa played out in my mind over and over again—each time empowering my sense of regret and self-loathing. I wanted so strongly to go back in time and fix the mistakes I had made. I had absolutely crushed the one person who had ever genuinely cared about me. I was a monster. There would never be somebody in my life as special as Marissa ever again. I had ruined my only chance at happiness. I didn't deserve happiness. I certainly didn't deserve Marissa. All I deserved was suffering and punishment. I deserved my depression. I deserved death.

Marissa's face as she backed out of the classroom—heartbroken and teary-eyed—flashed upon my memory like

a popup ad on a porn site. No matter how many times I tried to click on the X in the corner of the screen, it would just pop up again. I had destroyed all of her artwork. I had destroyed our friendship. All for nothing.

When Sunday morning rolled around, I found that I could move my body again, but controlling it was another issue. My head was so woozy that standing up straight was beyond my capabilities. I rolled out of bed and slowly crawled towards the bathroom. I climbed onto the toilet and rested my spinning head against the sink beside me as I relieved myself. When I finished, I fell back to the floor and made my way for the kitchen.

Thankfully, my family kept our supply of bottled water on the floor beneath one of the cupboards. I opened a bottle and drank it swiftly. I then opened another and poured it all over my face and head in an attempt to wake myself up. It didn't seem to be helpful. I drank another full bottle and then continued crawling through the room.

I was starving and desperately wanted some food. I saw a box of crackers sitting on top of the counter next to the fridge, but it was too high for me to reach. I retrieved the broom from the open closet and held it by the base as I attempted to knock the crackers down onto the floor. I missed the first couple swings but eventually managed to hit the box. Once I had the crackers in my hand, I made my way for the living room and pulled myself up onto the couch.

My mom and grandma arrived home later that day and found me sprawled out upon the couch. The kitchen floor was doused with water, the couch was covered in cracker crumbs, and my eyes were dead and hollow with despair.

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And my stupid fucking mother asks me, “Are you high or something?” I had just undergone the worst weekend of my life after an unintentional suicide attempt, and this dumb bitch was concerned that I was smoking marijuana. Unable to speak, I gently shook my head no and closed my eyes with the hope of finally falling asleep.

Sleep finally did arrive, and I awoke Monday morning seemingly fully recovered from my weekend nightmare. For those of you considering suicide: Find a better method than popping pills.²⁰ The chances of success are slim, and the consequences can be horrific.

Unlike during my transition from first grade to second or from Texas to Illinois or from elementary school to middle school, I felt no sense of optimism towards starting high school. I had accepted that my life was and always would be shit, and that it was far too late to reinvent myself. I knew that realistically my existence would only worsen in high school rather than improve. Surely high school bullies would be more ruthless than middle school ones.

One thing I appreciated about high school was the ability to choose elective classes. Never before had I been granted the opportunity to choose which course I wanted to take—they’d always been chosen for me. As a freshman I only had room in my schedule for two elective courses, so I chose the two that interested me most: psychology and sociology.²¹

²⁰ Unless you know for sure the dosage will kill you swiftly.

²¹ My 8th grade counselor advised me to try Spanish, but I definitely wasn’t going to be the spic in Spanish class who didn’t speak a word of it.

Having been depressed for several years at that point, I had a natural fascination with mental illness, so psychology seemed like an interesting class. As for my interest in sociology, I was also curious in studying how and why people interact with each other in the ways they do.

The first time I saw Dawn Bracken was on the first day of high school when she walked into psychology. I didn't think much of her when I saw her walking through the classroom door, but what she did next definitely put her on my radar. Here's what you need to understand: Nobody ever wants to sit next to me. When students are able to choose their seats, I am always the last person anybody chooses to sit next to. If there is an open desk in the room, it is ALWAYS next to me. Every single fucking time. Evidently I'm so undesirable as a human being that nobody wants to even sit within a five-foot proximity of me. But here's the thing—Dawn sat next to me. She didn't say a word to me or even look up from the book she was reading, but she sat down right next to me despite there being several open desks left in the room. Can you even fathom how amazing it felt to have a cute girl simply choose to sit at the desk beside mine in class? It's something that wretched fucking normies take for granted every single day of their lives. They can't even imagine a world where nobody would want to sit beside them in a classroom. That's when I knew Dawn was different.

I didn't dare try speaking to her though. After my history with female friends, I knew better than to try anything. I was just happy she wanted to sit next to me, and I didn't want to scare her away by interacting with her. However, Mrs. Burk,

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the psych teacher, didn't allow me to keep my distance, as she soon paired the two of us together for a partner project.

We were supposed to choose a topic in psychology and then put together a huge research project about it. I already knew exactly what I wanted to do. It was an experiment performed on monkeys back in the 1970's, and after I first read about it my outlook on life changed forever. The experiment is infamously known as the pit of despair, and it proved that depression cannot be beaten.

The pit of despair was a device developed by psychologist Harry Harlow. After his wife died of cancer, Harlow fell into an awful depression, and, much like many people suffering from the disease, he became obsessed with it. He developed the pit of despair as a means of engendering depression within animals—specifically rhesus monkeys.

Simply put, the pit of despair was an isolation chamber wherein the monkeys would have no connection with the outside world or any other living creatures. Harlow tested a variety of monkeys to see how isolation would affect them differently—some had already bonded with their mothers while others were newborns. Additionally, the monkeys were placed in isolation for varying lengths of time—some for a month, some for six months, and some for a full year.

The monkeys placed in the pit of despair for a full year were radically changed upon their release. It seems obvious that their year of isolation spawned depression in every single one of them. They felt no desire to play or explore whatsoever, and when they were placed with other monkeys they became the victims of bullying. Additionally, Harlow

found that these monkeys were incapable of having sexual relations. Unsurprisingly, two of the monkeys starved themselves to death.

The results get even more profound than that, however. Harlow wanted to study how depression would affect parenting. Because the monkeys were now incapable of sexual relations, Harlow had the female monkeys raped. Upon having children, the mothers abused and neglected them. One of the mothers held her baby down and chewed off its feet and fingers while another simply crushed its baby's head in. All of the information I've just provided was taken from the Wikipedia page, and you can do further reading on the pit of despair there.

There are many things I took away from reading about the pit of despair. One was that depression cannot be overcome. None of the monkeys who had been placed in the pit of despair recovered from their depressive symptoms. The only escape, as the two monkeys who starved themselves seemed to realize fastest, was death. I, too, understand that I will suffer from depression until the day I die. If someone claims that they have recovered from depression, then they were never truly depressed in the first place.

The other takeaway I had from this study was that depression isn't the fault of the depressed person; it's the fault of society. These monkeys became depressed because they were isolated from other living creatures. Much in the same way as I have been isolated from others for the majority of my life. By rejecting me all throughout elementary and middle school, my peers literally caused my depression

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to develop. If they had simply accepted and befriended me, then I could have been a normal, happy person.

When society learns of the events that are going to take place tomorrow morning, they will ask themselves what was wrong with me that made me act the way I did. Well the answer is very simple—You all molded me into the person I am today. By rejecting me, you forced me into an unshakable depression that ultimately led to rampage. You only have yourselves to blame. The only way you can prevent more shooting sprees from happening is by extending the hand of friendship to everybody. If you refuse to do so, then you all deserve to die.

I told Dawn about the pit of despair and my interest in doing our project about depression, and she seemed on board. Other girls would have surely thought that my idea was too weird or upsetting or something like that, but Dawn appeared to be genuinely interested. My worries of scaring her away began to lessen, and we agreed to work on the project outside of class.

We met up at the library a month later to work on the project, but we didn't get much done. This wasn't for lack of trying, but we just got caught up in talking about other subjects. I was delighted to see that Dawn didn't look at me the way everybody else did. Where everyone else saw a fat, ugly, brown loser, Dawn saw a person who she seemed happy to talk to.

However, Dawn was the only positive part of high school. Despite my efforts to seem intelligent and confident, I continued to find nothing but failure on a social level. One of my worst days was when I made a student teacher cry. I was

under the impression that we had a mutual respect for each other, so I thought a joke at her expense would be funny and appreciated. Unfortunately, the stupid cunt started crying, and everybody in class knew it was because of what I'd said.

Furthermore, other than Dawn, nobody dared to get near me. Unless they were assigned, nobody wanted to sit next to me in class, nobody sat near me during lunch, nobody spoke to me in the hallways. Dawn was the closest thing I had to a friend, and she and I only spoke like once or twice a week. And so I decided I'd finally had enough. I started making plans for killing myself.

That's another thing you normies don't seem to understand. A depressed person doesn't need one big cataclysmic event to convince them to kill themselves. The decision for suicide is the result of a gradual culmination of shit. That's why suicide always surprises everybody like it just came out of the blue. The suicidal person didn't need one big thing to happen, it was a decision that they've been considering for a long time and have finally decided to commit to. And towards the beginning of the November of my freshmen year, I decided that death would be better than enduring four more years of high school and then sixty more years of depression. I set a date, prepared a method, and waited patiently for my upcoming death.

Chapter 11

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Loss of Innocence

Dawn Bracken

I began to contemplate the ways in which Mason could be removed from my life entirely. The first and most obvious solution was murder. I had no problem with orchestrating Mason's death (after all, he was preventing me from living the life I wanted to live, and that is practically murder in its own right).

The only stipulation I had with murder, of course, was the difficulty in getting away with it. Hiring an assassin is extremely tricky business considering the majority of potential candidates are actually undercover police officers. It would be absolutely crucial that I did not get caught, so not only would I have to have the utmost assurance that I was not dealing with a police officer, but I would also need to know that my hired gun was skilled enough at covering his tracks.

On the contrary, killing Mason by my own hand was not completely out of the question. Performing the murder myself would prevent a third party's involvement which tremendously lowered the risk of the operation. I would not have to use barbaric weapons such as guns and knives (these surely would result in a forensic examination proving me to be the killer) but instead could utilize poison or some other stealthy form of killing. Perhaps I could even lock him in a storage freezer overnight. I could not help but laugh at the thought of doing so.

Mason, of course, had always been a valuable complement to me, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting into the mind of his ditzzy sister. This in mind, I decided to further examine my options as to hopefully prevent murder from being my go-to source of elimination. I set it on the backburner as the worst case scenario and continued contemplating possible alternatives.

Letter to Mother

Another option I had was simply waiting for him to leave. Mason was halfway through his junior year, and surely upon graduation he would move to a college town of some kind. I imagined he would earn a special scholarship for being good at throwing footballs and would then be out of our lives for nine months out of the year. With this option I found two major issues. Firstly: I had no desire to wait eighteen months to start enacting my plans, and secondly: There was no guarantee Mason would go to college or even move out of town after graduating.

I spent the next few days weighing my options, all the while enjoying my time with Mason and Lilly. The three of us spent our days conversing with my other guests, playing games, watching movies, and generally having a splendid time. After a full week of work, it felt nice to lie in bed all day and relax—even though I had to nearly die in order to do so. I have a feeling most Americans would risk death for just a few days of extra vacation time. But I digress...

Something interesting happened during my second day of hospitalization. Mario's mother dropped him off at the hospital so he could visit me, and she came up to the room to say hello. I had seen Mario's mother from time to time when I went to his house to work on our psychology project, but he had made an effort to ensure I did not speak with her beyond simple greetings. Mario made it clear to me that he was terribly embarrassed of his mother and did not want her stupidity to reflect upon my opinion of him, so he wanted to shield me from her as best he could.

Mario was noticeably upset that his mother had come along (I could tell he had spent some time in the car trying to convince her not to come in) but alas there she was at the doorway smiling and saying hello to everybody in the room. Mario quickly excused

himself to the restroom, and once he was gone his mother had a message for everybody in the room (Mason, Lilly, *Dorianne*, and I). She said:

“Thank you all for being friends to Mario. He’s always been such a shy boy ever since grade school, and he always struggled to make friends. I was worried things would get even rougher for him in high school, and I was relieved to hear about all of you and your little club that you have on Wednesdays. He would be so embarrassed to know I was saying this to all of you, but I just can’t thank you enough for helping to bring him out of his shell.”

This speech, of course, was incredibly unexpected to me considering how much Mario bashed upon his mother, and it is made entirely more interesting upon considering that this woman lost her life at the hands of her son three months later.

Later that evening, once my guests had returned home, I was left with just Mason and Lilly. They intended on staying with me every night until I left the hospital. Lilly slept in my bed beside me (despite some resistance from the nurses. The way I saw it, body heat was body heat) and Mason had been sleeping in a chair. I had been able to tell for the last week or so that Lilly was itching to tell me about something, but for whatever reason was unable to do so in Mason’s presence. This in mind, I suspected her sudden desire for McDonald’s likely had a hidden motive.

“Maaaayysson,” Lilly spoke with a childish tone. “Could you please go get us some McDonald’s? I don’t want to eat the cafeteria food again.”

“Oh come on, it isn’t that bad,” Mason answered. “Besides, the nearest one is like ten minutes from here.”

Letter to Mother

“Please, Mason? I’m really craving a chicken sandwich right now, and McDonald’s has the best ones. Pretty please?”

Sensing that Lilly wanted us to have some alone time, I joined in the façade. “I would not mind having a cheeseburger. If you were willing to go, that is.”

Upon my request, Mason was quick to comply. After taking our drink orders, Mason was out the door and Lilly and I found ourselves alone.

“Like, oh my God, Dawn I have been like dying to talk to you. You aren’t going to believe what has been going on at my house. It’s bad, Dawn. It’s really bad. We’re in big trouble. Mason has told you about it, right? At your club meetings?”

I had not the slightest clue what she was referring to.

“Do you remember that boy I was telling you about? Chance Morgan?”

“Yes, of course. What about him?” Lilly and I had spent hours discussing Lilly’s crush on an older boy named Chance—a boy in my grade. I found it bizarre and frankly distasteful that the two had a romantic interest in one another despite a five-year age gap, but I did not let that become known to Lilly. Rather, I pretended to support the relationship and advised her to take steps in order to achieve it. Why? Because it would surely lead to conflict that I could partially take credit for without facing any repercussions, and I absolutely adore doing that exact thing.

“Well I ended up sending him nudes like you said I should, and he was sending them back and stuff and it was all good, but then my

dad walked in while I was taking a naked picture. And he went freaking crazy! Like, he took me to Chance's house and threatened him and he grounded me and Mason for life. It's been really terrible."

I had been wondering why Mason's temperament had been unusually dreary lately, and I now understood why. My advice to Lilly had crumbled their entire family, and likely Chance's family as well. I felt so happy in that moment, but I did not dare show it. For I could see that Lilly was becoming very emotional about the subject.

"But it's not just that we're grounded, Dawn. I mean, Dad grounds us all the time, so that's nothing new. But umm... God... I haven't told anybody about this. Not even Mason. And you have to promise you won't tell because I know that if Mason found out he would kill Dad. But I just don't know what to do and I feel like I have to tell someone and I don't know who to tell and I feel like you're the only one I could talk about it to..."

"What is it, Lilly?" I asked.

"Well... Dad was really, really angry about what I was doing. Like more angry than I've ever seen him before in my life. It was like I had betrayed everything he'd ever thought of me when he saw me naked taking that picture." At this point her voice had become wobbly and her eyes were filling with tears. "And, umm... He's been hitting me. Like, not just like spanking or whatever, but with a fist. He always does it when Mason is in the shower or downstairs eating, and he makes me bite down on a rag so that Mason can't hear my screams." She pulled up the sleeve of her shirt to reveal dark purple bruises covering her arms. She was trembling now, tears pouring from her face. "On my stomach he's

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burned me with his lit cigarettes, and he told me if I told anyone, then he would really hurt me. I just don't know what to do, Dawn. I'm so scared of being at home when he's there. Even when he isn't, I'm always terrified that soon he'll be home. It hurts so much, and I can hardly sleep at night because I'm afraid he's going to come in and hurt me more. And Mason has no idea what's going on, and I don't want to tell him. He would literally murder Dad, and if that happens, then he'll go to jail and I'll be left all alone. I'm so scared, Dawn. What am I supposed to do?"

Her words rattled around the cage of my mind. Could this have been it? The break I was looking for? Was the solution going to be that simple? I could just advise Lilly to tell Mason about the situation, or perhaps even tell him myself, Mason would kill his father, and then boom—he would be out of the picture, and I would be free to pursue my dreams. But would that really work? Would Mason actually kill his father in such a way? I felt as though Lilly's imagination was getting the best of her. As far as I could tell, Mason was a level-headed person. Upon receiving knowledge of his sister's mistreatment, he would obviously feel intense rage as any caring sibling would, but rage enough to legitimately kill? The boy did not have it in him. He would eventually calm down and pursue the proper course of action—contacting the authorities. In which case, Mason's father would be arrested for child abuse, Mason and his sister, being minors, would be sent to live with some distant relative or perhaps even a children's home, and we would be rid of his presence. But only temporarily. Or perhaps even not at all.

I had no knowledge of how the foster care system works (and I still do not to this day), but I figured even if Mason and Lilly were placed into it, they likely would not be removed from their current schools. The more likely case would be that Mason and Lilly

would move in with a trusted adult friend and remain there until Mason was old enough to purchase a domicile of his own. Even if by some miracle Mason and Lilly were sent to live with a distant relative or adopted by a family living states away, it was only a matter of time before Mason turned 18 and became capable of moving back to Elmhurst. At which point he would once again be able to meddle in my plans and any operations I currently had in place could easily become compromised. No, getting Mason's father arrested was not a permanent solution to my issue. But I perhaps had one in mind.

"It is a really sticky situation, kid. I am so sorry that this is happening to you. I am not sure what to say right now that can help you, but I will say that you are the bravest person I know for telling me about this. If I were you, I would be too scared to say anything to anybody about what was happening. I am really proud of you, and I feel honored that you feel as though you could confide in me about this."

Lilly smiled a weak yet bona fide smile. "Thanks for being here for me when nobody else can be. I love you, Dawn."

"I love you too, Lilly," I answered.

When Mason eventually returned with our food, all signs of distress evaporated from Lilly's person. Given the opportunity, she could make an excellent actress one day. We ate our grotesque dinner while watching television and continued to do so until we felt tired enough for sleep. All the while the gears of my brain were turning at a rapid pace. I was developing a plan that I thought to be foolproof, and come my release from the hospital, Mason would be no more.

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It was now New Year's Eve, and I had the entirety of my plan laid out in my mind. I just needed to have patience. The day went by as well as any other. Truman and Mario stopped by again and the five of us played a game called Cards Against Humanity. My doctor informed me I was recovering splendidly, and he expected I would be set free in a day or two. This was satisfactory for me, as I would need the hospital room for the next couple days in order for my operation to come to fruition.

Night came, and once again I found myself alone with Mason and Lilly. We flipped the television to the annual ball drop in New York City and anxiously anticipated the coming of the new year. Lilly asked me if I had any New Year's resolutions. "Of course," I answered. "But I do not want to share them until they are successes."

The clock was quickly approaching midnight, and I could tell by Mason's awkward attitude that he wanted to kiss me like most couples do at the turn of the new year. This, of course, would have gone completely according to plan if not for Lilly's presence, so I excused myself to the restroom at approximately 11:58.

"You missed it!" Lilly exclaimed as I walked out of the bathroom at 12:02.

"Darn," I responded. "Hopefully it will happen again next year."

As our sad excuse for a New Year's party began to wind down, it seemed obvious that Lilly was feeling drowsy. She cuddled up beside me in bed and began to drift off to sleep. Mason seemed disappointed he missed the opportunity to kiss me at midnight, and I intended to make up for it.

“Mason,” I whispered, trying my best to not wake Lilly. “Will you come speak to me in the bathroom please?”

He appeared perplexed. “In the bathroom? What for?”

“It is something private. I do not want Lilly to hear, even if she is asleep.”

Confused nonetheless, Mason followed me into the restroom. I shut the door behind us.

“So what’s up?” he asked, but before he had even a moment to take a breath I grabbed the sides of his head and kissed him. His tremendous shock was apparent, but this did not prevent him from immediately going along with the situation and kissing me back as passionately as a teenage boy can. This was my first ever kiss with a boy, and it was pretty much what I expected: sloppy, nauseating, and generally unpleasant. The personal space of my mouth felt violated by the presence of his tongue and the taste of his saliva. The sounds of his ever-so-subtle moans made me want to cringe in embarrassment. I fought through my discomfort, however, and after about thirty seconds I ended the kiss and pulled my head back.

I opened my eyes and found Mason’s face flushed bright red. He was breathing heavily as if recovering from a panic attack. “Wow... Oh my God... That was...” he mumbled, unable to form a cohesive sentence. Luckily he did not have to.

“Mason, I love you,” I said. “I have been in love with you for a long time now, but I have been too shy to say anything. And now after spending these last three days with you by my side I know for sure that you are the one for me. I know this probably seems out of

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the blue and all, and you probably do not even like me more than as a friend, but I have decided to take the risk of telling you how I feel.”

“Oh Dawn,” he blissfully spoke, a gigantic smile tearing across his face, “I’m so happy to hear you say those things. I’ve felt exactly the same way about you ever since I met you.”

I forced a bright smile upon my face. “Have you really?”

“Yes. In fact, the majority of my journal pages are written about you.” He paused and considered this statement, surely questioning whether or not he had just presented an awkward amount of information. I had no qualms with this.

“Mason...,” I said, shyly looking down at my feet and swaying my arms from side to side. “Do you remember when I told you about those Nazi freezing experiments?”

This sudden change of topic caused his mind to hit a cerebral speed bump. “Y-yeah?”

“Do you recall the methods they used in trying to revive hypothermic patients?” I asked.

Still unsure where I was going with this, he answered, “Well uh, they put them in the hot baths kind of like what the doctors here did for you, right?”

“That is right, but do you remember the other successful method?”

He thought about it for a moment and then as he recalled the answer his face flushed red yet again. “Yes, I do.”

“Well, I am still feeling kind of cold,” I responded. “Would you like to try that method with me? Strictly for medicinal purposes,” I added with a wink.

Mason grew more flustered, and I noticed a trickle of sweat forming on his brow. “I, uh... Here in the... But Lilly is here...”

“Yes, that is a problem,” I stated. “So tell her it is time to go home and once you arrive there claim you forgot something back at the hospital. Then we will have the room all to ourselves.”

The boy must have thought he was dreaming. The proposal of sex had put him into an almost animalistic trance wherein the desire to fornicate overrode all other cognitive functions. He simply stuttered, “O-okay. I will.”

“I will be waiting,” I said with a smile. “And do not forget to pick up condoms on your way back.”

“Right,” he said. “Right, right. Don’t forget... I’ll be right back.”

I then endured a short kiss before he opened the bathroom door and went to waken Lilly.

“Lilly, we’ve got to go home,” Mason said, tapping his sister upon the shoulder. She slowly sat up whilst rubbing her eyes and then glanced at the clock.

“It’s one in the morning, Mason. What do we have to go home for?”

“I am so sorry, Lilly. I just need some alone time tonight. You can both come back tomorrow morning, alright?”

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A sense of fear suddenly poured upon Lilly's face as she began to realize her current situation. For the first time in three days, she was going to be at home with her father. She looked up at me with pleading eyes as though they could change my mind.

"I apologize," I stated, acknowledging her concern. "But it is only for the night."

Not long after, Mason and Lilly had departed from the hospital, and I was alone in the room.

As if kissing were not bad enough, I would soon be engaging in copulation. During my stint of alone time, I attempted to brace myself for the upcoming discomfort. Never before in my life have I had any desire for sexual intimacy. A yearning for sex is purely an evolutionary trait that we have not yet overcome as a species. Animals desire sex due to their need to reproduce. As somebody who plans on never settling down, getting married, or having children, I feel as though I have mentally overcome the craving for coitus, and thusly have never felt sexually aroused. Some might think that makes me inhuman, but in my mind it is what sets me apart from the animals. Yes, with my ability to overcome sexual impulses, I believe I have reached a new stage of human evolution wherein cognition trumps instinct. But I digress.

Approximately forty minutes later, Mason returned with a box of condoms in hand. As assuredly no mother wants to hear the details of her daughter's deflowering, I shall spare you of them. What I will say, though, is that I found sex to be the most overrated activity in world history. Our sex obsessed culture has created a tone suggesting sex to be life's greatest pleasure, and yet I felt nothing but discomfort and pain. Perhaps on an emotional level sex is a worthwhile endeavor for couples who truly love one another.

Dawn Bracken

Surely Mason reached this level of ecstasy under the impression that the two of us were now madly in love. How pitiful he must feel now.

Minutes after climax, after Mason's sweaty, warm body lay beside mine in a tight embrace, he stood from the bed and removed the condom from his person. He walked towards the bathroom with the intention of disposing of the disgusting latex sack of semen. "Just throw it into the trash can," I called. "I heard it is bad to flush them."

Absentmindedly, he complied with my request. Thusly, phase one of my operation was complete.

He returned to my bed with the intention of further cuddling, but I reminded him of his sister. "She is going to wonder where you have been. You had better head back home."

"You're right," he stated, sadly accepting his fate. "I wish I could stay with you all night."

"I do too," I answered. "But you and Lilly will be back in the morning."

He sat on the edge of the bed as he began dressing himself. "Hopefully you can get out of here tomorrow," he stated.

"Yeah, hopefully."

"Is there anything you want to do tomorrow? Like any movies you wanna watch or games you wanna play or anything?"

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“Not particularly,” I responded. “But I will try to think of something.”

Fully clothed, Mason headed for the door. Before exiting, he turned towards me and said, “Happy New Year, Dawn. I love you.”

“Happy New Year, Mason,” I answered. “I am smitten with you as well.”

With that, Mason exited the room, and I was left alone to recover from my repugnant experience.

I awoke the next morning in high spirits. I was one conversation away from removing Mason from my life once and for all. And once my operation had been completed I would be able to move on to my bigger and better goals: Seeking vengeance against the Ricardo couple and performing experiments on live human beings. In a short matter of time I would be flourishing in the successes of my life. It was going to be glorious.

Mason and Lilly returned at approximately eleven in the morning. As they entered the room, they both wore an expression on their face as if they and I shared a secret bond that the other was unaware of. This, of course, was true. Both siblings had betrayed the trust of the other in favor of trusting me, and both would suffer horrendous consequences for doing so. The sweet scent of dramatic irony filled the air.

The three of us watched television while talking over it for about an hour. Every time Mason looked in my direction he could not help but smile at me as if our supposed love was so powerful he could not contain his lips. Lilly had a particular expression when

looking at me as well, but hers was one of distress. Around noon I made an announcement.

“You are not going to believe this,” I stated. “But I am actually craving McDonald’s again.”

“Really?” Mason asked. “I could have sworn you once went on a rant about how you think that stuff is poison.”

“I seem to remember that as well,” I answered. “But if a freezer could not kill me, then I doubt Ronald McDonald’s poison will be potent enough to do the trick.”

At this point Lilly had caught on to the charade. It was clear that this was our secret code for intending a desire to speak in private. “I could go for McDonald’s again too,” she stated. “I’ll take some chicken nuggets this time, though. With honey mustard sauce.”

“Oh alright, alright,” Mason said, standing up. “But are you sure you want McDonald’s? I heard Ricardo’s Deep Freeze is having a great sale on human popsicles.”

“Hilarious,” I stated. “Now I want one of those McDonald’s ice cream treats too.”

Mason laughed before heading for the door, en route for our lunch. When the coast was clear, Lilly began to speak.

“I wish we wouldn’t have gone home last night. It probably would have been fine if Mason had stayed, but he left me all alone with him for over an hour. It was terrible. It was like he had to make up for the three days I was away. He just kept kicking me in the

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stomach and calling me all sorts of terrible words. I can't handle it anymore, Dawn. I have to do something."

"Yes, you do," I said. "And so do I. Lilly, I am extremely inspired by your bravery in telling me about this abuse you are receiving, and thanks to you I finally have the nerve to speak up too. But..." I paused, tears coming to my eyes, "I do not think I can do it. I am too scared."

"Oh God, not you too," Lilly cried out. "What's happening with you? Is it your mom?"

"No, no, of course not," I answered, pretending to try and yet fail to fight back the tears. "It is... something else entirely. But I am too afraid to say it. I am not as brave as you are."

"You don't have to be brave, Dawn. You just have to trust me. I trusted you, didn't I? That should prove that you can trust me back to tell me whatever you need to say."

"I do trust you, Lilly. I trust you more than anybody in the world. I know it is pathetic to say since I am in high school and you are just in middle school, but I sincerely feel as though you are my best friend."

"You're my best friend too, Dawn. And as far as I'm concerned you always will be. In fact, we're more than friends, we're like sisters. You're the big sister I never had. At least not until now."

"Well, Lilly... I... I just know you will not believe me."

"Try me."

“Okay... Well... For the last few months I have been getting sexually assaulted. At first it just started off as unwanted touching and that sort of thing... But now it is far worse. Like, rape worse.”

Lilly’s hand instinctively covered her mouth as her eyes poured with sorrowful tears. “Oh my God! Dawn, I had no idea! We have to do something!”

“Here is the thing though...,” I shakily spoke. “The guy doing this stuff to me is Mason.”

Lilly froze as though she had witnessed her loved ones being shot in the face and was too fearful to react to a fight or flight response.

“No way. You’re lying.”

I hid my face behind my pillow. “See? I told you you would not believe me.”

“You have got to be lying... Why are you saying these things, Dawn? Why would you say something like that?”

“It is the God honest truth, Lilly. Tell me, what excuse did he give you for why he came back to the hospital last night?”

For a moment Lilly seemed lost in thought as though the dendrites of her brain refused to send messages. “He, uh... He said he forgot his journal I think.”

“And do you really think it took him over an hour to retrieve it? No. Last night he came back to rape me. Right here on this bed. He forced me to have sex with him. That is why you had to go home to your father last night. I, of course, wanted nothing to do with it.

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I knew that the last thing you wanted was to be alone with your dad. But he forced me into playing into his façade. He wanted us to be alone so that he could rape me like he has done dozens of times in the past. You know that feeling you have when you think about being alone with your dad? That is exactly how I feel when he is in the same room as me. These past few days have been torture. I have just been agonizing at the thought that any minute my rapist was going to lose control and attack me again. And that is exactly what happened last night. I have wanted to tell somebody about this for a long time, but Mason threatened he would kill me if I said anything to anyone.”

Lilly’s body began to quiver. It was as if she physically, mentally, and emotionally was unable to accept the words I was presenting her with. She uncontrollably shook her head from side to side as she bawled intensely.

“Mason wouldn’t do those things... He just wouldn’t... Mason isn’t that person.”

I gulped and wiped my eyes with my sleeve. “You still do not believe me, huh? I did not want to have to do this, but you have left me with no choice.”

“Wh-what are you talking about?” she asked.

“You want proof that what I am saying is true?” I asked. “Go into the bathroom and take a look in the trashcan. You will find all the proof you need in there.”

A terrified expression grew across Lilly’s face as if she knew she was about to find a monster underneath her bed. She slowly stood

and crept towards the bathroom door. She entered, and moments later I heard a gasp. “Oh my God!”

She exited the bathroom in a frenzy. “Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God! It is true! Oh God.” The girl began hyperventilating.

“Calm down,” I stated. “Take deep breaths. I need you to focus. He is going to be back soon and we still have more we need to talk about.”

“I can’t believe Mason would—but he did! Oh God, he’s a monster! My brother is such a monster! He has been tricking us this whole time into believing he was a good person! He’s even worse than Dad! He’s pure evil!”

“Lilly, sit down. There is something very important I need to tell you.”

She complied, all the while still shaking like a war veteran with PTSD.

“Lilly,” I said calmly. “We are both victims of terrible abuse at the hands of monstrous men. If we do not do something about it, then these terrible things are just going to continue for years to come. We need to get out of it as soon as possible.”

“You’re right, you’re absolutely right! We need to go to the police! They both deserve to rot in jail for what they’ve been doing to us! I can’t believe this is happening, Dawn! This has gotta be the worst day of my life.”

“I am too scared, Lilly,” I said. “You are the brave one here, not me. Mason said he would kill me if I told anybody about what he

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has been doing to me, and I know he really would. I am just too much of a coward. You should definitely tell the police about your dad, but I... I just cannot. I am a useless coward, Lilly. I am nothing more than a damsel in distress.”

We sat in silence for a few stoic moments as Lilly contemplated the situation. She then spoke. “You don’t have to tell. I’ll do it for you.”

“But then Mason will know I told you, and he will stop at nothing to get revenge on me. You have no idea how violent he can get. When we are alone he gets so scary...”

“No, I won’t tell them about you,” Lilly said. “I’ll say he’s been doing it to me.”

On the outside I tried to keep my composure, but on the inside the most spectacular fireworks display was shooting off. Bells rang, people danced, the excitement was uncontrollable. She had fallen for the bait quicker than I had expected her to. A quick victim of my simple trap. I had won.

“No, Lilly. You cannot do that for me. Just save yourself. I can try to endure my abuse for a while longer. All I care about is that you feel safe.”

“I will never feel safe now that I know I’m living with a monster as a brother. Please, let me do this Dawn. For both of us.”

“But it is not that simple. They will do tests to prove you are lying. And then Mason will be free and he will murder us both.”

Dawn Bracken

“I’ll fake it. I’ll... I’ll... I’ll take that thing out the trashcan and rub it all over myself. Then when they test me they’ll find his stuff on me. That should be proof enough to get him locked away.”

“Lilly...,” I said. “If you did this for me, for both of us... then I would be eternally grateful.”

“Anything for you, Dawn. You’re my best friend.”

“And you are mine as well.”

With that, Lilly retrieved the condom from the bathroom and used the money I gave her to catch a bus to the police station. When Mason returned with two bags full of McDonald’s, I informed him that Lilly had scurried home and I had no idea why. He left me my food and was quick to head out. “I love you, Dawn,” he said as he headed for the door. “Hopefully I’ll be right back once I get this figured out.”

That was the last time I saw Mason Elliot.



Chapter 12

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Suicide

Part IV: Suicide

In the five hours since I began writing this document I've had a major change of heart. At the beginning I stated I was writing this with the intention of sharing it with the world, but now I think I want to change my mind. This manifesto is meant to be a book of support and encouragement for people in similar situations to my own. It is also meant as a warning to normies that the beta uprising is coming, and in order to avoid untimely deaths it is crucial for them to love and accept everybody equally despite their physical or social inabilities. I feel that by now this secondary purpose has been served. Normies, I command you to stop reading this document henceforth. If the first three sections were not enough to convince you to change your ways, then nothing will. Get the fuck out, normies.

And in case you still aren't sure whether or not you qualify as a normie, please consider this simple Normie Test that I've established. The test is very simple and constitutes only one question: Do you believe the phrase "Just be yourself" is quality advice? If your answer to that question is yes, then you are a filthy fucking normie and I command you to stop reading this document. Only a normie would believe that "just being themselves" would be enough to win friends, affection, and happiness. Everybody in my position knows that being oneself is a fruitless endeavor.

Now that the normies are hopefully gone, I feel more comfortable in detailing the events of my once-planned suicide.

*Extermination Justification or: The Rants and Ravings of
That Chubby Spic Who Probably Killed Your Kid*

Life had become an unbearable repetition of despair, isolation, monotony, and boredom. I hated everyone and everything—myself included. I no longer felt passion for anything. The videogames I'd once cherished, the television shows I'd once loved, the music I'd once obsessed over—I felt nothing in regards to any of them. I guess that's really the best way to put it. I felt nothing.

It was as if the deadly combination of depression and loneliness had hollowed me out as a person. My passions, desires, goals, hobbies—all had evaporated. My only focus now was on the sweet embrace of death. Upon death, my suffering would be no more. I would never feel depressed or lonely ever again. I already had become the embodiment of nothingness, and all I needed was to pull the plug so that my consciousness could join the rest of me.

I became obsessed with death and suicide in particular. I spent entire nights doing extensive research on the subject—reading stories of those who were considering it, those who had tried and failed at it, and those who were left behind by fallen loved ones.

The stories of people who knew victims of suicide were the most influential in my decision to follow through with the act. They told of their utter, unbelievable pain and suffering. It was as if in an instant a piece of their life had been viciously ripped from them. They felt immense guilt for not being able to prevent the tragedy. They spoke of the signs that now seemed ever so obvious. It seemed as though these people now understood intense suffering. And that's exactly how I wanted to make everybody feel.

I wanted my suicide to make an entire city weep and suffocate in guilt and grief. Especially my mother. That cursed woman is the reason why my life is so completely shitty, and I wanted my death to impact her the most. I wanted it to break her heart, her soul, her mind. I wanted her to feel full responsibility for my suicide, and I wanted it to tear away at her until she felt she had no choice but to end her own life as well. And I intended on doing everything in my power to make my suicide impact her as deeply as possible.

I also wanted to use my suicide as a means of revenge against everybody who had ever wronged me. The kids at school who had always disregarded me and had refused to give me a chance needed to feel as though a life had been lost due to their hostility. Much like at Hannah's funeral, the student body would join together and take turns stating why I was such a great person and how they felt sorry that I was no longer around. My death would be a weight on the shoulders of each and every student who had known of my existence but refused to acknowledge it, and it would weigh down upon them for the rest of their lives.

In case you can't tell, I definitely condone suicide. You can't listen to what the normies tell you—it's pure bullshit. Normies will say things like, "Suicide is the most selfish act a person can commit." Well allow me to be the first person to say that this sentiment is wrong.

If a person is in such traumatic and severe physical, mental, or emotional pain that death would suit them better, then that person absolutely has the right to end their life. The normies think of this as selfish. Really? I have to endure another sixty years of intense suffering just so you don't

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have to say you knew a guy who killed himself? And I'M the selfish one? That's fucking bonkers logic! It's as if normies have no idea what the word selfish means! It's like these fuckers think that undergoing chemotherapy as a cancer treatment is selfish because everybody else loves seeing your flowing head of hair. How the fuck these normies can justify such hypocritical beliefs is beyond me.

Another bullshit line normies will try to throw at you is, "Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem." Wow, what sage advice! I forgot that my race, weight, social status, social inability, mental illness, and socio-economic background were all temporary problems! I should just wait a few days until all that shit goes away and I wake up in the body of a rich, fit, white guy! Holy shit normies, and to think I was going to kill myself before you gave me that ingenious piece of consultation! Heck, before you know it I'll be a filthy normie too!

While I'm debunking normie bullshit in regards to suicide, I might as well tackle the other big one that comes to mind. Normies have a twisted sense of morality that binds them to believe human beings are inherently valuable and therefore it is tragic when one of them dies. Simple examination of this claim can lead one to understand that it not only isn't objectively true, but ultimately leads to the conclusion that suicide IS a proper solution.

For starters, we've already established I am an avid atheist and have come to terms that there is no god. Everything in the universe was created by random. All life, animal, human, bacteria, etc. was the result of billions of years of evolution. Mutations, accidents, all that fun stuff.

Which means that human life has no objective, inherent value because it was created randomly. If you rolled a die and it landed on a three, you wouldn't claim that three is an inherently important number. It just happened to be the number the die landed on.

"But Mario!" the normies claim. "Human beings are self-aware! We are highly intelligent creatures and therefore intrinsically valuable!"

The fact that we are self-aware does not mean we are valuable in any sort of way. Objectively value does not exist in the universe. Only when we lower the scale down to the level of humanity can any sort of value exist. It is therefore at this level we must evaluate ideas, if at all.

At this level it is quite clear that a universal aspect of humanity is that it is good to experience happiness and bad to experience suffering. Now that we have a value system, we can determine whether or not suicide is the correct decision. If by killing yourself you will increase the happiness/decrease the suffering in the world in total, then it is morally the right thing to do. On the other hand, if by killing yourself you would be increasing the overall suffering/decreasing the overall happiness, then it is morally the wrong thing to do.

This trail of logic is based entirely on using the normies' own sense of morality against them. From my standpoint, I don't give a shit whether any action is moral or immoral. Morality is a fucking joke to me. However, I felt the need to express a moral justification for suicide for those of you who desire one.

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At the end of the day, I firmly believe that if you want to kill yourself, then you definitely should. Don't worry about how it will negatively impact your friends or family, just do it. You should not have to suffer in exchange for their happiness. Think about it this way—if their happiness truly deserved your consideration, then you wouldn't be suffering in the first place. Why should you worry about the wellbeing of those who clearly aren't preoccupied with your own? If those people really cared about you, then you wouldn't be suffering in the first place.

There is one footnote I should add to this philosophic discussion, however. The world is going to change tomorrow morning when I go on my rampage and this document is released to the public. The fate of the world will be put into the hands of people like us. Those who don't feel as though we belong. Those of us who feel depressed, suicidal, and rejected. The normies are going to bend to our wills in order to prevent future slaughters. Thusly, you might want to reconsider your suicide with this in mind. The world around you will be changing very quickly. Your situation very well could improve to the point where you no longer feel like dying. That is why I feel as though my cause is a noble one. I am the ultimate martyr, the closest thing to a real life Jesus Christ. I am going to make a sacrifice that will improve the fate of mankind.

And of course, if your situation doesn't improve and you still want to die, then make sure you take out as many normies as possible on your way out the door. Then your death can help the cause.

As I stated earlier, I wanted my suicide to cause as much emotional and psychological damage as possible to my dear ol' mother, so as soon as I knew I was going to end my life I began forming a plan. I needed to figure out three important details: A method, a place, and a time.

The time was the first answer that came to me. The bitch's birthday. It was perfect. The ultimate Fuck You from beyond the grave. Something that each person holds as a special day in their life would suddenly become her most tragic. Throughout the remainder of her miserable, pathetic existence she wouldn't even be able to receive joy once a year from her birthday. In fact, I would be turning the one potentially happy thing in her life into the most soul-crushing one. It was going to be perfect.

I read up on just about every suicide method imaginable. I found lists of methods, the pain intensity associated with them, and the success rate of each. Ideally I wanted to find the method with as low a pain intensity and as high a success rate as possible.

The ultimate method I found was a shotgun blast to the head. It by far had the highest success rate and also the lowest pain intensity. Unfortunately, I had no shotgun, nor even any other type of firearm, so that idea was scrapped.

Firearms aside, the next most viable option was being hit by a train. The idea didn't seem terrible, but it would require me to die out in the open. I would have preferred my mother being the one to first discover my corpse. It has an extremely high success rate, though, so I kept this method in mind.

Ultimately, I decided to go with a hanging. Hanging oneself has a very high success rate, especially for people of

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my weight. I couldn't see a way in which my neck wouldn't snap under the pressure of my tremendous body. Plus, my mom could find me hanging in my room. It didn't seem to have any downsides.

I now had the method, place, and time figured out. My next course of action was putting it into place. I definitely needed to be home alone during my death. The worst case scenario would be my mother or grandma walking in on me as I am about to do it. Surely they would rush me to a mental hospital and I would never be given the opportunity to try it again. I somehow had to find a way to get my mother and grandmother out of the house on my mom's birthday.

For the majority of my life I had saved up every dollar from birthdays, Christmas cards, and stealing change from the washer/dryer. I had a grand total of one hundred and thirty-five dollars. I told my grandma I wanted to use my money to purchase my mom a fabulous present—a gift certificate to one of the most expensive restaurants in Chicago—Alinea. The restaurant was about a forty-minute drive from our house. During the time it would take for them to drive there, eat, and return home, I would have been able to hang myself a dozen times.

My grandma was extremely impressed with my generosity and drove me to the restaurant so that I could purchase the certificate.²² I spent every dollar I had on the certificate, and when my mother's birthday finally rolled around, I presented it to her as early in the day as possible.

²² I suspect that her willingness to do this for me relied more on her desire to join my mother for dinner at the restaurant than anything else.

“Well it looks like I won’t be cooking tonight!” she happily exclaimed. “This is so kind of you, Mario. I never thought I would be able to eat at a place like this. Thank you.”

“All I ask is that you take Grandma along for helping me buy the thing and that you bring me home some fast food for dinner,” I replied, giddy that my plan was going to work.

With that out of the way, I had nothing left to do but enjoy my final day on Earth. I created a music playlist of all my favorite songs. Its length totaled nearly nine hours, and I wanted to listen through all of it before my demise, so I started it as soon as I returned to my room. For the first time in months I was in high spirits all day. I felt genuinely happy. I was finally going to do it. I was going to die and leave everybody else behind to grieve over me. The world had rejected me, and now I was going to reject the world.

Around 5 p.m. my mom and grandma took off for Alinea. Once they were out of sight, I entered the garage in search of the rope I planned to use. At this point I felt as though I’d reached some sort of state of enlightenment. I was now mere minutes away from death. My family was gone, and it seemed as though nothing was left to stop me. My suffering would soon be over. I felt as light as a cloud.²³

The rope retrieved, I returned to my bedroom and pulled up a YouTube video detailing the best method in which to tie a noose. Up to this point I had practiced several times with pieces of string, but I didn’t dare practice with the actual rope in fear of being caught. I tied the perfect noose and my music playlist was nearly completed. Everything was in its

²³ Which is strange considering I should have tried to feel heavy in order to better induce suspension hanging, but whatever.

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perfect place. In a few minutes Mario Quintanilla would be no more.

But then I got a phone call. My phone was sitting on my desk across the room and it started to violently vibrate against the wooden surface. I very rarely received phone calls, so this surprised me. I figured it was Mom or Grandma calling to say they'd gotten a flat tire or some other asinine thing. I grabbed the phone and discovered that it wasn't my mother calling, it was Dawn Bracken.

"She's probably just calling about our psychology project," I thought to myself. "It's not even worth answering at this point."

But here's the thing—I decided to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Hi Mario. Dawn here. I hope I am not catching you at a bad time."

"Not at all, what's up?"

"This may seem a bit out of the blue, but I was wondering if you had any plans for after school this Wednesday."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I really don't."

"Wonderful. In that case, I was wondering if you would like to join me and a group of friends in watching some grotesque videos."

This intrigued me. I never thought I would receive a phone call from a girl asking if I was available to hang out, and I definitely never predicted this sort of proposal.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Every Wednesday after school a group of us, mostly sophomores, come together to view an assortment of disgusting footage. Based on our interactions at school and

the time we have spent preparing our project, I figured you would be the type of person to get a kick out of our activities. The group is always looking for new members if you would like to join.”

This was fascinating. I was moments away from death—a death prompted by my utter loneliness in the world—and now a girl was inviting me to join her group of friends. It was the most spectacular coincidence, one that you may find unbelievable, but trust me that it is undeniably true.

Oftentimes truth can be stranger than fiction.

I accepted Dawn’s offer and she told me she looked forward to seeing me in class on Monday. We then ended the conversation and I stood in my room with my phone in one hand and the noose in the other. I looked down at the two and wondered which path I should take. One was guaranteed to end my suffering; the other had potential for doing so. I thought long and hard about the decision I had been presented with. In the end, I decided to give Dawn’s friendship a shot. After all, even if it spectacularly failed and I was made more miserable than ever, I always had the noose as a last resort. The only downsides to all of this were that I was now out of my life savings *and* I’d made my mother happy.

The following Wednesday I attended my first ever Triflers²⁴ meeting. It was there where I met the other five members for the first time. There was Mason, the cool, older

²⁴ I once inquired Dawn as to where the name had come from. I believe she said it was borrowed from a relentless band of outlaws that were infamous back in the Old West days.

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athletic one, Chao, the quiet, Asian one, Dorianne, the freak show, Truman, the tall, awkward one, and Tao, Chao's uncle who ran the laptop. Of the student members, I had recalled seeing most of them at school from time to time²⁵, but naturally none of them had ever spoken to me before. Not wanting to ruin a potential good thing, I tried my best to seem friendly.

Once Tao started the first video, I knew immediately that this club would be the right fit for me. It was a video of some guy lighting his dick on fire. I'd never seen anything like it before in my life, but I thought it was fucking awesome. I looked over at Dawn, and she seemed as enthralled by it as I was. A bunch of the others looked uncomfortable, however. I found it funny that it was only my first day in the club and I already felt more comfortable than the rest of them.

After the video was over, the lot of us sat around talking about it, telling jokes, stories, and generally having a pleasant time. Unlike at school, these people actually acknowledged my existence. They listened when I had something to say and made me feel as though my contributions mattered. They laughed at my jokes and I at theirs. And despite all of our differences, we did have one thing in common. For one reason or another, we all were interested in watching disturbing videos.

It seemed clear that in regards to the videos the most passionate member of the group was Dawn. I was seeing her in an all new light. At school, and even during our group work sessions, she seemed like nothing more than a quiet,

²⁵ I even had a class with Mason.

calculating girl. But now there was a fire in her eyes. Her attitude towards the uncomfortable and the grotesque made her glow. Where the others' discussion contributions were elementary in nature, focused primarily on how the content made them feel, Dawn focused on the ramifications of the actions displayed. Others would avoid questioning how the pain likely felt, or in what ways the man's life would be changed forever, or how he would explain his injuries to his doctor, because it forced them to consider his pain from their own point of view. Dawn felt no fear in this regard. She not only loved exploring these questions, but she flourished in them. I began to feel as though the Triflers, and Dawn in particular, were going to fill the emptiness within me.

This was just the beginning of my newfound relationship with Dawn. She noticed that I, much like her, was far different from the rest of the Triflers. We shared an important connection—a love for the grotesque and a disregard for life. I think that's what set Dawn and I apart from the other Triflers, and really everybody else in the world. We didn't take life seriously. We knew that none of it mattered and that the end was inevitable. We could die any moment and we wouldn't care. Life was nothing more than a game—a joke.

We soon began to spend much of our time together. We discovered we had the same lunch period, so we began eating at the same table. We made plans to get together as often as possible to "work on our psychology project." I continued attending the Triflers meetings every single Wednesday. Life was improving drastically.

So fuck Aubrey, and fuck Marissa. It wasn't until Dawn that I experienced true friendship. She and I had so much in

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common, and we sought to discover each and every little commonality. From a physical standpoint we couldn't have been more different, but on a cognitive level we were terrifically alike, and that is what mattered. We had similar tastes in music.²⁶ Neither of us cared much for our fellow classmates. In fact, before long we discovered a shared hatred for the majority of the student population.

"I detest nearly every single one of them," Dawn told me during lunch one day. "Look at them interact with one another as if they were chimps in the jungle. They try terribly hard to stand out as leader of the pack, but the sad truth is none of them are intellectually superior enough to lead a horse to water. Not only are they complete imbeciles, but they are incredibly narcissistic creatures. Narcissism is fine and dandy when the subject is deserving of respect, but I cannot find a single person worthy of my respect in this loathsome pack of concupiscent, idiotic beasts."²⁷

"People are nothing more than a game to me," she continued. "I spend weeks, even months at a time, strategically planting ideas into their heads and playing mind games. It is one of the only ways in which I can amuse myself. I will often get bored of someone after a while and move on to my next victim, but that is fine considering there are hundreds of these dirty roaches for me to choose from. The ultimate strategy for being successful in life is to convince people that you actually care about them when the

²⁶ I introduced her to my favorite bands and she introduced me to hers.

²⁷ I highly suspect she spends her evenings reading a thesaurus for pleasure.

truth is you only use them for your own personal advantage and entertainment. I am a puppet master with invisible strings. You, of course, can rest assured that I am not doing these things to you. If I were, then I would not have dared to tell you any of these things about me.”

I thought Dawn to be my perfect complement. Over time love began to grow for her. The purest kind of love. Not one tainted by bodily desires such as sex or kissing, but a love of her heart, her soul, her brain, her being. Every moment spent conversing with Dawn felt like my life was being lived to its fullest potential. There wasn't anything I couldn't tell her, and she me. We became best friends, and I was thoroughly glad I didn't hang myself.

As our relationship went on, our conversations became increasingly dark and honest. We fantasized about murdering all of our classmates in the most brutal ways possible. Those stupid, slutty, preppy girls who probably went on and on about how disgusting I look or how bad I smell would be suspended upside-down by their ankles. I would have a large collection of swords, and I would take my sweet time using them to slice their naked bodies over and over again. They wouldn't die from the cuts. I would give them as many shallow yet painful cuts as possible, and they would bleed to death from their wounds.

We shared these fantasies with one another and elaborated on them. She would tweak mine in one way, I would change hers in another. Pain, suffering, and death were in our blood. We were obsessed with it. It was our destiny.

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It is for these reasons that I know Dawn will join me tomorrow morning in my massacre. I will bring a gun for each of us, and together will we exterminate the people we so dearly hate. Dawn saved my life, and now I will die fighting by her side.

Chapter 13

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Invisible Strings

I feel no remorse for what I did to Mason. My actions, as cruel as they may appear, potentially saved his life. Given the events that occurred a few months after his arrest, Mason's prison cell was likely the safest place for him. I am sure when Mason learned about Mario's rampage as well as the Chao House Massacre, he was glad to be reading the newspapers from his cell rather than being one of the names featured in the articles.

Upon my release from the hospital, I ordered a mandatory Triflers meeting. They had all heard of Mason's unexpected fate, and they were predictably aghast. They needed answers, and I had them. Honest answers no, but answers nonetheless.

Once everybody was in attendance, I addressed my congregation. "Triflers... Over the past year or so our small clan of the obscene-obsessed has continued to grow without mitigation. But now, for the first time ever, we have lost a number. By now all of us have heard the rumors surrounding Mason's arrest, and as his sister's number one confidant, I am one of the few who fully comprehends the truth of the situation.

"There is not much beating around the bush one can do when it comes to issues of physical and sexual child abuse, so I will dive straight into the crux of the issue. The rumors are all true. For years now, Mason Elliot has been molesting his younger sister Lilly, and in order to keep this abuse under wraps, he threatened her with death. Mason's father, too, had been abusing the poor girl. It both saddens me that a girl as kind and pure as Lilly could be the victim of such unexpected, heart-wrenching domestic abuse and that I, a close friend of the family, was unable to recognize these vicious and sadistic acts during my numerous get-togethers with the two of them.

Letter to Mother

“Thankfully, on New Year’s Eve once we found ourselves alone, Lilly gathered the courage to confess the secrets of her miserable existence to me. Needless to say, I was utterly appalled and frankly astonished by the nauseating tapestry of a tale she was weaving for me. I simply could not believe that Mason, our Mason, could possibly be behind the heinous crimes she was relaying to me. But I could tell by her fearful, battered demeanor that this was no joke, this was no lie, this was no prank—this was the absolute, unadulterated truth. Mason Elliot was a monster.

“Upon this realization, I wept. The both of us did. But then I realized there was no time for tears. Mason would be returning to the hospital room at any moment. No, now was the time for action. I told Lilly to rush to the police station in order to relay her story. She did as I told her, and Mason and his father were picked up by police later that day.

“From what I have heard, Mason’s father admitted to physically abusing Lilly during police questioning. Mason, on the other hand, denied everything. The police were able to conjure up physical evidence proving his guilt, however, and he remained in custody.

“He attempted to call me, but I was so disgusted that I ignored the call. He left a voicemail feigning innocence, but I know better than to believe him. He has been feigning innocence this entire time, and none of us had any idea that we were actually dealing with a nefarious fiend. To think that the handsome, charming boy who we spent every week watching videos and having discussions with was actually the active player in an unforgivable act against humanity. It just goes to show that you cannot trust a person based on their outer appearance. You have got to be wary of their hidden inner demons.”

My audience had eaten up every word morsel I had fed to them, both the truths and the lies, and they were noticeably more disgusted than they had been before my speech.

“I fucking knew it,” Mario insisted. “Don’t ask me how, but all along I knew there was something fucked up about that guy. I just couldn’t put my finger on it.”

“I don’t understand how I could have been so blind,” *Donovan* stated. “We’ve been best friends for years... You would think I’d have noticed that he was doing these terrible things... You and I are so blessed, Dawn. Either one of us could have been his next victim.”

It took every ounce of my self-control to not slash her throat right then and there.

Unsurprisingly, the Trifler who appeared least upset about Mason’s rape allegations was Truman.

“I’m just glad Lilly is safe and that justice has finally been served,” he claimed.

I knew, however, that Truman was unconcerned with both Lilly’s wellbeing and the level of served that justice had achieved. Truman was only happy that he had one less opponent to compete against for my undying affection.

“From what I have heard, Lilly will now be living with her great aunt way out in Oklahoma. Given the cavalcade of unfortunate events that has surrounded her life lately, I think this new start will be the perfect thing for her,” I stated.

Letter to Mother

“It’s just surreal to think that I used to drive him and Theo around back before they had their licenses,” Chao’s uncle said. “He just seemed like a normal, nice kid. Kind, polite, protective of his sister. And now three lives are forever changed. They’re ruined. It makes you wonder what makes people go nuts like that.”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Mario asked. “Sex is the root of all evil. I thought this was clear. Mason’s sexual desire was his downfall. Yes, it’s fucked up what he did—especially considering that it was his own sister—but can we really be that surprised? Our society now advocates slut culture. At every turn, women are flaunting their bodies and sexuality, torturing men at every waking moment with the knowledge that only the top twenty percent of men will ever get to sleep with the top eighty percent of women. This constant buildup of sexual frustration caused from slut culture is what led Mason to doing these things. After being surrounded all day by women whom he had no control over, naturally he felt inclined to take advantage of the one girl in his direct vicinity over whom he had power. It’s nauseating to think that we’ve given women such power over men in society, but we have. And because of it, things like this happen.”

“Jesus Christ, Mario. Can you please just shut the fuck up, like for forever?” *Dorianne* inquired.

“Attention please,” I spoke, attempting to halt their ridiculous conversation. Once all eyes were on me, I continued. “Although for the first time ever the Triflers seem to be breaking apart, I feel it necessary to say that this is a time wherein we must unify with a stronger bond than ever before. Given recent events, it is crucial that we stick together in order to best weather the storm. We must continue our meetings week after week and continue scouting for potential members. We must never forgive nor forget the actions

committed by Mason Elliot if we wish to move forward and heal as a group. He will remain a symbol of everything that is evil in the world. We will stay strong and unite against such symbols. We will prove that we are better than Mason and those who are like him. We will continue to expand our horizons and diversify and travel forward on our path of uncovering the hidden truths of life. That is all.”

While some Triflers noticeably felt as though my battle cry was rather cheesy, I could tell that others, specifically Mario and Truman, were moved by my convictions. This was crucial, for I would need their undoubting support when I transitioned the Triflers into our next phase—live human experimentation. But I was not ready to transition yet. There was still one blip left on my vengeance radar. Blake and Jill Ricardo still had to pay.

The school year resumed on the following day. Now that I had a bit of extra spending money, I was able to purchase a parking pass, which was a nice improvement. The student body was running rampant with rumors and stories about Mason and Lilly constantly on the edge of their tongues.

Oddly enough, one of the few people who defended Mason was his ex-girlfriend Jessica. She swore up and down that Mason was completely innocent of the charges being pressed and that Lilly had to have been lying. She, of course, was in the minority, as most students loved spreading word of Mason’s hidden life as though it were the Gospel truth. The principal even held an assembly class by class to discuss the dangers of domestic abuse and urged any closeted victims to speak out to a trusted adult. But I could not focus on these matters. Mason Elliot was behind me. My mind was focused intently on destroying the lives of the Ricardos.

Letter to Mother

Murder seemed too harsh a punishment. Yes, their negligence had endangered my life, but it was a matter of greed rather than homicidal intent. I wanted the retribution to be reflective of the sin. Just as they served overpriced ice cream and cheese sticks to their community, I would serve them a heaping helping of poetic justice. So yes, murder was out of the question (despite how much I would have loved the irony of using the money they paid me to hire a hit man to kill them).

If not murder, then what? I wanted to punish them for their greed, so I would need to strike them within that realm. Would I slash their tires? Demolish their home? Hack into their bank accounts?

The solution struck me during lunch one day while Mario was blabbing away about Mason's earlier court appearance. Evidently he had submitted his diary to the court as evidence that he had not committed the crimes he was accused of. After some deliberation between lawyers, the defendant's attorney was able to convince those present that the diary was simply an alibi letter—a document written by a guilty person in order to prove their innocence in case they are caught. But this information being relayed from Mario's mouth to my ears was mostly ignored—I was too focused on the task at hand.

I would hit them right in the moneymaker. I would destroy the building that had nearly destroyed me—Ricardo's Deep Freeze. No, not destroy it. I would burn it to the ground. They had dealt me an icy grave and in return I would grant them a flaming tombstone. Sorry, even I could not help but giggle at that one.

It was settled. Ricardo's Deep Freeze would burn. But I certainly could not do it alone—even with my great knowledge of the building and its operations. I would need help.

I recalled Mario telling me stories of the debauchery performed by him and his cousin. They and their band of misfits had committed a plethora of crimes ranging from larceny to destruction of property to even dousing an innocent woman with urine. Arson would be quite a step up from these minor crimes, but given this history and my utmost trust of Mario, I figured he would be the person to turn to in regards to my fiery desires.

Mario, of course, loved the idea. He needed not even a second of consideration before declaring his decision to join me on my combustible conquest.

“This is so perfect!” Mario declared. “My cousin Dakota is in town for winter break from college, and I guarantee you he’d love to help out!”

His enthusiasm was so abundant that I had to shush him in order to prevent our peers from overhearing the conversation. I liked the idea of having additional help beyond Mario’s pudgy existence, but I had never met Dakota before, so I had no reason to trust him. My number one goal beyond getting vengeance was to not get caught. I needed control of every single variable in the equation, and a stranger whom I had never met before certainly was not a controlled variable. I wanted to trust Mario’s insight into the trustworthiness of his cousin, but I simply could not.

After Mario’s continued ramblings about how “awesome and cool” his older cousin was, I decided I would give him a shot. However, for my own protection, he would never become aware of my identity. Additionally, I would never meet the man face to face. Mario would be the middle man for all of our planning. Ultimately, if it could be helped, I did not want to be present during the arson.

Letter to Mother

It might seem strange to the average mind, but in order to achieve my revenge on a person I feel no need to pull the trigger myself. As long as the trigger is pulled somehow by somebody and my target is shot as a result, I will feel the utmost satisfaction. This is an ideal form of vengeance-seeking, as it allows me to remain physically innocent. Yes, I might have orchestrated the entire plot, but my players were the ones who acted it out. Ricardo's would burn to the ground while I slept comfortably from the bed in my room. I would both have an alibi as well as the ultimate guilt for the crime being committed, and nothing seemed sweeter than this combination of truths.

Mario met up with his cousin and explained the situation to him. The information was described in the way I had ordered him to: An associate of his was seeking to destroy a local eatery by means of arson. The associate has an intricate understanding of the building's layout and day to day operations and already has a detailed plan in mind. Mario and his associate were seeking a third party to assist in the committing of the crime. No disbursement or gratuity would be offered to Dakota on behalf of the associate beyond the intrinsic glee of torching a building to ashes. The associate wished to remain anonymous and Dakota would never come into direct contact with the associate at any time. Upon unlikely but possible capture by police, Dakota and/or Mario were not to disclose any information regarding the associate.

Upon relaying this information to his cousin, Mario called me and said, "He's in, but he thinks it's pretty fucking weird."

Unconcerned with neither the physical attractiveness nor the sexual conquests of my weirdness, I continued the conversation. With Mario mitigating the discussion, the three of us would come up

with a foolproof plan to execute our mission. I explained my proposal as follows:

“This will obviously be a mission to be performed late at night in order to prevent as many potential witnesses as possible. As wonderfully simple as it would be to squirt the building with gasoline and then light a match, my research shows that this is not the greatest method of exterminating a building by means of flame. In order to achieve the level of success we are aiming for, it is crucial that we start the fire from inside the restaurant.

“At first this may seem like a difficult task considering the security measures in place to protect the building. Upon the departure of the closing manager, all doors are securely locked and an electronic security system is in place. Without the password to the security system, nobody can open those doors without the alarm being set off and the police being notified. Unfortunately, I do not know the password to the security system, but it is not necessary for my plan.

“Additionally, none of the windows in the restaurant can open, and while breaking them open may seem like a viable option, a much sounder one exists. What I should have said was that none of the windows open except for one—the drive-thru window. This window is locked, of course, at the end of business hours, but the lock is easily turned from the inside and the window is not connected to the security system in any way.

“This is where my private knowledge of the eatery comes into play. I personally know the night manager Maranda and the various ways she deals with closing shop. For example: If she is closing with a female employee, then she does not require her to clean the men’s restroom at the end of the night out of ‘female

Letter to Mother

respect.’ Thus, if a man were to hide in the stall of the men’s restroom on a night when Maranda and a female employee were responsible for closing shop, then the man could easily remain unfound until the shop was devoid of all employees.

“From there it would be a simple matter of dousing the building with gasoline, turning on the grills, lighting a match, and escaping through the drive-thru window. However, one obviously, of course, cannot be expected to carry gallons of gasoline into a restaurant with him. This is precisely why this shall be a two-man operation. One man will be responsible for hiding in the restaurant and setting the place aflame while the other will feed the necessary supplies to him in through the drive-thru window. Based entirely on the physical sizes of our two players, Mario will have to be the one feeding supplies in through the window considering he likely would not be able to crawl out of it when the time came.

“The only other concern with this crime is the numerous cameras scattered throughout the restaurant. I have no idea whether or not they film at night, but it will be best to proceed with caution. I do know that there are no cameras outside other than at the ordering section of the drive-thru, so as long as the getaway vehicle avoids this area we should be fine. I suggest that Dakota brings a backpack full of dark clothing and a mask in order to hide his identity just in case the indoor cameras are functioning.

“Beyond that, I think we will be golden. I have gone over the events in my head hundreds of times, and I cannot foresee an outcome where the plan fails miserably. The worst case scenario is that an employee finds Dakota in the bathroom past closing time, but to my knowledge there are no laws against taking lengthy amounts of time to defecate. Ideally, police will assume that this was an accident caused by an employee’s failure to turn off the

grills at night rather than an act of arson. In either case, I believe that our bases will be covered enough to prevent any of us from being indicated in this crime. I will now open the floor to questions and suggestions.”

Mario and Dakota seemed pretty blown away by the details of my plan, and neither had any suggestions for improvement nor questions for clarification. The scheme would go through the following night.

Despite my utmost confidence in my plan, I still felt profoundly nervous about its execution. The night of the mission, I lay awake in bed unable to sleep. Surely something would go wrong and I would awake the next morning to find the police at my doorstep. I knew nothing of Dakota beyond Mario’s claims. How was I to know whether or not he would be competent in pulling off my vision? I had been too hasty; my desires for vengeance had blinded my better judgment. I should have spent more time planning a perfect operation rather than putting my fate in the hands of a stranger.

But really, how much did I have to worry about? The worst case scenario was that Mario and Dakota were arrested by the police. And then what? Dakota knew nothing of my existence, so he could not rat me out. That just left Mario. Given our relationship and prior conversations, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Mario would not indicate me as the perpetrator of this crime. If anything, the police would do some research, discover my connection with Ricardo’s, and assume that Mario was performing an act of vengeance on my behalf regardless of my knowledge or involvement. There was no proof that I had anything to do with the crime. All conversations about the arson had been done in person and over the phone, and no text messages or emails existed with

Letter to Mother

incriminating evidence. They had nothing on me. I had nothing to worry about. Most likely I would wake up the next morning to a world devoid of Ricardo's Deep Freeze. It was because of this rationale that I was able to calm down and eventually fall asleep.

When I woke in the morning, I immediately turned on the television and surfed the channels in search of the local news. At the top of the hour, the 6am morning news broadcast began. I was utterly flabbergasted by the top story of the morning.

"The body of a man was found in the burned shell of the local restaurant Ricardo's Deep Freeze earlier this morning. The victim has been identified as Joe Naae, a manager of the restaurant. Police are still investigating the cause of the fire."

My jaw dropped in disbelief. What in the world had Joe been doing in the building that night? Poor Joe, I thought. He did not deserve to die. He was a good, funny guy. I felt genuine sadness that my actions had led to his death.

As it turns out, Joe had been sleeping in the back office of Ricardo's for weeks. Unable to live with his drunken father due to the rules of his parole, Joe found himself homeless and had turned to Maranda for help. Maranda had been secretly allowing Joe to sleep in the back office of the restaurant until he was able to find a new place to stay. Evidently Joe had been a heavy sleeper because he did not hear any of Dakota and Mario's shenanigans that night, and by the time the smoke and flames woke him up, it was too late to safely escape.

Pure catharsis erupted throughout my being. I felt the utmost joy at achieving my revenge against those who had wronged me, but I felt misery that Joe had to die in the process. I was not going to

allow myself to lament too much in Joe's death, however. A bittersweet victory was still a victory, and I intended on enjoying every ounce of it.

When I arrived at school, I immediately sought out Mario. He appeared to be terribly exhausted as if he had not slept all night. I could not blame him.

"Did you see the news this morning?" I asked him.

His expression became concerned as if he were worried that he or Dakota had been caught. "No, what is it?"

"There was a man sleeping in the building, Mario. He burned alive." Upon learning this news, Mario's mouth extended into the most magnificent and villainous grin I have ever seen.

"That is amazing."

In retrospect, Mario's reaction to this news should not have been surprising. Previously, the two of us had participated in numerous discussions about our fantasies of murdering our vexatious classmates, and I had a deep suspicion that within his mind these fantasies crossed within the realm of desires, but for the boy to be so passionate about having a stranger's blood on his hands was baffling. I had not revealed any information beyond the victim's gender, and yet Mario was enthused that he had participated in this person's death. Celebrating the death of an enemy is completely understandable, but a complete stranger? This reaction only confirmed one thing in my mind—Mario was going to match me step for step in our Triflers meetings to come.

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The police, of course, furthered their investigation into the Ricardo's fire. Forensic scientists were able to determine that the fire had been started deliberately, but luckily no condemning evidence was found at the scene. It turns out the Ricardo family had a profusion of enemies because as far as I am concerned I was never once thoroughly investigated as a suspect.

From what Mario told me, Dakota became physically ill upon learning Joe Naae's fate. His cousin felt utterly disturbed by what he had done, but knew he could not tell his story to anybody for fear of being prosecuted. Until the writing of this letter, I was convinced that this secret would die with Dakota and me. If word about this got out, then poor Dakota would likely be investigated and arrested for his participation in this crime. But I can trust that you will keep the contents of this letter between you and me, right Mother?



Chapter 14

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13 Reasons Die

Part V: 13 Reasons Die

Back during middle school, a very vocal majority of students²⁸ were obsessed with a novel written by Jay Asher titled *Thirteen Reasons Why*.²⁹ In case you're one of the eight people on Earth who hasn't heard of this crock of shit, allow me to summarize it for you. It is the story of a teenage girl named Hannah who committed suicide, and through an elaborate blackmail plan she informs the thirteen people responsible about how their actions led to her decision. After witnessing so many of my peers rant and rave about how amazing this book was³⁰, I decided to check it out for myself.

Here's my review: It's fucking awful. It became very clear to me that Jay Asher has never felt depressed or suicidal a day in his life. All of Hannah's reasons for committing suicide were teeny-bopper retarded nonsense that have nothing to do with actual depression. "Boo hoo, a boy said that I have a nice ass!" "Golly gee, this girl pretended to be my friend so that I would give her a ride to a party." If you think I'm being facetious, then think again, because these are literally some of the reasons brought up in the book.

The book being shitty is to be expected. It was a generic high school drama aimed at kids that did everything in its power to tug on heartstrings. The plot and characters were

²⁸ Mostly girls, but a surprising number of guys too.

²⁹ Stupidly stylized as TH13TEEN R3ASONS WHY. Because a serious drama about teen suicide really needs a silly stylization with numbers replacing letters for no fucking reason.

³⁰ And also seeing them weep during the middle of class because of how supposedly sad the novel was.

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extremely formulaic—there was nothing original or groundbreaking to be observed—the novel existed solely to sell copies.³¹

The thing that pissed me off about *Thirteen Reasons Why* wasn't the novel's shittiness or Jay Asher's lack of content knowledge, it was the response of everybody who read it. I was surrounded by weepy middle school students claiming that *Thirteen Reasons Why* was the saddest thing they'd ever read. Here they were crying over the suicide of a fictional character when an actually depressed and suicidal person—ME—was sitting right there among them. To the novel's credit, one of the big takeaways from the story is that people should keep their eyes open for signs of suicidal behavior so that they can help their peers through troubled times. The most infuriating part of all of this was that my peers had picked up on this message and had begun chanting it around, but none of them were actually following through with it! They were all bark and no bite. They claimed to care about helping their suicidal peers, but not a single person made the effort to do so.

The current slacktivist culture we're living in is one of the main issues I hope to bring to an end with the beta uprising. Slacktivism is when people feel as though they have made a meaningful contribution when in reality they haven't done a damn thing. For example: sharing a hashtag on Twitter in support of ending hunger, liking a page on Facebook in support of curing diseases, claiming to be on the lookout for

³¹ This entire paragraph can also be used to describe the vast majority of novels written in the modern day.

suicidal behaviors while continuing to ostracize suicidal peers—these are all prime examples of slacktivism. These people have essentially done nothing and yet they feel fulfilled as if they've accomplished something tremendous. This is the exact same problem I have with prayer. Telling somebody, "I'll pray for you," is completely fucking retarded. Instead of actually helping them through their time of need, you are instead going to do fucking nothing, but you still get the satisfaction of thinking you helped. Please fucking kill yourselves.

But this section isn't about slacktivism. This, the penultimate chapter of my glorious manifesto, is titled 13 Reasons Die. In the same vein of Jay Asher's shitty novel, I too will create a list of thirteen people. Not of thirteen people responsible for my suicide, but a list of the thirteen people I intend on killing tomorrow during my rampage.

Target #1: My Mother

This should come as a surprise to absolutely nobody who has been paying even the slightest bit of attention. This entire manifesto has been a testament to how much I hate that fucking bitch. My mom is the sole reason for my suffering on this world, and I very much look forward to ending her life. Nearly every single thing wrong with my life is due to her. Her disgusting sluttiness led to my birth, race, and lack of a father figure, her pathetic existence led to our poverty, her terrible mothering led to my weight and inability

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to socialize—the list could go on for centuries, but unfortunately I'm running out of time.

Target #2: Bryce Sheller

Bryce Sheller represents everything I could never be. He's white, he's popular, he's athletic, and according to him (and many others) he's very sexually active. Bryce is the embodiment of the cocky, egotistic, douchebag alpha male, and my murder of him will symbolize my war on alpha males. It was his boasts of sexual activity during middle school gym class that first prompted me to consider suicide, and as revenge I seek to end his life. Bryce has probably spent his entire life looking down on guys like me while smugly thinking that he is superior in every way. I can't wait to see the look on his face when the person he thought so little of is the one ending his putrid existence.

Target #3: Robby Wilkinson

I consider Hannah Wilkinson³² to be the primary reason why I was unable to socialize after moving to Illinois in fourth grade. Hannah's racist comments towards me sparked two things within me: (1) An extreme sense of self-

³² I just realized that Hannah shares her name with the girl from *Thirteen Reasons Why*. I'm glad they're both dead.

consciousness that utterly destroyed any confidence I had and (2) A new sense of self-loathing due to my race. Hannah's cackling laugh after claiming that I was "illegal" still haunts me to this day. If it weren't for her, I could have been somebody. I could have made friends way back in fourth grade and none of the depression or loneliness ever would have occurred for me.

As I reflect on Hannah's untimely death, I feel very bittersweet about the matter. While I am very happy that Hannah died, I now wish I could have been the one who ended her life. This is why I am choosing to target Robby—Hannah's younger brother.

Racism isn't inherent in people—it is something that is learned. And Hannah's racism was taught to her by her parents. They've already lost their first child, and now I want to drastically hurt them again by taking away their second. If it were possible, I would be killing the Wilkinson parents tomorrow rather than Robby, but I don't have that option available to me. I suspect that killing Robby will hurt them far more than bullets ever could though, and I find great solace in this suspicion.

Robby is in middle school, but I know that he is advanced in math and therefore attends the high school first period geometry class and is then bused over to the middle school. This will give me the perfect opportunity to kill him along with the other students on this list.

Target #4: Nina Cook

During middle school, I was acquaintances with Nina Cook. We weren't exactly friends, but we spoke from time to time. Most of our interactions took place during English class. We were in a creative writing unit at the time, and Nina and I enjoyed reading each other's work. We would give each other pointers and compliments about the things we had written, and our relationship actually made me feel as though I had a bit of a purpose. Nina seemed like a shy girl, and she wasn't willing to let anybody read her work other than me, so I felt special as though I was the one person who could help her break out of her shell.

Nina wasn't a very popular girl. She had a small group of female friends, but that was it. As far as I could tell, she didn't speak to any guys other than me. She was very plain Jane and wore thick-rimmed glasses that made her eyes look huge. This isn't to say she was ugly, but guys weren't exactly waiting in line to speak to her.

It was because of this that I made the stupid assumption that Nina and I might have some sort of future together. I seemingly had no competition from other guys, and she appeared willing to open up with me rather than with other people. I felt that these were clear signs that I should pursue a more serious relationship with her.

Valentine's Day rolled around, and I decided to get Nina a gift. I had very little money at the time, so I begged and begged my mom to purchase a gift for me. After persistent

begging, my mom agreed to buy a twenty-dollar necklace on my behalf.

The necklace was a pretty nice one for only being twenty dollars, and it came in one of those fuzzy jewelry boxes. I spent a great deal of time wrapping it up in giftwrap and sticking a bow on it and everything—it looked really great.

Valentine's Day landed on a Sunday that year, so our school officially celebrated it on the Friday before. I was very anxious that day. I'd never given a girl a gift like that before, and I was very worried that she wouldn't like it (or, even worse, that she wouldn't like me).

I mustered up the courage to walk up to her locker and hand her the gift. She looked surprised to see me, and was even more surprised when she unwrapped the box and found the necklace inside. Astonishingly, she claimed to love the gift and thanked me for it.

I went about the next few periods feeling pretty good about myself. I'd given a girl a gift and she'd actually liked it, and now there was a good chance that we were going to take things to the next level and I would have my first ever real life girlfriend. Alas, I'm sitting in my room at 4am writing a manifesto, so you can safely assume this wasn't the outcome.

During English class, Nina surprised me by handing me a paper sack that had been stapled shut. "Don't open this until you get home," she said to me. The bag obviously had something in it, and I assumed it was a gift. Surely Nina wanted to give me a gift in return, and in order to do so in a timely manner had been forced to place it in a brown paper bag. No biggie. After class I put the bag in my locker.

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I spent the next period torturing myself over the contents of the bag. I was so insanely curious about what she had given me, and waiting until I arrived home was going to drive me nuts. My curiosity got the better of me, and I excused myself to the restroom. Instead of going to the restroom, however, I went to my locker and pulled out the paper bag.

I opened it and was shocked to find the necklace I had given her along with a handwritten note. I still have the note to this day, and I will transcribe it below:

Mario,

Thank you so much for getting me this necklace. It's really nice and I like it a lot, but I can't accept it. My parents are very strict about boys. There is no way they would let me date yet, and at this point they don't even like me talking to boys. If I took this necklace home, they would want to know where it came from, and that would only lead to trouble. I'm sorry, but I can't keep this.

Needless to say, I was terribly disappointed by this, but I understood. We were only thirteen years old, it was to be expected that some parents wouldn't let their children date yet. I didn't agree with their mindset, but I wasn't going to try to fight against it either. I just accepted this news and hoped that it wouldn't affect me and Nina's current relationship.

Exactly one week later on February 19th, Nina started dating a boy named Landon Hughes.

Target #5: Landon Hughes

Need I say more?

Target #6, #7, #8, #9: Ashley Morrison, Chelsea Fanning, Julia Rinehart, Lila De Veer

The next four targets get to share a story on my list because they're all guilty of the same crime against me. During the summer between middle school and high school, I was at my lowest low. My every thought was either of self-ridicule or suicide. Day by day I inched closer to the decision to end my life. One day in August, I decided to go for broke. If I was going to kill myself soon anyway, then why not actually try to put myself out there and find companionship? Rejection was surely imminent, but at least the pain of rejection wouldn't have to last long.

I decided I would Facebook message all of the girls on my friend list who were currently single. Surely they all would laugh at my pathetic attempt to communicate with them, but I decided to attempt it regardless on the off chance that one of them was willing to speak to me.

I wanted to give the impression that my message was off-the-cuff and uncalculated so that I would appear as friendly and genuine as possible, so I sent two separate messages back to back. The first: "Hey, how's it going?" Immediately

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followed by: “I’ve been pretty bored all summer. We should hang out sometime.”

As soon as I hit Enter on the second message I came to realize the unfortunate reality of what I’d just done. I hadn’t sent those messages to the fifteen girls separately—I’d created a group chat with all sixteen of us in it. I immediately began to panic.

A few of the girls were online, and my intentions/mistake were painfully obvious to them. Most ignored the message and a few asked if it was a joke, but four of the girls—Ashley Morrison, Chelsea Fanning, Julia Rinehart, and Lila De Veer, used the group message as an opportunity to ridicule me. They posted message after message mocking me, laughing at me for my stupidity, saying things like, “as if he had a chance with any of us, hahaha” and “god what a freak I can’t believe he did this.” I was utterly humiliated beyond belief. Suicide couldn’t come soon enough after that.

That’s why the four of them are on this list—for the way they treated me in that chat. They made my bad situation even worse. They could have just ignored the message like many of the other girls did, but they didn’t. They set out to make me feel as bad as possible. And now they’re going to pay.

Target #10: Principal Norton

My desire to kill Principal Norton tomorrow has less to do with a personal vendetta and more to do with his hypocrisy

in general. Norton is known for having two major mottos that he expects all students to abide by. (1) If you try, you will not fail. (2) School is a safe place where everyone should feel as though they belong. It is this second motto that angers me. Once again, we are faced with slacktivism.

Principal Norton talks the talk in regards to making all students feel as though they belong, but then he doesn't do a single fucking thing to implement it. If he truly believed in what he proclaimed, then how could a student like me exist in his school? How could there be a student who feels ostracized and isolated and depressed in a school that he claims is welcoming to everybody? Norton makes these grand statements about belonging that shroud the student population with a security blanket so that they feel as though no issues of ostracism exist. Because Norton claims that everybody belongs, everybody assumes that this is the case, and nobody makes an effort to fix the problem. This is great for normies—they get to feel as though they belong *and* don't have to feel sorry for the students who don't. The people left behind, the people like me, are the victims of Norton's bullshit ideologies. Such a man is not fit to run an entire school, and the only way I can get him replaced is by ending his life.

Target #11: Mr. Kirby

Mr. Kirby is the teacher I had for sociology during the first semester of the current school year, and I intend on killing

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him because of an incident that happened at the beginning of the year.

About two weeks into the semester, Mr. Kirby announced he would be hosting a student teacher in his classroom. She would monitor him teaching for the first month and would then take over as teacher for the rest of the semester. I've always thought of the concept of student teaching as completely retarded. Yes, I agree that teachers need to have practice before getting their license or whatever, but to practice on real students like guinea pigs? As high school students, our education is completely dependent on the knowledge of our teacher, and they're putting us in the incapable hands of a 22-year-old college student who probably spends her weekends riding the cock carousel? It's fucking stupid and ridiculous. But, as Dawn would say, I digress.

We were then introduced to the student teacher—a woman named Ms. Lloyd. During her introduction she felt inclined to share only two pieces of information about herself. (1) She is a history major. (2) She loves cats and has four of them at home. I immediately could tell that I was going to hate this person.

On the contrary, as that first month went on I grew to like Ms. Lloyd. Since she was only monitoring, she hardly ever interacted with the class, but when she did she seemed to have some special fascination with me.³³ Before class started each day, she would strike up conversations with me. Just simple stuff like how my day was going and what

³³ Maybe she thought I was a cat.

movies I liked. I started to think that the two of us had formed a little bond for whatever reason, and I was now excited for her to be our teacher for the semester. For whatever reason, she liked me, and that would make my time in her class much easier.

The first day she led class was fine. She was obviously nervous and was a little unclear about a few key concepts, but all in all she was just fine. It was on her second day teaching when problems arose. I assumed that because we had our little connection going on that it would be funny and playful if I made a little joke at her expense. At the beginning of class when she stood up to start teaching, I loudly muttered, "Oh God, not her again! She's terrible at teaching!" Again, and I can't stress this enough, I thought for sure she would know I was being sarcastic and would laugh at this joke. She did not. She instead began to cry and excused herself from the room. I was then met with angry, confused stares from all of my classmates. Mr. Kirby ordered me into the hallway and quickly followed me out.

"What the hell is the matter with you, Mario?" he asked. Usually Mr. Kirby was a chill guy, but he was visibly pissed.

"It was just a joke," I tried to explain. "I thought she would know that it was just a joke."

"That's what you consider to be a joke, huh?" Mr. Kirby asked me. "You and those hilarious jokes of yours must make you the life of the party. Ha, ha, ha. Where did you learn to be so funny, Mario?"

His harshness hurt. I wanted nothing more than to take back the last two minutes of my life. But I couldn't. The damage had already been done.

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“I’m sorry, Mr. Kirby.”

“Don’t apologize to me,” he said. “You’re going to apologize to Ms. Lloyd. I want you to write her a full apology. Grab your stuff and go to the office for the rest of the period.”

I obliged, feeling as terrible about myself as ever. I never spoke to, or even shared eye contact with, Ms. Lloyd ever again.

In retrospect, I no longer feel bad about my actions on that day. I was in the right, and everybody else was in the wrong. All I had done was try to make a joke at the expense of somebody who I assumed, based on our prior relationship, would think I was being funny. Instead everybody else’s emotions got the best of them, and they completely overreacted to my innocent attempt at comedy. I would kill Ms. Lloyd if given the chance, but since she’s gone now I’ll have to settle for Mr. Kirby.

Target #12: Dawn Bracken

Unlike my previous targets, my desire to kill Dawn doesn’t emerge from hatred or vengeance. It stems from love—the purest kind of love there is.

Together Dawn and I will change the world forever. Side by side, we will murder the people on this list as well as anybody who attempts to get in our way. The two of us (as well as this manifesto) will spark the beta uprising that will take the world by storm and force all normies to treat people like us with love and respect! Obviously the police will arrive

to the school to try and apprehend us, and it is absolutely paramount that neither Dawn nor I are captured by police. As of March 9, 2011, the death penalty is illegal in the state of Illinois which means if arrested, the two of us would be facing a lifetime in the harshest prison available. I will not allow myself nor Dawn to be forced into such a fate. This is why I will kill Dawn tomorrow moments before killing myself. Once I feel as though we have gone as far into our rampage as we can possibly go, I will tell her goodbye before ending both of our lives.

Dawn is too good for this world anyway.

Target #13: Me

After saving Dawn from the police, I will stick my gun in my mouth and fulfill my lifelong goal of committing suicide. For years I've wanted to end my life, and I can't fathom going out any other way. I will die a glorious death. I will achieve the ultimate vengeance against those who have wronged me throughout my miserable, cursed existence standing side by side with my best friend, and I will then end my own life to prevent the world's normies from celebrating my trial conviction. My entire life will have led to this moment, and I know the taste of victory will be sweet as I say goodbye to this twisted world. It's insane to think that in five hours I will be dead.

These thirteen targets aren't the only people I wish I could kill tomorrow. There is a plethora of people I could

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name who deserve death. I already stated my desire to kill the Wilkinsons and Ms. Lloyd, but that's only scratching the surface. I'd also love to murder Aubrey and Marissa and my long lost father and that bitch who told the bus driver about my GameBoy and the bus driver and so many people, but alas I cannot. The only reason I'll be able to kill all of my intended targets is because they'll all be at the same place at the same time. It would be nice to end the lives of everybody who has ever wronged me, but I'm just not capable of being a serial killer. I would be caught long before I executed even a fourth of my targets. What's nice about a school shooting is that you know all of your intended targets are within the same building—it makes killing everyone super convenient.

With that, I think I've come to the end of my 13 Reasons Die. I'm really going to have to start picking up the pace if I want to finish my final section in time. For those of you playing along at home, look up the names of all the victims in my shooting and compare them to this list here. Obviously I'm hoping for 100% accuracy with numerous extra fatalities in between just from people running around or trying to apprehend me, but problems may arise.

Jay Asher, you're a talentless hack. Go fuck yourself and die you piece of shit.

Chapter 15

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The Bracken Experiments

I had now succeeded in both of my hospital bed goals. Mason Elliot was out of the picture, and vengeance had been dealt against the Ricardos. With Mason out of my way and my mind clear of vengeful intentions, I could now focus solely on fulfilling my purpose in life: Human experimentation.

I already knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Mario would welcome the Triflers' new objective with open arms. Truman, too, would not put up a fight. I had never spoken privately to Chao's uncle about the possibility of performing our own experiments, but given his enthusiasm when showing us videos as well as the excitement in his voice when detailing a war story wherein he shot a man to death, I was confident that he would be a more than willing participant. Chao never seemed to have any objections to anything, so he was not a concern either. The only person who I feared would attempt to throw a monkey wrench into my plans was *Donovan*. But with Mason no longer there to protect her or steer our group down the path of morality, I had a feeling the use of fear and/or intimidation tactics would be best utilized.

You are probably wondering why I did not simply remove *Dorianne* from the group altogether rather than risking that she would somehow interfere with my experimental endeavors. The answer should be clear, but I will explain it nevertheless. A leader's power is representative of the number of people he or she is in control of. As the newfound undisputed leader of the Triflers, I now had control over five subjects. To expel *Dorianne* would be synonymous to reducing my power by twenty percent, and I was completely unwilling to do so. I want my power to be ever expanding, not shrinking. Mason's expulsion was because I could not control him. *Dorianne*'s continued existence in the Triflers would be because I was confident that I could control her.

Letter to Mother

On a Saturday in mid-January, I visited the Chao household in order to converse alone with Chao's uncle. Chao was in his room with the door shut, and Chao's mother was assumedly at work or the Asian marketplace, so there were no human barriers in my way as I approached Chao's uncle's bedroom. I knew the location of his bedroom, but until then I had never seen inside it. The vast majority of my time spent with Chao's uncle had been in the basement. His door was ajar, and I tapped on it to get his attention.

The thirty-year-old man was sitting upon his bed with his laptop rested on his legs. He looked up from the screen when he heard me. "Oh hey, Dawn. What are you doing here?"

"I was hoping to have a chat with you," I told him.

He appeared slightly confused, but not enough to do or say anything about it. "Alright," he replied, closing his laptop. "What's on your mind?"

I entered and approached the velvet reclining chair sitting in a corner of the room. Its seat was cushy, but the fabric was peeling off in various places as if it were one of those butterfly children. I had a hunch that at one point in its life the chair had been sold at a garage sale.

The room looked more like a college dorm room than the bedroom of an adult military veteran. One wall featured two movie posters: *Pulp Fiction* and *Fight Club* (these being the most stereotypical, edgy teenager movie posters of all time), and another, oddly enough, was covered in three flags: China's, Afghanistan's, and the United States' in descending order. Atop his dressers sat a microwave (although there was one in the kitchen not even fifteen feet away from his room) and scattered about the floor were empty ramen noodle packages of various flavors.

Sitting in the chair, I gave Chao's uncle hawk-like eye contact as if I were conducting the most important business interview of my life. I needed the man to take me as seriously as possible if I wanted his full and unquestioning cooperation.

"Tao, when you joined the Triflers those many months ago, you changed the group forever. Thanks to you we were able to evolve from viewing fictional horror films to real acts of horror and carnage. These past few weeks we have indulged ourselves in watching The Delconte Experiments, and they have inspired me. You and I are very alike, Tao, and I have a feeling they have inspired you too. I am wondering if you would like to help our group evolve once more."

"What do you mean by that, Dawn?"

"I believe it is high time we performed our own experiments."

He stared methodically at me with a finger pressed against his lips, suggesting he was deep in thought. A smile emerged. "High time indeed."

We spent the next several hours outlining every detail imaginable. Chao's uncle and I truly were alike. We both intended to meticulously iron out every single wrinkle fathomable in order to get the results we desired without facing any repercussions. There were so many particulars to consider: Who would be the victims? Where would they come from? Where would we perform the experiments? In the basement? What would we do with them after we finished? Set them free? Kill them? How would we dispose of their bodies? The majority of our Saturday was spent discussing these questions while feasting upon criminally cheap ramen.

This is what we came up with. As a taxi driver at the O'Hare International Airport, Chao's uncle often picked up foreigners

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travelling alone. These people were typically from Europe, Asia, or South America, were visiting family in the Chicago area, had no cellphone reception, and spoke very little (if any) English. If Chao's uncle felt as though one of his passengers would make for a good specimen, he would pull his vehicle over in an isolated location and incapacitate them (likely with a chemical like chloroform). Their family, of course, would soon become aware that their foreign loved one was missing, but they would have very few details as to where the person had disappeared during their five-thousand-mile journey around the globe. Even if the victim contacted his family upon landing safely in Chicago, they would have no way of knowing how and where he disappeared to after leaving the airport. We thought this to be a brilliant method of acquiring test subjects.

As for a location, the Chao basement seemed sufficient. There were only two tiny windows down there, and they could be easily covered. The only viable exit was the door to the stairs, and that could easily be shut and locked. A large tarp would be purchased and laid out on the floor to prevent any spilled blood from staining the carpet. The cabinet beneath the sink in the bathroom could be used for storing any and all torture supplies that we could think to use. From there it would be treated just like any other Triflers meeting. The teenage members would sit upon the faux-leather couch while watching as Chao's uncle provided us with excruciating entertainment. Only now we would not be watching it on a screen.

Chao's uncle would purchase a small firearm as both a safety precaution and a method of execution. Unfortunately for our test subjects, they would never be leaving our torture chamber alive. Considering that the victims would be seeing all of our faces, it was obvious that allowing them to leave after we had finished

toying with them would be a poor choice. Chao's uncle would instead send a bullet through their brains and then dump their bodies in a ditch two hundred miles from here. This all may sound cruel, Mother, but in my mind these actions are justified for the sake of my research.

Chao's mother, as usual, would be none the wiser as to our activities. Whether she was genuinely or knowingly ignorant to the goings-on of our Triflers meetings, I am unsure, but Chao's uncle assured me that she would not be asking any questions. "My sister is like a robot," he told me. "Living in China for most of her life brainwashed her. She's so absorbed in those customs that she can't think for herself. In her mind men rule and women are only meant for cooking and cleaning. If I tell her not to worry about what we're up to, then she won't. It will be out of her mind forever."

With the circumstantial details established, we could now plan our experiments. After months of watching Chao's uncle's videos, I had dozens of ideas in mind. We decided to fill the bathroom cabinet with as many objects as possible so that we would have numerous options at our disposal. Hammers, nails, bottles, cheese-graters, carpet knives, peanuts (in case we found a specimen to be allergic), needles, pliers, the list went on and on. If it were of reasonable size and could be found in a hardware store, we likely had it available in the cabinet.

Our planning complete, we were then faced with the matters of collecting the supplies, informing our fellow Triflers about our potential future meetings, and waiting for Chao's uncle to have a golden opportunity fall into his lap.

That Wednesday during the Triflers meeting, I stood before my disciples with the hope of inspiring them. I addressed them:

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“Good afternoon, Triflers. I hate to impede our typical trifling process by leading the meeting with another lengthy sermon, but there have been some updates that need to be disclosed. Over the course of our time watching videos in this basement, I have often expressed my interest in conducting experiments of my own. Each and every time I announced this fascination, my thoughts were stifled by the condemning voice of Mason Elliot. Given Mason’s recent departure from the group, I no longer feel fearful about speaking my mind. I spoke with Tao in private about my ambitions and found that he shares them. Given the nature of our time spent during these meetings, I suspect that the majority, if not all of you, share these ambitions as well. Tao and I worked scrupulously to spell out each and every detail of our proposed actions, and we have arrived to a foolproof conclusion. What I am trying to get at is this: In the very near future, if given the right opportunity, we are going to perform experiments akin to the videos we have viewed on a live human test subject.”

I scanned their faces for approval. Mario’s face had lit up like Christmas lights on the home of a man attempting to compensate for his terse genitals. “Oh fuck yeah!” he exclaimed, raising a fist of passion into the air. “It’s about damn time we started having some real fun down here!”

Chao, oddly, just looked bored.

Truman and *Dorianne*, on the other hand, appeared apprehensive. “You’ve got to be kidding,” she stated. “We can’t do that kind of shit. Watching it is one thing, but doing it is just pure evil!”

“Language, *Dorianne*. How many times must I remind you to watch your language?” I asked. “As for the moral implications of our future actions, I am afraid you are mistaken if not just confused. The Triflers, as an organization, has always been

focused on seeking the truths of human nature. Our fascination for human suffering comes from a desire to comprehend why and how humans behave in the ways that they do. We wish to understand the pain spectrum and how its different levels affect a human being. We seek to uncover the ultimate limitations of the human mind, body, and spirit. This is the purpose of the Triflers. You speak of morality as if it is the objective truth of all things, but this mindset is erroneous. The moral thing to do is fulfill one's purpose. If the purpose of the Triflers is to uncover the unknown truths of humanity, then the moral thing for us to do is exactly that. Henceforth, the only true immoral actions we as a group could perform would be anything other than seeking out the truths we desire."

Mario nodded his head like a sassy black woman in church would during a rousing sermon.

"Don't give me that shit about some twisted sense of morality," *Donovan* stated. "Just a few weeks ago you were telling us about how immoral and evil Mason's actions against his sister were. How the hell can you justify torture as being morally right while condemning rape at the same time? You don't actually give a damn about what's morally right or wrong. You just want to do whatever your psychotic thoughts tell you to do, and you're manipulating us with these bullshit speeches into thinking this nonsense is the right thing to do."

"Are you finished?" I asked. "Clearly you have not been paying attention to anything I have been saying because your claims are contradictory to the exact things I just stated. Once again you are operating under the pretense that morality is universally objective. This is a ridiculous notion, and I will try my best to dumb it down so that even somebody only half paying attention can understand it."

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“Would you say that stealing is immoral? Yes, of course you would. And because you believe that morality is objective, you would likely claim that stealing is immoral no matter what. You refuse to consider subjective circumstances. For example: If a man’s children are going to starve to death and he cannot afford to purchase food for them, would it be immoral for him to steal a loaf of bread in order to feed them? Clearly not. But if we behaved beneath your universal sense of morality, then those children are going to starve to death.

“The same circumstance can be said of the Triflers. Is it immoral for the average person to torture another for the sake of personal pleasure? Arguably yes. But is it immoral for a group established for the sole purpose of studying human limitations to torture people for the sake of scientific research? Absolutely not. I am not twisting or manipulating my words—I am expressing statements supported by logic rather than by emotion. I understand that using logic in favor of emotions when generating thoughts might seem like an alien concept for you, but rest assured that the rest of the people in the room are more than capable of doing your thinking for you.”

Mind you, *Donovan* was absolutely correct in everything she was saying. My intended actions were completely immoral and fueled only by my personal passions. I was absolutely attempting to twist my words in an attempt to manipulate both her and the rest of the Triflers into believing that our actions were not wrong. I could not care less about perceptions of morality on any level—both subjective and objective. But I certainly was not going to express any of this to her.

“Oh fuck you, Dawn,” *Dorianne* said. “And fuck all of you if you’re actually buying this shit. If you people actually go through with what you’re planning, then you’re monsters. You’ll be far

worse than Mason. And I'll see to it that every single one of you is caught and arrested. I seriously can't believe that any of you are actually considering what she's saying. She's a fucking sociopath. I'm leaving."

"YOU WILL DO NO SUCH THING!" I bellowed, raising my voice for the first time in Triflers history. "YOU WILL REMAIN IN YOUR SEAT. YOU WILL CONTINUE COMING TO EACH AND EVERY TRIFLERS MEETING. YOU WILL NOT SPEAK A WORD OF OUR ACTIVITIES TO A SINGLE PERSON. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"

The look of terror in his eyes revealed that she did understand, and from that point on I knew that his fear would be enough to keep him under my control.

With all of the Triflers now on board and Chao's uncle purchasing the necessary supplies during his free time, it was only a matter of waiting.

Our long wait ended approximately two months later on March 13th. As we entered the front door of Chao's domicile, we were greeted by a smiling uncle. "Boys and girls, I've got a surprise for you downstairs."

Mario and I shared an excited look. We knew exactly what was in store for us.

"I have surprise too," Miss Feng gleefully stated as she entered the room with a tray full of crappie chunks. "I make snacks for you. School food is bad. You must be hungry."

We had been doing this for years and yet Miss Feng still felt the need to come up with an excuse for providing us with food. We

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thanked her, each taking a helping of the fried fish, and then eagerly marched down the stairs.

I opened the basement door, turned the corner, and found what I had been waiting for my entire life. The blue tarp had been laid out across the majority of the floor. Directly in the middle of it, tied to a wooden desk chair and blindfolded, was a medium-sized white man.

“He’s Hungarian,” Chao’s uncle informed us as he closed the door behind him. “Speaks practically no English. He wanted me to take him to the bus station of all places. Wherever he was going, he’s not gonna make it.”

Only Chao’s uncle, Mario, and I expressed any sort of enthusiasm about the afternoon’s upcoming events. Chao appeared curious. Truman hesitant. I could tell that *Donovan* wished to say something, but she restrained herself and instead took her seat on the couch.

“What are we going to do with him?” Mario asked.

“Yes, Dawn, what shall we do?” Chao’s uncle asked. “This was your idea after all. I see it only fit that you direct us on our first go around.”

I had been daydreaming of torture methods for years, but now that I had a living, breathing human being to experiment with, my mind was drawing a bizarre blank. It is like when a person spends hours practicing a speech and then freezes up when taking the podium. Luckily this brain freeze did not last long, and my imagination soon began to run wild.

“Is he awake?” I asked.

“He can be,” Chao’s uncle answered.

“Hmm,” I pondered. “I am curious to see how much self-inflicted pain he is willing to put himself through before submitting to death. Does that sound like a good place to start?”

“I like it,” Mario stated. “We’ll be able to witness the exact moment he decides death is the only answer.”

“I’ll fire up the translator,” Chao’s uncle said.

We were going to utilize the use of Google Translate in order to communicate with our non-English speaking test subjects. Chao’s uncle would type our commands into the translator and then give his best attempt to read the results aloud to the subject. Google Translate is not always the best method of translating speech, and Chao’s uncle’s reading of foreign words would likely be elementary at best, but we hoped the basis of our messages would get through to them.

As Chao’s uncle opened his laptop, the remaining standing Triflers and I took our typical seats on the couch. Google Translate now up and running, Chao’s uncle approached the Hungarian man and removed his blindfold. “Kelj fel!” Chao’s uncle ordered, slapping the unconscious man across the face. “Wake up!”

The man blinked his eyes open. He was obviously still very much under the influence of the sedative drugs that Chao’s uncle had forced into his system, but the look of terror on his face suggested that he was at least partially aware of his surroundings. What he saw upon waking would surely be enough to frighten any man: He was tied to a chair, in front of him stood an Asian man who was pointing a gun at him, and on the couch against a wall sat four teenagers staring wildly at him. Surely he recognized Chao’s uncle as the taxi driver who had picked him up from the airport. As for the rest of us, his immediate inkling was likely that we were hostages as well.

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The Hungarian shouted something assuredly obscene at Chao's uncle and then turned his attention on those of us sitting on the couch. He spoke to us as well—his tone implying that a question was being asked—but obviously nobody in the room had any idea what he was saying. He turned back to Chao's uncle and started screaming again, but was quick to quiet down after Chao's uncle slapped him across the face with his pistol.

"Well, Dawn?" Chao's uncle asked. "You're up."

"I believe the wisest course of action would be to start small and gradually work our way up. If each command is worse than the last, then we will be able to scientifically determine which intensity of self-mutilation seemed worse than choosing death. You should, of course, inform him that upon refusing to perform any ordered action he will be shot."

Chao's uncle translated what he wanted to say and then shouted, "Tedd, amit megrendelt, vagy mást fognak ölni!"

The Hungarian's face grew utterly confused, and he muttered a single English word. "What?"

Whether Google Translate had failed, Chao's uncle's pronunciation had been unintelligible, or a likely combination of the two had occurred, we were not sure. But clearly the Hungarian had not received the message. Chao's uncle then communicated in a universal language—he pointed the gun directly in the Hungarian's face while staring menacingly into his eyes. The Hungarian gulped as if he retroactively understood.

"*Dorianne*, please retrieve the carpet knife from the toolbox beneath the sink in the bathroom," I ordered.

The toolbox was actually a cardboard box filled to the brim with our numerous items, but we called it the toolbox because that sounded cooler.

Donovan did not move. She was obviously going to be stubborn. Knowing that fear was a powerful motivator for her, I deepened my voice and stated, “Now, *Dorianne*. I will not ask again.”

Reluctantly, *Dorianne* stood from his seat on the couch and walked across the room to the bathroom. As she did this, the Hungarian watched her with fear in his eyes. He was not fearful of her—he was fearful *for* her. He clearly still believed that we were all the Asian man’s hostages and that by standing and walking across the room *Donovan* would be violating a previous order. It was not until the Hungarian witnessed *Dorianne* emerge from the bathroom with a knife in hand that the Hungarian began to understand that we were all his captors.

Emotionlessly, *Donovan* handed the knife to Chao’s uncle. Now would be when things got tricky. In order for the Hungarian to perform harmful acts upon himself, he would need to be unrestricted. Additionally, not only would we be untying him from the chair, but we would also be handing him a weapon—the knife. In order to prevent anything from going wrong, Chao’s uncle would need his full attention on two things: His gun and his captive. Because of this, the laptop was handed off to Truman who would thereafter be responsible for translating orders. I would have volunteered to operate Google Translate myself if not for the pen and paper in my hands. I was going to take thorough notes.

We decided to shorten the orders from full sentences to caveman-esque syntax in order to best prevent future translation mishaps from occurring. As Mario untied the Hungarian (and Chao’s uncle

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kept his gun trained directly at the man's head), Truman began to translate the newest message. Cut arm.

"Vág kar," Truman read as Chao's uncle handed the knife over to the perplexed Hungarian man. He looked at us dumbfounded as if we were kidding. We were not.

"VÁG KAR!" Chao's uncle shouted. This seemed to seal the deal. The Hungarian's unfortunate reality finally seeped in through the hazy cracks. He had to either follow orders or die.

Hand trembling, the Hungarian lowered the blade to his left forearm. He grit his teeth and gave Chao's uncle a death stare as he sliced through his flesh. Blood began to emerge.

"Too easy," Mario stated. "Let's up the ante a bit."

"The floor is yours," I offered. "Keep it reasonable, though. This is only demand number two."

"Here's one for yah," Mario said to the Hungarian although he was really addressing Truman. "Cut off your ear."

Ten seconds later Truman read aloud, "Vágja le a fülét."

The Hungarian began to shake his head. "No! No, no, no, no."

With the firearm still aimed at the man's head, Chao's uncle smiled and gently said, "Yes."

Still the man refused to comply. He continued shaking his head from side to side while repeating his new favorite word: No. I was marveled by how well the man could make a single syllable sound like a desperate plea for mercy. Tears began to form in his eyes.

"I don't think he's going to do it, Dawn," Chao's uncle informed.

“This is unfortunate,” I said. “We have hardly even begun. After waiting for so long, it would be irresponsible to dispose of him after just one cut of the arm.” At this point I only had a paragraph of notes. Was his ear really more important than his life? This man was pathetic.

“Convince him,” Mario suggested. “Let’s let him know we mean business. Shoot him in the shoulder.”

Chao’s uncle looked to me for confirmation. I merely shrugged in compliance. He then stepped towards the man, trained the barrel of his weapon on his left shoulder, and fired. The sound of the gun discharging in the basement was almost deafening. It was certainly louder than I had expected, and much louder than television and movies made it seem to be. He must have thought he was in a decibel contest with the gun because the Hungarian’s shouts of pain nearly matched the weapon’s thunderous boom. There was now no question as to what was happening in the basement. Chao’s mother had to have heard everything.

“Vágja le a fülét,” Chao’s uncle ordered.

Having dropped the knife upon being shot, the Hungarian slowly leaned down to retrieve it. Chao and his uncle must have been very thankful for the tarp at that moment because blood was pouring from the man’s shoulder onto the floor. The knife in hand, our subject lifted it to his right ear. Upon the knife’s contact with his flesh, the man began to wince as if even the thought of his forced action was enough to cause him pain. We watched, utterly fascinated, as our puppet grunted and cried his way through detaching his auditory organ from the side of his face. The task completed, the Hungarian surprised us by exclaiming some sort of defiant battle cry and throwing the ear across the room.

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“I call it!” Mario declared as he scampered from the couch to the detached sound funnel. Having claimed his trophy, Mario gleefully returned to his seat.

“Well it looks as though our time with this specimen has been severely shortened,” I observed. “Without proper medical attention, I suspect he will lose consciousness now that he has three bleeding wounds.”

“Well then we’d better stop with the appetizers and move on to the main course,” Chao’s uncle said. “Did you have any big tests in mind?”

“Actually yes,” I stated. “Surely the lot of you remember a video we viewed a few months ago titled One Man One Jar?”

Donovan gasped in recollection. *Truman* whispered, “Oh fuck.” Chao’s uncle donned a smarmy grin, and Mario began laughing somewhat manically.

One Man One Jar is a two minute and thirty seconds long video wherein a naked man squats down upon a small jar. Shockingly, the entirety of the jar squeezes into the man’s rectum only to shatter into pieces from the pressure of his anus. This composes the first thirty seconds of the video. The final two minutes shows the titular Man removing bloody shards of broken glass from his bottom.

I am a fan of the original video, but I feel as though it could have been much better. For starters, I was curious as to what would happen if the jar had something inside it—a miniature cactus for example. What, then, would happen when the glass shattered within the man’s body? The answer to that question is obvious, but I was more interested in how the man would react to and deal with the pain. Bloody shards of glass are easily retrievable, but a

cactus? Unfortunately, we had no such cactus. It was time to improvise.

“Mario, join me in the bathroom. Let us see what we can find to fill the jar with.”

“Oh God, I’m so excited that I’m shaking!” Mario announced. He really was.

After minutes of deliberation, it was decided that our mason jar would be filled with remnants of barbed wire and several tablespoons of salt. We did not want to fill the jar too completely for fear that it would become sturdy enough to not crack under pressure. If all went according to plan, the Hungarian would soon have, as Mario put it, “an ass full of broken glass, barbed wire, and plenty of salt to clog up the wounds.” Nearly three weeks have passed since this day, and I still struggle to imagine a worse pain.

The jar prepared, we decided that the use of a visual aid would be far superior to attempting to explain what we wanted the Hungarian to do. We handed him the jar, opened the One Man One Jar video, and held the laptop a few feet from him so that he could see the screen. The remaining color in the Hungarian’s face drained away as he watched the naked man make the jar disappear. His entire body began to tremble and his already sporadic breathing grew more intense. I figured this would be a breaking point, and I was correct.

In a flash, the Hungarian threw the jar at Chao’s uncle’s face and followed up with a mad dash towards him with the knife. Chao’s uncle was quick to deflect the jar with his free hand, but not quick enough to dodge the blade. The carpet knife slashed through his upright hand. As the Hungarian crazily continued slashing at Chao’s uncle in a frenzied onslaught, our Asian protector began to wildly fire his weapon in an attempt to slay his captive. Mario,

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sitting beside me, dove across my body—both suffocating me with his tremendous girth and protecting me from the action. Chao jumped up to tackle the Hungarian from the side, but before he reached him it was too late. The fight was over. With two shots through his chest and one through his neck, our first ever test subject collapsed to the floor in a dead, bloody heap.

The pandemonium ended, everybody remained silent as they caught their breath. Mario rolled off of me and I witnessed the bloody spectacle with my own eyes. Chao's uncle was cut several times on his hand and arm, but otherwise he appeared to be alright.

Panting heavily, his veins surely pumping with adrenaline, Chao's uncle looked to me with sorrowful eyes. "I'm so sorry, Dawn. I panicked."

Still recovering from shock and momentary suffocation, I said nothing. My chubby savior spoke instead.

"Wow, Tao," Mario said, holding the ear in the air. "That was really EAR-responsible of you."

Dead silence. Then, despite my attempts to stifle it, laughter burst from my mouth like lava erupting from a volcano. I was laughing hysterically, harder than I ever have before in my life. It was Mario's perfect comedic timing and the awful, unforgiveable pun juxtaposed with a moment of frightful chaos and a man being shot to death that made it impossible for me to hold in my bellowing laugh. I knew in that moment as I laughed like a lunatic in a basement full of silent people that I had reached the high point of my life. I had finally achieved my wildest dreams. I had disposed of Mason, enacted vengeance against the Ricardos, and now I was performing real human experimentation. All of my life's dreams were coming true. In that exact moment, the highest moment of my life, I could only foresee continued success, a continued climb

Dawn Bracken

towards glory. Unfortunately, in a matter of weeks my world came crashing down to its lowest low. This decline began less than two weeks later on March 25th—a day Mario dubbed his Bloody Monday.



Chapter 16

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Bloody Monday

Part VI: Bloody Sunday

Wow. It's hard to believe, but we've finally come to the end of my glorious story, my suicide note, my warning to the world, my words of inspiration for my fellow men, my manifesto. I really should have worked on writing this over the course of a week rather than just in one night because I feel deathly tired after doing so much writing all at once. It really drains you. So please bear with me if my writing gets particularly sloppy in this part—my head is really spinning right now. I have a Red Bull to drink, but I promised myself I wouldn't drink it until sunrise. From then on I'll need all the energy I can get.

My intention with this final section is to detail my exact plans for today's massacre. I'm going to cover the plan's inception, my preparation, murdering my mother, my battle plan for the school shooting, and how I expect the world to change in the days, months, and years to come.

Back before my plan of martyrdom became concrete, it existed only as a daydream. During class on days when I was feeling particularly lonely I would imagine killing everybody in the room. The events played out in my head like scenes from an action movie. I would be diving around in slow motion, dual-wielding pistols and blowing the heads off of each and every filthy normie around me.

The action movie concept entertained me, and I began to come up with movie titles and taglines for the films about my murder spree. Of the ones I came up with, my favorite was *Bloody Monday*. The movie poster would show me standing

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in the school hallway holding a gun with pools of blood all around me and dead students littered all about. The tagline on the poster would read: “Just when you thought Mondays couldn’t get any worse.”³⁴ This, ultimately, is where the name came from. Back in the 1960’s the blacks had their Bloody Sunday, and now in 2013 the normies will suffer through my Bloody Monday.

What motivated me to turn my daydreams into a reality were two separate events that have happened recently in my life. My main concern with shooting up the school was that when the time came I would be too scared to go through with killing somebody. However, I was recently involved in the deaths of two individuals. I won’t go into further detail in order to protect those who were involved, but I will say that upon their deaths I didn’t feel sick or saddened—I felt enlightened. This feeling proved to me that killing was in my very nature and that performing my Bloody Monday would be an achievable and fulfilling goal.

I decided to write a list of my specific targets—people who I felt needed to be removed from the face of the planet for one reason or another. This list is generally the same as the one I provided in my 13 Reasons Die.

With targets in place, I now needed to acquire some weapons. An older friend of mine had recently purchased a gun, and I would have asked him for assistance if not for the other opportunity that had presented itself before me. Over

³⁴ It excites me to think that a couple decades down the line after I have changed the world for the better this movie could become a reality in the form of an Oscar-bait biopic about the life of an underdog hero who fought against the system.

winter break my cousin Dakota visited home from college and the two of us spent an evening out in the boonies doing some target practice with his father's guns. My uncle has a whole assortment of guns locked in the safe of his basement, and thanks to Dakota I was able to learn the combination. I didn't want to risk Uncle Mark discovering that his guns were missing, so I waited until yesterday to take them. After making sure nobody was home, I used the spare key they keep hidden in the grill to enter the house. The entire heist was truly akin to taking candy from a baby. I obtained two Glock 26's (one for both Dawn and myself), a Kahr PM9, a shit ton of ammunition, and an eleven-inch-long hunting knife. Each gun can only hold 7 to 11 bullets each, and we likely won't have tons of time for reloading, so the knife will come in handy as a last resort. My main concern will be keeping at least one bullet in each gun at all times so that I can swiftly kill Dawn and myself when need be.

Additionally, in the past few days I got my hands on a real grenade. To protect the safety of the provider, I shall not detail where I obtained this spectacular weapon from. I very much look forward to tossing it into a crowd of students and watching them explode into pieces.

With those preparations in place, I felt ready for war. However, about seven hours ago I had the idea to write a manifesto detailing my story, philosophies, intentions, etc. Even though it was last minute and would prevent me from getting any sleep, I chose to write the document, and here we are now.

At sunrise I will chug the final energy drink of my life and then wait for my mother to awaken. Ending her existence will

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be the greatest moment of my entire life. As much as I would love to have spent the entire day torturing the wretched bitch in the most brutal ways possible, I unfortunately have to be at the high school by first period in order for the rest of my plan to play out correctly. Thus, a few stabs to the chest will have to do.

My grandma, on the other hand, will be allowed to live.³⁵ Throughout my time living in her home, she has been nothing but kind to me. She has helped me whenever I asked her for help, and she often attempted to boost my self-esteem with those bullshit grandma lines. I saw right through her lies, but I still appreciated the effort. My hope is to barricade her within her bedroom so that she is unable to call for help when she hears my mother screaming for her life. My grandma has no cellphone nor a phone in her room, so she shouldn't be able to contact anybody for help until long after I've reached the school. Hopefully Grandma isn't heard of until the police come knocking and find her in her room.

Once my mother is disposed of and Grandma is somehow incapacitated, I will get dressed and ready for the day. With my gear fully prepared, I will head out towards the school. I won't be showing up for first period because I intend to start my shooting midway through it. Therefore, I will chill in the parking lot for the first twenty minutes. Immediately beforehand I will pop into the library across the street from the school so that I can email this document to the world. I plan on sending this manifesto to as many news

³⁵ Unless something goes terribly wrong and I have to take her out.

stations as possible. Surely at least one will post the full thing online out of greed for page clicks.

With my document sent, I will scurry over to the school parking lot. One way or another I'll trick Dawn into meeting me outside. I will then tell her what's going on and then hopefully she and I will carry out the rest of my plan.

You're probably thinking: "Mario, why the fuck haven't you told Dawn about what's going on? Isn't that fucking nuts?" Well there is a very good reason why I didn't, and I will explain it now.

Dawn Bracken is without a doubt the most meticulous, analytical person I've ever met. Like take Socrates and multiply by five. I firmly believe that there isn't a problem on Earth Dawn couldn't think her way out of if given enough time. This is precisely why I don't want to give her any time at all. If given the opportunity to thoroughly consider participating in my Bloody Monday, I know that Dawn will choose not to join me. If I present the option to her in the heat of the moment just seconds before the beginning of the massacre, then Dawn will be unable to think the situation through as well as she normally would, and she will most likely join me. This is my rationale, and I sincerely believe that it will bear fruit.

Once Dawn is on board, the festivities will begin. With the exception of passing periods, nearly every door into the building is locked.³⁶ Visitors are expected to enter through the office doors and then get buzzed in through the locked security doors. However, I happen to know that during days

³⁶ For security reasons, obviously. Some crazy person might try to come in and shoot up the place!

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with warm weather the doors to the gymnasium are unlocked so that gym classes can go out to the track/football field. Dawn and I will use this to our advantage and sneak into the school through these doors.

Excluding my mother, Dawn, and myself, there are ten main targets I wish to eliminate. I also plan to kill anybody who attempts to get in our way, but I've got to be conservative with my limited ammunition. I spent a lot of time doing research into the first period schedules of my ten targets, and I have developed a route that will best enable me to exterminate them all in a timely fashion.

Dawn and I will exit the gym through the commons while trying to keep a low profile. We must try our bests to keep the guns out of sight in order to prevent premature pandemonium. As soon as somebody discovers what is happening (from either seeing our guns or once we start firing), the school will quickly go into lockdown. From that point forward we will have to sprint through the hallways in order to reach our destinations. All doors will be locked and it will be very difficult to get to our targets. This is why we have to move as fast as possible in hopes of outrunning the lockdown.

After passing through the commons, we will turn left down the math hallway. There we will enter Dawn's geometry class and take out Robby Wilkinson and Julia Rinehart. Afterwards we will rush down the math hallway and turn right towards the history wing. Once there we will take out Mr. Kirby and then back track towards the math wing. Rather than turning into the math hallway, we will continue going straight and then down the ramp towards the weight

room. There we will find Bryce Sheller and Landon Hughes. I will likely kill the weights teacher while I'm down there too since he's such an asshole.

By now the school will be on full alert as to our activities. The halls will be barren and the door to every classroom will be locked. I have two ideas for dealing with these issues. The first of which is using force to unlock the doors. There are little windows beside the doors of most classrooms. If I can shoot through the glass, I should be able to either reach in and unlock the door or simply continue shooting through the window until I hit my target. The other strategy I had in mind was a form of trickery. Dawn could pretend to be locked out and scared for her life while banging on a door. As long as the class inside isn't aware of who the shooters are, they will likely unlock the door to let Dawn in. When they do we will both enter with guns blazing.

When we have finished in the weight room, we will sprint down the hall, up the stairs, and enter the library. Nina Cook has study hall in the library during first period, and that's where we'll find her. After Cook is cooked, we will exit the library through the door we entered and make our way to the language arts wing.

By this point I'm pretty sure the police will be in the building. Surely the school has contacted the police by now, and I'm confident that one of the news stations will have called the police upon receiving this document. This is of no matter. I have very realistic expectations regarding this shooting. I don't expect to hit every single one of my targets. I would love to, but alas it's likely impossible. My message

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will still reach the world if I only manage to kill four or five people. My primary objective will succeed no matter what.

In the English 9 classroom we will find Ashley Morrison, and Lila De Veer will be across the hall in the Spanish room. We will then turn the corner and make our way for the main office with hope that Principal Norton is standing guard near the doorway. It will be a miracle if we make it all the way to the office without being intercepted by police, but if we do, I look forward to wiping Norton off the face of the earth.

Our last stop will be the band room where we'll find Chelsea Fanning. Rumor has it the reason why she's so good at blowing dicks is because of her experience blowing into her trumpet. Hopefully I'll get the opportunity to blow her brains out with my Glock.

With my main targets annihilated, it will be time for us to go. In a perfect world, I would have time to speak to Dawn about how much she means to me and thank her for giving me validation as a human being. Unfortunately, this probably won't happen and I'll have to settle for saying, "Thanks," before shooting her in the head. And then it will be my turn.

I've wanted to die for a huge portion of my life, and in a few short hours my time will come. I have more or less attempted suicide twice now, and I'm hoping the third time will be the charm. I've often pondered what my last words would be. Would I go out with a joke? Perhaps something heroic? Give them something to quote in the history books? But now I realize that this entire manifesto will be my final words. These 30,000 words will be the final mark I leave on the world even after death. I, like the countless writers before me, will be granted eternal life after death because our

words and messages and stories will live on through the lives of our readers. Thus, I decided that the last words I will utter before ending my life will be, "I always knew I'd die a virgin." That should give anybody nearby a good laugh.

I imagine every news station in the country will be covering the story on the news this evening. It will first be reported that there has been yet another school shooting in the United States. A fifteen-year-old freshman named Mario Quintanilla stabbed his mother to death and then went to York Community High School and met up with his partner in crime Dawn Bracken. The two of them entered the school and killed X number of people. The news anchor will then claim to be praying for the families of the deceased or whatever and will question why such tragedies occur.

Tomorrow every major news network will be discussing why tragedies occur. News pundits will invite top psychologists onto their programs to discuss every aspect of my life. Sections of this manifesto will be displayed on screen, some in context and some not. Some liberal retards will claim it was too easy for me to get my hands on weapons even though I STOLE THEM while others will claim that the system failed to recognize my mental health issues.³⁷ Psychologists will try their bests to diagnose me with narcissism or sociopathy or whatever other brain defects, and they will use passages from this document to support their cases. What nobody will do is relay the true message of this piece of writing. The media will attempt to hide my desire to inspire my fellow betas to take a stand for themselves and to mold the world into a perfect place. They

³⁷ This one is actually true.

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will instead focus on dehumanizing me and calling me evil. But this is no matter. This is exactly what I want to happen.

The more the media demonizes me and displays the most brutal passages of this manifesto on television, the more people will become interested in learning my story and reading the full thing. The media will send a huge amount of traffic to this document, and in doing so will ensure that as many people read it as possible. Normies and alphas will begin to fear for their lives and will surely attempt to change their ways upon reading this, and the betas will become empowered and shall perpetuate the beta uprising that I have begun. I suspect at least six more shootings similar to my own will occur within the next month. Whether that number continues to grow or decline is completely dependent on if the normies change their ways and start treating us with the love and respect that we deserve.

The world around us is rapidly changing, and it will continue to change whether what I've set out to do is successful or not. The path of the beta uprising is only one of the potential directions I see our society taking. While mine is a path that eventually leads to equality and happiness among all people, the other paths aren't quite as cheery or hopeful. For the betas still reading who aren't sure whether or not they should shoot up their school tomorrow for our noble cause, allow this look into a very possible future to persuade you.

The biggest problem facing the future of society is women. I have already expressed within this document that women are living their lives on Easy Mode. All they have to

do is be a 3/10 or higher on the scale of attraction and they will be set for life. A decently attractive woman can marry the richest and most successful of men based entirely on her looks alone. A woman's value in the world is based entirely on her physical attractiveness rather than her personality or intelligence. This is why the divorce rate in the United States is so high. Attractive women trick men into marrying them and then when the men discover that their new wife has a shitty personality or is dumb as a rock he typically divorces her. But in the end the women win because divorce in this country is stacked in favor of women. Women automatically receive half of the man's assets, they get custody of their children virtually every time, and then the man is forced to continue paying the woman for the kids that she took away from him.

Divorce obviously isn't the only way society is stacked in women's favor though. A decently attractive woman can and will always use her physical appearance to her advantage in manipulating the world around her. Men will go out of their way to impress and please a woman just because she isn't fat or ugly because of their desire to have sex with her. The urge for sex is a huge problem in society, and I'll definitely get to that point in a moment. Men are expected to do things like purchase food for women while on dates, pick women up and drive them around, order drinks for them at the bar. Women complain about pay inequality³⁸ but never mention all the free shit that men are forced to buy them.

And here's another thing: A woman doesn't have to even be beautiful. Those sluts can just cake on a pound of

³⁸ Which is a myth, by the way.

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hideous makeup and stupid men will be unable to see through the illusion. Guys can't hide their ugly appearance with makeup like women can. We're forced to do something that women would never do in a million years—be ourselves. Surely the thought of being oneself is mortifying to the average American woman. Why else would they cake on all the makeup? Why else would they be so fake?

The issue of women gets particularly troublesome when you consider human sexuality. Unfortunately, the biggest carryover in our evolution from the rest of the animal kingdom was our insatiable desire for sex. This desire exists in the animal kingdom purely for the sake of reproduction. Although reproduction isn't an issue AT ALL for humanity, we are still plagued by this animalistic desire. The problem arises when we consider which gender gets to decide who gets sex and who doesn't—Women.

Unfortunately for society, women are the gatekeepers of sex. They, and they alone, decide which men get sex and which ones don't. And in case I haven't made myself clear, women are too stupid and irresponsible to be making decisions that impact the future of the human race. Consider the women you know. Which men are they attracted to—the intelligent betas like me or the brainless, caveman-like alpha males? No need to answer, I already know which one it is.³⁹

Women are unable to think rationally. Instead they consider two things: their emotions and their social status. These two mindsets lead women to mating only with the most powerful and stupid of men. This breeding pattern will

³⁹ And also I can't hear you because I'm dead.

continue throughout the generations until intelligent males are bred out of society altogether. Our country will be full of nothing but mindless jocks and cheerleaders. Unless we do something to stop it, there will be a genocide of beta-kind.

The United States didn't always face this issue. Back in the good ol' days, women knew their place. Women couldn't vote, they couldn't make decisions for themselves, they really couldn't do anything unless their father and/or husband told them to. They had no power over sex—men were in charge of deciding who they wanted to marry. And guess what—shit got done. While men were in charge, humanity flourished. Our technological advances have been incredible because intelligent people have been around to create them. With women in power, there will be no next Albert Einstein or Stephen Hawking. Instead everybody will have the mental capacity of the cast on that Jersey Shore show that the normies fucking love. There's a reason why we live in a patriarchy, ladies. Because it works. Because it gets shit done. Because when we give women the control in society, it inevitably falls apart.

It's up to us to prevent this future from happening. We need to take the world by storm and let all women, alphas, and normies know that we won't let them destroy the fabric of society. We will rule through fear and intimidation. They will be forced to accept us and treat us like anybody else. Our path won't breed out intelligence like the other. Rather, our path shall breed out discrimination, depression, loneliness, and despair. The path of the beta uprising is the path towards a bright and shining future for all of mankind. The normies will already be on edge after hearing about my

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massacre and my story, and now it's up to you to keep them there. If you're in a position similar to my own, then arm yourself with deadly weapons and take out everybody who has wronged you. I guarantee you society will change direction in an instant. Concepts like feminism will be considered thought-crime and will land people in prison. Betas across the land will have their pick at whichever women they want to sleep with. Nobody will ever feel the need to commit suicide ever again. This is the future I offer you—this is the world I promise you—but the power to make these dreams come true is in your hands now! I've done my part to change the world, I've sacrificed my life for the cause of my people, and now it is your turn! Daylight is starting to break, so I have very little time before my mom gets up for work. I beg of you—Do not let my sacrifice be in vain! You are the beta uprising! You are the future of mankind! Go out and force our dreams into reality!

I had more I wanted to say, but alas I have run out of time. This has been an exhausting endeavor. If you ever intend on writing something extremely long, be sure to pace yourself over the course of several days. This night has been hell.

I leave you all with these final words:

“Only I could do it! I was well aware that killing people is crime in itself! Yet at that point it was the only way to make things right! I thought to myself that someday people will come to realize this as much and regard it as an act of

Mario Quintanilla

justice! I had no choice but to act as Kira... It was the destiny given to me. I was chosen to renew this rotten world, to bring about true peace—a utopia.”

-Light Yagami (*Death Note*)

Chapter 17

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Dawn's Bloody Monday

Dawn Bracken

The shooting occurred on a date now burned in the minds of thousands of affected people—March 25th. This, Mario's Bloody Monday, was the school's first day back from a much too short spring break. Early that morning it seemed that the talk of the hallways throughout the week would consist only of wild spring break party stories, complaints of returning to school, pregnancy scares, drunken beach escapades, and other generic squabbles one would expect from a tribe of party-obsessed simpletons. In their tired, hungover conditions, there was nothing that could have prepared them for the fuming human-embodiment of hatred that was propelling itself towards them intent on extermination.

I was ten minutes into my first period geometry class when the announcement came over the intercom. The class had just handed in their homework when we heard the secretary's voice, "Mr. Jacobs?"

"Yes?"

"Could you send Dawn Bracken to the office please? Her father is here to pick her up for a dentist appointment."

"Certainly," he answered, giving me a look that suggested, "Why did you even come in this morning?"

At this point I was exceptionally curious. I neither had a dentist appointment scheduled nor a father to pick me up, but I was not going to explain this and risk being able to uncover whatever strange scenario was arising. I collected my things and headed for the office.

Letter to Mother

I approached the secretary's desk with my eyes on the lookout for whoever was pretending to be my deceased father. I saw no such person and my attention was shifted to the woman behind the desk.

"You just need to sign here," she stated, gesturing to the Sign In/Sign Out clipboard on the desk. "He said he is waiting outside for you."

Surely the school had it on record somewhere that my father was deceased, but it seems as though Mrs. Rayes was completely unaware of it. Or she simply assumed it was a step-father. Or she did not care enough to further investigate. Whatever the case, I was dying to know who had called me out of class, so I signed the sheet and exited the building.

On my walk out the door my mind was busy predicting who had called the office. My initial thought was that it was Chao's uncle. Perhaps he had taken a new test subject and wanted to show it to me. It seemed unlikely, but it was a definite possibility.

I saw no vehicle nor person waiting for me outside the office doors. I looked up and down the parking lot and found nothing out of the ordinary. Slightly perplexed, I decided to get into my car. If by some accidental occurrence I had been wrongly called out of class, I could at least spend an hour or two away with an excused absence. I, too, felt as though spring break had not been long enough, and I definitely felt no desire to sit amongst the chattering cattle any longer than I had to.

I saw no use in returning home and explaining to you why I was absent from school, so I deliberated going for a drive while listening to some of my favorite tunes. After considering the scarcity of my money when juxtaposed with the ludicrous height of

gas prices, I decided that simply sitting within my vehicle would prove to be an equally fruitful (and entirely gasless) endeavor. However, upon arriving to my (your) Oldsmobile, I discovered something that immediately canceled my plans. Mario had broken into the car and was currently sitting in the driver seat.

Unbeknownst to me, Mario had not shown up for class that morning. I had not spoken to him since the previous day. We had spent the last day of our spring break at the local science center. After a few hours we arrived to the doleful conclusion that the science center was not the intriguing emporium of wonderment I recalled it being from my childhood, and we promptly left in search of a more amusing prospect. Despite this slight disappointment, I felt as though the day had been an enjoyable one for the both of us, so you can imagine my surprise in finding my friend on the brink of self-destruction not even a full day later.

Mario looked up at me through the car window with a weary intensity in his eyes. I apologize for the contradiction, but I really cannot explain the state of his being in any other way. He was both keenly focused and mentally/physically drained at the same time. In his eyes I saw utter exhaustion as well as burning intensity. I later learned that he had just pulled an all-nighter writing his manifesto and had two hours prior murdered his mother.

He rolled down the window and asked, “Are you ready for your checkup?”

I was not angry at his deception or even that he had broken into my vehicle. I was instead intrigued by my friend’s bizarre behavior. The mystery set before me was solved in an instant when I leaned down to speak to him and I noticed the passengers sitting beside him in the car. Three firearms and a knife.

Letter to Mother

“Mario...” I considered asking something generic like, “What is going on?” but realized this to be pointless. I knew exactly what was going on.

Ever since befriending him, Mario and I have had numerous elongated conversations about murdering the idiotic masses we found ourselves surrounded by. We considered ourselves an island of individuals surrounded by an ocean of those who wished only to blend in to their surroundings. Our frustrations at our peers were evident, and we used our conversations as a means of relieving stress. At least, that is what I interpreted them as. But now it was clear to me that Mario had taken these conversations as blueprints rather than stress-relievers.

“Today is the day, Dawn,” Mario said with a smile. “The entirety of our lives has culminated to this exact point. Now is when we end the act of our existence and take a bow at our final curtain call. It’s Bloody Monday, Dawn. The day we change history for the better.”

The boy’s extreme tiredness could not have been more conspicuous. He was ranting in a drowsy stupor and surely thought he sounded a lot smarter than he actually did. I was unsure of what to do. The one thing I was absolutely certain about was that I did not want to commit a mass shooting. I was confident that I could talk the boy off of the ledge.

“Mario, you look exhausted,” I said. “How about we get you home and talk about this.”

“It’s far too late for that,” he answered. “I already sent my manifesto to dozens of people. We’re on a ticking clock now. It’s tick, tick, ticking away, Dawn.”

My heart sank. He had written a manifesto and it was now public. I could only imagine what incriminating things he had written about me within it. The seriousness of the situation now dawned on me. I no longer had complete control of what was happening.

“I’ve got one for you and two for me,” he explained, handing me a weapon. “And I’ve already got the whole thing planned out. All you’ve got to do is follow me and watch my back. Take out anybody who tries to stop us, and I’ll focus on the main targets. It’ll be just like we talked about, Dawn. We can finally exterminate those dirty roaches.”

At this point in time I had two main concerns: Preventing Mario from leaving my car and finding out the exact details he had written about me in his manifesto. If I learned that he had not written anything that could get me into trouble, then I would focus my attention on stalling for the police to arrive. If I learned that the things he had written would lead to my arrest, then... Well I did not really have a solid strategy for dealing with that predicament.

Wary about keeping my fingerprints off of the gun, I did not accept the gift of his firearm. “What did you write in that manifesto, Mario?”

“My life story! The whole, miserable, fucking dreadful experience from the very beginning! It’s all part of the plan, Dawn. I wish I had the time to explain it to you, but we don’t. We have to get moving.”

“We have time,” I assured him. “I am not moving an inch until you explain this plan to me.”

Letter to Mother

To this he did not argue. He was so enthusiastic and proud of what he hoped to achieve that I could tell he was bursting at the seams to disclose it all to me.

“We’re going to change the world, Dawn. Ha, now that I think about it I should have named it the Dawn of a New Age rather than Bloody Monday, but oh well. This shooting and my manifesto are going to fix the problems facing this wretched planet. The shooting serves us on two levels. On one hand it gives us the opportunity to get revenge on those fuckers who have made us so miserable, but on the other it puts us in the global spotlight. Every time there is a major shooting the names of the killers are plastered all over the news and they spend the next month examining the killers’ lives for hopes of finding an answer. Luckily for them, I saved them a lot of time and research by sending them all the information they’re looking for in one handy manifesto.

“Thousands, if not millions, of people will seek out what I’ve written so that they can see into the mind of the killer, and they’ll wish that they hadn’t. My manifesto will serve as inspiration for others who find themselves in our situation as well as a beacon of fear for the roaches of the world. My book will single-handedly change the world, Dawn. The betas will have their own shootings to follow in our footsteps, and the normies will adapt their behaviors and attitudes in order to make the betas feel safe and secure. It’s like when they have a controlled burn in order to prevent a forest fire. In order to change and protect the world, we first must destroy it.”

I honestly could not believe what I was hearing. Mario ranted about his hatred for normies on a daily basis, but not even twenty-four hours earlier he had been his normal self. The Mario I was faced with now seemed like an entirely different person. Somehow

overnight Mario had mutated into a deranged madman intent on holding the world hostage. I was impressed by his ambition, and his intentions, in the long run, appeared noble, but his initial execution seemed lackluster (specifically in the sense that he did not inform his partner in crime about the shooting).

“What about me?” I asked. “Did you write anything about me in there?”

“Of course, Dawn! You’re my muse! You’re my greatest confidant! The world is going to want to learn about both of us, not just me, so of course I told them all about you!”

“What, specifically, did you write about me?”

His amiable tone diminished at this point as it became obvious to him that I was not 100% on board with the massacre.

“Why does it matter what I wrote?”

“I am just curious about what my legacy will be is all,” was my reply. This was no longer just a game of stalling now. If Mario sensed that I was not on his side, then I could easily end up with a bullet in my head. I understood now that my life was on the line and the only way to stay alive was through conversational manipulation.

“Well isn’t it obvious? Your legacy will be that of the beta martyr just like mine! Decades from now in the new world where sadness no longer exists people will erect statues of us in honor of the revolution we began! The clock is ticking, Dawn. Let’s get a move on.”

Letter to Mother

He opened the car door and stepped out. As he placed his weapons into the holsters on his belt, I began to speak.

“I agree completely with everything you are saying, Mario, but I feel like there must be a better way. You and I are highly intelligent individuals. We operate through the labyrinth of life with our brains rather than our bodies. Those other people are the animals. As they attempt to crash through the labyrinth walls, we are the ones who strategize our way through the corridors. It would be tragic for us to end our lives through such barbaric means. We need to live and continue pulling the strings while the animals do all of the physical work. Do you understand what I am getting at?”

“It’s too late for that, Dawn. I’ve already sent the manifesto out. There’s no turning back now.”

“But there is! You see, that is exactly why we are destined to change the world. Because we are intelligent enough to see that there is always an opportunity to turn back. Yes, we might be waist deep in the muck right now, but it is not too late to pull ourselves out. The manifesto you wrote? Anybody could have written that as a prank in order to get you in trouble. If we hide these weapons well enough, then there will be no evidence that you actually planned any of this. We do not need to use our bodies when we can simply use our mouths to talk ourselves out of our situations, Mario. It is never too late.”

“It is,” Mario replied. “My mom is dead, Dawn.”

My jaw dropped. So he had already begun his murder spree.

“That bitch finally got what she had coming. It was so sweet. It was the most delicious moment of my existence, Dawn. I wish you

could have been there to see it. You could tell by the look on her face and her screams of terror that she knew she deserved what was happening. She knew that her shitty parenting had finally caught up with her and that she was paying for the crimes she'd committed against me! That wretched cunt is finally dead, and I've honestly never been happier in my entire life. So no, we can't talk our way out of this one. It is too late. Take this gun."

I stood still. My mind raced as I tried to find a way out of my situation. It seemed my life was going to change forever no matter which path I chose. I had finally built for myself the life I dreamed of living, and now it would all come crashing down. Eliminating Mason, burning down Ricardo's, it would all be for naught if I was unable to continue my experiments. My soul purpose for existence was about to be torn from me. Either Mario was going to kill me, the police were going to kill me, or I would be arrested and thrown in prison. Of these possibilities, death seemed preferable. I would rather be dead than imprisoned against my will.

I considered taking Mario's gun and shooting him in the head with it. Hopefully this would kill him before he could shoot back at me. My main concern with this was dealing with the police afterwards. Would I be considered a hero? Maybe. But would I walk away scot-free after shooting somebody in the school parking lot? Of course not. I decided that I would shoot Mario as a last resort, but in the meantime I was still concerned with escaping this fiasco without any blood on my hands.

"This is beneath us, Mario. Talking about murdering those people was certainly fun, but actually doing so is childish. You have no reason to lower yourself to their standards of existence. You deserve to live so that you can prove to them that you are better

Letter to Mother

than they are. I believe that is much more important than attempting to match your pain for their pain.”

“Deserve to live? I don’t deserve to live, that’s the fucking point. Those people in there are the ones who convinced me that I don’t deserve to live. It is because of them that I realized I am a lesser being! I’m disgusting! I’m fat and brown and poor and undesirable. This isn’t a matter of lowering myself to them at all. They don’t see me as being better. They look down on me like I’m useless filth. That’s why I have to kill them, Dawn. It will be so glorious for their precious lives to be taken away by the person who they see as undeserving of existence!”

“You should never be proud or ashamed of something you cannot control. Race, birthplace, gender, these things are completely out of your hands. You should only feel emotions of pride or shame for things you can control. You should be proud of your accomplishments and ashamed of your failures. You cannot control what color your skin is, but you can control things like your skills and behavior. To say things like, ‘I am proud to be black’ or ‘I am proud to be an American’ is completely ridiculous because you did nothing to earn that pride. The circumstances of one’s birth are not to be celebrated but simply observed. You are not lesser because you are Mexican and poor, Mario. These are the circumstances you were born into, and you should not be ashamed of them. Those people in there are lesser than you because they *choose* to treat you poorly. One of the only things you can control in life is the way you treat other people, and obviously they treat you very poorly. That is not reflective of your worth but instead entirely reflective of theirs. By seeking violent revenge against them you are lowering yourself to their sullied plane of existence. Do not prove your superiority by killing them; prove it by continuing to improve the things you can control in life. You are

intelligent and funny and strong-willed. These are virtues of your character that you earned and should be very proud of. Can those people in there say the same about themselves? Of course not. They are vain, arrogant, self-serving Neanderthals. They should be utterly ashamed of who they are, and you should be immensely proud.”

“Even if you are right, that doesn’t matter,” he replied. “What matters is *their* understanding of pride and shame, not ours. In their minds they are proud of who they are, and I should be ashamed of who I am. So for me to privately know that I’m better means nothing because they don’t accept that mindset. I don’t give a fuck about what I think about myself—what matters is what they think about me. No matter how smart or funny I may be they’ll always look down on me as being fat, ugly, Mexican, and gross. That’s why they must be destroyed. I don’t want to celebrate a private victory; I want them to suffer a burning, devastating defeat.”

“They will suffer defeat in due time, but not now. Not like this. One cannot suffer if they are dead. We can find a way to make their continued existence a living hell. That will be our victory. Rather than extinguishing the flame of their lives we can instead make the flame burn hotter so that they wish it were out.”

“They might be dead, but the people they leave behind will be left to suffer. And soon the entire world will suffer. This shooting is more than my personal revenge; it’s about the fate of humanity’s existence! Can’t you see it? Didn’t I spell it out for you? We are going to change the entire world for the better! How can you not see that?”

“Because your plan is going to backfire. You think you are laying the groundwork for some sort of beta utopia, but all you are really

Letter to Mother

doing is ensuring the suffering of those you wish to save. Do you really think the masses are going to accept the terms with which you leave them? Of course not. They are going to retaliate against them tenfold. The betas will not be treated with respect out of fear, they will be further subjugated to prejudice and hatred. Any person suspected of following in your footsteps will be sniffed out and arrested immediately. Those who were once thought of as lesser will now be thought of as threats. The kids who get bullied will now instead be arrested. This is not a controlled burn; this is starting the forest on fire and then blaming the trees. The people you wish to save are going to suffer needlessly because the fear you incite within the masses will lead to outrage and witch-hunting rather than a desire to nurture and love. Violence will not lead to peace—violence will only lead to more violence. It is a never-ending cycle of ‘if you push me I will push back even harder.’ This shooting of yours is certainly a good push, but it is not going to knock the other side down. It is going to aggravate them into pushing back even harder. The real winners are the ones who stand at the sidelines and watch the pushers play their game.”

By the end of my speech Mario’s eyes had drifted to his shoes. He stood solemnly in sorrowful self-reflection as tears began to appear in his eyes. His arm, once extended to hand me a firearm, was now slumped at his side. My friend looked up at me. He was terribly hurt and saddened. He spoke to me through his tears.

“I wanted to get revenge against all of the people in there who have done me wrong, and I wanted to die fighting by your side. But I see now... I cannot do both. Goodbye Dawn.”

Mario then turned around, water droplets falling from his face, and began to run towards the school.

It was in that moment as I watched Mario scurry towards the building with weapons in hand that I found myself presented with four distinct options. These options flashed through my mind at a mile per second and I knew I had very little time to consider them.

OPTION 1: Join Mario and commit the shooting.

The Pros: This certainly was not the worst option I had. While I did not agree with Mario's logic, I did marvel at the concept of ending the lives of several of the people within that building. I, too, had a list of people whom I would have loved to see die.

The Cons: This option inevitably led to one of two places—death or lifetime imprisonment. I am not ready to die yet. There are still so many things I wish to do and learn and explore. I cannot fulfill any of my life's dreams if I am dead or locked up.

OPTION 2: Stop Mario by force.

The Pros: This was the morally correct option to choose. Potentially dozens of innocent lives were about to be ended by Mario's rampage, and I had the ability to prevent these deaths. I simply had to catch up to Mario, apologize for my insolence, and upon receiving my firearm shoot him in the head. I would save many lives, people would view me as a hero, and I would have a definite way of arguing my innocence. If Mario's manifesto painted me as an equally blood-thirsty partner, then surely preventing the massacre by any means necessary would prove that I had no interest in taking part in it.

The Cons: Killing Mario would put blood on my hands. While the lengthy speeches I had given Mario were mostly meant as stall tactics, they also held truth to them. If I could get out of this

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situation using only my brain instead of resorting to barbarism, then I would. Additionally, I could not care less about the subjective morality of the situation. Whether the people inside that building lived or died was of no concern to me. If I had another option for dealing with this situation that would prevent me from pulling a trigger, then I would utilize it without considering the fates of Mario's intended targets.

OPTION 3: Wait for the police and explain myself.

The Pros: Surely the police had by then been notified about Mario's manifesto and were on their way. If I waited for them, I could explain what had happened (Mario had called me out of class, confronted me, I had rejected his proposal, and he had taken off for the school) and feign innocence. This would be the most believable story because it most closely resembled the truth.

The Cons: While giving me the opportunity to feign innocence about the school shooting, this option gave me very little time to plan ahead. I would remain in police custody for the remainder of the day and would be questioned relentlessly about the contents of Mario's manifesto. I still had no idea as to the exact details of what Mario had written, and I was putting myself at risk of remaining in police custody with no way of talking myself out of it. The possibility of Mario's manifesto containing irrefutable evidence about my previous crimes was far too great for me to choose this option.

OPTION 4: Go to the dentist.

The Pros: By playing dumb I would be granted the utmost amount of time to further evaluate the situation and plan my next steps. If I hurried to the dentist's office, I would have an alibi for the attack. I

could simply claim that I had no idea what was going on and that I was only doing as I had been told. Furthermore, upon leaving the dentist's office, I would have ample time to rush home and read Mario's manifesto. Upon reading it, I would know exactly what information the police had against me, and I would be able to further strategize my innocence from there. Furthermore, if I found that the contents of the manifesto were too much for me to handle, I would have time to either kill myself or escape before falling into police custody.

The Cons: Innocent people would needlessly die.

After quickly evaluating these options, I hopped into my car and headed for the dentist.

Chapter 18

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Aftermath

Dawn Bracken

As you know, the dentist office I biannually visit is only two blocks away from the school, so I arrived at the building in no time. I entered, wondering how many people had already been slain, and approached the receptionist.

“Good morning,” she greeted with a friendly smile, completely unaware that this was a day that would be forever ingrained within her mind. “Name please?”

“Dawn Bracken,” I stated. “The secretary at school told me I had an appointment. I am pretty sure I was just in here last November, so it seems like it is too soon to be coming back, but hey who am I to argue when a staff member says you can leave math class early?” I realized I was rambling a bit too much. I was starting to sound like Mario had. Although I definitely wanted to cement my alibi within this young receptionist, I knew I needed to tone it down.

The longer she typed into her computer the more frustrated her face became. “I’m not finding you on today’s schedule... It looks like you aren’t due back until May 17th.”

“Huh,” I answered. “That is peculiar.”

Two police cars with sirens blaring flashed by the nearby window.

“Looks like there’s a bit of excitement going on, huh?” she asked me, seemingly enthused by the police cars.

“That it does.”

As I hurried back to my vehicle another police car and an ambulance came barreling down the street towards the school. I

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slammed the key into the ignition and made a beeline straight for home.

Upon returning home, I grabbed my laptop and pulled up the internet in search of Mario's manifesto. I Googled his name and the first result was exactly what I had been looking for. The news network ABC had already published his full manifesto on their website, and as far as I knew the shooting was not even over yet. I had no time to reflect on whether or not this somehow proved some of the points that Mario had been trying to make—I needed to read the whole thing stat.

I quickly skimmed the entirety of Mario's manifesto and have since reread it numerous times. I know that you have not taken the time to read through it, so I will summarize it for you.

My name is not mentioned until about halfway through the document. While I am not painted in the most flattering light (Mario's depiction of me makes me come off as some sort of sociopath) there is no direct reference to burning down Ricardo's or Joe Naae's death. These were the matters most important to me in first reading Mario's writing, but in case you, too, are curious about the rest of it, I might as well share my thoughts.

Mario's manifesto is laden with hypocrisy, contradiction, entitlement, and the absurdity one would expect from an alien species attempting to understand human interaction. The "Rants and Ravings" portion of his title is possibly the truest section of the entire work considering the amount of regurgitated jabbering featured within. It seems as though Mario quite literally vomited words onto the page and decided they looked good in the order that they fell. His lack of editing becomes incredibly transparent as his numerous logical contradictions time and time again rise to the

surface. However, it is perfectly clear the six-part suicide letter was written by someone who had experienced real, severe trauma. His rage at the world around him is incredibly authentic and was the likely source of his clouded logistics.

I do not have Mario's document in front of me now, but I will try my best to remember the specific contradictions and errors I observed within it. The most glaring contradiction featured within the work was Mario's reoccurring analysis of clinical depression. Based on my experience with him as well as his writing, there is no doubt in my mind that Mario suffered from, among other mental illnesses, depression. However, his conclusions about overcoming the disease were, at best, paradoxical.

Time and time again, Mario claims that depression is an illness that cannot be cured. He cites his study of the pit of despair and the rhesus monkeys as evidence of this claim. Mario repeatedly states that depression can only be treated in order to reduce its effects, but as shown with his hypothesis about life on depression medication, true depression is something that will endlessly linger around you no matter what is done. He even makes the bold claim that anybody claiming to be cured of depression was never actually depressed in the first place.

It is when these statements are compared to others written in the manifesto that Mario's logical contradiction is made apparent. Throughout the document Mario also claims that depression can be cured when the cause of one's depression is eliminated from one's life. For example, if one's loneliness caused their depression, then their depression will be cured once they make friends. Mario even claims somewhere in there that obtaining a Death Note would literally cure his depression. Obviously the information in the earlier paragraph and the information in this paragraph cannot both

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be true which leads one to the conclusion that Mario has contradicted himself.

The reason why this contradiction is so important is because it is the basis for Mario's entire master plan of saving the world from normie tyranny. In simple terms, Mario's plan was the following:

- Betas are depressed because they are lonely
- I will scare the world into befriending betas
- Betas will no longer be lonely
- Depression will be no more

A noble cause, but utterly confusing when one considers that this line of reasoning came from the same person who believed, "If someone claims that they have recovered from depression, then they were never truly depressed in the first place." When you juxtapose these two ideas together, Mario's entire plan falls apart.

This is just one of the multiple blunders that appear on Mario's 126 pages. At one point he makes the claim that he has spent his entire life trying and failing to create relationships with the opposite gender and yet nearly every single one of the significant relationships in his life were with females. From Aubrey to Marissa to me. He claims that women rejected his existence due to his size and race, and yet he still managed to befriend Marissa and me.

This was obviously an issue of insecurity that both fueled his depression and at the same time was fueled by it. Despite befriending real life girls, Mario felt as though all girls despised him due to his physical appearance. Somehow while being so insecure about his body Mario was paradoxically inflated by a huge ego at the same time, for he never once considered that the

world's rejection of him had little to do with his physical appearance but rather everything to do with his personality. Upon reading his manifesto, it seems evident that Mario was completely unaware of his obnoxious personality. Even in moments where he describes something as vile as making a student teacher cry, Mario feels as though he was the victim and that his actions could not have possibly been thoughtfully deciphered as malicious. The unfortunate truth of the situation was that Mario's loud, obnoxious, arrogant attitude at school is what pushed people away from him, and he was completely blind to this fact. Mario often attempted (and failed) to debate teachers during class about subjects he felt as though he knew more about. These encounters often left students feeling embarrassed and made them cringe in disgust. Almost every single Triflers meeting began with Mario picking an argument with somebody. He loved trying to prove himself right in every single given scenario for absolutely no reason.

The reason why I was able to get along with Mario so well was because I did not care about his obnoxious attitude. It amused me to no end. I could listen to him rant about his hatred of women for hours because his enthusiasm about politically incorrect topics was hilarious to me. I was one of the few who could manage to watch him debate the teacher about the pronunciation of the word Antarctica without cringing in pain (he was on the wrong side of this debate, as usual). Even his endless stream of vulgarities did not bother me because his existence as a human being was so amusing to me.

I truly wish that Mario had never written that manifesto. Things could have been so different. He could be sitting with me on this bus right now and I would not be all alone. If he had come to me about his honest intentions, we could have talked him through his feelings, and I could have shown him that committing a massacre

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was not the logical solution. We could be together right now, and he could continue endlessly amusing me with his insanity. But he made the choices he made, and now he is dead.

Seemingly every hour I relive those moments beside my car in the school parking lot minutes before the shooting began. I try so hard to come up with a better solution, but each time I fail. It seems that there was no way of stopping Mario. After his manifesto had been submitted online there was no way of saving him. I partially blame myself for egging him on so often during our discussions, but I simply wanted to get him fired up for my amusement, not so that he would feel the need to actually go through with the madness we discussed.

Having skimmed Mario's manifesto, I knew that it was only a matter of time before the police came knocking on our door. I was confident, however, that I would be able to talk my way out of the situation, so I chose not to run away or kill myself. I paced the front room of our home like a caged animal as I waited for the police to arrive. When two police cars inevitably came rolling up the driveway two hours later, I emerged from the house with my hands held high and submitted myself to their custody.

I was taken to the police station and escorted to an interview room. I was now in a small, white, square space sitting in a chair across from two seated men. One man introduced himself as Ron Clacker, an investigator from the FBI. Clacker appeared to be only in his early thirties and yet he was already balding. His skin was a shade darker than his counterpart's—if I had to guess I would say he is of Middle-Eastern descent. His voice, however, contained no clue-worthy accent as to his ethnic origins.

The other was a man I recognized: Elmhurst Police Chief Curtis Maguire. You likely remember meeting the overweight, thickly-mustached man at the last high school football game you attended before your accident. While his colleague looked hardened, even angry, Maguire looked like a man who had just suffered a terrible loss. I could sense that the day's events had ingrained a sadness so intense within that man's psyche that he would suffer a lifetime of pain. This, of course, is the consequence of a man who promises to protect a population and dramatically fails to do so.

A printed copy of Mario's manifesto sat on the table between us. Several sections throughout had been highlighted with a yellow marker. They wasted no time with pleasantries.

"You must be the Dawn Bracken I've read so much about," Clacker stated. "I've been waiting to talk to you for a while now."

"The moment I heard those police sirens this morning I had a funny feeling I would find myself here this evening," I answered. "I am willing to answer any questions about the case that you have for me." My initial strategy with this conversation was to pretend as though I was truly shocked by the day's events and that I intended on helping the officers uncover whichever stones still lay unturned.

"So you knew that Mario was about to shoot up the school, huh?" Clacker asked.

"Not at first, but when I heard police sirens heading towards the school, all of the pieces sort of fell into place."

"And what pieces would those be?"

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“Well, for starters, I was called out of class this morning for a dentist appointment. I did not have a dentist appointment planned, but I was intrigued so I—”

“It was a trick by Mario,” Clacker interrupted. “All part of his plan.” He held up a page of the manifesto. “He needed a way to get you out of class so that you could assist him in the shooting.”

I shifted in my seat. “Well I would not know about that, Mr. Clacker. I have not read his book yet.”

“Is that so? Well allow me to read you a passage. ‘With my document sent, I will scurry over to the school parking lot. One way or another I’ll trick Dawn into meeting me outside. I will then tell her what’s going on and then hopefully she and I will carry out the rest of my plan.’ His ploy for getting you outside was the dentist lie, and once you were out there he told you all about the shooting.”

“No,” I responded. “I had a feeling that Mario was behind the phone call, but it definitely was not to meet me outside. I went out to my car and saw no sign of anybody so I drove myself straight to the dentist. I suspect that the reason why Mario called me to the dentist was to get me out of the school so that I would not accidentally fall into the line of fire when chaos erupted. Mario and I were very close friends, and he probably just wanted to make sure I did not get hurt.”

“That would be a very likely story if it weren’t for the fact that what he wrote tells a very different tale,” Clacker replied. “You see, I have a suspicion too. I suspect that Mario did exactly what he wrote about doing in his manifesto. You found him in the parking lot with his guns on his belt and he told you all about his

thirteen targets, but you weren't buying what he was selling and you rejected his offer. And you ran off to the dentist so that you could play dumb and innocent like you're doing right now."

"That certainly is one way of looking at it," I answered. "Except it lacks one crucial thing—evidence. You can make claims all you want, Mr. Clacker, but you have yet to supply me with any evidence that I actually met him outside."

"The evidence is right here in my hand!"

"Mario claiming that he is going to do something does not constitute as evidence! Obviously he changed his mind because I am telling you I did not see him in the parking lot. I went straight into my car and drove to the dentist's office. Perhaps he did intend on meeting me outside like he wrote in his manifesto, but in that case he must have missed me because I saw no sign of him."

"Don't you try to play innocent with me, girl. People are dead! This isn't a fucking game. I know that you and Mario engaged in multiple conversations wherein you fantasized about murdering everyone in school. He writes about these conversations in graphic detail. You are trying to play this innocent girl, but it's bullshit because we both know that you're equally responsible for today's carnage! Or do I need to read more of this to get it through your head?"

"No, you do not have to—" but he refused to let me finish.

"We fantasized about murdering all of our classmates in the most brutal ways possible. Those stupid, slutty preppy girls who probably went on and on about how disgusting I look or how bad I smell would be suspended upside-down by their feet. I would have

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a large collection of swords, and I would take my sweet time using them to slice their naked bodies over and over again.’ Does any of that ring a bell to you?!”

“Yes, I admit that we engaged in those types of conversations. However, I never thought we were being serious. They were meant as a means of stress relief. Like how people talk about wanting to kill their boss or spouse. It is just to air out grievances. I never thought he would actually go through with those desires.”

Unamused by my explanation, he continued reading.

“‘People are nothing more than a game to me. I spend weeks, even months at a time strategically planting ideas into their heads and playing mind games. It is one of the only ways in which I can amuse myself. I will often get bored of someone after a while and move on to my next victim, but that is fine considering there are hundreds of these dirty roaches for me to choose from.’ Does that sound familiar to you? Does that sound like the words of somebody simply airing out their grievances?”

“I have no idea how that quote pertains to me,” I responded.

“You’re the one who said it!”

“I am?” I asked. “I thought Mario wrote that.”

“He wrote it, but he is quoting you! Those are your words! You said those things!”

“I did not! Once again, Mr. Clacker, do you have any evidence to support your claims?”

“That’s enough, Ron,” Maguire spoke for the first time. “That isn’t why we called her here.”

Thinking that the difficult part of my interrogation was over, I breathed an early sigh of relief. Unfortunately, the true interrogation was just getting started.

“It’s true we have no evidence to support that you knew about or contributed to today’s shooting,” Maguire stated. “But some of the other information written in the manifesto has us curious about you.”

A bead of sweat strolled down the back of my neck. I had no idea what he was talking about.

Maguire gestured to Clacker, and he began reading.

“My main concern with shooting up the school was that when the time came I would be too scared to go through with killing somebody. However, I was recently involved in the deaths of two individuals. I won’t go into further detail in order to protect those who were involved, but I will say that upon their deaths I didn’t feel sick or saddened—I felt enlightened.”

“It turns out there aren’t too many unexplained deaths in recent Elmhurst history,” Maguire stated. “We did a little bit of digging, and we think we might have discovered one of the two deaths that Mario was talking about.”

I tried my best to keep my composure, but on the inside I had storm sirens blaring. I knew exactly what he was about to say. The connection was too clear. I decided to beat him to the punch.

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“Joe Naae,” I said.

The two men appeared startled as if they had not expected me to arrive at their conclusion for them.

“Y-yes. That’s right,” Maguire answered.

“The moment you mentioned Mario’s claims about being involved in two deaths the pieces immediately clicked together in my brain. Joe Naae was killed in a fire at Ricardo’s Deep Freeze, and because I have recently worked there you suspect that Mario and I had some sort of involvement with the arson. It makes perfect sense.”

“Er, it isn’t that you just recently worked there. According to our records, you nearly died while locked up in their freezer,” Maguire said.

“Really I can’t blame you for feeling so angry about your near-death experience that you and your buddy torched the place to the ground,” Clacker said. “I probably would have done the same thing back when I was a kid. Those people’s negligence nearly got you killed, and they had to pay. I respect that for sure. It’s a dog eat dog world after all. Unfortunately, an innocent man was sleeping in the building, and he perished in the flames.”

“I suspected that Mario was involved in the fire, but I never directly asked him about it,” I said. “I did not want revenge against the restaurant for what had happened. I knew that what happened with the freezer was my fault. But Mario did not see it that way. He talked often about how angry he was at my employers for even putting me in a situation where I could have been killed. I always tried to talk him down from these rants because I did not want him

to hurt anybody. Then, when I heard about the fire and Joe's death, I had suspicions but no evidence. I decided not to look into it because I did not want to think that my friend was capable of such a terrible thing. But after today... Well it just seems obvious."

"So Mario was a lone wolf, huh?" Clacker asked. "He decided to burn down the building all on his own in order to prove his love for you?"

"Well it fits the bill, right?" I asked. "That is the same reason he called me out of class today. That boy loved me, and he wanted to make sure I did not get hurt in the crossfire."

Clacker grinded his teeth and shared a look of disgust with Maguire. He viciously tapped his fingers on the desk out of what I assumed was frustration. They had no evidence that I had done anything wrong. I was in the clear.

"Any underlying suspicions about the other death Mario was involved in? While you're here?" Clacker asked.

"Not a one," I answered.

"And if I question Mario's cousin Dakota or I talk to any of your friends in your Triflers group, do you think they'll have any ideas?"

To this I tensed up. A single, vile word appeared within my mind. *Dorianne*. She would be my undoing. The moment these men questioned her it would be game over. That blasted fool would spill the beans about everything, and I would be granted a one-way ticket to a penitentiary.

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I shrugged my shoulders. “To be honest, I would not know. You would have to ask them.”

“Yours friends, the Triflers, sound like an interesting bunch,” Clacker said. “According to Mario there is, ‘Mason, the cool, older athletic one, Chao, the quiet, Asian one, Dorianne, the freak show, Truman, the tall, awkward one, and Tao, Chao’s uncle who ran the laptop.’”

“Looks like Mario wasn’t the first of your gang to be involved in illegal activity,” Maguire stated. “We just had your buddy Mason Elliot in here not too long ago for, if I recall correctly, sexually and physically abusing his younger sister.”

“That can’t just be a coincidence, can it Dawn?” Clacker asked. “How could it be that you just so happen to associate with so many dangerous, depraved people?”

“Misery loves company,” I answered.

“It seems that way,” Clacker replied. “And I look forward to uncovering how miserable the rest of your chosen company is.”

“I would invite you to a meeting but I think our club has been canceled for an indefinite amount of time given recent events.”

“Oh, I’m sure you would,” Clacker said. “And from what I’ve read it sounds like these meetings would be tons of fun for a guy like me. A bunch of teenagers sitting in the dark watching videos of men lighting their dicks on fire—who would ever think that members of such a club would be involved in violent crimes?”

“We all have our hobbies,” I replied.

Clacker and Maguire shared a look once more. Maguire then spoke. "Is there anything else you'd like to tell us before you go? Or perhaps any questions you have?"

I was very curious in learning the exact details of the shooting, but I was not about to ask them. All I knew at that point was that three people (including the shooter) were confirmed dead and that three more had been non-fatally injured.

"No questions. The only thing I want to do right now is go home and get some rest. I am pretty shaken up by this whole thing, and I feel like any second now I am going to break down and cry."

Clacker did not seem to believe what I was saying, but he did nothing about it. I was told I was free to go, and an officer returned me home.

After piecing together multiple stories and eyewitness accounts, I was able to formulate the entirety of Mario's shooting within my head. Our conversation in the parking lot had distracted him for so long that by the time he entered the school through the gym doors first period had already ended and the halls were flooded with students passing between classes. This obviously spoiled Mario's entire plan, as he now had no idea where any of his intended targets were. Flustered, he marched through the commons with his guns drawn and began firing wildly into the crowd of walking students. Chaos ensued as people screamed and tried to run for safety. Mario then pulled the pin on his grenade and attempted to throw it into the crowd, but he was tackled by none other than Bryce Sheller. Bryce held Mario's hand down to prevent him from throwing the grenade, and when it eventually exploded it killed the both of them. I could go into the rich irony of Bryce Sheller being the one who stopped Mario's massacre and saved the day, but

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surely you can appreciate it all on your own without me having to explain it to you. Of his thirteen targets, Mario only managed to slay three of them. His mother, Bryce, and himself. Three other random students not included on the list had been shot, but they were likely to have full recoveries.

I can only imagine the frustration Mario felt throughout the entirety of his Bloody Monday. First I rejected him, he then found himself late and unable to find his intended targets, and finally his massacre was cut short by one of the people he loathed most in the world. It is sort of poetic in a way. His shooting played out much like many of his stories did. I hope he at least acknowledged the beautiful irony in his failure before he died. Or perhaps he did not consider his plan to be a failure at all. I have no way of knowing.

Chapter 19

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Chaos

The moment I returned home, I began packing an emergency bag. Given the current state of things, I knew that my life could collapse at any moment, and I needed to be prepared. I would henceforth keep my emergency bag with me at all times so that if my life came crashing down, I could make my escape. I filled it with clothes, water, food, and the next morning I emptied my bank account and placed my remaining money in it as well.

I ordered a mandatory Triflers meeting to be held the following morning. I had to get to them before the authorities did. My main concern, of course, was with *Dorianne*. Of all the Triflers, he was the one who I felt would not hesitate to betray the group.

Given Monday's events, school was canceled indefinitely. Students and faculty were advised to stay home with their families, grieve for the lives that had been lost, and count their blessings. I needed the Triflers to do no such thing. We needed to assemble at Chao's posthaste in order to ensure we were all on the same page.

Most of the group was either not able or not willing to meet. Chao was the only person on board with the impromptu assembly. Chao's uncle had work early in the morning but would be home around noon. I was not too worried about the police interviewing him, however, so this was of little concern to me. Truman and *Donovan*, on the other hand, were going to be problematic. I explained the current situation to Truman, and he claimed to understand its urgency, but alas his parents had made it absolutely clear that he was not to leave the house. *Dorianne* simply ignored my calls and messages. I was confident that Truman would lie to the police in order to ensure my safety, but if the police came knocking at *Donovan's* door before I did, then we were going to be in trouble.

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The meeting was planned for 11am. I picked Chao up from his house at 10 so that he could assist me in recovering Truman and *Dorianne*. The plan was to fetch Truman first considering he would be the easier target and then utilizing him in abducting *Donovan*. The mission was simple—retrieve the targets by any means necessary. Failure to do so possibly spelt big trouble for the lot of us.

Chao and I pulled into Truman's driveway at 10:10. Together we marched up his porch stairs, and I knocked on the door. His mother answered.

"Hello Dawn. Hello Andy."

Given her facial expression and tone of voice, it seemed clear that Mrs. Sinclair knew why we had arrived at her doorstep. Luckily, instead of rejecting us at the door, she treated us with kindness. This is surely a mistake she will regret for the rest of her life.

"Good morning, Mrs. Sinclair," I greeted. "Is Truman home? We would like to speak with him."

"He's in the living room," she answered. "You can come in if you'd like."

We accepted this invitation and entered the house. We removed our shoes at the door and followed Mrs. Sinclair into the living room where we found her husband and son sitting on opposite ends of a couch. I did not like visiting Truman's home. Its overtly religious messages made me uncomfortable. Each room featured at least one cross or painted biblical mural or even one of those horrendous house tattoos that have been trending lately. I call them house tattoos because I do not know the actual name. The Sinclair

family has one in the living room scrawled out across the entire wall that reads: “But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.—Joshua 24:15.” Whether Truman truly served the LORD or not, I never knew, as he never spoke about such things while in my presence.

Truman stood and embraced me in a comforting hug. “I’m so happy you guys are okay,” he said.

“How are you two holding up?” Mr. Sinclair asked.

“I am still pretty shaken,” I answered. “All of the warning signs seem so clear now. Mario was such a good friend to all of us... But as they say, hindsight is twenty/twenty.”

“Thank God more people weren’t hurt,” Mrs. Sinclair said. “On the news this morning they said he had thirteen different victims in mind. We’re truly blessed that he only got to a few of them.”

There was that word again—blessed. Its usage has always made me sick to my stomach. The word was only used by stupid people thankful for the misfortune of others. While I have no problem with flourishing in the suffering of my fellow man, doing so under the impression that an omnipresent being is making conscious decisions specifically for one’s benefit is something that I find utterly disgusting. I was ready to get out of Truman’s house as soon as possible.

“You are probably wondering why Chao and I are here and not at home with our families,” I said. “I know you do not want Truman to leave home today, he and I discussed this all night, but I beg you to reconsider. A group of our classmates is meeting at the flagpole outside of the school at noon today to pray, and it would really

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mean a lot if Truman could be there too. Afterwards, we were going to stop by the church on Third Street for lunch, but if that is too much to ask, I understand.”

“They’re having a prayer circle at the flagpole?” Mrs. Sinclair asked. “Why didn’t you tell me about this before, Truman?”

“I guess I figured you wouldn’t let me leave no matter what, so it wasn’t any use to tell you,” he replied.

“Shucks, Millie. I don’t see any harm in it,” his father said.

“I didn’t realize you two were the praying types,” Mrs. Sinclair said. Obviously my disgust towards religion had been noticed, but Mrs. Sinclair’s observation about Chao had been made entirely with racial profiling.

“During such a time as this, I am looking for answers, Mrs. Sinclair, and I am willing to search anywhere to find them.”

“I shouldn’t be gone too long, Mom,” Truman promised. “I really think it’s important that I go and do this.”

“Alright, fine. But you should come back home for lunch. I’m going to make a pizza.”

It had been settled. The three of us left Truman’s home and set off for *Dorianne’s*. I knew that *Donovan* would not, under any circumstances, leave her home if I came knocking at the door. The same would likely be true if Chao did the same. But Truman? He was our absolute best bet at tricking her. Obviously she would not be willing to come to a Triflers meeting, but if Truman could somehow convince her to come out into the open, then we could

force her. At this point I did not care about trying to remain in *Dorianne's* good graces. The only strategy now was fear. Only fear would keep him quiet. And an old-fashioned kidnapping would serve well in putting some fear into her.

We discussed the plan on the drive over. When we arrived to *Donovan's* street, I let Truman out of the car and continued driving past her house. He frantically ran up to her door and began banging on it like a madman. She answered the door and without hesitation Truman exclaimed, "Dorianne, we've gotta get to the hospital! Mason is hurt!"

"Wh-what are you talking about?" the transgender student questioned.

"I don't know if it was part of Mario's plan or what, but Mason was stabbed last night by one of his cellmates. They rushed him to the hospital, but he's bleeding out. They don't think he's gonna make it. Come on, Dorianne, we have to go see him!"

"O-Okay! Mom! Dad! I've gotta go!" And the two rushed through her yard and into the street.

I pulled my vehicle up right beside them and slammed on the brakes. Chao jumped out of the passenger side, and the two of them grabbed *Donovan* and forced him into the backseat. This, of course, led to screams of protest and outrage, but I think we pulled out of that neighborhood without anybody being wise to our kidnapping.

"Truman, what the fuck?" *Donovan* screamed in angst.

"Somebody take her phone," I ordered.

Letter to Mother

As Truman started patting him down, *Dorianne* began to protest. “I don’t even have my fucking phone. It’s in my room.” I waited for Truman to confirm this.

“What do you want from me?” *Donovan* asked.

“We just need to have a meeting about yesterday’s events,” I informed. “Nothing more, nothing less. It will be a brisk hour or two and then we will return you home.”

“Well you fuckers didn’t have to kidnap me in the middle of the street and scare me half to death. Jesus Christ.”

“Perhaps if you answered my phone calls, we would not have to resort to such unwanted behaviors,” I replied.

To this she said nothing.

On the drive from *Donovan’s* to *Chao’s*, I began to feel an intenseness of anxiety. It could have been my mind playing tricks on me, but I could have sworn that the black vehicle driving behind me had also been in our vicinity while we were picking up Truman. Were the police following me? Had they just witnessed our kidnapping? Or was it merely a coincidence? I had to try my best to keep a cool head and resume my plan.

We arrived at *Chao’s* house around 11 and entered. Miss Feng, having decided that a school shooting at her son’s school in no way affected her ability to clean sheets, was at the hotel, so she was not there to greet us with delectable foods. We entered the basement, and I stood watching as the three of them took their places on the couch.

I felt a pitiful expression grow on my face as I observed the three Triflers sitting on the couch. Not too long ago it seemed as though our group was a thriving, growing community, and now we were barely threaded together as though a hungry cancer had been eating away at us. Surely I would feel better when Chao's uncle returned home from work, but the shrunken group staring at me from the couch did little to damper my sullen mood.

As much as I wanted to wait for Chao's uncle's arrival before spouting off my big speech, it was clear that time was of the essence. Truman's parents were expecting him home within the time it takes a group of teenagers to pray (a length of time which I was and still am completely ignorant of), and *Dorianne* was visibly antsy about getting out of there. All I needed to do was strike fear into her heart. So much fear that she would not dare speak to the police about our actions as Triflers. After doing so, they would all be free to go. Chao's uncle could be filled in later.

"And then there were four," I said playfully as I began my address. "Wow... I am not sure where to begin with this one. I reason why I found it absolutely mandatory that we meet today is because there have been some vital updates that need to be addressed in person.

"Despite what you may read or hear, Mario's actions yesterday were entirely of his own volition. He was mistaken in believing that I had any desire in joining him in his rampage. I believe our meetings here as Triflers had confused him into thinking that we value and support all acts of violence. This, of course, could not be further from the truth.

"From the beginning, it has been the mission of the Triflers to seek out undiscovered truths. Our methods in acquiring this information may obviously prove to be dastardly to some, but they have been

Letter to Mother

undeniably proven to bear tangible results. We hurt people for the sake of scientific discovery. We wish to reveal the unknown bounds and capabilities of the human body, mind, and spirit. Unless our actions lead to these types of discoveries, there is absolutely no justification in hurting people. This is something that Mario clearly did not understand. His actions yesterday did not reflect a yearning for scientific discovery—they were rooted only in hatred and vengeance. Mario's actions in no way are reflective of the principles and beliefs held by this assembly.

“The unfortunate truth of the matter is that not everybody sees it this way. There are those out there who believe that Mario's beliefs are reflective of those closest to him, and unfortunately thanks to his manifesto our group has been revealed as being just that. All of us are now going to be held under extreme scrutiny. This is why I needed all of us to meet together today. It should be clear that each and every one of us is now responsible of the fates of the rest—for if even one of us falls victim to the now scrutinizing eyes, then all of us will suffer for it. And when I say suffer I truly mean it.

“Yes, if even one of us reveals the Triflers' secrets to the public, then there will be hell to pay for each and every one of us. The only—” but my speech was cut short as the basement door slammed open.

“Honey, I'm home!” Chao's uncle exclaimed as he entered the room. “And I've got a gift for all of you!”

“This is certainly a surprise,” I said. “I thought you worked until noon.”

“That I did, but when I heard we were having an emergency meeting, I decided to leave a little early today,” Chao's uncle

stated. “But that’s not all. I figured after what happened yesterday everyone would be down in the dumps, so I brought you all a surprise. It’s waiting upstairs.”

My heart sank. I had a pretty good idea what Chao’s uncle’s surprise was, and it was the last thing we needed.

We followed the man upstairs, and my suspicion was confirmed. Lying upon the floor in front of the entryway was an unconscious burly man with his wrists tied together.

“This fellow’s name is Milos Stojanovic,” Chao’s uncle said. “Visiting from Serbia. No English at all. I figured you all needed a pick-me-up, so I did a bit more than just pick him up.”

I immediately thought of the black vehicle that had been following me. Were the police outside Chao’s domicile right now keeping surveillance? Had they just witnessed Chao’s uncle drag an unconscious man out of his taxi cab and into his home?

“This is not good,” I said. “The police are on to us now, Tao. Thanks to Mario they have promised to keep a close eye on this group. This is no time for experiments!”

“Well shit, nobody told me,” Chao’s uncle said.

As much as I wanted to be angry with Chao’s uncle, I could not help but be thankful for his noble intentions. He was right—a bit of experimentation would serve as a fine stress reliever in this highly stressful time. Besides, I had just given my fellow Triflers a speech about how experimentation was the purpose of our group. How would it look if I now ridiculed our eldest member for providing us with an experiment? Additionally, the Serbian man was already

Letter to Mother

inside the house. If the police had noticed, then we were already in hot water anyway. If they had not... What would be the harm in utilizing our human guinea pig?

"I apologize for my harsh tone," I stated. "You were only trying to do what you thought was the right thing, and I can respect that. As the expression goes: When life hands you lemons..."

"You can't be serious," *Donovan* said. "After all that shit you just told us about scrutinizing eyes you want to go and do something extremely dangerous like this? The day after the fucking shooting? You're all out of your minds."

"Please watch your language, *Dorianne*," I requested. "And the test subject is already in the building, so the riskiest portion of the operation is already complete. Are you really suggesting that we allow him to leave this place with his life? That seems like the riskiest option in my mind. No, now that he is here he can only leave in a body bag, and we might as well test his limits before putting him in one."

"Can we at least make it fast, please?" *Truman* asked. "I don't mean to be a bother, but my parents are going to start wondering where I am. We definitely don't want them to show up here looking for me."

"Yes, I agree. We definitely do not want that."

"And why can't we just let him go?" *Dorianne* asked. "He's passed out cold. What's the harm in just loading him back into the car and leaving him in the middle of nowhere?"

“You are a fool if you do not see the inherent flaw in your logic,” I replied. “Your question is hardly worth an answer, but just in case you truly are completely mentally inept, I will grant one. This man has already seen Tao’s face. The last thing he remembers before being knocked out was getting into Tao’s taxi. I am not sure how many Asian men work as taxi drivers at the airport, but surely our Serbian friend here would be able to pick out Tao in a lineup if he needed to. The answer is simply this: For Tao’s protection we must not let this man go free. If it was your face he had seen, then you, beyond a shadow of a doubt, would be urging us to ensure that this man never saw the light of day again. Surely you already knew this answer, and you were only trying to play dumb.”

Donovan scrunched his face up like an angry old man. “I just want to go home,” she said.

“We shall all go home in due time,” I answered. “But for the time being our civic duty calls.”

The sheep solemnly followed their shepherd down the stairs and into the basement—none of us wholly aware that this would be our final Triflers meeting. I sat upon the faux-leather couch and watched as my companions set up our operation. Truman laid the tarp upon the floor, and Chao’s uncle tied the sleeping Serbian to the wooden chair.

“On second thought, remove his clothes,” I stated. “We are on a time crunch after all. Best we skip ahead straight to the main event.”

“Oh fuck,” *Dorianne* groaned.

“You want to try the cactus jar again?” Chao’s uncle asked.

Letter to Mother

“Our previous attempt at data-collecting was inconclusive,” I reported. “There is no reason to skip a perfectly viable experiment.”

“Except for the fact that it has already been proven that a man would rather get shot in the chest than stick that jar up his ass. You already got the data you needed with that experiment,” *Dorianne* said.

“You are correct,” I said. “Perhaps the jar is too much for a man. A woman such as yourself, on the other hand, might yield a more entertaining result. Are you volunteering?”

“Oh fuck you,” he answered.

“Unless you are volunteering, *Dorianne*, I would suggest you do not complain about which experiments I choose.”

The Serbian man did not wake as Chao and his uncle untied him from the chair and began to remove his clothing. Truman retrieved the jar from the toolbox beneath the bathroom sink. Our lab rat nude, Chao’s uncle obtained his handgun from the desk drawer and fired up the translator. My fellow Triflers joined me on the couch. Everything was in place.

The Serbian was lying naked upon the floor untethered. Beside him sat something that would surely be much more difficult getting out than getting in (for all I know). In hindsight, we probably should have tied his wrists and ankles together before waking him, but we intended on immediately forcing him by gunpoint to anally insert the cactus jar, so tying him up seemed pointless as it would only lead to an immediate untying. We should have taken the

precaution—we had no idea how dangerous our specimen was capable of being.

Chao's uncle translated his first message. Then, with his gun in one hand and a glass of water in the other, he splashed the H₂O onto the man's face in order to wake him. The Serbian slowly blinked his eyes awake, and his face scrunched up as *Donovan's* had minutes before as he found himself lying naked in a strange space in front of a group of teenagers and a gun-wielding taxi driver.

"Dobar dan," Chao's uncle spoke.

Astonishingly, the Serbian smiled and began to laugh. I assumed it was due to shock, but now I am not so sure. "Dobar dan," the Serbian parroted. "Dobar dan, dobar dan."

In our confusion, none of us were ready as the naked man swung his leg into Chao's uncle's hand, disarming him of the gun. The firearm banged against the wall and was retrieved a second later by the Serbian who had dived across the room after it. Two obnoxious sounds entered my eardrums then: The sound of *Dorianne* screaming and the sound of gunshots. The Serbian fired his new weapon at Chao's uncle. The first shot went through his head—straight through his nose, and the second through his shoulder. Chao was the first off the couch as he hurried to protect his uncle, but, of course, he had arrived too late. Chao was then slain by two bullets.

By this point, the rest of us, Truman, *Dorianne*, and I, had rushed into the bathroom and locked the door. While escaping up the stairs and out of the house would have been preferable, the gunman was currently standing between us and the stairwell, and the

Letter to Mother

bathroom was our best bet at isolating ourselves from the shooter. With the bathroom door locked, the three of us turned the corner and crowded together in the shower in order to hide from any bullets that may have shot through the door. I tried my best to recall how many bullets Chao's uncle's gun held, but I was unable to think clearly. My thoughts were a jumbled mishmash. This was not eight hours in a freezer, and this was not watching safely as Mario walked towards the school, this was sudden, breakneck, berserk danger that I had very little time to think myself out of.

Aside from our heavy breathing, the three of us tried to remain silent as we listened for the sound of movement in the other room. Would the Serbian escape while he still had the chance? Would he attempt to break down the bathroom door and kill us? We had no idea. The only thing we knew for sure was that our antagonist was still in the other room—the sound of movement was definite. I retrieved the carpet knife from the toolbox. Normally I would not be the type of person to bring a knife to a gunfight, but my options in that moment were terribly limited.

“We’re so fucked,” *Dorianne stated*. “We’re going to die. I’m going to die. Because of Dawn fucking Bracken!”

“Watch. Your. Mouth,” I ordered through my rushed breathing. “This is no time to panic, you fool. Control yourself.”

“Oh God, I think he’s coming,” Truman said. “That lock is so cheap, he’s gonna break the door down so easily.”

“We cannot be sure of that,” I whispered, gripping the carpet knife tighter in my hand. When our assailant entered the room, I planned on hiding back while Truman and *Donovan* absorbed the remaining bullets. I then would have the advantage in brawling

with the burly fellow. One swift swipe at his throat would be all it took.

“I fucking hate you all,” *Donovan* said. “You psychopathic, insane, depraved fuckers. I swear to God if we get out of this, I’m going to make you all pay for everything you’ve done. I don’t give a shit what happens to me, I just want to watch you burn, Dawn. I’m gonna make sure you fucking burn alive for this.”

“Enough with the foul language!” I exclaimed, having grown tremendously flustered. Why on Earth was the Serbian still shuffling around in the other room? Either leave the building or break down the bathroom door! Just make a decision!

“Dawn,” Truman said, grabbing me by my free hand. “I need to tell you that I love you.”

I grit my teeth in disgust. “Truman, this is not the time.”

“No Dawn, if we’re going to die, then I need you to know. I’ve loved you ever since the day I met you. No matter what happens you should know that I truly feel blessed to have known you.” He then puckered his lips and leaned in to kiss me. All the while *Dorianne* continued to utter vulgarity after vulgarity, and the Serbian continued to make unidentifiable noise in the adjacent room.

And I just snapped.

For the first time in my entire life, I had a mental breakdown. The harsh reality of my situation caught up with me all in an instant, and I resorted to barbarism. In that moment I finally understood what Mario had been feeling. I knew the thirst for bloody revenge.

Letter to Mother

Before Truman's lips could reach mine, I slashed at his throat with the carpet knife. His face grew panicked, and he slowly began to back into the corner with one hand in a vice grip over the wound.

"Dawn, what the fuck?" *Dorianne* questioned. That four letter word was the last to ever emerge from his lips. I grabbed her by the hair with one hand and continuously slashed at her throat with the other. Even when her throat was a ragged, bloody mess, I continued to slash and swipe and swing my blade into her flesh over and over again. I wanted to cut her for each and every vulgar word he had uttered in my presence. My mind was blank of questioning the Serbian's actions—it was blank of all things other than flaying *Donovan* until I knew she was dead.

When her body was nothing more than a bloody heap, I stood from my crouched position and exited the shower. Truman sat seemingly paralyzed yet still alive huddled in the corner of the room, staring at me with terrified eyes. I stuck the knife in my pocket, and although blood had stained the majority of my body, I turned on the faucet to wash my hands.

It no longer mattered whether the Serbian intended to kill us or not. In my blind rage, I had disposed of my meat shields, so if the man wanted to kill me, he would have an open shot to do so. If the man was still in the basement, then I was going to die. No question about it. But if he had fled, then I needed to get moving. Gripping the knife in my hand, I opened the bathroom door and emerged into the main room of the basement.

Milos was gone, and he had taken his clothes with him (and presumably the gun since I did not see it in the room). What he did leave behind were the two deceased Asian males that were making a mess of the floor (unfortunately for Miss Feng, their bodily fluids

did not restrict themselves to the tarp). Although the violent aggressor had vanished, I was not even close to being out of danger yet. It was a miracle that I had talked myself out of the previous day's massacre—there was no possible way that I would be able to do the same the very next day. The moment the police arrived on the scene a manhunt would form intent on throwing me in prison for the rest of my life. My intellect could not save me now. It was my punishment for resorting to barbarism. Once you cross that line, you are banished from operating solely through cognitive means ever again. I knew it was time to take flight, and I was thankful I had prepared an emergency escape bag the night before.

First things first, I knew I had to dispose of Truman and *Dorianne's* bodies. As I stated at the beginning of this letter, I will not reveal the hiding place, and I doubt anybody will ever find their bodies. I will not reveal why, but while hiding them I mangled them beyond recognition so that even if they were found they could not be identified. Again, for my own safety I cannot reveal why I had to do this.

And that, ultimately, brings us to the present point. After hiding their bodies, I ditched my car, bought a bus ticket, and now here I sit with an aching wrist writing my story to you. I will not tell you the direction in which I am travelling nor my intended destination. What I will disclose is that I have no intention of deserting my ambitions. I will admit, my first attempt at Trifling ended disastrously, but I have learned from my failures. Now is the time for me to regroup and start a new Triflers 2.0 someplace far away.

I have often pondered what it takes for a person to become a Trifler. In seeking new recruits, it will be necessary for me to know what to look for. There must have been some sort of common

Letter to Mother

denominator that set Triflers apart from the rest of mankind (to steal a word from Mario: the *normies*), but for a long time I struggled to put my finger on what it was. At first I assumed that all Triflers were raised in single parent households (as is true of myself, Chao, Mario, and Mason) but this hypothesis quickly fell apart when I considered Truman and *Donovan*. I then thought that the noble distinction all Triflers shared was apathy towards death. This thought, too, did not hold water for long.

But now as I sit alone on this bus soaking in my thoughts and recollections about my time with the Triflers, I think I have come to a conclusion. Firstly: I am not a Trifler. Secondly: The one thing all Triflers have in common is that they can be manipulated by me.

It really is as simple as that. The one trait shared by all members of my group was that they did what I told them to do, and when they refused to do so they were forcibly removed. This is the only trait I need to keep my eyes open for in seeking new Triflers. Heed my words, I will start anew very soon, the police will never find me, and I will eventually flourish.

Well, perhaps flourish is not the best word to use. I have learned that no matter how hard I try I will never achieve the level of success I desire. My dreams are too grounded in misery and suffering for them to bear ripe and delicious fruit. If I were pursuing a path of spreading joy and happiness, then my goals would be easily surmountable. For who would not choose to receive joyous feelings if given the opportunity? But this path is too simple. Any dream worth achieving must be difficult in nature, otherwise has one truly accomplished anything? So I will continue grinding down my seemingly impossible path on the road to achieving my life's gruesome dreams, and I will continue to crush and conquer those who attempt to stand in my way.

Dawn Bracken

Alas, I have come to the end of my story, Mother. It bears repeating that every single word of this text is true. I have deceived you for long enough, and now that I am evaporating from your life forever it only seems fair that I share the whole truth with you. After this letter you will never hear from me again. If it helps to numb the pain of reality, I recommend you pretend as though I died in that basement along with the rest of my group.

I apologize again for the daughter I turned out to be. Surely no mother wishes for their child to grow up with the dream of hurting people. I imagine if Mario's mother were still alive, you and she would feel similar pain. Just know that I love you, Mother, and I never intended to hurt you. If things had gone as I planned, then you would not be alone right now. But hold no hope; I absolutely will never be contacting you ever again. Dawn is dead.

Sincerely,

Your Daughter

Chapter 20

-

The Email

Ron Clacker

From: Ron Clacker

Date: Tuesday, April 2, 2013 4:28 AM

To: Curtis Maguire

Subject: Bracken (document enclosed)

Maguire,

I just spent the entire night reading the letter retrieved from the Bracken household. I am seething and nearly blind from rage, but we have no time to lap in frustration.

Yesterday morning, we received a call from Gloria Bracken stating she had gotten a letter in the mail from her missing daughter. The damn thing was a nearly 200-page handwritten confession. I have photocopied the entirety of the document and enclosed it within this email.

Dawn's confession reveals a great amount of troubling information. It is clear that we are dealing with a very dangerous individual. I feel as though my temples are going to burst as I recall that just a week ago we had her in custody, guilty as can be, and we simply let her walk out the door and commit another massacre. There is undoubtedly now blood on our hands, and we must make up for our failures.

Dawn must be dealt with, but we have two other orders of justice to correct. The first is with Mason Elliot. I believe Dawn's document is clear evidence that Mason is innocent. A great injustice has been dealt to a young man. The system

failed him. We must take the necessary actions in order to grant him his freedom.

We must also immediately bring Dakota into custody. I'm not aware of his surname, but you will recall him as being the cousin Mario writes about in his manifesto. Dawn's confession clearly names him as a responsible party in the Ricardo arson that led to Joe Naae's death.

I have searched the databases of every police department in the state and haven't found anything about a man named Milos Stojanovic. If he exists, he's still out there somewhere.

Dawn's story matches the crime scene found at the Chao household. The two men, Andy Chao and Tao Feng, were killed similarly to the way Dawn described. Additionally, blood found both in the bathroom and in the carpet of both the basement and the stairway has been found to match that of both Donovan Reese and Truman Sinclair.

As far as Dawn's whereabouts, I am unsure. Her confession letter only states that she is travelling by bus and nothing more. I am going to dedicate the entirety of my being to this case. Several heinous, unforgivable injustices have been served by the hands of this sixteen-year-old girl, and it is my duty to ensure nobody else falls victim to her evil games. Rest assured, I will bring justice to Dawn Bracken.

Clacker

Chapter 21

-

The Travel Log

log #7 – Dawn actually went through with it today. i didnt think it was a good idea, but she did it anyway. now her long hair is gone and its probably gonna take her years to grow it back to the length it was. but she doesnt even seem to care. she looks like a completely different person as a blonde now. which i guess is what she was going for anyway. but she still looks as beautiful as ever.

log #8 – Dawn spent some of what little money we have left on a pocket-sized thesaurus. i dont know why she cares so much about people thinking shes smarter than she is. i think its better to just use whatever words come naturally.

The Travel Log

log #9 – Dawn has been writing her letter nonstop for the last four hours. she hasn't said a word the whole time. it's been pretty boring.

log #10 – took a nap and woke up from a nightmare. i was cutting dorianne's throat. i know i had to do it. i know she was going to get us arrested. but it still felt horrible. i hope i never have to do that again.

log #11 – conversation with Dawn:
[me] how is your letter coming along?
[Dawn] fine
[end of conversation]

Truman Sinclair

log #12 – never had a
buzz-cut before until
now. always wanted to
try it but mom thought it
would look bad. i think
she was right, i dont
really like it. but Dawn
said ill get used to it.

log #13 – i glance at Dawns
letter from time to time.
masons name sure is in there
a lot. and marios. i dont think
shes writing about me much
at all. i dont know if thats
good or bad

log #14 – Dawn has officially
been writing all day today and
she says she isnt even halfway
done.

The Travel Log

log #15 – did not sleep well. bad dreams again. Dawn was still awake when i fell asleep and then she was awake when i woke up. i asked her if she got any sleep. her answer: “yes.”

log #16 – just transferred to a new train. trains are expensive. we should be travelling by bus.

log #17 – Dawn asked to borrow a guys laptop and he actually let her. she wanted to look at marios manifesto. i asked her why and she said it was important for the letter. i dont know why.

Truman Sinclair

log #18 – this is
very boring. i wish
Dawn would talk
to me more.

log #19 – i thought it would
be a good idea to use the laptop
to delete my facebook account
but Dawn said not to.

log #20 – tuna sandwich for
lunch. this money wont last
forever. Dawn said she will
need to buy stamps.

log #21 – she looks so
cute when shes
concentrating hard on
something.

The Travel Log

log #22 – guy sitting across
from me must have noticed
how bored i was. he gave me
a copy of a book called
invisible man. i just finished
reading the prologue. its
pretty weird so far but i kind
of like it. its at least a way to
help pass the time

log #23 – another full day
of Dawn writing her letter.

log #24 – Dawn said we
need to start thinking of
new names. ive never
thought about having a
different name before. i
was thinking i would name
myself after the character in
this book im reading, but he
doesnt have a name.

log #25 – Dawn finished her letter today! im so happy that she finally finished. she promised she would explain everything to me once she finished writing it. she couldnt tell me early because it would “spoil her focus.”

log #26 – we just mailed Dawn’s letter. it was really really long. like two full notebooks worth of stuff. hopefully now we can talk more.

The Travel Log

log #27 – Dawns plan:

Dawn is pretending to write the letter to her mom, but she knows the police will find it. she hopes the trick will make the police trust what she writes

letter objectives:

1: convince the police that i am dead to make our escape easier

2: disclose masons innocence

3: make the police think she is travelling by bus rather than by train

4: take credit for the ricardo fire

log #28 – a question:

“why do you want to
prove mason is
innocent?”

an answer:

“his incarceration is no
longer of value to me.”

log #29 – another question:

“why would you want to
take credit for the ricardo
fire?”

another answer:

“now that i am on the run
there is no reason to feign
innocence. i want those
people to know that i am
the one responsible for
their suffering. i want them
to rue the day they wronged
me.”

The Travel Log

log #30 – a secret question:
why does Dawn care about
letting mason go free for
what he did?

log #31 – Dawn asked me if
i thought of a new name yet.
i said ralph. she doesnt like it.
i will find a better name.

log #32 – new name question:
[me] have you thought of a new
name?
[Dawn] yes i have.
[me] what is it?
[Dawn] i have always been fond
of the name Lilly
[me] (says nothing)

Truman Sinclair

log #33 – an attempt at romance:

[Dawn is sleepy]

[me] you can sleep on my
shoulder.

[Dawn] the armrest is fine.

log #34 – Dawn woke up from
her nap and we talked for a long
time. she hopes we can find a
good place to settle down and get
jobs. i think we will get married
someday. i just have to think of a
new name already.

log #35 – another attempt at
romance:

[me] look how beautiful the sunset
looks on the horizon.

[Dawn] always keep both eyes on
the horizon, truman. always.

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Epilogue

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The Next Entry

April 13th, 2013

I finished moving in to the new place today. Illinois only pays compensation for those wrongfully imprisoned for at least five years. Those bastards stole over four months of my life, and I have nothing to show for it.

The whole time I was in there I felt emotionally numb. Everything, even my depression, was sucked out of me. I was an empty shell of a human being. I was nothing. I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't do anything except the absolute essentials. It was like my body was running on autopilot.

I didn't understand what was happening to me. Lilly's accusations made no sense. The evidence made no sense. None of it made any sense. I knew it was all a lie, but the world thought it was the truth. But then Clacker came to me and made sense of it all. He showed me Dawn's letter. And suddenly I wasn't empty anymore. The entirety of my being was filled to the brim with hatred. It is all I am now.

I was so blind before. I allowed my love for Dawn to blind my judgment. I had no idea I was dealing with the most dangerous sociopath I would ever meet. She can't be human. No human being can be capable of the atrocities she has committed.

Lilly is living in Oklahoma with Aunt Pamela now. I haven't tried contacting her. I know why she did what she did. I understand it completely. I'm not angry with her. But I feel no desire to talk to her. I feel no desire to do anything except one thing.

The Next Entry

I'm not going to bother going back to school. They have nothing for me. I don't need it. Clacker offered me a job as a consultant on the Dawn case. With pay and everything. Not that the pay matters. He thinks I will have valuable insight that will help us track down Dawn. I hope I can be of help.

I was right when I wrote that someday I would look back on my old problems and they would all seem trivial. Crushing on two different girls, Lilly wanting a cellphone, struggling with depression—it all seems so ridiculous now. Prison definitely changed me. I now understand real issues.

I think Clacker's favorite word is justice. He keeps on saying that he's going to bring Dawn to justice by arresting her. But I know that's no good. Prison would be too good for her. She would find a way to twist and manipulate it into feeling like some sort of paradise. A being as evil as her cannot be allowed to live.

I don't care about the repercussions. It's not like I have anything else left to live for now anyway. The moment we find Dawn, I'm going to kill her.

