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Short Story Samples

Cheaters

“Commitment? What does that word even mean these days? It appears commitment has become just another word. A word to trick people into believing that they will always be the only flower in the garden. A fool I was to think that a man of such prestige would be loyal to a lowly woman as myself. I probably should’ve taken my friend’s advice and given the guy at the museum a chance. But my inner hypergamy got the best of me is suppose.” Melissa thought, looking out the window at the city that had a chilly vibe to it.

Melissa gripped the ends of the chair, reminiscing about the delightful, shared, experiences between her and her husband. You could say that she was in the process of experiencing a climax while reminiscing about the passionate love. But all good things must come to an end unfortunately, regardless of how pleasurable they may be. A sudden smile appeared but disappeared as the doors opened behind her.

A total of twelve individuals, eight women, and four men walked into the room while chatting with one another. The group greeted Melissa with smiles but the attitude they gave off was nonchalant, to say the least. Melissa looked up at the clock on the wall and realized that time had passed, faster than she had expected.

Moments later, Dr. Moodi walked into the office, greeted everyone, and sat across from Melissa. The other members of the group sat in their respective chairs next to one another. A few members of the group gave off the impression that they didn’t want to attend the session, while it was clear that others had no choice but to be there. Melissa just sat there, looking as if she was the only person in the room, even though she wasn’t the other only one trying to cope with relationship issues.

Dr. Moodi picked up a binder that was sitting on her desk, opened it, and began to read Melissa’s file. Dr. Moodi looked across at Melissa and watched as a stream of tears fell from her eyes.

“Mrs. Jones?” Dr. Moodi said calmly.

Melissa turned and looked at Dr. Moodi, “I apologize I’m just....”

Dr. Moodi cut off Melissa, “There’s no reason to apologize, Mrs. Jones. We are all here for the same reason, trying to get to the root of what caused our relationships to go to shit in a handbasket. The questions I here are usually as followed: ‘Why did he/she leave me? Why did she lie? What was wrong with me? What did I do to cause all this?’”

Dr. Moodi closed the binder and sat it on her lap, "Your situation isn't any different from those sitting here today. I say that not to make it seem as though your problems are irrelevant, just to inform you that we are all in this together, as a family."

"No offense, Dr. Moodi, but I don't know if that makes me any more comfortable." Melissa chuckled while attempting to hide her distress.

Dr. Moodi picked up a box of tissues and handed them to Melissa. Melissa took the box of tissues, pulled out one, and sat the box back down on the table. The atmosphere became thick but the transition to tense made it even more uncomfortable for the sobbing Melissa who sat across from Dr. Moodi.

For 15 years, Dr. Moodi has analyzed the behavior of those who experience mild-to-severe forms of trauma. You can say that her demeanor is rather cold, yet, compassionate. She is exceptional at analyzing body language, facial expressions, subtle and crude gestures, but her greatest feat is being able to read between the lines when her clients are unable to articulate their position(s). She can be rather brash and demanding at times, but she only does that because she knows what's best for her client(s). After all, withholding information does nothing but stall the rehabilitation process.

Dr. Moodi sat back in her chair, straightened the glasses that sat gently between her nose and eyes, and turned to a blank page in her binder. Melissa placed her hand on her chest and took a deep breath.

"It's ok. I understand that these situations can be rather uncomfortable at first. We are not here to judge you. We are here to console you and ensure that we become the family that you need." Dr. Moodi said with a compassionate tone.

Melissa balled the tissue up in her hand, "I did everything right. I was a good wife, I cooked, cleaned, I made sure her needs were met. But it wasn't enough. Why would he...." Melissa cried.

Dr. Moodi focused on Melissa's wedding ring, "Take me back to the beginning, Mrs. Jones. Take me back to the day when you and your husband met."

A smile appeared on Melissa's face, "I was standing at the bus stop on 142nd Avenue. It was a chilly day, to say the least, but the gentle breeze made the day more comfortable. 30 minutes had passed and still, my bus had yet to arrive. I assumed that it was a delay since nothing is ever on time in the city."

Dr. Moodi interrupted Melissa, "And what did you do next? Did you wait on the bus, or did you find another means of transportation?"

Melissa wiped the tears from her eyes and looked back outside the window, “No, like a fool, I walked across the street, into the café, sat at a table, and ordered my favorite drink – A caramel frappe with whip cream on top and a drizzle of chocolate syrup.”

“Do you usually purchase that drink when your things aren’t going as planned?” Dr. Moodi asked while taking notes.

Melissa thought to herself before responding, “Actually...yes. Whenever I feel anxious or is as though things will not go as planned, I order that same drink – caramel frappe with whip cream on top.”

Dr. Moodi sat her binder and pen between her legs and crossed her fingers, “It has been proven that through hardship, as humans, we seem to escape to certain outlets that make us feel comfortable. I can relate since there was a time when I would find comfort in consuming alcohol at high volume.”

Melissa sits back in the chair and grips the handles, “Are you saying that I have an addiction?” Melissa asked with curiosity.

“Not necessarily. What I am saying is that humans are animals that prefer comfort. Since our existence, we have found ways to cope with the hardship that comes with being human. For example, when our ancestors, migrated west and began to experience colder temperatures, they found ways to find warmth. Some through animal skins, others through advancing technology.” Dr. Moodi said while analyzing Melissa’s body language.

“Well... it’s not as if caffeine is a drug or anything.” Melissa stuttered.

Dr. Moodi corrected Melissa, “Actually, studies have shown that caffeine addiction is more common than many narcotic addictions.”

Melissa began to feel uncomfortable. Melissa stood up in the chair and held her chest, “I think I should go. I thought I would be ready for this but it is clear that I am not.”

Dr. Moodi got up from the chair, walked up to the door, and opened it, “Do as you will but the session will continue. After all, your problems are not unique and there will be many to come after you. I have seen many patients come in with the same issues – infidelity, lack of trust, and countless other affairs wrapped in one.”

The statement made Melissa stop in her tracks.

Melissa sat back down in the chair and placed her hand over her heart, "I apologize. The pain has become too much to bear, and it feels as though depression has become more than just a pass time."

Dr. Moodi walked up to Melissa and set a cup of tea down on the table. Melissa picked up the cup of trembling, trembling as she attempted to take a sip from the cup of tea. Dr. Moodi walked back over to her seat, sat down, crossed her legs, and turned to a new page in his binder.

"This particular café? Was it your first time attending this establishment?" Dr. Moodi asked while creating a diagram.

Melissa took a sip from the cup of tea, "Yes. I had heard great things about the establishment, but I am too much of a socially awkward individual to go places by myself. I don't know what made that day different. I guess the sounds of the city were a little more annoying than usual."

Melissa sat the cup of tea down on the table and wrapped her arms around her body.

"Are you cold?" Dr. Moodi asked in a concerned manner.

"No, just talking about that day brings chills to my body. I mean, it was the first day when I met my soulmate. Well, at least I thought." Melissa said, looking up at the ceiling.

Melissa began to reminisce while still talking to Dr. Moodi, "There were rosy aromas smell that came from the atmosphere. It blended well with notes of caramel, decaf latte, and mocha frappes. It was the first time, in a very long time, that I felt at peace. I mean I do work for one of the most successful tech companies in the city Afterall. Life can be rather hectic when it revolved around work and constant pressure from friends and family to get married."

Dr. Moodi interjected, "Is that the reason why you married so soon? Five months of dating is rather too soon to get involved in such a long-term relationship. The average couple usually dates for two years before even considering marriage." Dr. Moodi asked while drawing lines through the diagram.

Melissa glanced away from Dr. Moodi, "Not exactly. Let me explain further. When he walked into the café, at first, I didn't notice him. I was too busy in my world, trying to decide between calling an Uber or waiting for the next bus which would arrive in an hour. It was only when he approached me that I took notice."

"Excuse me?" He said.

"I looked up and saw a tall, about 6'0, handsome man with black hair standing over me. He was a treat, but it was his smile that blew me away." Melissa said while sipping on the cup of tea.

"I'm assuming he fits the criteria of a high school sweetheart?" Dr. Moodi assumed.

Melissa lit up with curiosity, "How would you have known?"

Dr. Moodi poured herself a cup of tea, "After years of investigating the dynamics between men and women and their preferences, I have concluded that an individual's preferences from middle school to high school dictate the type of partner they will be attracted to as they mature into adulthood. Usually, at first, such individuals seem out of reach. But as you grow older, you are willing to pass up on all the negative traits just to fulfill the past experiences."

Melissa closed her eyes and began to envision the events again, "He was so smooth and so seductive. When he sat across from me, I felt a presence I had never felt before. I would describe it as being euphoric, but it was something even beyond that. He was just so... charismatic."

"Is that Chanel No. 5." He asked as I sipped from the Latte."

"It is," I responded while blushing.

"That's interesting, I bought my mother the same fragrance for Christmas. Well, it does smell delightful on you." He responded as I sipped on the latte that had become a kind of warm."

"Do you mind if I sit?" he asked politely.

"Sure," I responded hesitantly.

He sat across from me as if I was something he had never seen before. He called the waiter over and ordered two more drinks for him and me, "Get her the Pumpkin Cheesecake Ale and get me a Brownie Frappe."

"Sure!" The waiter replied.

"The waiter walked away and left me and him alone. I was quite nervous, but the smell of his fragrance calmed my nerves. Would I be a fool to say I wasn't a tad bit too nervous?" Melissa asked Dr. Moodi, signaling she is never full of herself.

"It's understandable. Once you encounter someone who fits the criteria of what you've always wanted, it can become quite intimidating," Dr. Moodi replied.

"I remember introducing myself to him. He introduced himself as John, but his real name was Johnathan. I chuckled because my childhood sweetheart's name was Johnathan. That is a story in itself. After that, we hit it off and began to have lunch with one another. He took me to a restaurant on 3rd avenue. He ordered my favorite, crab legs, mashed potatoes, and asparagus. It was one of the best dates I had experienced."

Dr. Moodi scooted in her chair, "Exactly, what did he order?"

Melissa wondered before responding, "If I can remember, a turkey dinner with a side of cabbage and mash potatoes."

Dr. Moodi became interested, "Very similar to the meal you purchased. That is a sign that he wanted to make sure you were comfortable. Most men on the first date, usually, order meals that are similar to their dates."

Melissa finished the rest of the tea in her cup and placed it on the table, "Six months had passed, and he finally committed to me. We were out at our favorite sushi restaurant, and he proposed to me. I can't say that I was shocked. I mean, the signs were on full display. It didn't feel real until the wedding came around. It was beautiful. All our friends and family were there. I thought we would live happily ever after. But not all stories have happy endings. As time went on, during our marriage, he became distant. I would ask if everything was ok, but he would push me away as if I wasn't even there or question my motives"

Dr. Moodi interrupted, "Those are usually the first signs of an affair. But continue."

"I pushed those thoughts away in my head. One day, I walked in, coming from a long day at work, and heard moaning coming from upstairs. I rushed upstairs, thinking something was wrong with my husband. I rushed into the room and saw him in bed with my best friend, Charles."

Dr. Moodi placed her hand on her chest, "My goodness, I know that had to hurt."

Melissa wiped her eyes, "It did. It did."

After the affair, Melissa and Johnathan split up and moved across the country away from one another. Melissa hasn't heard anything from Johnathan since. Unfortunately, Johnathan is somewhere living the same life as someone else. But something tells me that this affair may cost him more than just a wedding ring.

The Phantom From Afar

“So I hear you’ve traveled all this way to find the true “source” of humanity, is that correct?” The geneticist said, leading me to my own, personal, laboratory.

“Yes, my kind sir. What I’m looking for is something that will change the very fabric of what humanity is.” I replied, observing the immaculate architecture of the facility which had to have been at least a decade old.

The director of the facility looked at me as if I was a fool, searching for something that doesn’t even exist. I paid him no mind since I was a man of faith and knew the potential that awaited humanity if I got my hands on it.

He smiled, pretending that he was interested, “Such a task would take years. Are you sure you are up for such a challenge?”

It was as if he was suspecting that I was there for something else, other than scientific discovery.

I responded politely, “My father used to tell me that if a man has the power to change the world and he does nothing, he has wasted the only gift that God has gave him – action.”

“You must’ve had a wise father.” He said, looking at me out the corner of his eyes.

After minutes of navigating the very complex facility on the third floor, we finally made it to our destination. He entered in the code, “6-5-9-4”, and opened the door to a laboratory that resembled the one I saw in the presentation.

I stepped in, observed the laboratory, and quickly fell in love with how neat and organized the laboratory was.

The director reached in his suit pocket, pulled out a card, and sat it on a desk, “You will need that code to enter the facility and your laboratory. If you are ever to find yourself locked out, all you have to do is call maintenance and they will get you in. Is there anything else I can do for you, Dr. Smolden.”

“No, you have done well,” I said, still analyzing the entire laboratory.

He smiled and walked out of the laboratory to leave me to myself. I sat my briefcase on the desk and the sound of waves from the ocean caught my attention. I walked over to a window, which was right next to my desk, to get a view of the ocean

that was right off the coast of the Pacific Ocean. It was a rather beautiful sight, to say the least. Never did I think something so bland could also be so beautiful, but humanity has taught me that even the deformed has a glimpse of beauty somewhere.

The voice of a woman came across my shoulder, "You must be Dr. Smolden."

I turned around and saw a young, beautiful, brunette who was holding a stack of papers and a cup of coffee.

She reached out her hand to greet me, "Hi, my name is Melissa Fort. We talked on the phone earlier?"

I reached out and shook her hand, feeling as if I had seen her before.

"I'm sorry, but have we met before?" I probed.

"I don't believe so." She said while shuffling the papers in her hand.

I wasn't convinced but I continued with the conversation to ensure that we were on the same page. She was going to be my assistant after all and it would be foolish for me not to at least build a relationship with the only person who would be at my side for the next few years.

"Well, seeing that you came prepared, I guess we can start our research today. As you know, I am in search of the source of humanity – the matter which gave birth to this beautiful, yet, imperfect planet.

"No disrespect, Dr. Smolden, but I hear such a thing is a myth," Melissa said, looking at me as if I was a fool searching for fool's gold.

"In science, my dear, the only way to discover if something is a myth is by using the scientific method. Only results will show the true nature of truth." I replied.

"Very well." She replied while inserting a special code on the screen.

A picture of a map pulled up from the projector. Melissa took a laser and pointed at a section of the island which was blocked off from the rest of the facility.

"After conducting countless hours of research, I was able to stumble upon an ancient text from a tribe that used to inhabit this island. The text states that an unknown source of the matter was buried with a great warrior who saved his people from a demon that appeared in the night. If my sources are correct, this is where we have to go if we want to recover the source." She said.

I walked up to the map to get a closer look and was astonished.

"She must've spent countless hours conducting research." I thought.

I turned and looked Melissa in the eyes, "Gear up, we are taking a trip tomorrow."

One year later

The sun was beaming down on our almost malnourished bodies, feeding on the psyche of men who were destined to save this planet. Melissa stood at my side like a loyal assistant should, shoveling away at the dirt with the same shovel I was using before taking my break. Standing across from us was a group of tribesmen, operating heavy machinery to dig beneath the surface of the island.

"Do you think we are getting close, sir?" Melissa said while sweating heavily.

I looked at the map and glued my eyes onto the area we were digging on. I looked closer and saw that we were digging in the area where the source was last buried.

"We should be getting closer," I said, gazing off into the sun that was as relentless as the pesky mosquitoes that covered my body.

I stood up, walked over to Melissa, and offered my assistance. I picked up a shovel and dug in the same area as Melissa was digging while singing a tune that came from my village. Melissa looked over at me, stunned that I knew such a melody.

"I never knew that you were a singer, Dr." She said, splashing the dirt on the side of the hole.

"You never asked me, my dear," I replied.

"If you don't mind me asking, sir, what motivates you to continue on this journey even though all you know is a disappointment." She asked.

Such a question made me go back and relive the day I arrived at the village, lost and without a home. I was new to this world and I found navigating it to be quite harsh, especially since I was a foreigner in this land. When I arrived at the village, I was accepted with open arms. I expected this place to be similar to the new world – a rather bleak and unfriendly place. I was taken away by the beauty of the people and how they looked after their neighbors. This contradicted everything I had learned about humanity before. At first, I thought that saving humanity from its dark future was hopeless, but the people of the village showed me that there was hope after all.

I looked over at Melissa, "Because I promised my friends and family, back at the village, that in return for their hospitality and treating me as an equal, that I would do

everything I can to ensure that humanity's extinction becomes nothing but a fairy tale for years to come."

Melissa smiled as if she had finally found her purpose in life. I'm not going to lie, I felt a sense of warmth that I had never felt before. Humanity had turned me into quite a monster over the years so expecting warmth was like expecting the birth of a new Ice Age.

After hours of digging, we made our way to rock, oozing in a form of matter we had never seen before.

"Melissa, please, hand me my gloves and a test tube," I said while digging in the back of my pockets.

Melissa handed me a pair of gloves and a test tube. In the test tube, was a dead plant that hadn't received water in almost a month? If my calculations were correct, this matter would be able to replenish the soul of the plant and bring back life. I scooped a sample into the tubes and watched as small strains of leaves, slowly, grew on the tips of the branches.

"Fascinating, if we found a way to speed up the replenish process, we would be able to build gardens in a matter of minutes," I said while completely amazed at the process.

Melissa walked up and began to scoop the matter into a large jar.

She smiled, "I believe we have found the source, doctor."

Six Months Later

Six months had passed and every single test conducted, involving the source, was complete. I was able to revive deteriorating bacteria, create water from dust, and reconstruct decaying DNA that left with the world so long ago. In a way, I felt as if I was the God that humanity had spoken of all this time.

I sat in the corner of the laboratory, looking outside the window, "What a man could do with such power." I thought while staring out into the Pacific Ocean.

I was quite amazed at how, soundly, the waves moved with the reflection from the sun. It was like a beautiful symphony was being played before my very eyes. As a man of science, I usually don't pay attention to the philosophies of religion or things that are related to the "spiritual realm." But on that day, I felt a sudden presence,

looking over my shoulder. Of course, I had a feeling that I and this presence had come in contact before, but I paid it no mind and continued on my journey of wondering how a people could, possibly, create such a beautiful thing.

Melissa walked into the room, carrying two cups of coffee in a tray, wearing a smile I had never seen before.

"Someone's up early." She said, smiling and handing me a cup of coffee.

I kindly replied, "Always. A man of science has no choice but to greet the sun with the utmost of respect."

I took a sip of the coffee but my tranquil state was interrupted at the sound of my AI informing me that a sample of the source was complete, "Sample 1015 ready for discharge."

"So soon?" I said, thinking of the potential results that I had been waiting for, for months.

I rushed over to my work desk, logged into my computer, and watched as the test tube, carrying the substance, slid on my desk. I entered in the code, "Release Sample 1015."

"Releasing Sample 1015." The artificial intelligence said as the test tube was released from the grips of the robotic clamp.

I slid on a pair of latex gloves, carefully picked up the test tube, and analyzed the source as it replicated into tiny cells. What I saw blew me away. The matter was finally replicating at the rate in which I wanted. Now, nothing could stop me from achieving my goal and bringing life back to a species that was on the brink of extinction.

"Melissa, come look," I said.

Melissa ran over to where I was standing and watched as the source mutated into different strands.

She was excited, "We did it, Dr. We did it."

"Yes we did, my dear," I replied with a smile on my face.

"Here, I will go grab some food for us to celebrate," Melissa said while skipping across the laboratory.

Melissa skipped out of the laboratory and left me to admire my work. Suddenly, I saw that I was receiving a video call from a friend back in the village. It had been a very long time since we had spoken to one another, about two years I would say, so I wasted no time in answering the call. Before I could say a word or receive words of

rejoicing, I was caught off guard at the black smoke, coming from the house that I had lived in since childhood.

“Jason, can you hear me?” He whispered, trying not to bring attention to where he was hiding.

“Jeffrey? What is going on?” I said while feeling a bit concerned.

“It’s the soldiers, Smolden. They have infiltrated the village. They are looking for something, I just don’t know what it is.” He whispered while looking over his shoulder.

I opened up my satellite application and began to search for an escape route, “Can you get out of there, Jeffrey?”

“Unfortunately, I can’t. The soldiers have blocked off all escape routes.” He whispered.

I scanned the area for whatever remaining routes were left in the area. It seemed as though they were all blocked off, but I remembered an escape route that was located directly underneath our house, linked to the basement cellar.

“Jeffrey, I know of an escape,” I said, rushing my words.

Before I could give Jeffrey the coordinates, a soldier walked into the house and hit Jeffrey in the back of the head.

I screamed out in anger, “Jeffrey!”

The video cut off, causing me to toss the materials from my desk in a fit of rage. I began to run the various test on the video recording, trying to find a way to gain access to the signal, so I could call Jeffrey back. After minutes of scanning, I was finally able to gain access to the signal. I put in the command to call Jeffrey back but the line kept failing. Without hesitation, I turned my attention to the satellite radio attached to my laptop.

“Susan, turn to Channel 425, please?” I asked the AI politely.

The AI began to scan different channels until it made it to the one I commanded. I turned up the volume and was able to listen in on the news which was reporting the incident at the village.

“Good evening, this is Channel 12 news, reporting live from Ashland City. We are here to bring you breaking news. It seems as though Sector 13 has been decimated by the Ashland Army. Based on our reports, there are no remaining survivors in Sector 13. What caused such a travesty? Our reporters are working around the clock to figure out why such a small village fell victim to genocide.” The reporter reported.

"No!" I shouted while feeling as if my heart was about to jump out of my chest.

I turned off the radio and sat back in my chair, wondering how such an atrocity could occur. Melissa walked into the room while carrying energy that could light the soul of any living manner but it did nothing for my heart which turned cold.

"Melissa, can you give me a minute." I said, holding back tears.

"Is everything ok, Dr.?" She asked out of concern.

I was so hurt that I couldn't even face her.

"Everything is fine, my dear," I said.

Melissa walked out of the laboratory, leaving me to show my true nature. In a bliss of rage, I threw my phone against the wall and screamed, "Damn savages!"

I sat back in the chair and got control over my emotions. I, then, got up from the seat, walked over to my computer monitor, and contacted the General from my home planet "Nekuta"

The General of the Army answered, "Mantel, why has it been so long? Are you enjoying your stay on Planet Earth?"

At first, I couldn't answer but my want for revenge forced me to become what I was always destined to become.

"I was wrong, sir, civilizing the human race is a waste of time. They do not have the capabilities of acting on a moral level."

"You don't say?" The general asked. "Very well, we will begin, "Project Gamma" in 30 seconds. I will be sending a team to recover you and the source."

"Very well," I said. "Very well."

Lost In A Mist of Wonder

Tiffany sat in the corner of her bedroom, looking outside the window at the ocean that seemed to be so close that she could feel the breeze creep in through her bedroom window. It was the break of dawn and, like always, the sound of the town's bell rang throughout the entire city like a symphony that was commanding for everyone to head home for the day. Tiffany had grown accustomed to the sounds of the town's bell. After all, it was in the same spot as it was when Tiffany was born which was about 26 years ago.

The sounds of the bell brought joy to everyone who lived within the small town. Some people saw the bell as the pride of their town while others saw it as a symbol of beauty for a town that was already beautiful. Unfortunately, the sound of the bell brought back memories that were beautiful, yet tormenting, for Tiffany who was doing everything in her power not to go back to that dark place.

Tiffany remembered the times when she and her love would sit at the bedroom window, huddled up, watching as the waves made its presence on the beach that had white sands and blue waters to complement its beauty. Although the sea was a sight for joy, it was the sound of the town's bell which always seemed to set the mood for the evening. Throughout the entire town, people would run in the middle of the streets and rejoice as if they had just escaped a decadelong battle. Tiffany, on the other hand, would whisper sweet words into her man's ear as he would run his fingers through her hair.

"I will never leave you, my love." He would whisper.

"And neither will I, my knight and shining armor." She would whisper back

Such memories almost brought Tiffany to tears, but a knock at her bedroom door forced her to hold her composure. She wiped her eyes and took a deep breath to get control over her emotions that were spilling out over her room. She turned and faced the door which gave off an energy that made her feel sort of uneasy.

"Who is it?" Tiffany said while trying to hide any signs of sniffing.

There was no response which made Tiffany feel even more suspicious. Usually, during this time, it would be Tiffany's brother who would be banging on the door to inform her that dinner was ready.

"Maybe he is playing a joke on me." Tiffany thought while trying to rationalize this bizarre feeling that was boiling inside of her.

Suddenly, the door slowly opened and all that was standing in the doorway was a tunnel of darkness with voices echoing in and out. Tiffany leaned in to get a closer look, but all she could see was a pitch of darkness, that seemed to lead to nowhere but a never-ending loop of echoes and bleakness.

"What's this?" Tiffany said as she slowly got up from her seat.

Suddenly a voice from a secret admirer echoed from the doorway, "Tiffany, come to me, my love."

Her heart stopped as she knew the voice that was coming from the other end of the door.

"It can't be." She thought while trying to rationalize what she was hearing.

She slowly crept towards the door while relieving herself from any apprehension that was present. She made her way to the doorway, stood there, and closed her eyes while taking in everything that the voice was telling her.

"Come closer, my love. Come closer." The voice repeated.

Tiffany took a step forward and stepped into the darkness that was as chilly as the breeze that came from the ocean. In such a state of being, you would expect a woman to quiver in the wake of darkness, but Tiffany embraced it as if she was expecting for light to be at the end of the tunnel. Luckily for her, there was.

Tiffany opened her eyes and realized that she was standing in the middle of the grassy field which was located right outside of the town. She looked around in amazement, as she knew exactly where she was.

"It can't be," Tiffany said while running her hand through the grass that stood high in the fields.

Suddenly the familiar voice made its presence again, "I knew you would hear my voice."

Tiffany turned around and saw that it was David, her fiancé, who was standing in front of her while wearing the military suit that he wore when he graduated from the academy. Tiffany was speechless. David walked up to Tiffany and placed both his hands on her shoulder. He looked into her eyes and his glistening smile made Tiffany melt into his arms.

"David, I thought I would never see you again," Tiffany said with tears pouring from her eyes.

"I told you that I would always come back for you, Tiffany," David said, holding Tiffany, tightly, in his arms.

"You did. I remember you told me when we were sitting in my bedroom, listening as the bell ringing throughout the city." Tiffany added.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Run, and this time I will count to twenty." David said, smiling as if he had something under his sleeve.

David turned his back to Tiffany and began to count, as Tiffany took off and skipped through the grassy fields with the wind blowing through her golden-colored hair. Tiffany could hear David getting to the final count, so she hid behind a tree that was about a couple yards away from where David was standing. After making the count, David turned around and looked out into the grassy fields, trying to spot any hiding spots that would be obvious.

As David crept through the fields, Tiffany placed her hand around her mouth to ensure that she would not give herself away so easily. David crept around the fields while trying to sniff out the scent that always seemed to follow Tiffany.

"A smell of rosemary mixed with Lilly," David said while looking around the corner of a large boulder that sat in the middle of the grassy field.

He sniffed until he made his way to the tree that Tiffany was hiding behind. David could hear Tiffany giggle, but he played it off as if he had no clue where she was.

"I guess I'm going to have to head back in town," David said while looking over his shoulder.

Suddenly, Tiffany turned her head and saw David standing beside her. He wrapped his arms around her, and together they fell to the floor and made love while the sun beamed down onto their bodies.

"Promise me you won't leave me again," Tiffany said with her hand sliding down David's cheek.

"I promise," David replied while kissing Tiffany on the neck.

Out of nowhere, Tiffany began to hear the sound of children cheering. Tiffany opened her eyes, sweating, and looked around her room as if she had seen a figure who was not supposed to be there. She turned and saw that David was not there and all that did was bring her into an emotional state that would be detrimental to her mental health.

"Why? Why can't I have him!" She sobbed as the sound of the town's bell tried to overpower her tone.

Suddenly, her bedroom door opened up, giving her permission to enter at her own will.

“Come, my love, come.” David’s voice whispered from the hallway.

Tiffany got up from her bed and slowly walked towards the door.

“I knew you would come back, my love. I knew you would come back.” Tiffany said as she tripped over the tears that were falling from her face.

Tiffany walked into the hallway of darkness, and the door closed shut behind her. This time she would be with David for eternity. Or so she thought. The bell just kept ringing and all that was left was abandoned buildings and an ocean without a beach.

Novelette and Novella Samples

A Note From Yesterday

Chapter One:

Nerdy Girls Don't Cry

Living in the big city can be tough, especially when you wake up in the morning, and the only thing you have to look forward to is rats, subways, sirens, and faces that seem to replicate one another like a mirror house at a circus. They say that if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere, but I question the validity of such a statement. The nature of the people who wonder this concrete jungle, we call New York City, have made me realize that all walks of life wonder this terrane.

The city is filled with so much to do, but what is a girl supposed to do in such a big city? It seems as if the only company I have are social media feeds and a diary which is on its last pages. I supposed you think I'm talking about the girl next door who was the most popular girl in school, the captain of the cheerleading squad, and the one who always seemed to have a secret admirer. If this is one of those stories you were expecting, I hate to break it to you, but you've lucked out.

My name is Rhonda Wines and I am far from your average diva, pretentious gold-digger, entitled brat, and, no, I was not the leader of the cheerleading squad when I was in high school. I am your typical nerdy, introverted, good girl who takes the subway to work, goes to cafes to read the latest erotica, and stay up all night, in my living room, and watch soap operas while envisioning myself receiving a kiss from that hot-hunk on the tv screen. Yeah, my life is boring, I know.

It was 5:30 on a sunny, evening, day in Brooklyn, and there I was, sitting on the bus while looking outside the window at the architecture which makes Brooklyn so beautiful. I moved here to New York, about ten years after I graduated from The University of Illinois for a job opportunity. It was a position for a financial advisor for one of the biggest banks in Manhattan. Do you think I was going to pass that up? Hell No!

I received praise from fellow teachers, mentors, and friends who gave a damn about my sanity, but my parents had some choice words with my decisions. I remember when my parents, especially my mother, scolded me when they found out that I was moving to the big apple.

I can just hear my mother's voice ringing through my ear, "Why would you want to go to such a dirty city."

Then my father, “New York is a tough city. Those people will eat you up and spit you out.”

Of course, I knew my parents wanted the best for me, and they were just looking out for my well-being. But New York City beats the icy suburbs of Cook County every day of the week.

As I began to dose off, the smell of decaffeinated Verona gave me a sudden boost of energy that wasn’t supposed to be there. I had just got done working a double shift back at the office and I was exhausted. Word of advice, if you are going to college to be a financial advisor, don’t do it. I’m telling you, you will never receive a “Thank You” or a “You did a good job” from your boss or your client. Looking back at it, I should’ve just followed my dreams and became a starving artist instead. Yeah, I would’ve been hungry but at least I would have peace of mind.

The bus pulled up to the corner of Greene Avenue which was a block away from my house. Before I stepped off the bus, the bus driver said his goodbyes, and I continued on my way to the place I call home.

It took me about fifteen minutes to make it to my house. Usually, when I walk into my house, the first thing I do is head to the refrigerator and warm me up some leftovers that I cooked the previous night. But, this time, I decided to just walk in the living room, plop down on the couch, and turn on some *Greys Anatomy* which always comes on at 6:00 in the evening.

You can say that I have a boring life, but I do enjoy the comfort of my home. A bowl of ice cream and a bag of, freshly popped, popcorn is an ideal evening for me. But I would be a liar if I told you that life, sometimes, can’t be kind of lonely. My friends, Sandra and Laura, always tell me that I should get out more, but the city has nothing to offer but \$1 pizzas and charcoal ice cream – which is to die for.

“Maybe I should get out more.” I thought to myself while sliding a spoon full of ice cream down my mouth.

The show ended with a bang which left me feeling a little more satisfied with my life. One of the main characters, a woman in her mid-30’s, finally met her prince charming.

I got up from the couch and turned the tv off, “A goal, in which, I hope to accomplish one day.” I said.

I rolled over on the couch and drifted off into my happy place: a night of nothing but sweet dreams. As I drifted off, I began to envision myself somewhere else. A place

that I had buried, deep, in my subconscious. A place where happiness blossoms like flowers during spring.

Chapter Two:

To Dream or Not To Dream

Although life in the big city can sometimes be noisy and uncomfortable, nothing beats sitting in the middle of Central Park and soaking in the hustle and bustle that comes with the city. When I sit back and look at my life, compared to others, I feel like a movie star, similar to an actress on *The Young and the Restless*. Or maybe *The Young and the Restless* is a little too dramatic. As you know, my life is too irrelevant to be filled with much drama. *Sex and the City* would be an appropriate comparison, but, then again, I lack the sex-appeal that those women possess. I guess it would be best for me to write my own movie and be done with it. It doesn't make sense to keep comparing myself to others when I know I will constantly fall short of such standards.

It was an early Sunday afternoon and while I should've been in my living room, drowning myself in cheap Merlot and expensive chocolates, I was sitting in the park, waiting for my, supposed, night and shining armor to come and sweep me off my feet. Talk about feeling shallow? I was feeling as if I was starring in a prequel of *Sex and The City*, just without the luxurious clothing or spacious apartments that come with such a lifestyle.

"Exactly what am I getting myself into?" I thought while looking up at the clouds that hovered over Manhattan.

Here I was, sitting in Central Park, about to go on a date with a man I met on a dating app. This was, literally, something out of the ordinary, especially for someone of my caliber. Most dates I had been on, which were quite a few, usually happened out of pure luck. It was as if the stars had aligned and there it was, me making out with a guy who hadn't bathed in almost a week.

"How did I get here?" You might ask.

Well, Sandra and I met up, earlier yesterday, and she hooked me up with this guy who was a well-known banker in the Manhattan area. At first, I was apprehensive due to his status and reputation. I couldn't imagine myself being on the arms of a man who was the epitome of prominence. But there was no turning back, so I had to take the bitter with the sweet and put on my big girl panties. I mean, it wasn't like it was hurting anybody.

It has proven that there comes a time, in everyone's life, where all they want is a form of companionship. Even I, the most undesirable of women, wish to wake up and

be with that special someone. You know, the one you share your darkest secrets with. The one who will comb your hair and bring you breakfast in bed?

I looked down at my watch and saw that it was 11:45, so I decided that this would be a good time to do some journaling. After all, when you have no one else to talk too, your journal becomes your best friend

Dear Diary,

Sometimes I feel as if I have wasted the last twelve years of my life, being a study worm and always doing the "right" thing. Sometimes I wish I could've been that, wild, college student that everyone would remember all the way to adulthood. But growing up in a family, that put so much emphasis on education and being exclusive, made me into the "class-clown" for most of my life. But you can't cry over spilled milk like my grandmother used to tell me when I was younger.

It's sunny here in Manhattan but it doesn't make my mood feel any better than it is. Honestly, living in New York can be rather lonely, especially during the summer. Yeah, I know, I have friends but sometimes, even being around them makes me feel as if I'm the odd one out the bunch.

I have some good news though. I have a date. He is a rich banker and part-time Broadway actor who has also starred in numerous Independent Films. I met him through a dating app that has become quite popular among our generation. Is it sad to say that this is the first time, in a long time, where I have actually felt special? Usually, the only guys who have paid me attention are either retired incels or professors who couldn't get laid even if their lives depended on it.

Well, it's early in the evening so I must prepare myself for the inevitable. I'll talk to you when I get home. Just pray that I at least get a kiss. Lord knows I have been praying for one over the past ten years.

Sincerely, Rhonda.

I closed the diary and placed it back in my purse. I sat back and waited patiently, but impatience began to take a toll as I realized that it was already 12:30 PM. I remembered him telling me, earlier, that he would be here at around 12. Yes, I know patience is a virtue. Yes, I know I sound like an entitled diva, but I can't help it. My life has been full of disappointment, so it's only natural for me to become apprehensive when it seems that things are not going as planned.

After waiting an additional 30 minutes, I decided to call it an evening. It was clear, to me, that the man had stood me up, but as the saying goes "Life ain't fair"

“Well, maybe next weekend.” I thought while gathering my things.

It was at this moment when I understood the virtue of patience. Suddenly, a hand brushed across my shoulder which turned me around. I was slightly startled but was relieved to see that it was him: tall, dark, and handsome.

“Sorry I was late. I got caught in traffic. You know how busy Time Square can be. Especially during this time of the day.” He said while fixing his collar.

I blushed, “Oh, you’re fine. I’m just glad that you were able to make it.”

Saying that the smell of his cologne was delightful would be an understatement. It reminded me of a mix of cinnamon, chocolate, and honeysuckle all in one. His attire was rather classy, yet, hip at the same time.

“Well, let’s get out of here. I know a nice steakhouse over in Flatbush. I go there at least twice a week” He said, as his smile glistened.

“Sure,” I said, deeply attracted.

I wrapped my arms around him, and together we walked down Manhattan as if it was us against the world. Sure, that is how I wanted it to be. But let’s take things slow and see where this takes us. I’m sure, in the end, I will be greatly satisfied.

Chapter Three:

Waking Up From Neverland

Together, we sat in a packed steakhouse and enjoyed a glass of wine while discussing everything under the sun from politics, religion, and our favorite episode of *Grey's Anatomy*. At first, I thought that this was going to be one of those dates where I get up and leave him with the check, but I was actually having a really good time. He made me feel like a queen and based on his body language, I knew he was enjoying my company.

Although his boyish- good looks were a complete turn on, it was his intellect that was his greatest attribute. I would argue that his intelligence was equivalent to any professor I had worked with, and I'm pretty sure he would've held his own against any great debater. He almost came off perfect. A little too perfect.

This was the first time, in my entire life, that I had ever been to a steakhouse that had golden chandeliers hanging from the ceiling while a live band played soft jazz. The food was amazing, but it was the wine that set the tone for the evening. This was clearly a restaurant for only the most elite of society, and for the first time, at that moment, I felt a sense of importance that I had never felt in my entire life.

But, quickly, I realized that after this date, I would have to go back to the life I loathed. Talk about a woman going through a mid-life crisis, I was doing the best impression of a snob, as I sipped the glass of wine, slowly. I knew how to play my cards right. After all, I was a financial advisor for one of the biggest investment companies in the city. You can't be a sucker if you want to make it in that business.

He looked into my eyes as if he was trying to read me. I attempted to look away, but I stopped myself. The worse thing you can do is give off the impression that you aren't used to such luxuries. Such behavior will leave you, isolated, in the friend zone.

"Thanks for the advice, mom." I thought to myself.

"So, what's it like being a financial advisor? I heard you guys go through a lot of shit for shit pay." He asked, sipping on the glass of white wine.

"It's interesting, to say the least. I enjoy the company of my clients, but sometimes the elitism can be as nauseating as a night out in Hell's Kitchen." I said while stirring my drink with a straw.

He picked up a white cloth, that was sitting beside his plate, and used it to wipe his face, "Tell me more." He said.

It felt as if I was placed in a 1980's Noir Drama where I was being interrogated for a murder, I knew I did not commit. I was up for the challenge since I was used to having to always prove my worthiness. He was playing a game of checkers while I turned the table and made him play a game of chess.

After hours of telling each other our deepest, darkest, secrets while going through hundred-dollar bottles of wine, we decided to take a walk in Midtown where the city is always bustling. I'm not going to lie; I felt a sense of specialness that I had never felt while being out with another guy. I know it's not good to profess to have an inferiority complex, but I couldn't help but wonder why a man, of his caliber, would be interested in a woman like me: a nerdy, introverted, middle-aged woman.

I'm pretty sure he could've done better if he wanted too. But who knows, maybe he was the kind of guy who preferred emotional compatibility over physical attraction.

"I must say, today was a really good day." He said while looking up at the billboards which were plastered on numerous buildings.

"Really" I replied, feeling all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

He turned and looked at me, "Yes, really."

He turned around and placed both his hands on my shoulders.

He looked deep into my eyes and confessed, "I don't know what it is I'm feeling, but I do know that it is something special."

"Really?" I blushed, with stars appearing before my eyes.

"Yes, really." He replied, giving off the impression that he was about to propose to me.

He leaned in to kiss me, but before our lips could touch, the sound of an alarm began to ring through my head as if it was trying to get my attention.

I jumped up from my bed, drenched in sweat while panting at an alarming rate. I looked over at my clock and saw that it was 7:00 in the morning. I reached over, turned off my alarm, and laid back in the bed, feeling as if I had missed out on the jackpot.

"It was all just a dream." I thought while looking up at the ceiling which hadn't changed colors since I moved in, ten years ago.

I sighed, "A dream that felt too real."

I lifted out of the bed, grabbed my pillow, and threw it at my window, feeling a sense of fury.

“Really,” I yelled, feeling annoyed.

I wasn’t furious at the fact that it was all just a dream. I was furious at the fact that this was the third dream, this week, about the same exact man. I’ve never really been a fan of superstition, but I was starting to feel that this was a form of torment, coming from somewhere beyond this realm. Where exactly? Well, I didn’t know.

It felt as if I was on an emotional rollercoaster that was going up and down in a steady motion. I had to do something to calm my nerves, so I reached under my pillow and pulled out my journal. I opened to the 12th page and began to write my heart out,

Dear Diary,

How has it been? Me? I’ve been ok, I guess. Work is the same and it doesn’t seem like I’m getting a promotion any time soon. Laura and Sandra are doing well. As you know, they both followed me to New York after I graduated from the University of Illinois. New York is nice but you can never get used to the constant sound of sirens, neighbors arguing, and rats munching on old, dried up, pizza. Oh, how I hate the rats.

My love life is in shambles. Since moving to New York, I would say that I have only been on two dates. And, let me tell you, dating in this city is much more difficult than it seems. Everyone’s busy and all the good men seem to be either taken or more interested in work than an actual relationship. I know this may sound like a defeatist mindset, but I guess I must start coming to the realization that I will be single forever. It doesn’t sound so bad the more I think about it. I do have whiskers, my pet cat, so I don’t really have to worry about children. Yeah, with my emotional state, I think that would be best.

Well, I have to go now. It’s Friday and I have to get ready for work. The weekend is among us so you might not hear from me for a while. Just make sure you don’t remain a stranger. You’re the only friend I have who understands me, so my life would be a total mess if I didn’t hear from you. Take care of yourself and stay safe.

Sincerely, Rhonda.

I placed my journal back under my pillow and looked back over at the clock. It was 7:25 in the morning and I had to be in the office at 9:00 on the dot. Well, this is New York and, as you know, no one is ever on time. I guess that’s the consequence of participating in the rat race.

Whatever you may have heard about New York City, just know this, nothing will prepare you for the rat race that encompasses the daily lives of New Yorkers. Everyone is chasing the big cheese, but once they reach the finish line, they realize that

the only reward is more overtime and tax incentives. It's really a defeating life once you think about it. Yeah, I probably should've gone to LA.

I got up from the bed, walked over to my bedroom window, and opened the curtains to get a full view of the skyscrapers which encompassed the entire borough. The sun blinded me, momentarily, but that didn't stop me from getting a view of beautiful Brooklyn.

It was like a dream come true whenever I would open my window and soaked in the view of the city. You may not know this, but Brooklyn is beautiful during the summer. I'm pretty sure when you think of Brooklyn, you think of mobsters, pizza, and the moral equivalent of Gotham City. Trust me, it's nothing like that. I, personally, consider it to be paradise, just in a dump.

Brooklyn isn't the only borough that's consumed with beauty. If you were to ask an average New Yorker, they would tell you that the entire city of New York is like a crown jewel. But I sometimes ask myself, "What's the point of beauty when your life is like a movie on constant repeat?" Just imagine watching the same movie, every other day, while eating the same kind of popcorn and ice cream. Such an experience is bound to drive a woman crazy. Especially one who is upon her first mid-life crisis.

I guess I can't complain too much. I am making six figures, and I have been blessed with the opportunity to live in the greatest city in the world. I remember like it was yesterday when I, Sandra, and Laura were in high school and planning our future. The first thing we agreed on was when we graduate, we were all going to move to New York City together. That's every aspiring teenager's dream but we actually pulled it off. I guess living in New York can make you feel more special than you actually are.

"No reason to waste any more time than I already have." I thought while envisioning myself in the Bahamas somewhere.

I walked into the living room and saw Whiskers, my cat, sitting in the corner sleep. I walked into the kitchen, opened a cabinet, and pulled out some of her favorite cat food. I walked back into the living room and sat the open can of cat food in front of her. The smell of, freshly cut, salmon woke her from her slumber. She was so cute as she stretched her body and indulged in her favorite brand of cat food.

Suddenly, the sound of barking drew my attention back into the kitchen. I, personally, hated dogs due to their unconventional nature and lack of cleanliness. Whiskers purred, meowed, and jumped into my arms as if it was a helpless lamb being taken to the slaughter. I walked over to the window and saw a tall, olive-skinned man, carrying a large box into the house that was next door. The house had been vacant for about a month and, to be honest, I was surprised that the owner was able to sell the

place. The place was a dump, and it was always noisy over there, especially on the weekends. It's funny because I remembered when the owner, and his wife, invited me over for a party. I never knew that people in their 60's could party so hard. I guess you learn something new every day.

It was strange because the man resembled the same men I had been seeing in my dreams. He didn't come off as being the white-collar type. He had more of a blue-collar persona which wasn't a bad thing. Based on the size of his vehicle, and the number of boxes he was unloading, I could tell that he was single. Fairly attractive, indeed, but his Aura was rather cold and standoffish.

"Maybe I should introduce myself." I thought, feeling neighborly.

Then I thought back to all the bad experiences I have had with men.

"I don't have time for anyone else's problems. I already have my own." I thought to myself.

My phone vibrated, which indicated to me that I had a notification.

"Who could be messaging me so early." I thought as Whiskers licked my hand.

I walked back into the living room and sat Whiskers on the couch. I walked back into my bedroom and picked up my phone that was sitting on my bedroom dresser.

"A secret admirer," I said, envisioning myself kissing the hottest guy on *The Young and the Restless*.

I bypassed all the feeds of people kissing and hugging, on various social media platforms, and made my way to the messaging app. I scrolled through all the messages I found to be redundant and made my way to only the most recent messages. It was a message from my other friend, Christina. Unlike Sandra and Laura, I and Christina had been friends since Middle School. Fortunately for her, she was able to move the city right after high school. Sandra, Laura, and I were stuck in suburban Illinois where the only thing we had to look forward to was dirty weekends in Chicago.

I scanned the message which read, "Hey, Rhonda, want to go out with us tonight? It's Friday and you know all the hot guys are going to be out."

"Really, go out?" I said with a lack of enthusiasm.

What is there to do in a city that never sleeps but get drunk, go home, and regret everything that you did the previous night. Call me a worry warm if you want but you must play it safe in this world of social media and gossip. After all, usually when I go out, it always ends with me taking a long subway trip back home, thinking about what type of flavored ice cream I was going to indulge in when I make it back home.

"Sure," I replied.

Talk about falling into temptation at the right time. Yes, I have an impressionable mind and I'm not afraid to admit it. I just hope it doesn't lead to my downfall.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang.

"Who could it be wanting to visit little old me?" I thought, feeling as if I was more special than I actually was.

I walked back into the living room with Whiskers looking up at me as if I was about to abandon her. I walked up to the door expecting that it was either the mailman waiting for me to sign for a package or a secret admirer who was going to be holding a bouquet of roses and a box of chocolates. Unfortunately, I knew I had a better chance of dancing in the Puerto Rican parade in Spanish Harlem.

"Oh, stop it, you're not that special." I thought.

I opened the door and standing before me was the man who had just moved in next door. He was about 6 ft tall and his body was as gorgeous as a male-fashion model in Paris. If I could compare him to anything, I would say that he reminded me of a lumberjack, just without the beard.

He reached out his hand to greet me, "Hey, I'm John. I'm your new neighbor. I was just stopping by to introduce myself."

Usually, in such situations, I would've gone off and nagged the man to get away from my doorstep. I hated it when men showed up unwelcomed, at my house, without informing me first. But I kept my composure and introduced myself.

I grabbed his hand and shook it, "I'm Rhonda." I said, trying to play off that I was a little freaked out.

"I hope I didn't disturb you." He said in a courteous manner.

"You kind of did." I thought to myself, realizing that I had to be at work soon.

"My dad always told me that it is best to introduce yourself to your neighbors. It makes your life easier, especially if you need something." He winked.

"It sure does," I said with a fake smile on my face.

Saying that he was a beautiful man would be an understatement. He was drop-dead gorgeous, and I felt my heart about to pop out of my chest while envisioning myself wrapped in his arms.

“Well, hopefully, I see you around. I got some unpacking to do. You know, the fun stuff.” He said while rubbing the back of his head.

“Ok, have a good day.” I stuttered.

As he walked away, I closed the door behind him. I dropped down on the floor and began to see stars. I began to think about the glistening smile on his face, his olive-colored skin, and his slick-black hair which complimented his rugged attire.

“Yeah, see you around,” I said while looking over at Whiskers, who was also in a daze.

Who said that new neighbors can be a handful? I personally thought, with John living next door, I was going to have the time of my life.

Chapter Four:

Another Day In The Rat Race

I'm approximately 35 years old and I don't think there's any city, in this world, that can compete with the New York daily grind. If I could compare it to anything, I would compare it to a game of checkers, mixed with a game of chess, and a splash of blackjack. Yes, you literally must be strategic, cunning, and fast at the same time.

I never believed my mother when she said, "As you get older, even the most basic of task becomes tedious and exhausting." At first, I thought she was just pestering me, but now I see she was just preparing me for the inevitable. Just getting up and going to work, in the morning, had become a daily grind in itself. It was like I was in a race and the only finish line, I had to look forward too, was either lunch, smoke breaks, or an hour commute on the subway.

It was sunny outside, and the atmosphere smelled like a combination of garbage and roses all in one. The smell was rather interesting, to say the least. It was as if the wind was trying to knock us out with one gust, but the hustle and bustle of the city held us together, like a bond between a mother and its cubs.

I ran down the street, heading towards the bus stop, with my high-heel shoes just clicking away. When I tell you that living in New York is an everyday grind, I literally mean that living in New York is an everyday grind. From where I was standing, I could see people boarding the bus like hordes of bees, destined to find their place in the sweet honeycomb of the city.

I waved my hand to get the bus's attention, but the bus departed as if it was sending me a message, stating, "There is no rest for the weary."

I stood at the bus stop and felt the pressure of the city collapsing on my shoulders. I looked down at my watch and saw that it was 8:15.

"The next bus isn't going to arrive for another 30 minutes." I thought while looking around for a taxi.

I had no time to spare, so I flagged down a taxi. The taxi pulled up to the curb and I hopped in the back. I demanded the driver to take me to the Morgan Avenue Subway Station. It was the only Subway station that would drop me off in the middle of Manhattan. He agreed and sped away from the curb like a bat out of hell.

Driving down Brooklyn is always a breathtaking experience. They say Manhattan is the place to be, but if you haven't heard, Brooklyn is the new Manhattan. As we drove down Brooklyn, I rested my head against the back of the seat and soaked in the sound of police sirens, boom-bap hip hop, and the arguments that plagued the city.

It's interesting. Even sitting in the back of a taxi can be a breath-taking experience. Imagine smelling the taste of pizza, bagels, and Greek sandwiches all in one. Such a combination of smells will give you a food orgasm. I promise you will get used to them. I know, it's an experience that is only foreign to those who are not a "New Yorker"

The taxi pulled up, directly, in front of the Subway Station. I tipped the driver, hopped out of the taxi, and ran down the stairs towards the subway which was boarding early. Now, this where the real action begins.

I stood at the end of the platform, destined to be among the first group who boarded the subway. If I could compare boarding the subway to anything, I would compare it to fighting for the last piece of steak at Sunday dinner. Everyone is in a hurry and the worst thing that can happen to you is being pint up against a fat slob who forgot to brush his teeth in the morning. Trust me, I've been there.

The subway pulled up to the platform and people rushed in the subway as if they were running away from a past that they were ashamed of. I pushed my way through the crowd, destined to find a seat so I wouldn't have to stand on these high-heel shoes that had my back aching. I looked over in the corner and saw that there was an empty seat. I hurried over so no one could take it. I sat in the seat and rested my back against the chair as the subway departed.

Sitting on the subway is an experience like no other. This is the only time, during the day, when all walks of life cross paths with one another. You have the bum you see every morning, the rich-snobby kid who is always wearing the latest fashion, and then you have your typical blue-collar workers. Although they do not have much in common with one another, they all loathe waking up in the morning and being a part of a rat race with no finish line in sight. I can't say I was any different. After all, the only enjoyment I find is when I'm home, drowning my sorrows in a big bowl of vanilla ice cream.

The facial expressions on the other passengers told stories that went beyond anything on this earth. It was as if the people were starring in a zombie apocalypse series, which centered around the rat race and how miserable the middle class can be. I just sat back, relaxed, and watched as the subway went over the rumbling borough, Queens.

Suddenly, the smell of cinnamon and chocolate, blended well together, hit me in the face like a bad thought.

“That cologne? I have smelled it before.” I thought to myself while looking around, through the crowd.

It was the same cologne I had smelled while dreaming, just a few days ago. It was a dream about a man who held me in his arms while we ran through the fields as if we didn’t have a care in the world. It’s unfortunate that such a beautiful dream had to be broken due to the sound of construction coming from across the street.

After seconds of scanning the crowd, I was finally able to see him. He was tall, olive-skinned, well built, and had exquisite taste in fashion. I tried to get a better look at his face, but it was covered by a newspaper from *The New York Times*. It was as if I was caught in the midst of some kind of mystery where I was the detective and the man, behind the newspaper, was the serial killer I had been chasing for years. Surely it was not that serious but there was something about the man that I found to be unique.

“Who is this mystery man?” I thought, completely gawked out of my mind.

Chapter Five:

The Man Behind The Paper

To say I was determined would be an understatement. It had been 30 minutes and the man was still in the same position as he was earlier. It was if he was some kind of foreigner, trying to hide his true intentions behind a fancy suit and an intellectual demeanor. I watched as he turned the pages of the newspaper in a consistent manner. He blended in well with the other male passengers, but still stuck out as if he was a true alpha. I grew even more enthused as I saw that he turned to the last page of the newspaper. This gave me confirmation that the man, behind the paper, was going to be revealing himself, soon.

After five minutes of, literally, stalking the man and his every move, he finally lowered his newspaper and revealed himself. It was John, the neighbor who had just moved in, about two hours ago. He looked rather different with his hair slicked back and eyebrows arched. His business-professional attire was to die for, and he wasn't the blue-collar worker I was expecting him to be; I could tell based on the smell of his cologne, the color of his suit, and expensive shoes that he wore.

It was interesting since I saw him, but he did not see me. I found that to be quite weird since we were sitting directly across from one another. Maybe he did see me but didn't want to intrude on my personal space? Or maybe I was hoping that he saw me so I wouldn't feel alone in this world? I don't know, I guess I was just overthinking like always. That was one of the main problems I had, I always overthought everything.

The subway stopped in the Bowery Station in Manhattan. People exited the train in an organized, timely, fashion. You would've thought that the train was on fire due to the pace in which people exited. I grabbed my things and exited the train but kept a close eye on John who still hadn't notice me. Together, we exited the station and went our separate ways. I looked back and watched as he walked down the street. Or should I say I looked back, hoping to see him waving back at me?

"Is this a sign of some sort?" I thought while navigating through a large crowd of people.

"Maybe this is just another dream." I thought, again, while walking down the busy streets of Manhattan.

The building I worked in was just a few blocks away from the subway station, so I was able to clock in for my shift about ten minutes early. I walked into my office and brushed off all the "Hello" and "Good mornings" that were coming from my fellow

employees. Although they were quite polite, they never seemed to want to invite me to any special gatherings. Maybe it was because I came off as a bitch sometimes. I admit, I can sometimes be unpleasant, especially, when under stressful situations.

I walked into my office and was greeted by my assistant, Stephanie, who seemed to be the only person who understood me. She, too, had moved from the Midwest and decided to strike out on her own, in the city that never sleeps. I guess that's why we clicked so well.

"Hello, Ms. Wines. Getting ready for the weekend?" She asked while pouring me a cup of coffee.

I dropped down in my desk and rested my forehead on top of it, "You have no clue, Stephanie." I said, feeling a heavy burden hovering over my head.

Stephanie walked over and sat the cup of coffee down on my desk. She began to massage my back with techniques that were foreign to me. The massage calmed my nerves, but I was still on edge.

"You really should consider a vacation, Ms. Rimes." She said.

"Vacation? Vacation seems to be a dream or a foreign language during these times." I replied, yet envisioning myself in Puerto Rico, somewhere, drinking a mojito.

I opened my laptop and saw that I had 300 unread messages and three meetings scheduled for the day. My eyes rolled to the back of my head, and all I could do was laugh through the pain, like a comedian, knowing that their jokes weren't funny.

"God, please, come take me now," I muttered.

Sandra reached down her pocket and sat a shot of Whiskey down on the table. I looked up rather confused yet relieved at the same time.

She smiled, "It might make you feel better."

I grabbed the bottle with my head still, gently, placed on the desk, "You're a lifesaver. You're a lifesaver" I repeated.

Chapter Six:

A Night of Glitz With No Glamour

Nothing beats a night out in New York City. Although life in the city can be quite stressful, nothing beats a night out with the girls. After all, I owed part of my success to their support. I wouldn't have achieved the level of success without them in my corner, backing me every step of the way.

I've never been too much of a club person, but I must say that the night was rather fascinating. People were dressed in some of the most luxurious attire, and the DJ was playing music that was very hip to the crowd. The dancing reminded me of a mix of swing and hip-hop popping. I was never a great dancer. You can blame my anxiety and self-conscious spirit.

The lights from the club blinded me, but they were breathtakingly beautiful. It was as if I was seeing colors, from the rainbow, but in abundance.

I was slightly abbreviated, but it was nothing compared to Christina, who was in the crowd dancing, rather slutty. Sandra and Laura cheered her on while I sat back and just sipped on my martini.

"He's cute," Sandra said, gawking over a guy who was sitting in the corner, surrounded by a bunch of other professional men.

"He looks too snobby for my taste," Laura said while stirring her martini with her straw.

Sandra turned to me, "What do you think, Rhonda?"

Sandra put me on the spot as always. I didn't know how to respond, to be honest. The man wasn't really my type, but I've always been the type to agree with everything that Sandra said, due to my inferiority complex.

"Yeah, he's cute, I guess," I said not able to make my mind up.

Laura stood up and finished the rest of her martini. Looking at her I could tell that she was incredibly intoxicated. Laura was always one of those people who didn't do a good job holding her liquor. I remember a time when she threw up in my bathtub and left me to clean it up. Memories I tell you. Good old memories.

"You know what, I'm bored. Let's go dance." Laura said while moving her hips from side to side.

"I don't know. I would much rather sit here and just enjoy the view." Sandra said, slightly drunk.

Laura began to pull on Sandra's arm, "Oh come on, have some fun." She said with slurred speech.

Sandra looked back at me as if she wanted me to stop her from being devoured by the wolves that were awaiting her. What could I do? I was in an abbreviated state and I just wanted to sit back and enjoy the view. The night was still young, so I knew I would have plenty of opportunities to join them.

I watched as Sandra and Laura danced in the middle of the crowd as if they didn't have a worry in the world. Due to their abbreviated state and lust for attention, they blended in well with the crowd. But, for some reason, I still felt out of place. I tried not to think about it too much since I didn't want to fall into an emotional state that was going to prevent me from waking up in the morning. I just sat back and enjoyed the show as if I had a bowl of popcorn, sitting next to me. As they say, nothing beats the nightlight that New York has to offer.

I felt a hand touch me on my shoulder. I turned around and saw a guy who was quite dorky and clearly out of place like I was.

"Want to dance, sweet thing?" He said, blushing as if I was really going to give him the time of day.

"No thank you," I said, giving him the impression that I was not interested.

He got closer, "Come on, baby. You know you want me." He whispered.

I raised my voice, "I said, I'm not interested."

The man got defensive, "You don't have to be a bitch."

I got up from the table, picked up my drink, and threw it in his face.

"That's not how you talk to a lady," I yelled.

I stormed out of the club, without Sandra, Christina, or Laura noticing a thing. I flagged down the nearest taxi which pulled up without any hesitation. I got in the back and demanded the taxi driver to take me back to my house.

"Talk about a way to end a night but I guess you can't always have all the fun." I thought while envisioning myself cuddled up in John's bed.

Chapter Seven:

Another Night Of Ice Cream

What do you get when you are alone on a Friday night and your friends are out partying away? A night of *Sex and the City* and vanilla bean-ice cream. Oh, don't forget a bottle of red wine with a medium-size pizza from your favorite pizzeria. Yeah, I know, such a combination is bound to leave you feeling depressed and lonely. But, as I've said for the fourth time, "Life's not fair."

I turned off the tv, sat back, and just stared off into space as I envisioned myself in John's arms. I began to get a little creeped out since I didn't understand why I was so fond of a man I barely knew. Sure, you could say that it was because of the dreams I had been having about men who resembled him. But I couldn't help but think it was something else.

Maybe it was because I didn't expect him to, come, introduce himself to me so quickly. Or maybe I was just trying to speak something into existence that was never going to happen. Or maybe this was a sign that something better was going to come. Oh well, there's no sense in thinking about things that are probably never going to happen.

Suddenly, a knock came at the door.

"Who could it be?" I thought to myself.

I got up from the living room chair and walked over to the door. I looked through the peephole and saw that it was John, holding a pan of food. I blushed and opened the door.

"Well, how are you doing this evening?" I asked, a little surprised.

"I told you I was going to bring you some cake didn't I," John said with a smile on his face.

"Oh, you didn't have too," I responded, feeling special.

He handed me the plate of cake and I took a whiff of it. I wasn't really a fan of cake. I was more of a pie girl, but beggars can't be choosers.

"It smells delicious." I smiled.

"It's a family recipe. My mother uses to make it all the time before she passed away." He said with his hands on his hips.

"That's shocking. I have never met a man who could bake." I said a little surprised.

"It's a family tradition. My father owns a bakery back in San Francisco. He showed me a few things." He added.

"You're lucky. The most cooking my mother ever did was during the holidays. Outside of that, it was either pizza or pre-packaged food." I said, blushing.

He looked past my shoulder as if he was trying to see if I had any company. Although I was not your typical runway model, I was not naive when it came to men's tactics.

"I hope I'm not intruding in any way." He said.

"No, you're fine. I was actually just catching up on some reading." I replied.

"On a Friday night?" He probed.

I dropped my head in shame, "Yeah, unfortunately."

"Well, it's not like I'm doing anything special tonight. Do you want to go out and grab a drink?" He asked, politely.

I was so shocked that I almost dropped the plate of cake on the floor. I bit my tongue just to see if I was dreaming and, for the first time in my life, I was not.

"Sure," I said while trying to not come off as desperate.

"I hope you like wine." He smiled.

"Wine is my favorite," I said with stars flashing before my eyes.

"Ok, let me go grab my jacket and I'll be back in thirty minutes." He shrugged.

"Sure," I said while trying to hold my composure.

I closed the door and melted to the ground like charcoal ice cream on a hot summer day in Long Island. Whiskers crawled over to me and rubbed her back against my knee as a form of congratulations. I got up from the floor, with Whiskers in my arms, and began to dance around the living room.

I squeezed Whiskers, tightly, in my arms while chanting, "He noticed me. He really noticed me."

I, then, looked up at the clock and noticed that time was going by fast. He said 30 minutes and I knew how fast 30 minutes could go when you're having fun. I ran upstairs, with whiskers in my arms, and rushed into my bedroom, feeling my heart

racing at an alarming rate. I walked over to my closet, opened it, and began to toss clothes everywhere, destined to find an outfit that would set the night off.

I dug threw some old boxes and saw a dress that I hadn't worn in years. It was a purple dress with silver lining and a black ribbon. I remembered wearing it to my prom which was one of the worse nights of my life. Yeah, we'll talk about that later.

I sat whiskers on the floor and quickly slid on the dress with some matching flats. I rubbed whiskers on the head and whispered, "Wish me good luck."

I ran back downstairs, opened the front door, and there he was, dressed in business casual attire and completely geeked to see me.

He looked me up and down, "You look great."

"Thank you." I blushed.

I wrapped my arm around him, and together we walked down the street, feeling as if we were about to take over the world. Once again, I gently pinched myself to ensure that I wasn't dreaming. I wasn't. What I was experiencing was reality.

Chapter Eight:

Nerdy Girls Do Cry

Dear Diary,

The night is young, but my heart wishes that it would be over. As you may have heard, I started seeing a guy, that moved in next door, about a month ago. Yes, he is sweet and yes, he treats me nice, but why do I feel like I do not deserve him? I don't know if it's the inferiority complex or if it's just my mind telling me that I deserve better. Well, it can't be that since John is the most attractive man that has ever shown me such attention.

Maybe I'm just not ready. Maybe I'm still stuck in a paradox that won't allow me to escape. Whatever's going on, I must find a way to snap out of it. He invited me over for dinner so I must be on my best behavior. Well, talk to you later. Wish me luck.

Sincerely, Rhonda.

The table was smothered in so many delights that I almost passed out. He had cooked up a feast that was out of this world, and I couldn't help but indulge myself in the various delights. He had set the table with some of the most luxurious of eating utensils and the lit candles, in the middle of the table, really set the mood. I was surprised at his romantic behavior since I had never met a man who went all out for me the way he did.

I finished the rest of my plate, sat back, and unwind. I was so stuffed that it felt like I was about to bust in many pieces. I hadn't had dinner, of that size, since the last Sunday dinner I spent with my grandparents.

"How'd you like it." He asked with great concern.

"It was to die for," I said with a smile on my face.

"Well, I hope you have room for dessert." He replied.

He walked into the kitchen and came out holding a cake that was covered in caramel frosting – my favorite.

"You want to go in the living room?" He asked politely.

"Of course," I replied with no hesitation.

Together we walked into the living room and sat next to one another, on a couch, which was right next to a window where I could see my house. He sat the cake in the

middle of the table and turned on the tv which was right across from where we were sitting. He picked up a knife and cut both me and him a piece of cake. He sat the pieces of cake on small plates and passed mine over to me. He picked up the remote and turned to my favorite show *Greys Anatomy*.

"So, you're a fan?" I probed.

"Hell yeah, I love *Greys Anatomy*." He replied while picking his fork through the cake.

I almost melted on the couch; I was so impressed. Dinner, dessert, and *Greys Anatomy*? This truly was a match made in heaven. He scooted closer and wrapped his arm around my shoulder.

"This is getting awkward." I thought.

"What should I do?" I thought again.

I went with my first instinct and rested my head against his chest. I rubbed on his biceps and he ran his fingers through my hair. I could feel temptation rising to astronomical levels but didn't know what to do. He grabbed my cheek and turned it so we could be face to face. I knew what was going to happen next, but I was not prepared. He leaned in to kiss me, but I turned my head.

"Is everything ok?" He asked, wanting to make sure he wasn't overstepping his boundaries.

I leaned up on the couch, "Yeah, everything is fine." I said, feeling a little weird.

What was I thinking? This was the most romantic night of my life, but I was shunning away my potential prince charming as if I really had a better option. I began to feel sick to my stomach, so I jumped up and grabbed my belongings. I turned, looked his way, and came up with an excuse that was as generic as a kid, sneaking out the house.

"I'm sorry but tonight is not a good night. I have to go home" I said, feeling ashamed of myself.

He dropped his head in disappointment, "I understand." He replied.

I reached in, kissed him on the cheek, and ran out of the house.

"Rhonda, you're stupid," I said while hitting myself in the forehead with the palm of my hand.

I walked up on my front porch and began to dig through my purse while searching for my house keys. I pulled out my house keys and inserted them into the lock.

"You had him right where you wanted, and you screwed up," I said, turning the keys inside of the door.

I opened the door, walked in, shut the door behind me, and walked upstairs to my bedroom. I jumped in the bed and just stared into the ceiling as if I was expecting something to change. I turned and saw that Whiskers was not in her playpen. I grew worried but I figured she was out playing with some of her friends.

Suddenly, the sound of my cat meowing and a dog barking caused me to jump out of my bed with my heart accelerating.

"My baby?" I thought to myself while tripping over my shoes.

I ran to the back of my house and saw Whiskers hissing at John's dog while the dog was attempting to jump the fence to get after Whiskers. John ran out of the house, furious, and whistled at his dog.

"Come here, boy." He demanded.

The dog ran over to John and whimpered.

"Sorry, Rhonda, he can be a little feisty sometimes." He said, looking as if he hadn't gotten over what happened just ten minutes prior.

My cat jumped in my arms and purred in fear. I was frustrated so I went on an emotional onslaught.

"Your dog's a brute. Maybe you should hire a trainer" I said with an attitude written all over my face.

John was shocked, "Their animals, Rhonda. They're going to argue with one another."

I turned my nose up in the air and stormed in the house. I ran into the living and dropped to the floor with Whiskers in my arms.

"Damn, did I really have to be that rude." I thought to myself while feeling appalled at my behavior.

Suddenly, I heard a knock at the door. I walked up to the door, looked through the peephole, and saw that it was John.

"God, how I hate apologizing." I thought to myself.

I opened the door to face the music. I was expecting John to tie into me, but he was rather calm and collected which was something I had not seen in a man before.

"Hey, I just wanted to say that I apologize." He said with his head down.

"No, it is I who should apologize," I replied, feeling embarrassed.

Without hesitation, he grabbed my face and kissed me in my mouth. I wanted to resist but the softness of his lips prevented me from doing so. For the first time, in my entire life, I didn't feel hopeless. For the first time in my life, I received a kiss from a man I was sexually attracted to. For the first time in my life, I didn't feel alone.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't hold back." He said.

"I'm glad you didn't," I said, feeling a heavy burden being lifted from my chest.

I grabbed his hand and invited him to my house. I closed the door behind us and together we danced, in the middle of the living room while making love under a full moon.

Dear Diary,

How long has it been? One year and two months? I see our relationship is coming to an end. I know, it's a tough pill to swallow, but let's cherish the moment while we still have it.

Well, I have some good news. Do you remember John? The guy who moved in next door? Yeah, it's official. I am now Mrs. Williams. We are going on our honeymoon next week. Guess where? The Bahamas, a place I have dreamed about going since I was a teenager.

I remember you telling me to be patient and to take things slow. You told me that I would find somebody one day, and, at first, I thought you were just telling me what I wanted to hear. Now, I see you saw something that I couldn't see.

Once again, I appreciate you sticking by me after all these years. I honestly don't know where I would be if it wasn't for you.

Well, take care. I have a trip to get ready for. I want you to remember that there is someone special out there waiting for you as well. Just be patient, he'll come.

Sincerely, Rhonda.

Heat and Ice

Chapter One

At night, what is a woman supposed to do when she is alone, hot, horny, and the only thing there to keep her comfortable is memories and a warm pillow that is scented with her love's cologne? I swear, it seems regardless of how submissive, sexy, and freaky you are, they will always find a way to take it for granted. I guess my mother was right when she said, "You can throw it down in the kitchen and the bedroom better than any woman out there. It doesn't matter, a man's eyes will always wonder." Oh... how I cannot wait to have this conversation with her when I go visit her next month for Mother's Day.

I tossed and turned, envisioning Trey, my husband, inside me, riding me until I climaxed all over his shaft. The thoughts were pleasurable, but nothing beats the actual touch of a human being. Unfortunately, such thoughts were short-sighted as the sound of my two neighbors arguing woke me from my slumber.

"God Damn, do you guys ever have a peaceful night," I mumbled to myself while massaging my fingertips through my eyes.

I looked over at the clock and saw that it was 7:00 in the evening. I sighed, feeling as though I had wasted an entire day on nothing but nonsense. I attempted to go back to sleep, but before my head could touch the pillow, I remembered that I had big plans for the night.

"Shit," I thought, sighing away as if I did not have enough time.

I rolled out of bed, stripped naked, grabbed a towel that was hanging beside my dresser, and walked up to the mirror to take a look at my body.

"Girl, you are a bad bitch. Don't let no man tell you anything different." I thought while twirling around in the mirror.

I stepped away from the mirror and walked into the bathroom. I turned on the lights and set the body towel on top of the toilet stool. I stepped into the shower, turned on the shower faucet, and allowed the water from the showerhead to pour onto my body. I applied soap to a washcloth and gently glided the washcloth up and down my body, allowing it to hit every sweet spot. Such a transition made my body so tense which caused arousal. So aroused that I began to envision Trey walking into the shower to satisfy my needs.

The water from the showerhead ran down my body as I envisioned Trey standing behind me, ramming his hard cock, deep, in and out of my ass while I held onto the shower walls. I attempted to turn around and face him, but he aggressively

grabbed my hair, yanked my neck back, and gripped onto my breast as I moaned for him to go deeper.

“Now you know you can go deeper than that, baby.” I moaned.

He placed his right hand over my neck and squeezed it until I could barely breathe. It was pure domination at that point. And to be honest, that is what I preferred.

I took my right hand, expecting to grip Trey’s chest as he finished on my ass. Unfortunately, when I opened my eyes, the only thing I could grip onto was the other end of the shower wall. I was so disappointed that I pulled the vibrator out of my ass, sighed, and turned off the shower head while feeling even more sexually frustrated than before.

I placed the vibrator against my chest, “If only it was like the real thing.”

I walked out of the bathroom, wearing nothing but my panties and a wet T-shirt. My nipples were still erect and the residue from the shower did a tremendous job shielding the moisture that was dripping from my pussy. I sat on the side of my bed and picked up my cell phone that was sitting on the dresser beside my bed. I unlocked my phone and noticed a missed call from Trey. Before I could return his missed call a notification, indicating a text message, popped up on my screen. I clicked on the message and saw that it was from Trey.

“Hey, Queen, sorry I haven’t been able to talk to you these past few days. Trying to get these New York bastards to invest in a project, founded by three brothers, is like pulling teeth. I promise I’ll be back soon. Make sure you keep it warm for me.” The message read.

I rolled my eyes and sat my phone back down on the dresser. I turned my head and looked out my apartment window. Looking at the view of the city brought back memories of when I and Trey would sit at the lake, snuggled up, listening to old-school R&B while discussing our future endeavors amongst one another. Such a memory was put to rest when I turned my attention to an apartment window, across from my building. From where I was standing, I could see a woman performing fellatio on her husband. Such a sight made me depressed. If I could remember correctly, it had been months since I last pleased my husband.

I walked away from the window feeling even more sexually deprived than I was a few minutes ago. I sat back down on the side of my mattress, looked over at my alarm, and realized that it was 7:30. I panicked, realizing that I had a date coming to pick me up at 8:30.

I could hear my date's voice, "I'll be there at 8:30, beautiful. Just don't keep me waiting."

"Alexis, what have you got yourself into, girl." I thought to myself.

I dropped my head in disappointment since I knew that I was going to commit one of the greatest sins of them all. "But who said anything about sex? It's just dinner and drinks, nothing too fancy. Besides, you deserve it. What's the use in living if you can't have a little fun now and then?" Well... that's what I was telling myself. Everyone knows temptation sets in, especially when you haven't had a decent fuck in almost months.

Chills ran down my spine as I sat on the side of my bed, twisting the wedding ring that was attached, gently, to my ring finger. I looked across the room and saw a picture of me and Trey, hugging together at our wedding. The sight brought warmth to a heart that had grown cold, due to the lack of intimacy we once shared. Just thinking about me riding his face made my panties grip, as I gently rubbed my fingers up and down my clitoris.

The vision felt real as I could've sworn that I could smell his cologne consuming every part of my body. Then a hand appeared on my shoulder, causing me to grip my clitoris tighter. My body began to tense up as I felt myself about to climax.

I swore I could hear his voice whispering in my ear, "How do you want it?"

I replied as if he was there, "I want you to suck on that pussy. Nice and slow."

After minutes of envisioning his head between my legs, a commotion across the hall from my apartment snapped me back to reality.

I snapped at myself, "What are you doing, Alexis!"

I sighed and rested my head against my pillow. I looked up at the ceiling, trying to find a way to get myself out of a situation that I knew would fuck up everything that I and Trey had built. But then I had to ask myself, "What's the point in being a queen when even the crown cannot satisfy your needs."

My phone vibrated. I reached over and picked up my phone that was sitting on the dresser. I scrolled through my messages until I made it to the top where I saw a message from him, Calvin, which read, "Will be there in an hour. I can't wait to see you. 😊."

I put the phone in sleep mode and placed it against my chest. The thought of another man being excited to be in my presence made me feel special. It amazes me

how after just one month of talking and texting, you could feel as though you have known someone for years.

I couldn't help but make a comparison between Calvin and Trey, "He is so different from Trey it's like night and day."

Oh... how I remember the day so vividly when I first laid eyes on him.

One Month Ago

It was just another ordinary Saturday evening with my girl, Latrice. We sat in a Café off Vernon Street, discussing relationships, fashion, and other topics that are centered around "girl talk." Latrice has been my girl since high school. She has always been the brainy type, but the girl sure knows how to throw down with fashion.

"Do you think I should curl my hair to match my dress for this weekend," Latrice asked while running her fingers through her hair.

I was spaced off, looking out the café's window, but I was still responsive, "I prefer the locks. Straight hair makes you look a little too bougie."

Latrice faked as if she was offended, "Bitch..."

I sighed, "I told you not to ask me my opinion if you're going to get mad."

Latrice picked up her cappuccino, "Honey, you need some dick. I can tell." She said jokingly.

I turned and faced Latrice, "Girl, you don't want me to get started on that conversation. If it wasn't for Mr. Lex's Only Fans, I don't know how I would be able to sleep."

A thought came to Latrice's mind, "I know exactly what you need."

Latrice sat the cappuccino down on the table and began to scan through her phone. "I got something for you, girl..."

Latrice turned her phone around and showed me a picture of a tall, dark-skinned man with long dreads. Shirtless and wearing boxers that showed the imprint of his dick.

"Impressive, I know. He only charges \$300 for two hours. You can't beat that for that size" Latrice blushed.

"He's cute. But he's no Trey." I said while stirring my cappuccino with my straw.

Latrice snapped, "Girl, when's the last time he fucked you down?"

I rolled my eyes, "It's not always about sex, Latrice."

"Bullshit," Latrice responded in a high tone.

It wasn't as if Latrice was saying anything wrong. I am a woman with needs, but Latrice didn't understand that I took my vows seriously. Unlike her and her husband who love to spice things up with an orgy or two throughout the month.

"Trey's been busy. He and his partners just launched this startup so he's attending all these conventions and meetings with Venture Capitalists just to keep the heat on. He's always been the ambitious one." I said, trying to downplay everything Latrice was saying.

"I just wish he appreciated the queen he had. He better be careful before someone comes in and swoops you off your feet," Latrice said while shaking her head in disappointment.

I twisted my lips implying that Latrice was talking nonsense, "Girl, and who might that be."

Out of nowhere, Latrice's eyes lit up. Latrice waved her hand as if she was trying to get someone's attention. I turned around and when I laid my eyes on this man, my heart almost climbed out of my chest. When I say he was fine, he was beyond that. Brown skin, hazel eyes, about 5'11, with a body similar to a Greek god. Only a few men have been able to catch my gaze and make my insides want to spill out on the floor. But he was one.

He approached me and Latrice, carrying a presence that symbolized status. He wrapped his arms around Latrice and hugged her.

"I didn't expect to see you here." He said, gripping her tightly.

"Just having some girl time," Latrice responded while winking at me to get my attention.

He turned around and faced me. I was so shy that I looked away and pretended as if it was just me and Latrice. Latrice gently kicked my knee, underneath the table, to get my attention.

Alexis introduced me, "And this is my girl. Alex."

"Well, isn't she gorgeous?" He replied.

He reached his hand out. I was apprehensive at first, but I shook his hand out of respect for Latrice.

"Nice to meet you," I said while trying to hide my blatant attraction.

"My name is Calvin by the way." He said as if he knew that this was going to go further than I expected.

Back To Present

Since that day, we have shared some of our darkest secrets. I know it sounds a little cliché, but it was as if I had known this man for many years. Was I catching feelings a little soon? Maybe. I mean, it usually takes me a date or two for me to even consider kissing a man. There I go again, thinking about kissing another man. Boy was temptation knocking at my door.

Chapter Two

I stood in front of a mirror, applying the finishing touches of makeup on my dazzling face. I tried to ignore the obvious – the fact that I was a married woman about to have dinner with a man who I have only had a 30-minute conversation with at a cafe. Well.... should I say maybe a month? Don't look at me like that, I am far from a flirt. I'm just a little curious, that's all.

Just thinking about this made me realize that even before our marriage, me and Trey never really went on many dates. Due to his limited schedule and passion to launch the first-ever black-owned social media app since *Black Planet*. I mean, I couldn't be too upset. He always stated that everything that he did was for me, him, and our future family. That's one thing I admired about Trey – he always put family first.

After applying the finishing touches, it was time for me to analyze my work. The reflection staring back at me would make you think it was a different woman. My freshly pressed black hair flowed down my back, much classier than that sloppy ponytail that I had been wearing for the past few months. The Ruby Woo lipstick I applied gave my lips a fuller, perkier, look. The black Fashion Nova dress that complimented my curvy body stopped right above my knee.

"I know I'm a bad bitch." I thought, turning around as if I was a fashion week model.

It felt good for a change to make myself up and feel like a queen again. I held back the tears as I ran my fingers through my hair.

"You go, girl." I thought to myself while wiping the tears from my eyes.

Suddenly, before I could walk away from the mirror, I became consumed by guilt. So consumed that I began to contemplate calling Calvin and telling him that I was sick or maybe it was that time of the month. To be honest, anything that would get me out of this mess which was only bound to lead to more opened doors.

I began rationalizing my decision, "I'm not doing anything wrong. I just want to have a little fun, that's all. Besides, Trey is probably fucking someone right now and I wouldn't even know. Also, wouldn't it be rude just to cancel out of the blue? It's not like there isn't a connection. We have been talking to each other for a month. It's only dinner, it's not like we're going to attend a sex party or anything like that. Well... the brother is fine. And he's rich too. Oh my God, the brother is everything that a woman would want."

My phone flashed, indicating that I had received a message. I picked up the phone, scrolled through my notifications, and saw that I had received a message from Calvin.

"I'm outside." The message read.

"Lord, what am I getting myself into." I thought, seeing if there was a way I could back out of this situation.

"I'll be down in ten minutes," I replied with a text message that ended with multiple emojis.

"Shit!" I muttered.

I looked around and noticed I hadn't even picked out a pair of heels to wear. I rushed into my bedroom, opened the closet, and saw that the entire floor was scattered with numerous pairs of heels I hadn't even worn.

"Decisions. Decisions." I thought while scanning the closet.

Out of desperation, I grabbed the pair of heels that Latrice bought me for my birthday. I slid them on, ran back into the living room, grabbed my purse, and took one last look in the mirror.

"Remember, Alexis, it's just dinner. Be respectful." I said, talking to myself.

Chapter Three

"What are you getting yourself into, Alexis." I thought to myself as we drove down a busy section of the city.

It had been years since I had sat across from a man, besides Trey, and had dinner while discussing my deepest, darkest, secrets. Even though I felt a sense of guilt, it was overshadowed by the mystery behind the man with hazel eyes and a smile that could light up an entire room. Would it be shameful if I admitted that such a mystery made me want to rip his dick out of his pants and suck the hell out of that shit? Oh, my goodness, I'm getting a little carried away, but I do believe you get the point.

He kept looking at me out of the side of his eye as if he was trying to measure me against the other women he had wined and dined.

"To be such a handsome man, he sure was shy." I thought while analyzing his subtle movements.

Luckily for me, he broke his silence and began to open up little by little. Still, the 15-minute drive to the restaurant was bland, to say the least. The atmosphere was filled with nothing but awkward, forced, conversations and subtle pleasantries with a mix of small talk. He would look at me out of the corner of his eyes, attempting to make a flirtatious remark. But for some reason, he stopped himself. I'm assuming he was afraid that he'd say something embarrassing or maybe misogynistic.

When we arrived at the fancy Italian Restaurant, the conversation became less bland and filled with more substance. We began our date by talking about our careers, educational attainment, and our future endeavors. He was extremely intelligent, well-spoken, charismatic, and resilient. This was surprising since most men I have come across lacked one of the following characteristics.

"Financial Analyst? Now that sounds interesting." I said while picking through the plate of pasta that I had ordered with a side of salad and a glass of wine.

Calvin took his fork and steak knife and dug into a juicy ribeye, "You don't know the half of it. Imagine having to look over million-dollar portfolios, knowing that a market crash is coming but still these bastards want to invest another \$200,000."

"That's insanity," I said while chewing on my food, eloquently.

"Remember, rich people, didn't get there without taking risks." He chuckled.

His condescending tone gave off the impression that he was used to being the smartest person in the room. I had to respond in a way to inform him that he had met his equal.

“But you have to be calculated am I correct? I highly doubt a man of your stature got where you got by just taking risks. Usually, you have to have a little bit of sociopathy in you, am I correct?” I asked, trying to pick his brain even further.

Calvin looked around, contemplating a response. I guess he didn’t expect a woman of my caliber to ask such complex questions while expecting straightforward answers.

“Damn, woman, you have me thinking over here.” He chuckled.

After moments of thinking of a response, he broke his silence, “I was taught, by my mentor, that what makes a good investor is not the risk of investing. But the ability to look at trends, research the trajectory of a company’s growth, what products the company is selling, and what exactly is the nature of their business. For example, every year you hear about these gurus who promise that if you invest in their company, it is a guarantee that you will see at least a 30% return in a year. Now a fool would jump on such an investment after watching a few YouTube videos and seeing a shiny graph, projecting future growth. An investor like myself would ask one question. ‘How many followers do you have on Instagram?’” He explained.

I giggled, “I know damn well you would not ask that question.”

“Seriously, it doesn’t make no sense in investing in a product if you only have 500 followers.” He chuckled while pouring himself another glass of wine.

“I guess I should just stick to being a teacher,” I said jokingly.

“Now that’s interesting. You must have a passion for learning.” He said while digging his lobster tail into the small bowl of butter.

I sighed, indicating that I needed a career change, “I’ll put it to you like this, if it wasn’t my passion, I would be a stripper instead,” I said jokingly.

Calvin chuckled, “Well, that is another option. I was reading a study a few days ago which stated that adjunct professors are turning to sex work to make up for lost wages.”

“Uh.... Excuse me, stripping is not sex work.” I said, correcting Calvin.

Calvin shrugged his shoulders boastfully, “There is indeed a grey area.”

Calvin saw that my wine glass was empty, so he picked up the bottle of wine and filled my glass full.

"Interesting. Even Trey had never done such a thing." I thought to myself.

Calvin held up his hand and got the attention of a waiter that was serving at another table beside us. The waiter rushed over to our table.

"How can I help you." The waiter asked sincerely.

Calvin pointed towards my plate "I don't think she likes the pasta. Get her the lobster tail feast with a side of shrimp scampi, baked potato, and garlic-buttered broccoli."

"Absolutely." The waiter nodded.

The waiter walked away and left me Calvin alone. I hid the fact that I was impressed by sipping on the glass of wine, moving my eyes left and right, and trying to come up with a topic that would keep our conversation from becoming dry.

"It was plastered on your face," Calvin said smoothly.

I sat the glass of wine down on the table and scooted in closer toward Calvin.

"How did you know I liked lobster tails?" I asked curiously.

Calvin leaned back in the chair and crossed his arms, "What woman doesn't."

His smile was glistening, and his face revealed the sincerity in the words he spoke. There was an awkward silence. I took a sip of my wine as my eyes roamed away from the table.

"This brother is making me want to file those divorce papers." I thought while envisioning him and me fucking in the back of his Bentley.

Chapter Four

The night had grown more interesting than I expected. After dinner, I realized that I wasn't just on a date with a man who was trying to bore me with generosity and sweet-talk me into giving up the pussy. I was actually on a date with a man who knew how to treat a woman. I'm not saying Trey lacked the qualities of a gentleman. If anything, Trey exceeded expectations. But Trey sure was lacking in many areas compared to Calvin. I know it's a disgrace for a woman to compare another man to her husband. but why be ashamed to call out such differences? Besides, once again, who's to say if Trey wasn't getting his rocks off with a younger version of myself? It's a shame that I was rationalizing my adultery as if I was a victim.

Before we could call our night complete, Calvin advised me that he had the hookup at a local strip club, off Greenway, in the downtown section of the city. I was a little apprehensive to follow his lead since I have never been much of a club girl. I've always been the brainy type to stay at home and watch soap operas while sipping on a glass of Merlot. You must fight tooth and nail to get me to come out of the house. Only Latrice is successful at such an endeavor.

"Here we are," Calvin said as we pulled into the parking lot.

I looked outside of the window and saw a pink neon sign that read, "Big Tippers".

"Is this a strip club?" I questioned while feeling a little uneasy.

Calvin found a parking spot, reversed, and put the car in the park.

He looked over at me with the sneakiest grin, "What were you expecting?"

"I know this nigga isn't serious. A strip club on the first date?" I thought.

I didn't have anything against strip clubs. I'm all Girl-Power: If you can break a nigga, go ahead and break a nigga. But, my Lord, I was so ill-prepared, and I was not about to break \$100 just to tip some loud-mouth skank.

Calvin unbuckled his seatbelt, "Luckily for us, I know the owner. He's my brother-in-law."

"Well, look at you," I said in a sassy manner.

He looked around playfully to ensure that no one was listening even though it was only the two of us in the car. He stepped out of the vehicle, walked over to the

driver's side, and opened the door for me. I stepped out of the vehicle, looking around just to make sure that no one saw me. Yeah, I am the paranoid type.

He gently grabbed my hand to comfort me, "A little ass-shaking never hurt anyone." He winked.

We walked up to the front of the line, bypassing others who had looked as if they had been waiting for hours. The sight of underdressed women with banging bodies made me question my appearance. Calvin saw that I was a little uncomfortable, but he assured me that everything was going to be ok.

"Just because you have your ass out, doesn't make you a lady." He whispered in my ear.

"You ain't never lied," I replied condescendingly.

Marty, Calvin's brother-in-law, walked out to the front of the club, wearing a sparkly suit and black sunglasses.

Marty walked over and shook Calvin's hand, "Calvin! Boy, what you are doing out this late?"

Calvin looked over at me out of the corner of his eye, "Just chilling with my lady."

"My lady?" I thought, blushing and looking away as I did not hear the words that came out of his mouth.

Marty looked me up and down, "Your lady? You sure have a taste for candy."

"She seems like a keeper. I'm just trying to feel her out a little more." Calvin grinned.

Now this was interesting. First date, and he was already letting it be known that I was his? And women have the nerve to say that chivalry should die.

We trailed Marty into the packed club as we made our way to the VIP section of the establishment. Surrounding us were strippers of every ethnicity, twerking on stage and in the private sections of the club, being showered with cash by every big baller in the city.

"It's R&B night here at Big Tippers so it's a little crowded." He mentioned, apologizing for the lack of space.

Calvin and I sat at a table that had a bottle of champagne sitting in a bucket full of ice. Calvin attempted to pick up the bottle of champagne to pour me and him a glass but was stopped by Marty who had something better up his sleeves.

"That's the cheap shit." Marty scoffed.

"In VIP?" Calvin wondered.

Calvin picked up the bottle and saw that it was a rather expensive brand of champagne.

Calvin looked up at Marty, "This shit is like \$300 a bottle, Marty."

Marty was consistent with his point of view, "I told you, it's the cheap shit."

Marty turned around and instructed two dancers, carrying a large bottle of champagne, to come over to where we were sitting. The two dancers set the bottle of champagne down on the table.

Marty pointed at the bottle, "Now that's the good shit. Fresh off the boat from Spain."

Calvin smiled, "You never cease to amaze me, my brother."

'Hit me if you need anything. I'm about to go over here and see what's up with this fine Asian thing that's fresh from the Philippines" Marty said boastfully.

Marty walked away and left me and Calvin alone. Calvin picked up the bottle of champagne and analyzed it.

"Marty must be doing good for himself." He said while analyzing the bottle.

Calvin opened the bottle and poured him and me a glass. I picked up the glass of champagne, took a sip, and instantly fell in love.

"Just like an orgasm." I thought to myself, almost grabbing my nipple.

"You like it?" He questioned.

I looked over at him, tongue-tied, and trying to find a way to come off more bougie than I was. I guess you could say I was shit-testing him like all women do.

"To be honest, I'm more of a tequila type of chick. Sorry, I don't mean to come off too picky." I said a little apprehensively.

"Anything for my lady." He winked.

Calvin called over one of the dancers and ordered her to bring me a bottle of their best tequila. The dancer looked back at Calvin and gave him a seductive smile. Such action made me a little envious since I couldn't even hold a candle to her body.

"You are quite the lady's man," I said while trying to play off that I wasn't jealous when it was obvious that I was.

He wrapped his arms around me, "She's not my type. I'm more into a woman with class."

My body became tense, so I pushed myself away gently.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to overstep my boundaries." He said as if he thought he did something wrong.

"You're ok, it's just been a while since I had a chance to get out," I said, sighing and wondering what the hell Trey was doing at that moment.

The dancer walked over and set the bottle of tequila down on the table.

"Can I get you guys anything else?" She asked politely while her eyes were glued to Calvin.

"No, honey, we are just fine." He responded.

The dancer walked away. Calvin opened the bottle of tequila and poured me a glass. He looked over at me and noticed that something was weighing heavy on my mind. To be honest, I was shocked by this spontaneous turn of events. If someone had advised me that I would be at a strip club, drinking an expensive bottle of tequila, while just leaving one of the most expensive restaurants in the city, I would've called them a bold-faced liar.

Yet, here I was, being pampered by a man whose intentions were unknown. Of course, I expected that he wanted to fuck me. I mean, what man doesn't want sex? But Calvin was a lot cooler than I expected. And this was the most relaxed I had been since me and Trey's honeymoon which was just three years ago. There I was, again, comparing a man who I had only known for a month to the man who swooped me off my feet and rescued me from the screwed-up life that God handed me.

"What a shame." I felt as I sipped on the glass of tequila.

"I take it you're not used to all of this." He asked as if I was giving off the vibe that I was uncomfortable.

I looked over at him confused, "Use to what? This isn't my first time being to a strip club."

"I'm talking about being treated like a lady." He probed. "I know it's hard out here for a lot of you sisters to find a good dude."

I played off the fact that my life had become nothing but an endless cycle of waiting for my love to come home, "It's cool. It's cool." I hesitated.

Calvin placed his hand over mine which made me turn and look him in the eyes, “No matter what you’re going through, just forget about it. Enjoy the night, there is so much more to come.

I got lost in his dreamy eyes. My body was frozen stiff as if his words had frozen me in my tracks. All I could do was nod in agreement as my favorite song from Alicia Keys, *You Don’t know my name*, played in the background.

Chapter Five

The drinks flowed in and out of the VIP section like a party in the Hills, where there are no rules and temptation becomes an afterthought to whatever pleasures are hidden. My vision became blurry as one shot turned into two and then two turned into five. We joked among one another, revealing freaky things we had done in our past while sipping on the finest champagne and tequila the strip club had to offer.

I was so intoxicated that when Calvin was talking to me, I could hear his voice go in and out. I just nodded my head in agreement as I stared into those hazel-colored eyes that took me into a different realm on this earth.

Calvin looked into my eyes and could see that my pupils were slightly dilated, "You're drunk, aren't you?"

I was a bit embarrassed, but I nodded my head in agreement, "Yup, I am, unfortunately."

I picked up the last shot of tequila on the table and downed it. Calvin grinned as if he was amused at the sight of me being fucked up and all.

"We can leave whenever you want," Calvin said, informing me that he was expecting something more after we left the club.

"I'm in no hurry. I just wish I had some cash."

I looked over in the corner and saw a light-skinned stripper with red hair, dancing in front of a group of men.

I pointed in her direction, "Ole girl over there is working it."

"The light-skinned one?" Calvin asked confused.

I pointed his head to a light-skinned dancer with red hair. She had a slim build with a huge ass that was covered with a dragon tattoo. She had been giving her all and making close to nothing from the men she was dancing for.

"She is a beauty. Maybe you should go over there and twerk something." He said in a serious, yet, joking manner.

"Boy, you crazy." I chuckled.

"She doesn't seem to be making that much money. Half these niggas are probably spending their goddamn rent money." Calvin joked.

I picked up the bottle of tequila and poured myself another glass, "Which must not be enough,"

"Maybe I should go over there and show them how a real baller plays." He said, asking me for my approval.

I picked up the glass of tequila and sipped it, "Do what you got to do." I insisted.

A devilish grin appeared on Calvin's face, "Your wish is my command."

Calvin kissed me on the cheek and walked off. I watched as Calvin walked up to the stripper, pull out a wad of cash, and made it rain why she dropped it and twerked on him. It appeared that Calvin was trying to make a point, which he had no business doing. With the type of niggas who were in that establishment they looked as if they could shoot up the place.

He walked back over to me and handed me a wad of ones, "Now I want to see you go crazy."

To say I was impressed would be an understatement. This was the first time a date has ever given me stacks on top of stacks just to trick off strippers. The spontaneity of it all had brought me out of my comfort zone but in the best way. My day-to-day life had become so monotonous, it felt good to be doing something out of the ordinary.

Calvin called for the redhead woman to come to where we were standing. I sat down in my chair and allowed the dancer to give me a lap dance as Calvin made it rain.

"Girl, what have you got yourself into? This isn't you. You know damn well you should not be out at no damn strip club this time of night. If only Trey could see you now." I thought to myself as dollars fell from the sky and all over my body.

Chapter Six

Once the lights had become dim, the show was over, and the only thing left was me and Calvin, watching as the stripper walked away with all the money she had made that night. I commended her because she gave half to another stripper who seemed to have had a long night. I could only imagine what it's like being a stripper on a Sunday night. I couldn't imagine myself twerking to some Isacc Presley or Smokey Robinson. But, to each their own.

The conversation between me and Calvin continued to flow effortlessly. The connection we were experiencing was beyond genuine. Earlier, I had been keeping a safe distance from Calvin, not to get too close. But as the night progressed, I couldn't help but scoot closer to have more of a face-to-face conversation.

Suddenly, the song changed to Mint Condition, "Pretty Brown Eyes."

"I know that ain't Mint Condition playing." Calvin looked at me with a puzzled expression.

"What? You don't know this song?" I asked, eyeing him oddly as I snapped my fingers and sang along.

His body language said everything, "Such a beautiful lady The kind you find in a dream and dreams are so real for me with eyes so warm and soothing They put me in a trance."

He shrugged his shoulders and admired me as I had sung my heart out.

"Damn, you're fuckin with it huh?" Calvin said sarcastically.

When the chorus came Calvin found himself singing along. He hadn't recognized the verse, but the chorus was familiar to him. It reminded him of early Saturday mornings. The 90s R&B woke him and his siblings up like an alarm letting them know it was time to get up and clean.

Calvin reached his hand out, "May I have this dance?" He asked her while I stood to my feet.

"You may," I said, feeling even more horny compared to when we had entered the club.

At this point, the tequila had stripped down every guard that I had up. I was intoxicated by the alcohol and the smell of his cologne had invaded my personal space.

We made our way to the middle of the dance floor. We started dancing slowly, his arms around my waist while my arms were wrapped around his neck.

My head rested on his shoulder and although the strip club didn't have the vibe for this type of dancing, we were vibrating on a frequency all on our own.

"You are fine as a mother fucker, you know that?." he whispered in my ear as we rocked back and forth.

He placed his index finger under my chin, forcing me to look at him, deeply, in his eyes. We made eye contact momentarily, but I looked away.

"I'm assuming I'm not him," He said softly.

I was shocked, "Excuse me?"

He was apprehensive at first, but the liquor made him speak his sober thoughts, "I don't mean to come off so condescending, but I have heard the problems between you and your husband."

It had dawned on me that Latrice had filled him in on what I and Trey had been going through for the past year. I was ashamed but I couldn't hide it since the sound of the music brought me to an emotional state that I wasn't expecting. As the song changed to a slower, more sensual pace, I turned around and began to grind on him to the beat. Ice Cold Rain on me you fire baby Her hips rocked into him melodically as Fire and Ice by Wale played in the background.

The stripper on stage was performing brilliantly and captivated the attention of everyone in the club but the two of us.

"Damn, baby." Calvin was shocked.

He hadn't expected this, but he was pleased. Starting to lose his balance, he gained support from the wall behind him as I continued to juke on him like they were at a Carver Center party in 2008. I could feel his breath on my neck as I closed my eyes, and he tilted my head back.

My silk press became frizzy as beads of sweat began to form on my forehead. I was lost in the music, lost in the moment. I wanted it to last forever, but I knew that all good things had to come to an end. It felt as if me and him were the only ones left in the club. I noticed his dick starting to harden as I continued to grind to the sensual sounds provided by the DJ. I couldn't see his eyes, but I could feel them burning into me as I observed and admired him from the back, wondering what it would be like if our clothes weren't in the way.

Momentarily, forgetting where we were, Calvin placed his hand around the front of my neck and began gently choking me, as I continued to thrust my hips into him. I started to arch my back more and, in the process. I turned my head, and we locked eyes. I could see the desire on his face. He smirked, causing a pulsating sensation in my center. I was hot, a little too hot.

“Let’s get out of here.” He whispered in my ear, as his hand was still around my neck.

I stopped and turned around to face him. I looked around the club embarrassingly catching the eyes of spectators.

“Yea, it’s about that time,” I said nervously.

This was when I knew Pandora’s Box was about to be unlocked. God have mercy on his soul after he gets a taste of my sweet waters.

Chapter Seven

Calvin only lived a block up the street, so we arrived at his apartment quickly. The short drive was silent, but one could hear the sexual anticipation loud and clear. I was tempted to grab his pants, pull out his dick, and give him the best head as we drove down I-35. But I kept my composure and stayed patient. It's like my grandmother used to tell me, "Anything that comes too fast, may not be the best for you."

"Do I need to take my shoes off?" I asked as we entered his apartment, noticing how impeccably clean it was.

The carpet was white as snow with no stains in sight. The kitchen was spotless except for a plate in the sink. The apartment was much bigger compared to mine which had me feeling a tidbit salty. And judging by the elite paintings on the wall, I could tell he had an appetite for the finer things in life.

"No," Calvin responded immediately, his eyes taking me in hungrily. "Keep everything on."

Together we walked into the apartment. He closed the door behind us, and I made my way to the living room where a sofa was waiting for me. He walked into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator as if he was looking for something.

"Do you want a glass of wine?" He asked politely.

I plopped down on the sofa and set my purse on the floor.

"Why not?" I shrugged.

The shots from the club still had me on another level, but I figured a glass of wine wouldn't hurt.

"Alright bet. I have some Prosecco in the refrigerator." He said, pulling out the bottle from the refrigerator.

He walked over to the kitchen counter and set the bottle of wine on top of it. He reached into his back pocket, pulled out his phone, and opened a Music App.

"Have you ever heard of Soulection?" He asked while scrolling through the playlist.

I grinned, "Of course. I listen to their playlists all the time."

He smiled back, happy that our common interests continued to grow.

"Bet," He said as he connected his iPhone to his Beats pill.

He selected a playlist and a version of LNF by Phabo and blasted the song through the speaker. He pulled out two wine glasses from a cabinet underneath the counter and filled the glasses full of wine. He walked back into the living room and placed one glass right in front of me and one glass on the end of the coffee table.

"I don't think I've ever seen a porcelain coffee table before. You got money..." I laughed, mimicking a video that went viral a couple of years ago.

"I do what I can." He chuckled back before finding his spot next to me on the sofa.

We each picked up our glass of wine, clinked our glasses together, and took large sips, both of us almost finishing our glasses in one gulp.

"Prosecco is my fourth favorite wine. I love the way it tastes." He said, staring down at the glass.

It became difficult to process what my next move should've been. On one hand, I wanted to just sit there and stare into his dreamy eyes. On the other hand, I wanted to taste the wine residue that was present on his lips.

"Now you're overthinking shit, Alexis." I thought.

Snapping me out of my thoughts, I felt Calvin's mouth on mine. Our tongues wrestled with one another. My body started to throb in response and my defenses grew weaker by the second. He stopped and allowed his eyes to roam every inch of my body.

"Take this off," he demanded. "I would like to see you strip."

I gazed at him with a puzzled expression, not sure of what to say. I hadn't done anything like this for any man but Trey but for some reason I didn't feel uncomfortable.

"I'm no professional." I said while unconsciously tugging on the bottom of my dress.

"I don't need you to be a professional. Do it in your way." He said seductively.

His tongue had made its way to the bottom of my neck, sucking it just enough to not leave any evidence behind. He sat down on the couch and watched as I stood in front of him, allowing the beat in my mind to take over. I picked up the bottle of wine and took a sip from it. As instructed, I slid the zipper down on my dress and peeled it off slowly as soft jazz played in the background.

Chapter Eight

Calvin stared at me with lust in his eyes as I swayed to the beat, removing the stacks of money from his pocket. He looked at me as if my body was a work of art. My almond skin illuminated in the dimness of the living room. My stomach was tight, and my ass was naturally rounded so there was no shame in my game.

Calvin took the rubber band off one of the stacks of money and threw them in the air. Watching the bills fall over me as I undressed was turning him on and I could feel him extending through his Armani slacks. Seeing the bills fall freely over my body gave me a boost of confidence. Once I had stripped down to nothing but my black strapless bra, matching thong, and heels I began dancing on him.

I had become so moist, and he had become so solid. The yearning we felt for each other was out of this world. I turned around and straddled him, now grinding on him from the front. As my C-cup breast bounced, he used both hands to reach underneath my bra to caress my nipples. I moaned gently as we locked eyes again. My nipples were sensitive, causing my pussy to leak more than it already had. Peeping at my arousal, he pulled my breast out and began sucking them. My moans grew louder as he licked, sucked, and bit down on each of my erect nipples, giving ample attention to each breast.

Although we were practically strangers, it seemed as though our bodies were old friends, embracing each other in a way that felt so familiar. It was as if we were in the next lifetime Erykah Badu was singing about - the way our souls connected.

He stood up, lifting all 145 pounds of me in his arms. We made our way to his bedroom, which had a scent of cinnamon and an aroma that screamed "exotic." Effortlessly, he unhooked my bra and laid me down gently on the bed. Once laid flat, he started kissing me all over my body. Starting at my forehead, down my neck, and lingering at my nipples again momentarily. He continued his journey leaving a trail of saliva in every area he visited, essentially marking his territory.

He kissed my inner thighs while teasing me. I wanted his mouth on my lower lips so bad, his teasing began to hurt. I didn't want to rush him but the closer he got to my center the more I could feel my clit swelling with anticipation. When he finally got to my center, he placed a kiss on my pearl through my thong. The long overdue orgasm escaped my body before he even made direct contact. He placed my thong to the side, and I came right into his mouth. My body convulsed as an unfamiliar climax passed through my body like a shock wave. My thighs shook viciously as Calvin continued to lick and suck, taking every bit of what I had to give.

It felt so good I could feel tears welling in my eyes and before I could stop it, they fell from my face to the sheets I was gripping tightly.

“Damn, baby. You taste so good. Damn.” He said in between licks, looking me directly in the eyes.

“I want it all, let me have it.” He said while placing two of his fingers inside of me, taking my orgasm to an entirely different level.

The moans escaping my lips were ecstasy induced. It was so satisfying that I couldn’t even speak. Remnants of my natural waters left traces in his beard.

At this point, I craved his connection, “I would like to taste you now.” I said in a demanding, yet, passionate manner.

Somehow, he managed to become harder than he already was.

“You want me?” he asked seductively, removing his head from my inner thighs and using his hands to place his body right on top of mine.

I nodded my head in agreement. He removed his clothes, tossing them to the floor unmasking his perfectly toned body. It was like God had come down and created this chocolate man herself, spending intricate moments sculpting every bicep and triceps on his body. Once he was in his underwear, I could see his thick shaft standing at full attention.

I sat up and admired it before removing his boxers and revealing him. I placed my hand on it and began to stroke gently. It was thick and long with a slight curve at the top. I licked the tip before placing it in my mouth. He closed his eyes and grabbed his dresser for stability as I sucked and stroked him.

I let a moan escape my throat, causing his toes to curl.

I looked up and noticed that his eyes were closed and demanded “I want you to look at me.”

He looked down as he was told. After removing the hair from my face, we made eye contact as I quite literally blew his brains out. He couldn’t allow himself to cum though, he wanted to see what it felt like first. He stopped me and bent down as our mouths found each other once again. The kiss allowed us to taste one another, turning the heat up just a notch more.

Nonverbally, I pleaded with him to enter inside me. The ball was in his court.

Without hesitation, he agreed, “Bend over” he instructed, picking up on my unspoken request.

I bent over, arching my back perfectly as he entered my body, slowly, from the back. He eased his way inside of me, each stroke accompanied by another inch of his member. I was tight and he could tell by the way my walls squeezed him that this area hadn't been explored in a while. He took his time with me, allowing me to feel all of him little by little.

"Fuck" I moaned out in pleasure.

That was the only word I could seem to form. Hearing my moans accompanied by the sounds our bodies were making naturally, his strokes became animalistic. Every thrust was long and deep. He grabbed a fist full of my hair and pulled me up. Our bodies were in perfect tandem with the help of whatever song that had been playing at that time.

The alcohol had helped uncover some of our deepest sexual desires. I felt my body about to climax for the second time as my thighs began to shake again, this orgasm more explosive than the last. As if on cue, Calvin pulled out from me and spread his seed onto my back and ass as we climaxed together.

He collapsed on top of my back and we both landed on the bed. We lay like that for a moment in complete silence, both of us unable to process what had just happened between the two of us.

"Wow," I said, breaking her silence.

He slapped my ass before responding and lifting his body off of mine.

"Wow is right, baby. That shit was crazy." He laughed, placing his head in his hands.

He made his way to the head of the bed, pulling me into him making me the little spoon as we cuddled.

Chapter Nine

Moments passed and all I could hear was snoring from behind me. I turned around and Calvin was in a deep slumber. I lifted his arms from around me and walked into the bathroom attached to his room. Turning on the lights, I looked in the mirror and smiled, "Yeahhhh bitch, you put that nigga to sleep!"

Before leaving, I did a two-step celebration. I didn't want to wake him, so I graciously slipped back into the bed and placed his arm back around me like it had been before. Drowsiness started to present itself and I felt myself succumbing. I didn't know what had just happened, but she needed that shit.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of keys clicking as the door to his apartment was turning. The door opened and my heart skilled a beat.

"Please don't tell me this nigga is fucking another bitch." I thought.

The last thing I needed was to whoop a bitch ass. But the sound of Trey talking in a feminine manner startled me.

"Daddy, I'm home. My flight came in late, so I decided to come to stay with you for the night."

Tears ran down my face as I looked over at Calvin with disgust. Trey walked into the bedroom, holding two glasses of wine in his hand. Standing in my presence, Trey dropped both glasses down on the floor.

"Alexis?" Trey said, startled as if he had seen a ghost.

Calvin opened his eyes, leaned up, and saw me and Trey staring at one another with deep passion in our eyes. Calvin dropped his head in disappointment as he was embarrassed that the truth had been uncovered.

"It's not what you think. I go both ways from time to time, but I prefer women." He said while trying to rationalize his sexuality.

I held my finger up to halt his speech.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, "If you want to join, you can. We have all night to make this more interesting. Now come give me some dick. It's been a month."

Trey looked over at Calvin with a confused look on his face at first. After a few seconds of processing what he was hearing, he stripped naked, walked over to me, and spread my legs.

Before he proceeded, he needed confirmation, "How do you want it, queen."

I winked, "Nice and slow, baby. Nice and slow."

From Pain To Redemption

Chapter 1

What is the purpose of living when all you must look forward to is walking through a storm with no one, but yourself, to keep you company? I swear, for the past two years, it feels as if I've been walking through a dark tunnel where the only light, that is present, is the light from the fireflies who seems to have a purpose? It's sad when I really sit back and think about it. I usually looked around at others, and it seemed as if their lives were filled with so much joy and adventure. I'm not going to lie, it made me a little jealous. So jealous that I would actually cry when I got home.

They say to be thankful for the blessings that others receive, but how can you be grateful when your life is nothing more than a never-ending nightmare? It's like no matter how hard you try to wake yourself up, from this nightmare, you are stuck in this dark ibis that only serves the purpose of making sure you remain miserable. A life like that will make any young man go crazy, especially one who walks around with a dark cloud every day.

It was early in the morning and I sat on the bus feeling as if I was about to go into an emotional wreck. I looked around, and it felt as if I was surrounded by lost souls. Lost souls who seemed to be awaiting some kind of judgment, from a being, who I knew didn't give a damn about my well-being. The looks on their faces told stories that could only be compared to the horror in fiction. Who was I to judge? It wasn't as if I was any different. If anything, I would say that I was probably worse off due to my young age and emotional imbalance.

The bus stopped, and James, my closes friend, stepped on the bus and sat beside me. I knew he was there, but I didn't pay him any attention since I was trying to find ways to navigate to my happy place.

"Good morning, Jimmy." He said while looking over at me with a huge smile on his face.

"Good morning, James," I said as if there was a dark cloud hovering over my body.

James paid my foul behavior no attention since he knew that my behavior was nothing out of the ordinary. After all, he was the only person I had confessed my darkest secrets too.

James pulled out a sandwich, from his lunchbox, and sat it on my lap.

"Just in case you get hungry, mate." He said with a chipper look on his face.

I looked down at the sandwich feeling as if I was about to turn into an animal and devour it like a helpless prey in the wilderness. I remembered not having enough time to make breakfast due to my mother's emotional rambles. If you want to see someone reach their tipping point, had them a bottle of vodka and two shots of whiskey. I promise you will not be disappointed.

"Thanks," I said while giving James the impression that I really didn't care.

I picked up the sandwich and ate it in small portions while looking outside the bus window. The bus drove down some of the most scenic areas in the city. Such sights would make any person, filled with sadness, feel a sense of importance in a world that is so lonely.

There were times when I would just sit back on the bus, look outside the window, and envision myself as being a bird who flew through the skies while discarded of any troubles. You can say that I have a mind of a child, but that seems to be the only thing that can crack a smile on my face.

"The scenery is beautiful." I thought to myself as I envisioned myself soaring through the light-blue skies.

It was as if I could, literally, feel the wind blow through my hair as I soared through the skies. I felt as if I was on top of the world but only temporarily. Unfortunately, I knew it was all just a figment of my imagination. After all, all my good experiences, thus far, have been nothing but figments of my imagination.

"Such a sad case, indeed," I said to myself while quickly getting snapped back into reality.

I started to feel a sense of darkness slipping in like water through a busted pipe. Such darkness became so strong that it overflowed my heart with grief and the true reality that encompassed my existence.

I gently placed my hand on my chest, "Make it stop." I said to myself.

James looked over at me and noticed that I was in a state of unimaginable pain.

He signed, "Jimmy, you have to get a hold of yourself."

James placed his hand on my shoulder to give me some sort of comfort. It wasn't enough to rid myself of the pain, completely, but it did lower my blood pressure which was on its way to reaching unimaginable levels.

I sat back in my seat and sighed in relief. It was as if all pain had been drained from my heart - sort of like a sponge which was drifting away, in the ocean, without any true direction.

"It seems as though your panic attacks are getting worse, my friend," James said with a concerned look on his face.

"You don't even know the half of it," I said while massaging my forehead with the tip of my fingers.

I began to reminisce about an unfortunate event that had occurred approximately two years ago. I would have to say that this event, inevitably, created the emotional state that I felt trapped in.

Chapter 2

Flashback – Two Years Ago

The night was rather tormenting, to say the least. I was unable to slumber due to the thunderstorms and constant antagonizing noises that were echoing throughout my head. I was tossing and turning, in my bed, like a mad man who was being antagonized by a paranormal entity who was quite persistent and confident in its approach.

“Where is this coming from?” I thought to myself as sweat drenched my sheets.

“Get out of here,” I yelled while thinking that it would make it stop.

This wasn’t the first time that this had happened. This was actually something that occurred quite frequently, but something was different this time. This time, whatever was tormenting me seemed like it had a particular, goal in mind: to make my night a living hell.

“Am I losing my sanity.” I thought to myself while tossing and turning.

The sound of voices came along my bedside like my mother telling me a bedtime story. At first, I thought I was going crazy, but the sound of the voices confirmed, to me, that I was perfectly sane. It was as if something or someone was trying to send me a message of some sort. I tried to rationalize this situation by asking myself if I was the one who was talking.

“Are my voices playing tricks on me?” I thought.

I, quickly, snapped out of such silly thinking, since I knew that I would know my voice better than anyone. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a sense of pain hit me in my chest. It felt as if I was having a heart attack, but I was still unsure. The pain was excruciating. So, excruciating that I began to fall in a fit of rage that made me feel as if I was a monster.

I grabbed my heart feeling as if I was shielding someone from stabbing me. It felt as if I was being stabbed by a pointy object, but I knew there was no one present, in my room, but me and my reflection who sits in the corner. By this time, the antagonizing feeling began to make me weep like a baby who was in need of his mother’s milk. I tried to fight it off, but I was hopeless. So hopeless that I decided to just sit back and take the punishment like a victim involved in a domestic dispute. It was clear, at that moment, that this phenomenon was destined to make my night a living hell.

I, slowly, opened my eyes and realized that this was just another panic attack. I realized that I was telling myself that this was a paranormal experience to make myself feel better. I leaned up in my bed and panted at an alarming rate to calm myself.

"Sleep? Sleep seems to be more of a blessing these days. After all, the only time I am happy is when I'm asleep." I thought to myself.

I looked around the room to confirm that no one, or nothing, else was present. My breathing slowed, and I, finally, became relaxed in my own skin.

"Sure, the nights can be rather cold and bleak, but nothing beats the tranquil state of a nice, long sleep." I thought to myself.

I laid back in my bed, closed my eyes, and placed myself in a tranquil state to ensure that my anxiety wouldn't turn back on. Such a tranquil state was interrupted when I could hear my mother, in the other room, arguing with a very strange man.

"Why are you always so angry!" She cried.

"Angry? You make me that way, woman." The strange man responded.

"That voice? It sounds familiar." I thought.

I lifted my head, just a little, to hear a little better.

The male's voice became clearer, "If you don't want me here, I'll leave. I don't give a damn about you or that boy. I can't take this shit." The strange man said, talking as if he was about to pull his hair out.

I realized that the strange man was my father.

"Why would I refer to my father as being a strange man." You might ask.

Because, for most of my life, my father had always seemed like a strange man. Every conversation we would have would be short and to the point. Never did my father seek to build a strong father-son relationship. That is why I decided to treat him as such, a strange man.

"What are you saying?" My mom asked my father who was still very disgruntled.

"Don't make me." My father said as if he was apprehensive to speak his sober thoughts.

I noticed that for the past few weeks, it seemed as though my father was stressed. So stressed, that even he had to take to the bottle to get a taste of freedom.

"Not this again." I thought to myself while covering my eyes.

To be honest I wasn't too surprised at such unfortunate events. My mother and father had been arguing, for the past few days, over motherly-fatherly duties, in which I didn't understand. The tones in their voices escalated, so I knew that they were taking their argument to the living room. I got out of my bed, feeling as if I was the one to intervene and bring peace back into a house that was never peaceful. Before I could attempt to come to the rescue of my mother, who was rather weak and fragile, I felt the presence of a hand holding onto my shoulder.

"What is this?" I said as chills withered down my spine.

I, slowly, looked back and saw my shadow holding onto my shoulder as if he was preventing me from intervening.

"You're going to regret this." My shadow said as if he saw something coming.

Such an interesting turn of events since this was the first time, I had ever heard him speak. I had always considered him to be a figment of my imagination, but he was probably more of a brother than my actual brother who went to prison four years prior.

"Just go back to sleep. We'll talk about it in the morning." He said while rubbing his forehead in complete worry.

I ignored him, "I must attend to my mother. She needs me." I said.

I walked over to the door and, slowly, cracked it open to watch the show that was on full display. My mother was yelling at my father who was holding a suitcase while pushing her back.

"You can't leave. Jimmy needs you!" She cried.

"You've done a good job raising him! I'm sure you can do it alone!" He yelled.

It was obvious, to me, that my father was in a drunken state since his eyes were bloodshot red, and his breath reeked of bourbon whiskey. My mother became so furious that she slapped him in the face. This did nothing but infuriate my father who was already in a state of anger that I had never seen before.

He pushed my mother against the wall and stormed out of the house like a shadow being swallowed up in darkness. My mother sat, in the middle of the room, and began to cry as if she was having an anxiety attack. I, quickly, opened the door to comfort my mom but was stopped by my shadow who was more concerned for me.

"Give her time." He said as if he had been in a similar situation.

"But she needs me," I responded while watching her being tormented by her very own reflection.

"She's in a state of shock. Trying to comfort her will do nothing but make her slip even closer to the darkness." He said.

I took his advice, closed the door, and went back to bed as if the whole thing was just a nightmare. Unfortunately, what was transpiring was a harsh reality. I couldn't believe my father was stepping out on me and my mother, but it was something I had to accept. Even though I despised his very presence, I couldn't imagine a life without him. Such a situation made me realize that I was going to have to grow up much faster than I wanted to. I guess it's true when they say life is not fair.

My shadow sat on the side of my bed with his head down as if it was his father who stepped out of his life.

"It gets better as time goes by; I promise." The shadow said while looking out my bedroom window.

"What are you looking at?" I asked.

The shadow did not respond. He just walked away and sat in the corner as if he had seen something that crushed the last bit of consciousness he had inside. I got up out of my bed, and I walked over to the window where I saw my father getting in the passenger side of a car with another woman. Strange, since I did not believe my father could have an affair due to his emotional stability. My heart, suddenly, dropped when I saw that there was a little girl sitting in the backseat. She looked just like me it was so scary.

"Are we related?" I thought to myself.

I knew we were related; I just did not want to accept it. My father was leaving us for another family, and I just had to accept the fact that he found a family that he deemed more worthy than us.

"It's lonely out there. He just doesn't know how lonely it is." My shadow said while looking out the mirror.

My father drove off in the car and didn't even look back. He saw me in the window but not even a wave to say, "goodbye." Talk about your world crashing in on you. I held in the tears, or should I say I had been crying so much that there weren't any tears left. I just closed my eyes and drifted off into the sorrow like any child would do once he found out that his father was no longer present.

I stayed up, during the night, just pondering what to do next. I looked over in the corner and saw a journal but writing out my pain wouldn't do anything but make me bash my head into the wall. My shadow sat in front of me, on the floor, reading a book

which seemed to be titled *From Pain to Redemption*. Such a title brought a sense of light, but that light was quickly snatched away once I began to drift off.

It took me an hour to fall back to sleep. I felt like I was trapped between two different worlds, but at least my shadow was there to keep me company. Suddenly, the alarm went off, and I rose out of the bed, feeling as if I really had the purpose of being alive. I shook my head as it was pounding at an accelerated rate. I looked around and noticed that the sun was beaming in through my bedroom window. I felt a sense of relief since I could've sworn that I had a dream that my father had left the previous night.

"Thank God it was just a dream and nothing else," I said while looking over at the same corner my shadow was sitting it.

I climbed out of my bed and it felt as if there was a heavyweight on my heart. I shrugged it off as if it was just morning sickness from the steak sandwich, I ate the previous night. I walked into the living room and saw that my mother was lying on the floor in a devastating, depressed, state.

I rush over to my mom, "Mom, what's wrong?"

At first, she didn't respond. I grew quite worried, but the feeling of a pulse calmed my nerves which, almost, went haywire.

"He left." She responded

"Who left, mom?" I asked.

"Your father." She said with tears pouring from her face.

"I guess it wasn't a dream after all." I thought to myself.

My mother attempted to lift her head, but she was so drunk that she could barely keep her balance. I helped her up from the floor with my hand on her lower back and my other hand on her shoulder.

"Come back, to me, baby. Come back." She slurred.

Although they had their problems, my mother loved my father. But it was evident that he did not feel the same. If he did, he wouldn't have stepped out on us like a coward.

"He's not here, mom," I said while holding her up.

She pushed me away and began to go on an emotional tirade.

"It's because of you." She said while looking into my eyes as if I wasn't even her son.

She pushed herself out of my arms and stumbled across the living room.

"He left because of you. I should've done... I should've done it." She said as if she was in great pain.

"Should've done what?" I thought to myself.

She stumbled towards her bedroom while holding the side of her stomach. She opened the bedroom door and looked back at me as if she wanted to say something. She dropped her head in disappointment and just walked into the bedroom.

I felt a sense of sickness as I watched the door close behind her. I dropped down on the floor and began to sob like a baby without a mother. What hurt, even more, was when I looked up and saw a picture of me, my mother, and father together.

End Flashback

Chapter 3

It had been two years since my father had stepped out on me and my mom. I would love to sit here and say that I had got over my father's decision, but the feeling was the same: dark and rather tormenting. Since then, my mother's drinking had risen to unprecedented levels. Add pills to the equation and the combination was bound to leave her with more than just a hangover. Whenever I would express my concern, she would shrug it off as if she didn't care that her life was slipping away. All she cared about was making sure that the high would last her all the way until the next morning. Nothing was more important than ensuring that she got her high, not even my concern for her wellbeing.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy. I didn't know that you had gone through so much over the past two years." James said as if he actually gave a damn.

"Yeah, I have. But there's no sense in crying over spilled milk," I responded.

"Two birthdays and no response." I thought while realizing that my father had not acknowledged my last two birthdays.

The bus pulled in front of my school and, together, I and James stepped off the bus with our backpacks strapped to our backs.

"See you later, Jimmy. I hope you feel better." James said while walking away.

I don't know what it was but sometimes it felt as if Jimmy was never there. It was like he, too, was just a figment of my imagination. Luckily, I had made two friends who I knew were as real as me: Billy and Nicholas.

Billy was the more subtle type while Nicholas was rather blunt in his approach. Like myself, they, too, came from dysfunctional households. I guess that's the reason why we clicked so easily.

Across the way, I could see Billy and Nick playing football in the middle of the field. I rushed over to join them but was quickly taken away by a girl who walked past me with her friends. She was extremely attractive, but she was clearly out of my lead. She turned back and looked at me as if she wanted to say something. I was locked in but only for a moment. Nick and Billy interrupted any chance for interaction between me and the beautiful girl.

"What's going on, James," Billy said while throwing the ball up in the air.

"Shitty day on the bus," I replied.

"I saw you checking her out. Maybe you should talk to her." Nicholas said with a sly grin on his face.

"Please, she only likes the chaps on the football team," I said with a lack of confidence in my voice.

"You really need to gain some confidence, mate," Billy said while kicking the ball up with his feet.

It's hard to have confidence when you feel like all your worth is a bottle of whiskey and an ashtray full of cigarettes. I kicked the ball out of the air, and it landed in Billy's hands.

"Oh well, there's more girls in class," I said as if I had forgotten about her.

The bell rang, indicating that class was about to start very soon. I proceeded to walk away but was stopped by Billy and Nicholas.

"Where are you going, mate?" Billy asked as if I was in the wrong.

"Class," I said with a confused look on my face.

"Class? Since when was class so important." Billy said with a confused look on his face.

"We're about to go have some fun. You should join us." Nicholas said with a devilish look on his face.

"I don't know. I have finals coming up pretty soon." I said while feeling a little apprehensive.

"Screw finals, mate. We have better things to do." Billy said while kicking the ball in the air.

It felt as if an angel was on my shoulder telling me to do the right thing, while Billy and Nicholas were the devils who always persuades you to do what you were not supposed too. At that time, temptation caved in like a lost child in the urban core where everyone is left to fend for themselves. I looked back at the school still trying to make my mind up.

After juggling countless voices in my head, I decided to take a walk towards the dark side for a change.

"I guess class can wait," I said while looking back at the school.

"Cool, let's go get into something," Billy said while tossing the ball up in the air.

As we walked away, I could've sworn that I saw my Shadow, who I hadn't seen in two years, watching us from a distance. At first, I wanted to run back to him like a

son trying to get back in the graces of his surrogate father. But I just pushed back and continued on with my friends who were on a path of darkness like I was.

Chapter 4

As we walked down a pretty busy section of the city, I began to get a weary feeling in my stomach. I didn't know if it was my intuition or the gloominess that smothered the air. I looked up in the air and noticed that the sun was not present even though it was about two hours ago. Just thinking about it, I realized that sometimes it seems as if the sun is just no longer there. It's like when I look up, all I see is just a bunch of clouds with nothing of much substance. It's like I'm stuck in some sort of multi-universe where darkness is light, and light is darkness. It's quite interesting when you think about it. We tend to believe that we live in a world where everything is either black or white, but, based on personal experience, there are a lot of grey areas that you must navigate to survive. What side you choose is up to you. Just know that the choices you make will catch up to you like an estranged father who stepped out on you so long ago.

I stood among my friends, thinking that it was just us against the world. Together, me, Nicholas, and Billy walked down the street looking into getting into something. I was excited but, slightly, sad at the same time. It felt as if my anxiety and depression were about to turn on at the same time. Such a combination is bound to leave me on my knees while praying for the pain to stop.

Nicholas looked back at me and saw that I was a little disgruntled.

"Everything ok, mate?" Nicholas asked with a slightly worried look on his face.

"Yeah, probably just something I ate," I said while continuing to push on.

We got to the end of the street and saw a group of three boys who were standing on the corner laughing and joking with one another. Nicholas and Billy had got into a scuffle with the boys a week ago after school. I knew because everyone was talking about it back at school.

"There they are," Billy said with his fist balled up.

"What's going on?" I asked in a curious manner.

"Those guys, they jumped us a week ago after school. It was over a game of football." Billy said while biting the side of his lip.

"Why would they jump you guys over a game of football?" I asked a little confused.

"They're always walking around thinking that they're tough. We'll show them." Nicholas said while pulling up his sleeves.

I was never a fighter, but I knew what had to be done when hanging out with Billy and Nicholas. I rolled up my sleeves and stood by their side as a loyal soldier would.

"Are we really about to do this?" I said feeling as if I was about to go crazy myself.

"You're damn right," Billy said with an angry look on his face.

We charged towards the group of boys while feeling a source of energy that wasn't there before. The three boys saw us coming, so they prepared themselves. We, each, fought one on one until the boys ran away in a cowardly manner.

"Come back you, pansies," Nicholas yelled.

"Yeah, come back!" Billy yelled.

Suddenly, a sense of guilt came upon me like a dark plague. My heart began to accelerate and sweat began to drip from my forehead like a never-ending waterfall. Nicholas and Billy turned around and saw that there was something wrong with me.

"Is everything ok, Jimmy?" Nicholas said with his hand out.

"I got to go," I said in a hurry.

I ran down the street and didn't look back. It felt as if something, or someone, was chasing after me, but it was just my reflection tagging along as always. I stopped to catch my breath and heard footsteps coming from behind me. I turned around and saw that it was James. This was the first time, in a very long time, when I was glad to see him.

"Jimmy, what's wrong?" James said while in a panic.

"It feels like I'm having another panic attack," I said while panting.

James lifted me up and carried me down the street as a true friend would.

"We got to get you home. The last thing I want is for you to be laid out in the street." He lamented.

I didn't want to go home but it wasn't as if I had any other choice. It was 12:00 in the afternoon, so I knew that my mother was going to have questions. Oh well, it wasn't as if she was in the position to tell me what was right or wrong.

Chapter 5

I stood in front of my house in complete silence. I knew I was about to walk into a storm, and the only place, I knew, I could find refuge was in my room. I was accompanied by James who stood beside me, knowing that I was about to walk into a war zone where emotional onslaughts were just the norm.

"Want me to come over after school?" James asked as if he was my keeper.

"You have better things to do. I'll be fine. Thanks for walking home with me." I said with my head down in disappointment.

I walked into the house and felt a gust of cigarette smoke hit me in my face like a gust of smog from a, ran down, factory in the middle of Birmingham. My mother sat on the couch, and she looked at me as if she was pissed about something.

"Shouldn't you be in school?" She said while holding a bottle of vodka in her left hand.

"I was sick, so I decided to come home a little early," I said while trying to play it off.

I headed towards my room but was stopped by my mother who jumped out of the couch with the bottle of vodka still in her hand.

"Why do you have that scar on your face?" She asked while turning my face with the palm of her hand.

I tried to act as if she was seeing something that wasn't there, but it was clear that there were scars on my face.

I brushed her off, "It's nothing, mom."

"What do you mean it's nothing? You never get into fights, Jimmy." She scowled.

My mother was persistent, but the smell of alcohol made me unable to take her seriously. After minutes of pestering, I finally confessed to her what happened.

"I got into a fight," I admitted.

"What are you doing fighting?" She asked this time in a much sterner manner.

"I was protecting myself, ok?" I said as if I was annoyed.

She slapped me in the face but I brushed it off as if it didn't have any effect on me.

"What did you say?" She said with fury in her eyes.

"Don't you ever talk to me in that manner again." She added.

I dropped my head in shame as I knew that an emotional onslaught was on its way.

"You wouldn't be acting like this if your father was here." She said as if it was going to make me feel any better.

"It's not like it would matter," I mumbled

"What did you say to me?" She responded.

I elevated my voice, "I said it's not like it would matter."

She attempted to slap me again but this time I grabbed her hand.

"Stop!" I demanded.

I pushed her back and rushed out of the house without giving her a second to react. She followed behind me, but I was so far down the street that I could not hear the words that she echoed.

Chapter 6

Here I was, back on the bus, just looking outside at the scenery of downtown. I always envisioned myself being a bigshot in one of those condos on Elm Street, but I knew such dreams would never come to pass since I was so emotionally unstable. Hey, it doesn't hurt to dream, but sometimes dreaming doesn't do anything but make you feel even more crappy about where you are in life.

"I guess no one is truly special." I thought to myself.

The bus stopped and the girl from school stepped on the bus and saw that I was sitting at the other end. She smiled and decided to sit next to me.

"Aren't you Jimmy?" She asked with a glistening smile on her face.

"Yes," I said feeling quite nervous.

"Oh, so you're the guy that Billy and Nicholas are always talking about. I've heard nothing but good things about you." She said with a smile on her face.

I was shocked that Billy and Nick were well acquainted with the girl. They made it seem like she was just another one of those types who went after athletes, jocks, or the more studier classmen.

"My name's Jessica. What's yours?" She asked with great curiosity.

My name? I felt honored.

"Jimmy. But my friends call me James." I responded with a grin on my face.

"That's lovely." She said with a glistening smile on her face.

She wiped her eye and accidentally removed some of the makeup that was covering her blemishes. I saw that she had two black eyes which indicated to me that she was also a victim of abuse. My facial expression turned from cheer to gloom in a matter of seconds.

"What's with the funny look?" She asked.

I used my hands to indicate to her that I was aware of the blackeyes. She, quickly, pulled out a mini-makeup mirror and saw that the makeup, that was covering her black eyes, was removed. She dropped her head in complete embarrassment as she did not want anyone to be aware of the pain, she was experiencing back home. I wrapped my arms around her to inform her that everything was ok.

"It's ok, I know your pain. Maybe we should talk sometime." I said while looking into her eyes.

She cracked a smile, "Yeah, maybe we should talk."

Something told me to look over my shoulder, so I did as I was told. I looked over my shoulder and saw The Shadow that had disappeared two years ago. Sitting next to him was James who was reading a book titled *From Pain to Redemption*.

"Now it all makes sense." I thought to myself while looking down at Jessica.

Novel Chapters-Samples

Novel 1

Chapter 1

What happens when a young girl has been turned away, and the only place she has to turn too is a cold alleyway where society's failures reside? You might be wondering what she did to put herself in that situation, but as we all know, we cannot pick our parents or what type of household we were brought up in. They say you have to play with the cards you were dealt, well I find that to be kind of ironic. Anybody who has gambled will tell you that when you have a bad hand, you know you have screwed up and that the man next to you is going home with all the chips. That's life for you. Life is nothing but a damn gamble and only a small percentage of players are rewarded the chips. Do you want to know why was dealt a pretty bad hand? Mia Daniels.

It was a strange night during the month of mid-September. The evening seemed particularly unusual, yet, at the same time, it seemed like just another regular night in the neighborhood. There was something in the air signaling that tragedy was upon us. A sharp, cool, breeze blew across the city like a knife slicing through butter. Even the beauty from the fall leaves couldn't do anything to brighten up the night. It was so thick it felt as if you were being smothered by a thick smoke with no scent. The wind grew stronger by the minute, but Mia kept pushing on like a young lady on a mission. The night was quiet but that didn't stop Mia's cries from echoing through the wind like an opera singer in a deserted auditorium. Around the corner, she walked while being followed by shadows who were laughing at her every minute of torment. I never understood the nature of these beings. It seems as if they always show up when you are on your last leg in life. You would think they would be there during the times night isn't so chilly. But as we all know, your better half sometimes gets off seeing you suffer. I learned that when I was in Mia shoes a long time ago.

Mia was such a beautiful young lady. She had nice, long, kinky hair, deep brown eyes, and a shape that made her look like an actual woman. She was actually only 16 years old but that didn't stop her from receiving compliments from other men. Unfortunately, no matter how beautiful she was, that didn't stop her from being abused, beaten, and neglected. You could say that she was cursed but I look at it from

the standpoint that darkness just chose her, and she had no say what so ever in the deal. Just the presence of darkness, alone, made her want to pass out and vomit like a drunk man, on his way home, ready to be chewed out by the very wife he was having an affair on. She didn't see it, but she could feel every inch of darkness presence breathing down her neck. She felt something grab a hold of her shoulder.

She looked over her shoulder with fear in her eyes, "Who is there?" she asked with fear reeking from her body.

She scanned her surroundings and saw that no one was there but her and her shadow. She continued in the night, walking, and waiting for the inevitable that was upon her. With pain also comes fury and if you don't know, "Hell has no fury like a woman's scorn." I've noticed that we always talk about a woman's scorn, but we rarely ever talk about a woman's sorrow? I wonder why? They say nothing heals the soul, from sorrow, more than prayer. But what do you do when prayer fails? I understand that prayer can be an essential ingredient to all our troubles, but there are times when prayer is irrelevant to resolving the absolute turmoil that a person is in. Mia started to reminisce about the previous night when she had her first conversation with the God who made her.

Flashback 1

Mia laid on a worn, old beige carpet, which had a stench of carpet power which covered the true scent underneath. Mia was in her room, sitting on her knees, on a pallet she made from covers from her bed.

In a quiet, yet shaky voice, Mia began to whisper while praying with her eyes closed, "I am not sure how to do this, but I'll give it a try. I heard, God, that you are everywhere and that you know everything. I often wonder why I even exist. Even though I live in a close-knit community, I still feel alone. I hope You are real and can hear me because I need your help. While everyone around me seems to be happy, I am the only one who has a dark cloud hovering over me. My life is so painful that I'm starting to hate it. Someone told me that you planned everyone's life. If that's so, why didn't you plan a better life for me, father?"

Such a prayer left Mia feeling hopeless since she did not receive an answer. They say that sometimes God sends us messages in, little, in-direct ways. If true, Mia was too blinded by the darkness to see any message of a sort. The position Mia was in was equivalent to a rooting carcass trying to find its way to the grave.

End Flashback

The night howled like a ravaging wolf who was alone in the wilderness, but even the howling couldn't compare to the pain that Mia was feeling at that moment. Mia made her way to the front of the courtyard, which was connected to her apartment building. Mia could feel a presence holding onto her shoulder as if it was trying to prevent Mia from committing the inevitable. But Mia brushed it off like it was just a gust of wind blowing through her hair. Mia dragged herself through the courtyard with tears pouring from her face like nightfall after the peak of dawn. She pulled out her phone realizing that she had just received a message. After a gut-retching sob, she tossed the phone in the bushes and ran through the apartment doors like her soul was on fire.

Mia walked into her apartment weeping, distressed, and sniffing as tears poured from her face like a river of souls. Mia closed the apartment door behind her and stood in the middle of the room in complete silence, trying to get a hold of herself. The apartment felt like an absolute dungeon where the only glimmer of light that came through came from the cracks of the walls. It was like she was caught in purgatory – a place where lost souls are lost until they figure out which path they should take. The apartment gave off uninviting energy even though she had lived there since she was a little girl. Once again, a presence made itself known, but Mia brushed it off as if it was just her shadow playing possum. Mia, then, walked into her bedroom which was the epitome of what a teenage girl's bedroom should look like. Mia looked over at some trophies, on a shelf, which helped her soak in some of the pain but not for too long. Mia began to cry as she noticed that a few of her trophies were missing. She began to cry her eyes out like a girl who knew that she couldn't keep going on in this world we call life. Mia walked over to her dresser, picked up a notepad, and began to scribble a secret note on the notepad. She ripped the piece of paper from the notepad, sat it on her dresser, and slowly stepped back as if she was becoming apprehensive.

Mia walked out of her bedroom and entered another bedroom that was just across the living room. Mia began to pant heavily as she paced the floor and scanned the room to make sure no one is present. She turned her attention to a picture of a man and woman who were hugged up together. In a fit of rage, Mia picked up the photo and smashed it on the floor. She began to pant even harder as sweat began to drip from her forehead. The situation was equivalent to someone having an anxiety attack only ten times worse. After five minutes of shaking and rage, she calmed herself and proceeded to walk into the closet which was even darker than the night. Mia turned on the closet light, reached up on the shelf, and grabbed a box. She opened the box and pulled out a Glock 9mm gun. Mia studied the gun thoroughly as she started to become even more

confused as to what she was about to do. She was undecided and this caused her emotions to fluctuate from fear to peace. Mia turned off the safety and placed the gun to her head. Mia began to breathe heavy, once again, as she started to have second thoughts. To soothe her nerves, Mia turned off the lights and her breathing slowed down to normal levels. She pushed the gun harder into her head and then her breathing began to rise, again, to an alarming rate. Mia mumbled to herself as if she was saying a prayer of some sort. Suddenly, the gun went off and Mia fell to the floor with a gunshot wound to her head. Blood was everywhere and the shadows who were following Mia stood amongst her as they waited to take their prize. Mia began to have flashbacks of some horrible things that occurred during her past. I guess it is true that your life flashes before your eyes before you are about to leave this earth.

Chapter 2

When death begins to creep in, life begins to flash before our eyes like a movie in a home theater. We start to have regrets about what we should or should not have done in a situation. We start to worry about our loved ones and how well they will cope with our departure. All of this ran through Mia's head as she was gasping for life like a person drowning in a sea full of souls. Life was slipping away, and fast, by every second. Everything that led up to this decision, starting from childhood, was repeating in flashbacks. Mia briefly closed her eyes and opened them and realized she was in a dark place. It was like she was caught between heaven and hell the only difference is that it didn't look anything like the movies. A door presented itself to her, and like every person has to do, she opened it and came face to face with every bit of pain she had ever encountered.

Flashback 2

It was a fine summer day during the month of June. Birds were chirping, children were outside playing, and the sun was shining as bright as it was supposed to. Little Mia, about six years old, was in an empty, rundown, apartment watching as men and women committed abominable acts that no child should be aware of. She sat around people who were doing drugs and eyeing her with suspicious looks. Since she was so young, she didn't understand what was going on. To her, this was nothing but a dream when in actuality it was a nightmare. A woman pushed her saying, "Get away from here. You don't belong here. You want to end up like us!" Mia watched with tears running down her eyes since that same woman had haunted her all her life. In the corner, she could see the spirit of the woman as if she was there watching as her whole life unfolded.

Mia reached out to grab the spirit's attention, "Wait."

The woman turned away from Mia and walked away into the darkness that was awaiting her.

Mia ran after the woman, "Wait, there's still a lot I want to know."

Mia ran into the darkness and came across another door. Hesitant, at first, she opened the door and came across another event that was even more tragic.

Flashback 3

One of the worse things a woman can do is take the side of a man over her daughter's. Ever since her mother got involved with this man, she allowed him to commit unspeakable forms of abuse that's not even suitable for a young man. Mia never liked the men her mother got involved with, but every time she brought this to her mother's attention, her mother would shoot her away like an annoying stepchild. What made it even more disheartening was the fact that Mia never had the heart to tell anyone about the abuse she was enduring since she didn't want to see her mother lonely and unhappy. Mia stood in the corner of the apartment complex and watched as her nine years old self was being physically disciplined, at the hands of a strange man, over something she did not do.

The strange man slapped her and shouted "What have you done? Why are you such a brat? "Learn to be a good girl!"

Mia stood there and took the punishment like a girl what numb to the pain.

"You are such a poor excuse of a little girl," The strange man added.

The strange man told Mia to get on her knees and do fifty push-ups. Her mother stood there and did nothing. Based on this situation, it is only logical to conclude that this wasn't the first time the man had done this. The spirit of Mia walked over the younger version of Mia and crouched down to get on her level.

"Don't worry. It gets better as time goes on." Mia said to the younger version of herself knowing she wasn't going to get a response.

Mia blinked and in a matter of seconds, she was right back where she started. This time there were other souls surrounding her, walking through doors that led to nowhere but flashbacks of the past. Mia got on her knees and began to sob as she felt she was stuck in a spiritual conundrum that only wanted to torture her until she took her final breath.

Flashback 4

The scene switched to nighttime when Mia was lying in her bed humiliated, depressed, and feeling worthless in a world that was colder than the arctic wind during the winter. A tear trickled down her cheek as she was withdrawn from her cold reality. She was as numb as a dead body but with a soul. A man sat on the side of the bed

wearing nothing but his pants, work boots, and a beater. He looked over his shoulder and saw that something was troubling Mia. He crawled over to Mia's side and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"What's wrong, baby." He asked with great concern.

"Have you ever wished that you could just pack up your things and leave? Mia said softly.

"All the time, baby." The man said in a soft manner.

The man continued, "Don't worry, baby. One day we will leave this place."

The bedroom was filled with darkness. The only light that came in was from the streetlights outside the window. Mia could hear yelling coming from the other room. Mia got up from the bed, opened the door, and walked into another scene where she was arguing with the same man who was laying in the bed next to her. There was a sense of tension in the air. Something like a soap opera or revenge love-story. The sound became obsolete and everything turned to black & white. Mia watched as herself was kicked out of the apartment and forced out onto the streets. The spirit of Mia followed herself as she wandered around the dark, gloomy, streets alone. She found refuge in an alleyway and rested her body against a brick wall.

She looked up in the sky and began to yell out in anger, "Why God?" Mia asked yelling out loud.

"Why me? Why did you make my life this way! She yelled once again but even louder.

Mia walked over and sat beside herself while reciting bible scripture.

"He who are afflicted are righteous." She said with her arms wrapped around herself.

Mia briefly closed her eyes opened them. She looked over her shoulder and saw that had disappeared with the wind. Mia looked over in the corner and saw the spirit of a man smoking a cigarette while leaning against the wall. The spirit looked over at Mia with a sinister grin, indicating that everything was going as planned. Mia stood up from the floor and faced the spirit.

"You will not take me," Mia yelled trying to feel brave when in actuality she was scared.

The spirit flicked the cigarette and walked past Mia as if she wasn't even there. Mia looked down and saw her reflection in a puddle of water. Mia remembered when her grandmother told her that If you really want to see pain, look in the mirror at your

darkest thoughts. With everything that has transpired, it's no surprise that Mia decided to take her life in her own hands. They say that this is a doggy god world, and the only people who survive are those who have the strength to persevere. I know many of us look at the person who came up with that saying as a fool, but as you go through life you will see the creator of that saying was wiser than we were.

Mia closed her eyes and ends up back where she started. She watched as she shot herself like a fool who had no purpose. Blood leaks from her head, her vision becomes blurry, and here she is surrounded by spirits who are just like her. Life can be painful but what really hurts more than anything is not knowing where you are going. I guess it's true that, in life, you have to take the bitter with the sweet because nothing is promised after this life. That's what makes it hell on earth.

End Flashbacks

Novel 2

Chapter 9

Flashback: 15 Years Ago

The sound of soft music playing in the background of the rather classy restaurant set the mood, pleasantly for Gideon, Evelynne's stepfather and President of The Syndicates, and Aria, Evelynne's mother, and Gideon's wife. The two sat across from each other, at a table, each reading from a menu, contemplating what dinner they were going to order to complement their evening. Gideon was draped in a fine-Italian three-piece suit while Aria wore a stunning blue dress that was well-crafted from blue diamonds and silver linen.

Gideon skimmed through the menu, between different pages, but was unable to find a dish that would satisfy his hunger. Aria looked across at Gideon and saw that he was having a hard time deciding.

Aria set her menu on the table and placed her hand over Gideon's, "You can't tell me that it's that difficult to make a decision between Cajun Alfredo and Smothered Porkchops with Potwa Sauce."

Gideon continued to skim through the menu, "Actually... I am having a hard time choosing between The Stuffed Ravioli or The Chicken and Shrimp Scampi."

Analyzing Gideon's body language, Aria could sense that there was something else troubling Gideon.

Aria probed for answers, "Is there anything you want to talk about, honey?"

Gideon brushed Aria off, "All I want to talk about is whether we are going to have wine or whiskey to complement our dinner."

"If you say so," Aria replied as if she had lost interest in what was bothering Gideon.

Aria picked her menu back up and continued to scan through the pages. Gideon continued to read through the menu but became so frustrated that he slammed the

menu on the table. The sound of the slam startled the other guests in the restaurant as it caused unwanted attention to Gideon and Aria.

"Honey, we are not at one of those barnwood blues clubs. Don't show your ass down here." Aria asked Gideon.

Gideon sat back in the chair and spaced off. Aria paid Gideon no mind since she had grown used to the constant mood swings. She sensed that something was going on in the organization, but she knew not to ask such questions. She was an "Ole Lady" after all. And asking such questions would disrespect Gideon as an authority figure.

Aria picked up a glass of wine that was sitting beside her.

"I'll just let you be," Aria said while swirling the glass of wine around in her hand.

She attempted to take a sip from the glass but knew that her husband required some words of encouragement. Aria sat the glass of wine back down on the table and placed her hand back over Gideon's hand.

Aria looked Gideon in the eyes and attempted to flatter him, "You know after all these years, you would think that I would know how to read the mind of the man who played Smokey Robinson on our first date."

Gideon wanted to smile but his cold, yet, serious demeanor prevented him from revealing his humorous nature.

Aria continued, "And then after that night, you asked me if I would be interested in meeting your family. Who, at first, seemed to despise me because they thought I only wanted you because of your status."

"My mother and my father were always the protective types." Charles joked while keeping his serious demeanor.

Gideon leaned in and placed his hand over Aria's, "Just a little stressed, that's all. When you are the head of two families, it can sometimes feel as though life is slipping away. Not in the literal sense, of course, but in the sense that the Old Guard is losing its grip. Imagine building something so strong and prosperous from the soil just to lose it. To lose it all, will cause a man to destroy it himself."

"That's why I'm happy I'm an Ole Lady," Aria replied.

A waiter walked up to Aria and Gideon's table and set two shots of Whiskey down on the table. He then set one plate of salad in front of Gideon and another plate of salad in front of Aria.

"Are you two ready to order?" The waiters asked politely.

The waiter turned his attention towards Gideon, who pretended as if the waiter wasn't even there. The waiter turned his attention to Aria who was giggling in a rather curious manner.

"Don't mind him. We'll both take a plate of your Cajun Chicken and Shrimp Scampi with Lobster Sauce." Aria said while trying to calm the waiter's nerves with her pleasant voice.

The waiter pulled out a notepad and pen and began to write down the order, "Ok, would you guys like your chicken garlic-flavored or onion-flavored."

Gideon snapped, "Mother Fucker, she said lobster sauce."

The waiter jumped, indicating that he was frightened. Aria folded her arms, rolled her eyes, and shook her head in disappointment.

"I'll just make sure that there's flavored butter on the side." The waiter responded, fidgeting recklessly.

The waiter walked away and left Gideon and Aria alone to themselves.

Aria shook her head in disappointment, "Now you know you did not have to yell at that boy like that."

Gideon picked up the shot of whiskey and drank it quickly.

"Last time I've seen you this stressed you were comprehending going to war with those disciples off California Avenue. Thank God I was the voice of reason, or you and your crew would've had State and Federal police at every club location in this state," Aria said while digging her fork through her salad.

Gideons slammed the shot glass back down on the table and startled Aria.

Gideon scooted in closer so Aria could hear, "A war is coming, Aria. I'm talking about a new generation of one-percenters who have no code, no respect for authority. I'm talking about an army of Satan's spawns. And the Old Guard is growing weak. It's as if vision has become nothing but a foreign language to my fellow Syndicates."

Aria looked around the restaurant, checking to see if anyone was listening in on her and Gideon's conversation.

Aria lowered her voice, "Can we talk about this when we get back home, please? I didn't come all the way downtown to look this good to hear you speak about club business. I have to hear this shit every day."

Gideon raised his voice a little louder, "Without this business..."

Aria held her hand up, "Stop! We'll talk about this when we get home, okay." she said sternly.

Gideon ignored Aria's request and continued, "There comes a time when a man must accept that things are changing. I've been in this game for 35 years. I never envisioned that a day would come when I would have to turn my back and allow a New Guard to rise and take control over everything that I built."

Aria chuckled while pouring salad dressing over her salad, "That's the alcohol talking..."

Gideon cut Aria off before she could finish her sentence, "Evelynne is going to take my place as President of The Syndicates."

Aria was stunned by Gideon's request. So stunned that she accidentally tipped over the bottle of wine that was on the table.

"Tread lightly," Aria demanded.

"I know this isn't what you wanted to hear. But if a foundation is becoming rocky, you have no choice but to tear the whole thing down and build on new soil." Gideon said, trying to get Aria to see the bigger picture.

Although Gideon had adopted Evelynne as his daughter when she and Gideon got married, Aria never expected him to choose anyone over his biological daughter, Katrina, to lead the next generation of Syndicates. Especially someone as fragile as Evelynne who could barely hurt a fly.

Aria picked up the glass of wine beside her, and swirled the glass in her hand, causing the wine to swirl in the glass.

Gideon saw that she was having trouble accepting his decision, so he placed his hand over her hand, "What did I tell you when I proposed to you four years ago?"

Aria held up the wedding ring that was on her right hand, "You said that this wedding ring will be placed on the right finger on my right hand since the ring finger on your left hand is only for The Syndicates. You advised me that even our love doesn't compare to the love you have for your brothers and sisters."

Gideon nodded in agreement. Aria, then, took her ring finger and placed it over Gideon's Syndicate One Percenter ring.

Aria looked Gideon in the eyes and asked, "Why not Katrina? She is your daughter after all."

“And so is Evelynne,” Gideon replied.

Aria sighed in disbelief, “You know what I mean.”

“Katrina is too much of a wild card and she’s predictable. She’s tough, and she has excellent leadership abilities, but she allows her emotions to get the best of her. That’s the last thing this organization needs during this transition. This organization needs someone with vision, intellect, and charisma. Evelynne checks all those boxes. Plus, Evelynne isn’t the type of person to reach for a gun when there is a disagreement” Gideon explained.

Aria looked away, “How can you be so sure that she is ready for this responsibility?”

Gideon leaned back in the chair, pulled out a cigar, and placed the cigar in his mouth, “Now you question my discernment.”

Aria pointed at Gideon, “I just don’t want anything to happen to my baby. If something happens to my baby, well, you know what I’m capable of.”

“And you know I will go to war with heaven and hell to make sure if anyone hurts my daughter's face the cruelest of punishments,” Gideon said while lighting the cigar in his mouth.

Chapter 10

Despite their physical similarities, Katrina and Evelynne were complete opposites when it came to their worldviews. Katrina believed the only way forward was through force and domination while Evelynne believed that structure, obedience, and making the right deals were what lead to prosperity. Katrina was the fierier and more rambunctious of the two, and Evelynne was empathetic, graceful, and kinder compared to Katrina. Although there was some hidden animosity between the two sisters, Evelynne and Katrina played together in harmony as they watched their father, Gideon, run The Syndicates with an iron fist.

While wearing protective glasses and earmuffs, Katrina picked up a Glock 20 handgun that was sitting on a stand beside her. She analyzed the gun before putting the clip in, ensuring that there were enough bullets in the chamber. Katrina turned her attention to Evelynne who was also wearing protective glasses and earmuffs while loading a Glock 20 with an extended mag.

Katrina became jealous as she felt Evelynne was sizing her up. Katrina took the bullets out of the chamber, pulled out the clip, and quickly switched the clip with an extended mag.

"It's not a competition, sis," Evelynne said while aiming her Glock at a target across from her.

Katrina turns her body towards the targets across from her and aimed her pistol directly towards one in the middle, "I never said it was."

Katrina analyzed Evelynne from the side of her eye and noticed that she was shaking, "You're shaking."

"A Glock 20 with an extended mag, it's a little heavy," Evelynne responded.

"Grab the 22 then if you can't keep up." Katrina chuckled.

The two began to fire off their pistols, hitting their respective targets with minimal effort. Evelynne was able to hit all her targets directly in the chest while Katrina was able to hit every target with accurate headshots.

Katrina took her glasses off and focused in on her targets. "Three headshots on three targets. I wonder if you could beat that." Katrina said confidently.

Evelynne took off her goggles and earmuffs and sat them on a table beside her.

"I hate to break it to you, sis, but Ryders don't sit still," Evelynne said sarcastically.

"Is that supposed to intimidate me or something," Katrina said while pulling her earmuffs off.

Evelynne stuck her tongue out and mocked Katrina. Katrina looked behind her back to ensure no one saw them, turned around, and stuck her middle finger up at Evelynne.

One of the soldiers of The Syndicates walked up to Katrina and Evelynne, informing them that their parents wanted to talk to them, "Ok, princesses, your daddy wants to talk to you two."

Katrina rolled her eyes and stomped off, "I hope this isn't what I think it is."

"Maybe he's taking us to Disney World for your birthday," Evelynne added while walking side-by-side with Katrina.

Katrina and Evelynne walked into the living room where Aria and Gideon were sitting at a table. Katrina and Evelynne sat across from their parents while sitting side-by-side one another. Gideon sat back in his chair while looking over at Aria. Aria gave Gideon the nod, informing him that she was onboard with his decision.

Katrina and Evelynne looked at each other, wondering why both of their parents were so quiet.

"Why is everyone so quiet," Katrina asked curiously.

Gideon broke his silence, "Do you two know why some civilizations fall while other civilizations seem to stay stable for centuries on end?"

Katrina and Evelynne looked at each other confused.

Katrina turned and looked back over at Gideon, "I don't know. Colonization? Slavery? Exploitation?"

Gideon looked over at Aria with a confused look on his face. Aria dropped her head and covered her mouth to prevent her laughter.

Gideon smiled, "Leadership. Since the beginning of time, man has looked to other men and women to lead them to something greater than what God gave them. I don't care what country you are in, what organizations you are a part of, or whether you are in the process of building something, leadership is what decides prosperity or calamity"

Gideon became serious as his tone transitioned to that of an authority figure, "As you two know, I have been the President of this organization for 35 years. I have killed hundreds, destroyed families, pimped whores, and I have flooded these streets with so much poison that even the rats know my name. But it's a new era. And it's time for a change."

"Change?" Evelynne quietly whispered to Katrina.

Gideon continued, "We're expanding. The organization and I are setting up a new chapter in Carmichael."

Katrina and Evelynne looked at each other with excitement in their eyes.

Gideon continued his speech, "This new chapter will be responsible for controlling all shipments coming into the state. That's big money and a huge responsibility. Such leadership requires a combination of strategizing, empathy, and the ability to reason with those who are even our opposition. I will be stepping away from The Syndicates and handing the organization over to someone who I know will put the club first."

A sinister grin appeared on Katrina's face, "And who may that be, father?"

Gideon looked Katrina in the eyes. Gideon stood up from his chair and turned his attention to Evelynne who looked as if she already knew where leadership was going to be passed on too.

"That is why I have decided to make Evelynne the new President of The Syndicates," Gideon said with confidence.

Katrina was outraged.

Katrina jumped out of the chair and knocked it over, "Are you kidding me? You said blood was always supposed to come before water!"

Gideon pointed at Katrina, "Lower your tone, Katrina. You do not disrespect me in my house. Now you will have access to all the benefits that come with being a Capo."

"Fuck being a Capo!" Katrina yelled.

Katrina looked over at Evelynne with disgust. Katrina, then, stormed out of the room, leaving Evelynne alone with her parents. Gideon walked over to a table and poured himself a glass of whiskey.

"That girl is going to death of me," Gideon said, pouring himself a glass of whiskey.

Gideon turned his attention to Evelynne and saw that she was lost for words.

Gideon comforted Evelynne, "Don't mind her, she'll get over it."

Gideon sat back in his chair and looked over at Aria who was concerned about how this decision would affect Katrina and Evelynne's relationship in the future.

Evelynne placed her hand on her chest, "But, dad, I don't know if I can...."

Gideon respectfully interrupted Evelynne, "You're ready. You just lack the confidence of a leader. I was there at one time. It is not easy. It will never get easier. Just know that you have families depending on you, a city depending on you, and a legacy depending on you."

Back To Present

Novel 3

Chapter Three

Imagine for a second that you are caught in a gust of darkness that is ripping you inside and out. You try to escape the darkness but the harder you pull the tighter the grip gets. You look back to see if someone's there to save you, but the only thing you have that ensures your survival is a gun, a badge, and a man or woman, at your side, who depends on you, just as much as you depend on them. Imagine, that you are seen the epitome of justice, but you fall short every day when you clock out, go home, and turn on the evening news and see that not much has changed.

"How powerless can a man be." You would think to yourself.

With power comes a certain level of burden. Many men are unable to live up to such high expectations, that is why many fall on the deep end. Kent adored the notoriety that came with the badge. He walked around as if he embodied everything right with the department. But little did he know, he was the embodiment of everything that was wrong with the system – racism, unfair police practices, and systemic oppression.

Officer Kent and Officer Michael sat together in a police cruiser driving up and down a very rough section of North Philadelphia. North Philadelphia had seen better days if you ask me. On the surface, North Philadelphia embodied everything that people wanted to run away from, but underneath the surface was a community filled with joy and soul. Of course, Kent didn't see it that way. To Kent, the people of North Philadelphia were nothing but animals. But to Michael, the people of North Philadelphia were victims of the system.

Kent looked over at Michael and saw that Michael was in his world.

"Now that'll get you killed, son," Kent said, joking with Michael.

Michael lost himself out of the daze and looked over at Kent, "What are you talking about, sir?"

"A good cop is always aware of his surroundings. Sorry, son, this isn't Cherry Hills, NJ. These people will cut your head off." Kent said in a serious tone.

"What makes you say that?" Michael said with curiosity.

Kent's demeanor changed to anger, "My father used to work this beat. He told me not a day went by where he was called cracker, slave hunter, racist. You know, the typical liberal bullshit."

Michael sighed as he had heard this story before while he was in the academy. Michael looked out the window and saw teenagers, carrying backpacks, playing on the corners. Michael smiled as he thought, "No matter what problems they may have at home, they still find a way to smile."

"They may look innocent, but those bastards will kill you for being white and blue," Kent said with a smirk on his face.

Michael looked over at Kent out the corner of his eyes, "I will remember that next time, sir."

"Just relax, you'll do fine. Just make sure you keep your head up." Michael said, looking side to side.

Kent and Michael began to enter a section of the city where a protest was going on, similar to the one they saw back at the precinct. The crowd was in an uproar over the acquittal of Officer Kartus, who had murdered an unarmed black man a week prior. It was ruled a justified shooting, due to lack of surveillance, proving that the suspect was not unarmed.

"You see this shit? When are these animals going to realize that we are trying to solve the problem? We're not the enemy, we're the solution." Kent said while navigating through the crowd.

Michael looked over at Kent, "Have you ever thought that maybe we are the problem?"

Kent looked over at Michael in disgust, "The hell you mean?"

Michael shrugged, "Have you ever asked yourself that maybe broken window policies just don't work? Maybe we should try, building more of a relationship with the community."

"You're sounding like a libtard." Kent said condescendingly.

Kent began to hunk the horn as a crowd of protesters began to swarm his vehicle.

Kent pulled the window down and began to shout, "Get away from my car, you piece of shit!"

"Fuck you, you cracker." A man yelled from afar.

“What did you say to me,” Kent yelled.

Kent hopped out of the vehicle and pulled his gun on the crowd, “Back up or I will blow your head off.”

“Go ahead, shoot another black man.” A man shouted from afar.

Michael stepped out of the car and got in the middle of Kent and the protesters.

“I understand you all are frustrated, but we have to get through to get to our jobs.” Michael pleaded.

The protest erupted but only for a second. The crowd disbursed and Kent and Michael got back in the car. Kent turned and looked over at Michael, “Next time, pull out your gun.”

Michael looked confused, “Why?”

“Because to them, you are the enemy,” Kent said with a scornful look on his face.

In the eyes of Kent, Michael saw a defeated man, trying to hide behind the rage that comes with being on the force. Michael laid back in the chair and ignored Kent as he went on his racist rant. The two drove off and headed down a busier section of the city.

Chapter Four

Devonte tossed and turned in his bed while trying to drown out the sounds that came from the city. It was late in the evening and, like always, during Friday nights, the neighborhood was jumping. There was a block party going on down the street and a family-get-together going on the floor above Devonte's apartment. But nothing broke his sleep more than hearing his neighbor, Earl, yelling from the 12th floor of the apartment complex to another man who stands on the corner, drinking a 40z of liquor and singing the blues.

"Hey, Jay Jay, did you hear what happened to Rhonda to another night!" He yelled.

"Naw, black, I just got off work. What happened?" Jay Jay replied, clearly abbreviated.

"Word on the streets is she left John for some dope boy off Bryan Street." The man yelled while making his presence known in the apartment building.

"Well, what did I tell you the other day, over your house? Can't turn a hoe into a housewife." The man said while crossing the street.

"I hear that. Are you coming over later? My wife's making some of that beef brisket you like."

Jay Jay thought to himself for the second but then realized that he had something special planned for the wife, "Maybe later, Earl, I have to go check on the wife. You know how the women like to party on Friday nights."

"Just wait until you hit 50 and the only thing you have to look forward to is Soap Operas and Ham Sandwiches." Earl chuckled.

The conversation was amusing, to say the least. Devonte's alarm went off exactly at 8:00 PM. Devonte drug himself out of the bed looked out the window that was above his headboard and stared off into the stars that blended in well with the lighting that came from the downtown section of the city. Devonte looked across the street and saw a group of young men singing and dancing while singing to the doo-wop.

"What's love got to do with it, got to do with it." The man sang.

Devonte smiled, walked away from the window, and turned on the tv that sat across from his bed. He, then, turned to the channel 5 news and saw, "Breaking News. Black Man Killed in Philadelphia, PA by Philadelphia Police Officer."

Devonte turned up the volume and saw images of protesters, protesting in the downtown areas of a variety of cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. The reporter looked worried, but she held a professional persona to the point that you would not have noticed.

“Good evening, Channel 5 News here to bring you breaking news and coverage. We are here to report an incident that occurred, today, at 7:30 PM on the Northside of the city. Darnell Jones, a black man, walking to the store, was murdered by officer Antonio Resetti in Brooklyn, New York this evening. Officer Antonio Resetti had stopped Darnell Jones due to suspicion of passing an illegal substance. Officer Antonio Resetti states in his report that he saw Darnell reaching for an object under his jacket. Without hesitation, Officer Antonio Resetti fired three shots in Darnell Jones’s chest. City officials are worried that recent events could spark a citywide protest.”

Devonte turned off the TV, feeling a pit of sadness seeping through his chest. Devonte rested his head against his pillow and looked up at a poster of Malcolm X, thinking, “How far have we come.”

Devonte began to reminisce on the days his grandfather would talk about the civil rights movement, and how the police would just sit back and sic their dogs on them when a riot had occurred.

“Those were some very tough days back in the day. Be thankful you and your generation don’t have to experience these things now.” He would say.

“I could only imagine what he would say if he was still alive in the era of social media and cellphone.” Devonte thought while listening in on his mother’s conversation on the phone.

As Devonte listened in on his mother's conversation, he was taken away at the sounds of fighting and another ruckus that was going on outside his bedroom window.

“Friday nights are always the worse.” Devonte thought while wiping the sleep from his eyes.

“Ain’t nothing out in those streets but hoes, harlots, and hustlers.” That is what his grandmother would say.

Suddenly, the sound of his mother’s voice echoed from the kitchen and directly to his bedroom, “Devonte, can you please run to the store and pick me up a gallon of milk and a dozen eggs?” Rita yelled.

Devonte sighed, wondering why she didn’t tell him to do this earlier before he took his nap. He had to study to complete before finals, and the last thing he wanted to do was flunk Physics.

“Ok, mom,” He yelled, hiding the fact that he was not pleased with her orders.

Devonte reached over and grabbed his mother’s car keys she gave him earlier after he had got out of school. He walked out of the apartment, headed down the stairs, and jumped into the driver’s side of my mother’s Kia Altima. Devonte pulled off from the curve and headed down the street to the neighborhood market.

Meanwhile, just a block away, Officer Michael Dorsey and Officer Kent Marchetti, sat on the side of the road, across from a Chinese restaurant. Kent was sipping on a cup of hot noodles while Michael was on the lookout.

“You need to relax, kid. You’ll still get your pension regardless of the results.” Kent said while twirling the chopsticks in the bowl of noodles.

Michael ignored Kent and continued with his duty.

“That’s what I hate about you rookies. You take shit too seriously. When you’re ten years in, you’ll have a change of heart.” Kent said, sipping on the cup of noodles.

Devonte drove past Michael and Kent’s police cruiser. Kent looked out of the window and saw that the tags were expired on the vehicle. Michael sat the cup of noodles down in the cupholder and turned on the police flashers.

“What did he do?” Michael asked out of curiosity.

“Expired tags. These people tend to buy expensive cars but are unable to keep up with the registration.” Kent said with a devilish look on his face.

Michael rolled his eyes as he disagreed with attending to such childish matters. To him, it was best to attend to more serious crimes than simple traffic violations like an expired registration. The police cruiser pulled away from the curb and followed Devonte down the street.

Devonte was halfway down the street from the market until he saw flashing lights appearing from behind him. Devonte looked closer into the rearview mirror and saw that it was the police. He did what his father taught him and pulled to the side of the road. The police car pulled behind him, so he turned off the engine of his car, took a deep breath, and prepared himself for the typical, “Let me see your license and registration” type of talk.

Kent looked over at Michael and advised him, “Watch my back, we don’t know if this guy has a gun or not.

Michael nodded in agreement. Kent and Michael stepped out of the police cruiser. Kent approached the vehicle, flashing his flashlight in Devonte’s face, and looking at him with a certain disgust on his face.

Devonte pulled the car window down and introduced himself, "Is everything ok, officer?"

"Your tags are expired," Kent said with a chilling look on his face.

"Oh, my mother must've forgotten to renew them," Devonte replied while trying to keep his emotions under control.

Kent raised the flashlight higher to aim the light in Devonte's eyes. Devonte turned in an instant which made him seem more suspicious.

"Is everything alright, sir?" Kent said as if he was trying to pick at Devonte's nerves.

"Well, you are aiming the light in my eyes, sir" Devonte replied.

Kent placed his hand on his gun and in an authoritative tone he ordered Devonte to step out of the vehicle, "Sir, step out of the vehicle."

Michael looked confused as he found Kent's approach to be unnecessary.

"I'm sorry, sir, but for what," Devonte replied, confused and without a sense of what was happening.

Kent pulled the gun from his holster and aimed it at Devonte with his flashlight still pointed towards Devonte's face.

Kent raised his voice, "I said, step out of the vehicle."

"Ok, ok!" Devonte panicked.

Devonte opened the car door, but before he could step out of the vehicle all he could hear was, "Drop the weapon!"

"Drop the weapon? What is he talking about?" Devonte thought, trying to dodge the light that was coming from Kent's flashlight.

Suddenly, in an instant, the sound of gunfire rang through the air, and the feeling of my ribs burning caused Devonte to fall back in the driver's side of the vehicle. Everything was blurry, it was as if he was blacking out and entering a realm that was not a part of this world but in another dimension. The glass from the driver's side window shattered and shattered what was left of his vision. The smell of gunpowder was intoxicating but nothing compared to the sound of gunfire which rung through the atmosphere like a treacherous storm during the peak of spring.

"Shot fired, shots fired!" Michael yelled in his walkie-talkie.

Devonte gasped for air, but it was as if he was losing more oxygen with every breath he took.

He kept saying, quietly, "I can't breathe."

But it was as if no one could hear him but himself, Kent, and Michael who was in complete shock due to the chain-of-events."

Michael got on his portable and contacted dispatch, "Shots fired! Shots fired of 29th and King Drive. The suspect is down, emergency medical is needed.

Michael walked over to where Kent was standing and began to analyze Devonte's wounded body. Michael raised his flashlight in the air and used it to analyze the vehicle. Michael analyzed the inside of the vehicle thoroughly but couldn't find a gun anywhere.

Michael turned and looked at Kent with suspicion, "Where's the gun?"

Kent looked confused, "I saw him reaching in his pocket."

Michael took his flashlight and put it back in his holster.

Michael looked at Kent in disgust, "You shot an innocent kid."

Kent walked up to Michael and got in his face, "You are going to tell them that he was reaching for something. You understand me?" Kent said in a stern matter.

Michael pushed back, "Or what?"

Before Kent could respond, the sound of police sirens halted the altercation between the two. Kent took a step away. People in the community began to walk out of their houses and onto the street to see what was going on. Michael looked over his shoulder at the body of Devonte, which was barely clinging to life.

Screenplay Samples

A Time Between Fate Part 1

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Shots of a grassy field during a nice summer day, clouds hovering over the field, a slight breeze causing the grass to move at a steady rate. The sun shines upon the field as a group of deer nibble off the grass from the fields.

Sia, a young woman, stands in front of a deer, sketching it's every movement on her sketch-board. Sia watches as the deer bends down, eats from the grass, leans back up, and chews. Sia focuses in on the deer chewing and quickly makes a sketch of the deer's mouth. Another deer walks up and brushes up, affectionately, against the deer who is still chewing the grass.

Sia smiles. Sia quickly makes a sketch of the two deer in their positions. Something alerts the two deer, causing them to run away. Sia watches as the two deer run off together, down a hill.

Sia takes the sketch-pencil and places it on a tray next to her. Sia takes a brief sigh. Sia looks up at the sky. Tears begin to fall from Sia's eyes.

SIA

(Talking to herself)

Our love transcends space and time.

Remember...

BEGIN MONTAGE VARIOUS

EXT. CARNIVAL

Sia and Len, Sia's husband/boyfriend at the time, sit on top of a ferris wheel, in their teenage years, watching the view of the city. Len's arms are wrapped around Sia's. Sia looks up at the sky and points. Sia and Len watches as the full moon makes it's presence.

INT. ART ROOM

Len sits across from Sia, in a chair, as Sia Sketches him. Sia gives Len a signal to stand up. Len stands up and takes off his shirt. Sia smiles as she sketches.

EXT. PARK- NIGHT

Sia and Len lay in the grass, on a blanket, looking up at the stars. Sia rests her head in Len's chest. Len runs his fingers through Sia's hair.

END MONTAGE VARIOUS:BACK TO SCENE

Sia picks up her sketch-pencil and continues to sketch the surrounding fields. Sia looks across the field and sees the spirit of Len, standing across from her, wearing a black peacoat, with a scarf around his neck. Sia drops the sketch-pencil on the floor. Sia reaches her hand out.

SIA
(high-toned, startled)
Len. My love?

The spirit of Len turns his back and walks away.

SIA
(high-tone)
Wait!

Sia runs across the field, heading towards where Len is walking away. Sia runs down a steep hill, trips, and falls to the ground. Sia stands up, places her hand on her elbow, and slowly walks to the top of the hill while holding her arm.

CUT TO: 10 SECONDS LATER

Sia makes it to the top of the hill. Sia looks around and notices that Len has disappeared. Sia falls to her knees, still holding her arm while looking down, depressed and broken. The wind blows through Sia's hair. A flower blows in front of Sia and gently lands in front of her. Sia picks up the flower.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: 10 YEARS AGO

INT. PARK - DAY

Sia runs across the park, laughing and smiling, while Len chases after her. Sia trips but catches herself. Len catches up to her and gently picks her up from the ground.

SIA

(giggling)
Oh my God, put me down.

Len, gently, places Sia on the ground and lays on top of her.
Len and Sia look deep into each other's eyes. Len kisses Sia on the lips. Len looks back into Sia's eyes.

LEN
Why do you have to make things so
difficult for me.

Sia places her head into Len's chest. Len lays on the side of Sia with his arms wrapped around her body.

SIA
Because I actually love you, dummy.

Len kisses Sia on the cheek.

LEN
No matter how far you may think I am, I
will always be at your side, Sia. For
our love transcends space and time.

Len looks over his shoulder and sees a pink flower. Len picks up the flower from the ground and places it in front of Sia's face. Sia's eyes light up. Sia grabs the flower.

SIA
My grandmother used to give me a
flower, just like this, every year, on
my birthday. She said that it
represents purity and elegance.

Sia looks up at the sky.

SIA
(looking at the sky)
It means she must be hear.

Len places his head on top of Sia's in an affectionate manner.

LEN
Or maybe she's trying to tell you to
stop making it so hard on me. Don't
forget, I am going to the academy in
the next few months.

SIA

(rolling her eyes)
Don't remind me.

Sia places the flower close to her chest. Len places his hand over Sia's hand that is holding the flower close to her chest.

LEN
Promise me, Sia, that no matter what happens, in the future, our love will never break.

SIA
I promise. But you have to promise me that you will always come back to me, even if it's across space and time.

LEN
I promise.

END FLASHBACK:BACK TO SCENE

Sia holds the flower against her chest, with a tight grip, while crying her eyes out. A rabbit hops to the side of Sia and lays next to her. Sia looks down at the rabbit as it looks up at Sia. The rabbit crawls over to the broken flower buds on the ground and begins to eat them.

Sia looks up at the sky as it transitions from blue and sunny to dark and cloudy. Rain begins to fall from the skies and onto Sia and the rabbit. The rabbit hops away. Sia picks up the broken buds and holds them in the palm of her hand.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Shots of a small house, sitting in the middle of the woods, surrounded by trees. A dog lays on the porch, sleeping, as a rocking chair next to it rocks back and forth with no one sitting in it.

INT. BEDROOM

Sia lays in the bed, sleep. Sia tosses and turns as the wind, blows in from the window, making her restless. Sia rolls over. The wind blows the sheet, covering Sia's body, halfway off. Sia grabs the sheet with force and pulls the cover over her body, holding it tightly. The body of a naked male, Len, crawls into

the bed, gets underneath the covers, and wraps his arms around Sia.

LEN
(whispering)
Do you feel it? The warmth of my skin?
The beat of my heart.

Sia opens her eyes. Sia places her hand over Len's hand.

SIA
(soft-tone)
Why must you torment me? Why can't you
just let me go to sleep and rest?

Len squeezes Sia tighter. Sia sighs.

SIA
This is all just a dream. Just another
sick dream to bring warmth to a heart
that has been aching since your
departure.

Sia closes her eyes and quickly opens them. Sia places her hand on her chest and notices that Len's hand is there no more.

SIA
(talking to herself)
You will be back. You always make your
presence during the break of dawn or
when the sun makes its presence after
the moon sleeps.

A squirrel crawls inside the bedroom window. Sia's eyes light up. The squirrel grabs a piece of fruit from a plant that is sitting on Sia's dresser, right next to the window. The squirrel begins to nibble on the piece of fruit. Sia sits up in the bed. Sia reaches over and pets the squirrel on the head.

SIA
(to squirrel)
At least I can feel you, my little
furry friend.

The squirrel grabs another piece of fruit, from the plant, and continues to nibble.

SIA

(blushing)
I see you like it.

Sia reaches over and grabs an already open sketchpad that is sitting on her bedside dresser.

SIA
(to squirrel)
Just keep that position for two minutes.

Sia begins to sketch the squirrel as it nibbles on the fruit. Sia fills in the nose of the squirrel and then the fruit in the squirrel's mouth. Sia pushes the pencil harder into the sketchbook as she fills in the sketch. The tip of the pencil breaks.

The squirrel jumps away from the window. Sia walks over to the window and watches as the squirrel sits on top of the tree, still nibbling on the fruit. Sia smiles.

SIA (V.O.)
(thinking to herself)
I remember that night so vividly. We were so young, filled with life, and willing to do anything to be next to each other.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM

Sia sits in the middle of her bed, covered in a blanket, sketching in her notepad while listening to music on her headphones. Sia turns the page of her notepad to a sketch of a bird, sitting on a tree branch. Sia fills in the beak of the sketched bird with a black-colored pencil.

The sound of a rock hitting her window disturbs her. Sia turns her head towards the direction of her window. Sia takes the headphones off her head and lays them on her bed-side dresser.

Sia gets up from the bed and walks over to the window. Sia looks out the window and sees Len, jumping up and down, waving his hands. Sia opens the window and sticks her head out of the window.

SIA

(whispering)
What are you doing? Do you know what
time it is?

LEN
(whispering)
I was bored so I decided to come see
you.

SIA
(whispering, erratic)
You couldn't wait until the morning?
It's 9:00 at night.

Len looks over his shoulder, making sure no one can see him. Len
turns back around and makes eye contact with Sia.

LEN
(whisper)
You weren't at school earlier. I was
worried so I wanted to see if you were
ok.

Sia turns her head around in a paranoid manner. Sia turns back
around and faces Len.

SIA
(whispers)
I can't come down there. My parents are
downstairs and they'll hear me.

LEN
(whispering, smiling)
Who said anything about you coming down
here.

Sia points her finger at Len.

SIA
(whispering, stern)
Don't you dare!

Len walks over to a tree that is right next to Sia's window. Len
looks up at Sia.

LEN
(smiling, whispering)
Watch me!

Sia drops her head and places the palm of her hand on her forehead, displaying that she is annoyed.

Len takes both his hands and pushes himself on top of a branch, grabbing it with both his hands.

SIA
(whispering, nervously)
Be careful.

Len begins to climb the tree, steadily, watching every step. Len places his hand on a branch. The branch breaks, causing Len to slip. Len's right foot, placed firmly on the base of the tree, allows Len to catch his balance.

SIA
(worried, whispering)
I'm going to kill you!

Len takes his other hand and grabs onto another tree branch. Len looks down and sees that he's quite high in the tree. Len looks up at Sia with a calm, yet, nervous look on his face. Len climbs on top of the branch and makes his way on top of the tree. Len, slowly, walks across the branch until he makes it to the opening of Sia's window.

Len climbs through Sia's bedroom window. Sia punches Len in the chest.

SIA
I swear to God, if you do that again, I
am going to kill you.

Len walks over to Sia's bed and sits on the side of the bed. Sia shuts her window and locks it. Sia rushes over to Len and pushes him, gently. Sia stands in front of Len.

SIA
(pointing)
Don't do that again.

Len grabs his chest.

LEN
I just wanted to see you, calm down.

Sia nudges Len and shuts the window. Len walks over to Sia's bed and jumps in it, laying across the bed, looking up at the ceiling, observing the beautiful painting that Sia has drawn.

LEN
(interesting)
How were you able to draw these
paintings. These are so cool.

Sia walks over to the other side of the bed.

SIA
My mom helped me.

Sia jumps in the bed. Sia grabs the covers and pulls them over
her legs.

SIA
She said that if you ever want to
achieve your dreams, you have to reach
for the stars.

Sia picks up her notepad, and continues to sketch, ignoring Len.

SIA
(sketching)
But... every time I look up, I see
nothing but empty dreams with subtle
potential.

Len climbs into the bed and wraps his arms around Sia, looking
at her as she sketches in her sketchpad.

LEN
I don't mean to be an asshole.

Len looks back up at the ceiling.

LEN
(looking up)
But I can't tell if that's a beaver on
an alligator.

Sia takes her shoulder and nudges Len while focused on her
sketching.

SIA
(sketching)
I would love to see you do a better
job. Sometimes, I don't know if you
know the difference between a cat or a
dog.

A spider crawls on Sia's arm. Sia looks on her arm, jumps, screams, and climbs on top of Len's shoulder.

SIA
(freaking out)
Oh my God, it's a spider. Kill it! Kill it!

LEN
(laughing, holding his stomach)
Oh my God. Really, Sia!

Sia crawls on top of Len's back and wraps her arms around Len in fear.

SIA
(freaking out)
Len, I will kill you. I swear to God!!!

Len reaches over, puts out his hand, and allows the spider to crawl into the palm of his hand. Len lifts his hand to show Sia the spider.

LEN
See... It's harmless.

Sia takes her hand and covers her mouth, indicating that she is disgusted.

SIA
I think i'm about to puke.

CUT TO: 30 SECONDS LATER

Len opens the window, sticks his hand out, and allows the spider crawl onto the tree branch. Len closes the window and walks back over to Sia who is in the bed, still sketching.

LEN
(slightly high-toned)
You should've seen your face?

Len crawls back into the bed and lays next to Sia.

SIA
(sketching, annoyed)
Don't be so loud? My parents can hear you in the other room.

Len takes his forehead and places it on Sia's head in a flirtatious manner.

LEN

Do you honestly think I care?

SIA

You will care after my father kicks your ass.

Len pauses. Len leans over and watches as Sia sketches a picture of a bird, sitting on a tree branch.

LEN

You've been working on this sketch for weeks.

LEN

Let me guess, you're struggling with whether you should fill in the feather to match the edges of the leaves?

LEN

Or, you're probably struggling with whether or not you should include a nest in the background since it would enhance the sketch's beauty.

SIA

(sketching)

I'm trying to get the branches right. I should've used oil pastels for the beak and the feathers but I was worried that the residue would smear the branches.

Len places his hand on his chin, analyzing the sketch.

LEN

I don't think you need oil pastels for this sketch.

Len reaches in his back pocket and pulls out a sketch pad.

LEN

Here, let me see.

Sia sighs, rolls here eyes, and hands the sketch book to Len.

SIA

If you screw up my painting, i'm going to punch you.

Sia turns to get a better angle of her sketch. Len opens his sketch book. Len turns to a page of the same bird, sitting on the same branch. Len holds Sia's sketch next to his sketch so Sia can see the difference.

LEN

You see the problem?

Sia grabs Len's sketch pad and analyzes the sketch. Sia takes a closer look. Sia sees that Len has colored in the flowers, surrounding the bird.

SIA

(looking in the sketch book)

How could I have missed that.

Sia places the sketch on Len's chest. Sia sits back in her bed and crosses her arms, looking disappointed.

SIA

I guess we have a winner.

Len smiles. Len wraps his arms around Sia and gives her a kiss on the cheek. Sia closes her eyes and smiles.

LEN

Now, that's the smile i'm looking for.
For a second there, I thought you were going to break up with me.

Sia turns her head and looks Len in his face.

SIA

Now, why would I do that? Who else is going to knock on my window at 10 at night?

Len smiles. Sia kisses Len on the lips which catches Len by surprise.

LEN

What was that for?

Sia rests her head on Len's chest. Sia closes her eyes.

SIA

Your guess is as good as mine.

END FLASHBACK: BACK TO SCENE

Sia watches as the squirrel jumps from one branch and to the other. Sia looks over at her dresser and analyzes a picture of her and Len on their wedding day.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Sia walks into the living room, carrying her purse on her shoulders and her laptop in her right hand. Sia heads to the door. Before she opens the door, she stops. Sia turns her head and sees a picture of her and Len while he is in his military uniform. Sia walks up to the picture and places her hand on it.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: THREE YEARS AGO

INT. KITCHEN

BEGIN MONTAGE VARIOUS

Sia stands in front of a stove, stirring a pot of stew with a long soup-spoon.

A teapot sits on a stove-top, boiling, with steam releasing from the top.

Sia reaches into the oven and pulls out a pie while wearing an oven-mitten.

Sia stands over a table, frosting a cake with a plastic spatula.

END MONTAGE VARIOUS

INT. DINING ROOM

Sia walks into the dining room. Sia walks over to the dining room table, and sits a pie in the middle of the table. Sia looks over at a clock, hanging on the wall, that reads, "2:00 P.M."

SIA

(talking to herself)

I need to freshen up. He should be here
in any minute.

Before Sia can exit the dining room, a knock at the front door haults her movement. Sia lights up with Joy.

SIA
(talking to herself)
Len! Well... he's home early.

Sia walks over to the door, looks through the peephole, and sees two military officers standing at the door. Sia opens the door and comes in contact with the two military officers.

SIA
Officers of the Fifth District? How can I be at your service.

OFFICER 2
Good evening, mam, is Mrs. Hamaji here?

SIA
Yes, that is me. How can I be at your service, officers.

OFFICER 2
Do you mind if we come in, Mrs. Hamaji?

Sia looks behind the officers.

SIA
Where's Len? Where's my husband?

OFFICER 1
Mam, I think it would be better if you let us come inside. We have some news. It's about your husband.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The two military officers sit on a couch, sitting up-straight in a military fashion. Sia walks into the living room and sits two glasses of tea, on the table, in front of the two military officers.

SIA
I apologize, I just got done cooking dinner for me and my husband. He told me that he would be here by this time. I hope everything's ok. This is not like Len.

Military officer drops his head and closes his eyes.

OFFICER 2

My apologies, Mrs. Hamaji, but that's
why we're here.

Sia becomes startled.

SIA

Is my husband ok?

OFFICER 1

(sternly)

I think you should sit, Mrs. Hamaji.

Sia sits across from the two officers, Sia's face transitions
from worry to anger.

OFFICER 1

Your husband is missing, Mrs. Hamaji.

Sia places her hand on her heart.

SIA

What do you mean he's missing? I just
talked to him about 4 days ago.

Officer 2 drops his head in disappointment.

OFFICER 2

Approximately two days ago, January 5th
at 11:00 AM Eastern Standard Time, a
compound, where your husband was
station, was hit by enemy missile
strikes.

OFFICER 2

There was approximately 45 casualties
but we could not recover your husband's
body.

Sia, tightly, grips her chest.

SIA

(crying)

On my God, No!

OFFICER 2

We apologize, mam, but we have something that your husband wanted us to give you. Just encase he didn't make it back home.

Officer 2 reaches in his front pocket and pulls out Len's sketchbook. Officer 2 hands it to Sia. Tears pour down Sia's face.

END FLASHBACK: BACK TO SCENE

Sia walks over and picks up a frame of Len's military metal. Sia sits the metal back down on the table and places her hand over her heart.

EXT. CAFE

Shots of the front of a Cafe where people are sitting outside, drinking coffee and conversing with one another.

INT. CAFE

Sia sits at a table, on her computer, drawing a picture of a lion from an image on her computer screen. Sia scrolls through the picture and zooms in. Sia focuses in on the Lion's nose and copies it on her notepad.

A waiter walks up and places a cup of coffee down on the table.

WAITER

And this is for you. Sorry for the wait, we have been very busy.

Sia looks up.

SIA

It's ok, I appreciate it.

WAITER

Ok, call me if you need anything.

The waiter walks away. Sia closes her note pad and let laptop. Sia picks up the cup of coffee, leans back in her chair, and looks outside the window.

From across the street, Sia can see a little boy and girl, playing soccer, kicking the ball back and forth to one another.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: 20 YEARS AGO

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Shots of young children running around the playground, playing with one another, swinging on swing-sets, jumping rope, and rolling around in the sand.

Sia sits in the corner, sketching in her sketch pad. A breeze of wind blows through her hair. Sia looks up at the sky.

LEN (O.S.)

(from the skies)

No matter where you are, our love
transcends space, time, and the
heavens.

SIA

(thinking to herself)

These voices? They sound so familiar.

A squirrel approaches Sia, chewing on a piece of fruit. Sia smiles and reaches her hand out. The squirrel crawls into Sia's hand. Sia raises the squirrel in her hand. Sia puts her nose against the squirrel's and wiggles it against the squirrel's nose. The squirrel hops out of Sia's hand and runs into the bushes.

Sia turns her head and sees a white rabbit sitting in the grass eating grass. Sia begins to sketch the rabbit as it eats from the grass. Sia takes the end of the pencil and slowly sketches the rabbit's eyes.

The rabbit runs away. Sia sighs. Sia closes her eyes. Sia begins to draw a sketch of a squirrel, drinking from a water pond. Sia opens her eyes and looks up in the sky which halts her sketch. Sia sees a cloud that is shaped like a lion. Sia turns the page to a blank page, in a hurry and starts to sketch the cloud.

A ball gently taps Sia on the foot. Sia looks down. Len runs up to Sia and picks up the ball. Len and Sia stare each other in the eyes. Sia ignores Len and continues to draw. Len takes a step forward to get a closer look.

LEN

Are you drawing a comic book?

SIA

(sassy)
That's none of your business.

LEN
Gees..... I was just asking.

Len takes the soccer ball and kicks it in the air repeatedly while keeping his eye on the ball. Len turns his attention to Sia, still kicking the ball in the air. Len watches as Sia sketches in her sketch book.

LEN
(kicking the ball up)
What do you think?

SIA
(nonchalantly)
It's cool I guess...

Len tries to impress by kicking the ball repeatedly but at a faster rate. Len falls on his back side. Sia giggles. Len, quickly, gets up from the floor.

LEN
(brushing his pants)
Sorry... I don't mean to be annoying. I
just wanted to see if you wanted to
play soccer with me.

Sia looks back down and continues to sketch.

SIA
(looking in book)
Soccer is for losers but I can draw you
if you want me too.

Sia turns the sketch around. Len walks up and takes a closer look of a sketch where Sia has drawn him kicking a soccer ball in the air.

LEN
(excited)
Wait, you drew this?

Sia begins to flip the pages of different sketches of Len playing soccer.

SIA

I remember when I first saw you, you
were sitting on the floor over there,
holding the soccer ball, by yourself.

LEN

You want to know a little secret?

Len reaches in his back pocket and pulls out a small sketch
book. Len turns the page to a sketch of a city and holds the
sketch up to Sia's face.

LEN

I love to draw too. I just don't tell
anyone.

Sia grabs the sketch book and analyzes.

LEN (O.S.)

I drew this during recess yesterday.

Sia flips through the pages of the sketch book and sees numerous
sketches.

SIA

It's ok, i guess. But you should've
shaded the sky a little darker.

LEN

Turn to the next page.

Sia turns to the next page and sees a picture of the same sketch
but more filled in. Sia hands the book back to Len. Sia turns
the page to a picture of a man and a woman laying in the grass
snuggled against one another. Sia shows the picture to Len.

LEN

Can you draw a picture of me, doing
back flips.

SIA

Only if you buy me ice cream?

LEN

(smiling)

Deal!

END FLASHBACK: BACK TO SCENE

Across the street, Sia sees a painter, with his back turned, painting a woman and her little girl who is sitting in the woman's lap. Sia leans up in her chair and zooms in on the portrait.

Sia watches as the painter turns the picture around to show the woman and her daughter. The woman hands the painter some money. Sia gets out of her seat and rushes outside the cafe.

EXT. FRONT OF CAFE - DAY

Sia rushes up to the painter with excitement in her eyes. The painter has his back turned away from Sia, as he begins sketching a new sketch.

SIA

Excuse me, are you drawing in Picasso style?

MAN

Yes, how would you know?

SIA

My husband admired Picasso style. He said that it was something about the combination of shading and outlining that brings the best out of art.

MAN

It sounds to me that your husband was a scholar when it came to the arts. Please tell me, whatever happened to your husband?

The man turns around and makes eye contact with Sia. Sia's eyes become watery. Sia places her hand on her chest as she recognizes that the man is Len.

SIA

(shocked)

Len?

LEN

(shocked)

Sia.

Sia wraps her arms around Len, holding him tightly.

SIA

They said you were dead.

LEN

They said a lot of things. Things, that I weren't able to reveal to you at the time.

Sia looks up at Len. Sia takes her hand and, softly, squeezes Len's cheek.

SIA

It's you. It's really you.

LEN

There's a lot we have to catch up on.

Sia rests her head in Len's chest.

SIA

(thinking to herself)

Why? Why has it been so long.

CUT TO: 30 MINUTES LATER

INT. CAFE

Sia and Len sit at a table, across from each other. A waiter walks up to the table, carrying a tray with two drinks on it. The waiter places a cup of coffee in front of Sia and a cup of coffee in front of Len.

LEN

(to waiter)

Thank you.

WAITER

Is there anything else I can get you guys.

LEN

No... that will be all.

The waiter walks away. Len picks up the coffee, hands trembling, coffee, slowly, spilling from the cup. Sia places her hand over Len's hand to calm him down.

SIA

I can get you something else if you want.

Len sits the cup of coffee down on the table. Len takes his hands and places them over Sia's.

LEN

Not a day went by when I did not think about you, Sia. I tried my best, but my main obligation was serving my country. But... I realized, in the end, that I was nothing but a pawn.

Len drops his head in disappointment.

SIA

What happened? They told me that you and your unit was wiped out. They said that it was a missile strike that wiped out your entire unit.

Len looks up at Sia.

LEN

They say a lot of things, Sia.

SIA

Just tell me what happened? It's been three years, Len. I have the right to know.

Len slams his fist on the table and startles Sia.

LEN

I apologize. I just cant...get over the voices.

SIA

Len, you can tell me anything. After all these years, you still fail to realize that.

Len closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK : 5 YEARS AGO

EXT. MILITARY OUTPOST

Soldiers sit behind a set of trenches, firing their assault rifles at the opposite side.

LEN (V.O.)

We didn't see it coming but enemy forces hit us with everything they could.

Explosions go off on the battle field. Shots of dead bodies laying on the battle field.

LEN (V.O.)

Like thieves in the night, they hit us when we were at our most vulnerable.

Len sits behind a machine gun, firing.

LEN (V.O.)

I saw my brothers fall from left and right, but I was destined to defend my country's honor.

Len reloads the machine gun. Len begins to fire the machine gun at a rapid rate.

LEN (V.O.)

If I was to fall, alongside my brothers, I wanted to make sure that it was our flag that was raised when the caravan arrived.

Soldier 1 runs up to Len, carrying a large box of Ammo.

SOLDIER 1

Sir.... Division 18 is unresponsive and headquarters said it will be 20 minutes before evac.

LEN

(shooting machine gun)

That means we're going to have to fight harder until they get here.

A bullet grazes Len on the arm. Len kneels down and grabs his arms, halts firing the machine gun. Soldier 1 rushes over to Len and grabs him.

SOLDIER 1

(hightone)

Sir...you're hit!

LEN

Don't worry about me. Just keep firing
we can hold them off until evac
arrives.

Len stands up and limps back over to the machine gun. Len attempts to fire the machine gun. A bullet hits the machine gun and causes it to malfunction.

Len backs away from the machine gun. The machine gun explodes. Len drops to the ground as gunfire begins to enter the fort. The shot up body of Soldier 1 falls to the ground.

SOLDIER 1

(Gasping for air)

It was an honor, sir.

Soldier 1 dies with his eyes open. Len reaches over and pulls the dog tags off Soldier 1's neck. Len crawls over to the exit. An explosion Goes off that spreads throughout the room.

CUT TO: 30 MINUTES LATER

Len's half-dead body lays on the floor, slightly conscious. Len rolls over on his back. Len opens his eyes, blurred vision, and sees an enemy soldier standing over him. The enemy soldier takes the end of his rifle and knocks Len cold.

INT. PRISON CELL BLOCK

Two prison guards drag Len down a cell block, each holding one of his ankles. The two prison guards stop in front of a cell.

INT. PRISON CELL

The prison guards throws Len in the cell and closes it shut. Len leans up and crawls over to the cell bars. Len places both his hands on the cell bars.

LEN

(yelling)

You monsters.....!

Len crawls back over the corner and rests his back against the wall. Len reaches in his back pocket and pulls out a small

sketchbook. Len turns the page to a sketch of him and Sia and observes the sketch.

LEN (V.O.)

During graduation at the military academy, I expected to either die on my back or over the bodies of my fallen soldiers. I never expected to be locked away in a cell.

CUT TO: TWO WEEKS LATER

INT. PRISON CELL

Len sits in the corner of a prison cell, wrapped in a blanket, and shirtless. Len tries to drown out the sound of screams by singing to himself.

LEN

(singing to himself)

The sun is falling in the sky. With no where else to go but inside. The sun is falling in the sky. With no where else to go but inside.

The sound of explosions causes Len to wrap himself into his blanket. Len rocks back and forth at a steady rate.

LEN (V.O.)

I should've never allowed them to take me.

LEN (V.O.)

I should've just ended it, right there, when I had a chance

A guard walks up to the cell. The guard takes a tray of food and slides it through the crack. Len crawls to the prison guard.

LEN

Who are you? Where am? Why am I here.

The prison guard walks away. Len picks up the tray of food and walks back over to the corner. Len takes his hand and digs into the food. Len scoops some of the food in his hand and eats it.

GRODNI (O.S.)

Tastes like shit, huh?

Len turns his head, spitting out the food.

GRODNI (O.S.)

I remember that face. You we're
assigned to the GTF unit in France
weren't you?

LEN

I'm not good with faces, mate.

Len picks up a piece of broken glass. Len crawls over to the
cell, takes the glass, and places it outside the cell and turns
it to see the face of Grodni in the piece of glass.

INTERCUT WITH: INT. LEN'S CELL AND GRODNI'S CELL

Grodni sits on the floor, with his shoulder rested against the
cell bars.

GRODNI

And they say familiar faces only come
once in a lifetime.

LEN

(surprised)

I thought you and your crew were wiped
out back in France.

GRODNI

We were. Well, at least my crew was.
Damn Albanians torched the place but
they found my sorry ass in the
trenches, broken, bloody, and bruised.

LEN

Same here..... Damn B21s wiped out our
entire post. We put up a good fight but
those bastards blindsided us.

GRODNI

Well, at least you can walk.

Grodni takes his hand and rubs it against one of his broken
legs.

GRODNI

My legs are broken in two places. I
don't know if I'll ever be able to walk
again unfortunately.

Len takes the tray of food and throws it against the wall.

GRODNI

You shouldn't have done that. You have to make every little calorie count.

LEN

The hell with calories. I need to find a way out of this prison. My wife... My wife must've received the news that i'm dead.

Godni and Len stop talking to one another as the sound a cell opens. Grodni and Len watch as two guards drag the dead body of a man down the cell lock. Len looks into the eyes of the man and sees that he is holding onto life by a thread. The two guards open a door down from the cell block and drags the body inside. The guards close the door behind them.

Len reaches in his back pocket and pulls out a painting of Sia.

LEN

I need to get out of here.

GRODNI

Now you're talking, brother. Come here, I have to show you something.

Len takes the piece of glass, points it out of the cell, and looks at Grodni through the broken piece of glass. Len can see Grodni holding up a set of keys.

GRODNI

I swiped them when one of the guards were walking past. What do you say? You only have one chance, mate.

Len looks down at the drawing of Sia. Len folds the painting in his hand and holds it against his chest.

LEN

Just make sure you don't leave me hanging. Don't forget, I saved your ass back in france.

GRODNI

(smiling)

Now you're talking.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Len and Grodni run down a wooded area with Grodni holding onto Len's shoulder.

GRODNI

I think they hear us, mate.

LEN

It doesn't matter. We'll be long gone
when the train arrives.

Len trips and falls to the ground. Grodni places his hand on his leg in pain.

GRODNI

(in pain, holding his leg)

It looks like my grandmother is calling
me, brother.

Len crawls over to Grodni.

LEN

We're not that far from the tracks. You
have to get up.

GRODNI

Just go, brother. You have a lovely
lady waiting for you.

GRODNI

Me.... I just have a bottle of vodka
and old cassette tapes.

Len looks down at Grodni. Len takes Grodni by the hand.

LEN

You were a great soldier, brother.

GRODNI

(laughing)

Really.... I never expected such a
compliment from the East Regages.

Len gives Grodni a salute. Len runs away. Len runs down a hill and makes it to the tracks. A train heads towards Len at full speed. Len looks back and can see enemy forces running down the hill, heading towards him. The train heads towards Len with full

blast. Len, quickly, jumps on the train and lands in an empty cargo. Len looks back at the prison from where he is sitting.

BACK TO: INT. CAFE SCENE

LEN

I made it but Grodni didn't.

Len clutches his fist and begins to shake. Sia places her hand over Len's.

SIA

It's ok.

Len looks up at Sia.

LEN

Enough of me. There is so much I want
to hear from you. Let's just go home.
Wherever home is.

EXT. POND - DAY

Sia, stands in front of a pond, painting a picture of a squirrel that is drinking from the pond. Sia dips the end of her brush into the black bubble of paint on her paint tray. Sia takes her brush and draws a nose on the squirrel.

The squirrel turns around and faces Sia. Sia smiles and quickly turns the page in her artbook to a blank page.

Sia begins to, quickly, make sketches of the squirrel as it is in its position. Sia, quickly, fills the sketch with the appropriate colors. The squirrel runs away before Sia can finish. Sia sighs.

Len walks up behind Sia and wraps his arms around her. Sia, gently, places her hand on Len's arm.

SIA

Why does it seem as though that all
great things of beauty must wither away
with the wind.

LEN

Not all beautiful things.

Len reaches in a backpack on his back and pulls out a notebook.
Len reaches over and holds up a sketch of Sia, painting.

SIA
(smiling)
I had a feeling someone was spying on
me.

Sia places her head on Len's chest. Len wraps his arms around
Sia, holding her tightly in his arms.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY

Sia sits on a grassy field, looking up at the clouds in the sky
while drawing a sketch of the clouds. Len walks over to Sia and
lays next to her. Len watches as Sia sketches the sky.

LEN
Sia, do you ever take a break.

Sia turns and looks at Len. Sia turns to a page of a sketch of
Len drawing a bird.

SIA
I caught you when I was picking grapes.

LEN
You're always surprising me Sia.

Len looks up at the clouds.

LEN
(excited)
Look!

Sia looks up at the sky.

LEN
(pointing at the clouds)
That looks like that lion I drew for
you earlier.

Sia, gently, grabs Len's hand and points it at another cloud.

SIA
And that one reminds me of that dog I
used to draw for you at the park.

LEN

Those were some great times.

Sia rests her chest against Len's.

LEN

Do you ever get tired of this? It's
like we've done this before.

SIA

I do not mind at all. I will travel
across space and time just to be next
to you.

Sia closes her eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

The Day Man Went To Sleep Part 1

written by

Author

Address

Phone

E-mail

FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDE STREET - DAY

David, a young well-fit man, jogs down the street with headphones in his ear. David looks across the street and sees an old lady waving at him. David takes his earphones off while continuing his pace.

DAVID
(waving)
Hey, Mrs. Patterson.

MRS. PATTERSON
David, my darling, when are you going to come over and meet my daughter?

DAVID
I wish I could, Mrs. Patterson, but i'm engaged.

MRS. PATTERSON
Oh my Lord, she is such a lucky girl.
I'll send flowers for the wedding.

DAVID
Thanks, Mrs. Patterson, talk to you later.

David increases his speed and continues down the street.

EXT. PARK - DAY

David runs around a pond in a not-so-busy park. David stops at a bench, leans over and rests his hands on his knees, and takes deep breaths. David sits on the park bench and breathes moderately to catch his breath. David looks down the trail and sees a man, sitting on a bench, coughing horrendously. David twists his face.

DAVID
(talking to himself)
You might want to get that checked out, bro.

David gets up from the bench and continues to jog down the trail surrounding the pond.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

David runs through the neighborhood and jogs down the same street where he saw Mrs. Patterson. David looks across the street and sees Mrs. Patterson laying in her front yard unconscious. David stops.

DAVID
Mrs. Patterson.

David runs across the street to check on Mrs. Patterson. David kneels down.

DAVID
(concerned)
Mrs. Patterson, are you ok?

David turns Mrs. Patterson over and sees green gook gushing from her eyes.

MRS. PATTERSON
(raspy voice)
Shawn is that you?

David falls on his back out of horror. David stands up, looks around, and sees other people falling to the ground, in their yards, coughing, sneezing, and some screaming.

DAVID
(horror in his eyes, talking
to himself)
What the hell is going on?

5 YEARS LATER

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Deep in the woods, on a cloudy day, a man lays in the middle of the woods, on the ground, sleeping and shorring. The sound of branches cracking, wakes David from his sleep.

CLOSE UP - MAN'S EYES OPENING

David leans up and looks around, cautiously. The sound of branches cracking, gets closer and David jumps up from the ground, looking around in a paranoid manner. David pulls out a knife, points it forward, and circles.

DAVID
(timidly)
Who's there!

The sound of branches cracking gets closer. David turns his attention to a set of bushes that is on his left. The bushes shake and, in a quickness, a rabbit jumps from the bushes and jumps in another bundle of bushes across. David sighs, places his knife in his knife holder.

David looks over at a woman, Darlene, David's wife, on the ground, sleeping in a sleeping bag, and shivering.

DAVID
Darlene?

The sound of men chatting with one another alarms David.

SOLDIER 1 (O.S.)
(far away)
Hey, over here!

David rushes over to Darlene. David kneels down, turns Darlene over so she is laying on her back. David sees green liquid leaking from her eyes, nose, and mouth. David gets up from the floor, startled, and backs up until the back of his head hits the end of a rifle.

SOLDIER 2
Don't move.

David lifts both his hands in the air.

DAVID
I don't want any problems, buddy.

SOLDIER 2 (O.S.)
Get on your knees.

David gets on his knees and places both his hands on the back of his head. Soldier 2, wearing a mask, walks around Man 1, aiming his gun all the way until he gets to the front.

SOLDIER 2
If you do everything we say, you live.

David looks around and sees that he is surrounded by soldiers, who are emerging from the bushes with their rifles aiming towards his direction.

SOLDIER 2 (O.S.)
But if you try to fight, well, you know
the consequences.

Soldier 2 looks into David's eyes and sees that he looking past him. Soldier 2 turns around and sees Darlene, laying on the floor shivering. David looks over at Corporal Gary Johnson, who is standing in between two soldiers, holding large axes.

SOLDIER 2
(to Gary)
Corporal Johnson, check and see if
she's infected.

GARY
Yes sir.

Gary rushes over to where Darelene is laying. Gary kneels down and sees that green liquid is oozing from her eyes, nose, and lips. Gary strands up and turns around.

GARY
(to Soldier 2)
She's infected, sir.

SOLDIER 2
(reaching for his walkie
talkie)
Oh great, another live one.

SOLDIER 2
(talking in his walkie talkie)
Transportation Team 6, we have two live
ones, one infected, one yet to be
determined, who need to transported
back to Silo Section 5.

SOLDIER 3 (O.S.)
(on walkie talkie)
Yes, sir.

SOLDIER 2
(to Man 1)
You're in luck, another five days out
here, you two would probably be dead

Soldier 2 reaches his hand out. David grabs Soldier 2's hand.
Soldier 2 helps David from off the ground. David stands in front

of Soldier 2 and looks over at Darlene, who is being placed in a portable chamber.

DAVID
(looking at Darlene)
Will my wife be ok.

SOLDIER 2
We'll run some test when we get her to the hospital at our sector but there's no guarantees.

David drops his head.

DAVID
(looking down)
Of course.

Soldier 2 walks away. David looks up in the air and a drop of rain lands on his face. Rain begins to pour onto the entire forest.

EXT. FRONT OF BUNKER - OUTPOST - DAY

Michael looks through the scope of a rifle while aiming at a red bird that is sitting on a tree branch.

MICHAEL
(looking through scope)
Now, that's what you call true beauty.

Standing behind Michael is Jerome, who is biting off pieces of jerky from a stick.

JEROME
(chewing)
What about your wife?

MICHAEL
(looking through scope)
Now, that's a whole other story.

Michael's walkie talkie, on his hip, turns on.

GARY (O.S.)
(talking through walkie talkie)
213 to outpost, 213 to outpose.

Michael lowers his rifle. Michael takes the walkie talkie off his hip and responds.

MICHAEL
(talking through walkie
talkie)
Outpost confirmed, this is Michael.

GARY (O.S.)
(talking through walkie
talkie)
Open sector 12, we have two live ones
here.

Michael turns and looks at Jerome.

MICHAEL
(to Jerome)
Open sector 12.

Jerome presses a button beside him.

JEROME
(chuckling)
I can't wait to see the look on their
face when they get a taste of Earl's
loaf.

Michael looks up into the sky.

MICHAEL
(looking up)
I can't wait to see the look on
everybody's face when we run out of
gasoline.

Jerome takes a bite out of the jerkey.

JEROME
(chewing)
You know, something's telling me that
you were so big shot back in the Old
World. You never took me as a working
man.

Michael smiles.

5 YEARS AGO

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

Cars sit, bumper to bumper, trying to enter into the downtown section of the city. The sound of cars honking at one another fills the atmosphere.

INT. LIMOUSINE

Limousine driver rests his head against the steering wheel.

Michael, a successful salesman and Tiffany, a famous super model, sit in the back of the limousine. Michael is talking on the phone to his partner, Dan. Tiffany is sitting next to him while looking in a makeup mirror, fixing her makeup.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(talking on the phone, irate)

I told you, Dan, we need to close out on this deal by next week.

MICHAEL

(talking on the phone, irate)

I don't have time to wait another month. I have investors in China, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria who are waiting to invest 50% in this deal. 50%, Dan.

DAN (OS)

(on the phone)

I understand, Michael, but Mr. Bradley is a very conservative man with his investments. He wants a guaranteed profit at least in five years.

MICHAEL

(on the phone, shocked)

Five years!

Brief Pause. Michael rubs his eyes in frustration with his cell phone still glued to hear. Michael rubs his beard for a few seconds. Michael takes a deep breath.

MICHAEL

Dan, I don't need a lecture on how to run my business. All I'm asking, is for you to do everything you can to ensure that Mr. Bradley is on our team. I

don't care if you have to sell a couple cases of Mona Lisa paintings, you do everything in your power to ensure to Me. Bradley that this is the deal of a lifetime.

Tiffany looks into the mirror and fixes her eyebrows with an eyebrow pencil. She smiles and blows a kiss at her reflection.

DAN (OS)

(on the other end of the phone)

I don't know if you've been paying attention to trends but paintings don't sell for as much as they used too ten years ago.

Michael knocks over his glass of champagne, sitting on the tray, in a burst of fury.

MICHAEL

(angry)

Ok, Dan, how about this? How about you put in your resignation and clean off your desk. I'm sure I can find some highly-motivated college graduate who would love to take orders from a guy as charming as myself.

Dan sighs.

DAN (O.S.)

(on the phone, unsure)

I'll see what I can do, Michael.

MICHAEL

That's more like it!

Michael hangs up the phone. Michael throws the phone against the chair in a furious manner.

TIFFANY

(putting lipstick on, looking into the makeup mirror)

You really need to learn how to calm yourself, babe.

Michael looks over at Tiffany. Michael is hesitant to say something.

MICHAEL

Easy coming from the one who doesn't
have to pay the bills.

Tiffany closes the makeup mirror.

TIFFANY

(snarky)

Don't be mad, it's not like you're my
cup of tea either.

Michael Leans up.

MICHAEL

What's that?

TIFFANY

(looking at michael, grin on
her face)

Oh, have you forgot about our little
arrangement.

Michael sighs and rests his head against the seat.

MICHAEL

(rubbing his eyes with both
his fingers)

I should've listened to my mother and
married that beautiful redhead that
lived down the street.

TIFFANY

(digging in her purse,
quietly)

And I should've married the pool man
who used to come over every weekend.

Tiffany pulls out her phone. Tiffany dials a phone number that
is saved to her contacts. Tiffany places the phone to her right
ear.

TIFFANY

(on the phone)

Hello, I am calling to set up an
appointment with Dr. Rodman.

REPRESENTATIVE (OS)
(on the other end of the
phone)
And who do I have the pleasure of
speaking with today?

TIFFANY
(on the phone)
Oh, it's Tiffany.

REPRESENTATIVE (OS)
(on the other end of the
phone)
Oh hey, Tiffany. I love the new boobs.

TIFFANY
(on the phone)
Well, thank you. Tell Dr. Rodman that I
will like a small breast reduction.

REPRESENTATIVE (OS)
(on the other end of the phone
)
Sure thing, Mrs. Thorton, and would
that be cash or card?

TIFFANY
(on the phone)
I will be paying with visa

REPRESENTATIVE (OS)
(on the other end of the
phone)
Ok, that will be \$30,000.

Michael rolls his eyes. Michael leans over and rests his
forehead on the palm of his hand.

MICHAEL
(thinking to himself)
If she wasn't hot, I would dump her for
my neighbor.

Tiffany looks at her phone and smiles.

TIFFANY
(looking at phone, grinning)
Oh, look at my beautiful angels.

MICHAEL

I don't care about your stupid muts.

Michael leans back in his seat. Michael looks out the limousine window.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. FRONT OF BUNKER - OUTPOST - DAY

Michael takes his rifle and aims it towards a deer that is hidden in a bundle of bushes, eating the leaves.

MICHAEL

(looking through scope)

Yeah, I was once somebody, not I am nothing more than a survivor.

INT. MAIN HALL

A crowd of people stand around, chanting, as a man, shirtless and wearing a mask, is escorted through the main hall, accompanied by two soldiers. People throw trash and liquids onto the man. One of the soldiers aims his rifle in the air and fires off a round.

SOLDIER 4

(yelling)

Everyone calm the hell down.

The crowd calms down.

SOLDIER 4

The man standing before you is a murderer. We found him on the outskirts, running for the hills.

The crowd boos loudly.

SOLDIER 4

By approval of the council, he shall be hanged.

The crowd boos even louder. Two teenagers, brothers and sisters, Luke and Bethany push themselves through the crowd and make it to the front.

LUKE
(out of breath)
We made it.

BETHANY
(out of breath)
Why are we here again?

LUKE
(excited)
To see the slasher. I wrote a three
page research paper about this guy last
month.

BETHANY
Luke, you're such a dweeb.

The soldiers escort the masked man on a platform.

SOLDIER 5
(to masked man)
Show your face, coward.

Soldier 5 pulls the mask off the man. It is revealed that the
murderer is Luke's teacher, Mr. Bennet.

LUKE
(shocked)
Mr. Bennet?

BETHANY
Wait, wasn't he our third period
teacher in the 6th grade?

LUKE
I thought he died during the pandemic.

SOLDIER 4
(to Mr. Bennet)
Confess your sins, murderer.

MR. BENNET
(crying)
I am innocent, I tell you, innocent.

Members of the crowd yell, "liar" as other members of the crowd
yell out in rage.

SOLDIER 5

(whispering in Mr. Bennet's
ear)
Tell that to whoever created you.

The executioner walks up on the platform. The executioner grabs Mr. Bennet and places his head around a piece of rope.

MR. BENNET
(crying)
You all are making a terrible mistake.

The executioner pushes Mr. Bennet off the platform. The crowd cheers as Mr. Bennet gangs from the platform, choking. Bethany and Luke turn their heads in disgust. Bethany rests her head in Luke's arms.

BETHANY
I wish we could go back to way things
were before.

LUKE
Yeah, I wish we could too.

5 YEARS AGO

INT. LUNCH ROOM

A teenage boy, Luke, and a teenage girl, Bethany, sit at a table together while surrounded by other students sitting at a table. The two are brothers and sisters. Luke is on his phone, reading the various post on his Newsfeed. Bethany is filing her nails.

BETHANY
Can you believe that mother had the
audacity to tell me that if I get an F
on my report card, that I can't go to
France for the summer?

BETHANY
She doesn't realize how much this trip
means to me. Jazmine is going to Mexico
for the summer and Laura is touring all
of Western Europe. I have to, at least,
come back next year with some cool
story on how awesome my summer vacation
was.

LUKE

(looking down at this phone)
Well, I must admit, you have been
slipping lately.

BETHANY
(pouting)
Ok, Luke, I thought you would be on my
side.

CLOSE UP - LUKE SCROLLING THROUGH HIS NEWSFEEDS

LUKE
(looking at his phone)
I'm sure mother is not pushing you to
reach for the stars.

BETHANY
(filing her nails, annoyed)
She said I had to get, at least, a C+.

LUKE
(taking a selfie with his cell
phone)
That sounds obtainable.

Their, personal, butler walks up to the table, carrying a tray
of food. The butler sits the tray of food in the middle of the
table, which is plastered with a variety of different delights.

Bethany stuffs a napkin down her collar.

BETHANY
Of course you would say that, "Mr. I'm
going to Spain for the summer."

Luke stuffs a napkin down his collar.

LUKE
Hey, it's not my fault that I studied
during spring break.

The butler places a plate of food in front of Luke. The butler
places a plate of food in front of Bethany. Bethany pulls out
her phone and scrolls through her Feeds.

BETHANY
(shocked, looking at her
phone)

Oh my God, I can't believe this. It's not like my day couldn't get any worse.

LUKE

(holding a cup of tea next to his mouth)

Please don't tell me that our limousine is going to be late again. I told dad to fire the loser.

Luke takes a sip from the hot cup of tea.

BETHANY

(pouting, looking at her phone)

Sarah's parents just bought her a 2020 Bentley Continental.

The butler pours cheese on the pasta that is on Luke's plate with a food dipper.

LUKE

Well, didn't father just buy you a 2019 Bentley Gt.

BETHANY

(snappy)

That's not the point, Luke. I can't have Sarah become the most popular girl in school.

LUKE

Don't tell me you're going to have mother buy you another car. You know she's going to refuse.

BETHANY

(cunning smile on her face)

No... I'm going to have mother buy me the most expensive jewelry in the world. I believe I will look good in platinum.

The butler sits a bowl of salad in front of Bethany.

LUKE

(sarcastic)

Oh...How lucky.

BETHANY
(excited)
Hey, look, mom and dad just sent us a
picture.

Bethany shows Luke her phone.

CLOSE UP - MICHAEL AND TIFFANY SITTING NEXT TO EACH OTHER.
TIFFANY LOOKS BUBBLY WHILE MICHAEL LOOKS MISERABLE

LUKE
Why does dad look so miserable.

Bethany pulls the phone back.

BETHANY
(looking at phone, texting)
Would you want to be married to mom.

LUKE
Good point.

Luke blows on his bowl of soup.

5 YEARS LATER

INT. HALLWAY

Rhonda walks down the hallway, in a hurry, while carrying a set
of folders in her arms.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

The President sits at a table surrounded by four congressmen.

PRESIDENT
Do you guys know why democracy is so
important?

The four congressmen look at each other and shrug.

PRESIDENT
It's because it gives the people a
choice.

The President gets up from his seat. The President walks around the table while talking.

PRESIDENT

The choice on how a country should be ran. The choice to choose the best representative to represent their views. That's the beauty of democracy.

CONGRESS MAN 1

With all due respect, sir, what does this have to do with the fact that we're running out of food faster than we predicted five years ago.

The President slams his hands on the table.

PRESIDENT

Explain to me, how we live in one of the wealthiest bunkers in the world, and we are unable to hire people who can process food in an efficient time frame?

CONGRESS MAN 2

Correction, sir, we are the only bunker left in the entire world.

PRESIDENT

Don't question my intelligence, Dawkins.

CONGRESS MAN 2

Well, it's not questioning your intelligence, sir...it's just.

PRESIDENT

(cutting congressman 2 off)
Say one more thing and I will banish you to the outback.

CONGRESS MAN 2

There are no more outbacks in the world, sir.

The president sighs. The president places his hand on his forehead, signaling that he is frustrated.

PRESIDENT

What do we have to do to solve the supply of food in the compound?

CONGRESS MAN 3

I was thinking that we cut back on the number of meals the population eats a day. Studies have proven that eating just one time a day, can have the same effects on your body as eating three times a day.

PRESIDENT

Corporal, where the hell did you find that study.

CONGRESS MAN 3

In my daughter's notebook?

PRESIDENT

(sarcastic)

Oh, great!

CONGRESS MAN 4

I know this may be a little extreme, but maybe it's time for us to wiggle out the weak.

The President stands next to a table. The President pours himself a glass of alcohol. The President turns around to face the Congress Men

PRESIDENT

(holding drink in his hand.)

Be more specific, John.

CONGRESS MAN 4

What I'm saying is, maybe we should consider cannibalism.

The President is so lost for words that he spits the alcohol out of his mouth.

PRESIDENT

Cannibalism? Are you crazy?

CONGRESS MAN 1

How can you even call yourself a human.
Where is your humanity?

CONGRESS MAN 4
Humanity? We have starving people for
crying out loud. I don't know about
you, but I believe in strongest of the
fittest.

The President presses a button underneath his desk.

Two secret service members walk into the office. The two secret
service members walk up to Congress Man 4 and place their hands
on his shoulder.

CONGRESS MAN 4
(high tone)
What? What is this madness!

The President sits at his desk, swirling his glass of alcohol
around in his hand.

PRESIDENT
I'm sorry, John, but despite our
extensive relationship, I think you
will prove to be more of a burden than
an asset in the near-future.

The secret service members lift Congress Man 4 out of his chair.

CONGRESS MAN 4
(irate)
This is preposterous.

The secret service members carry Congress Man 4 across the room.

CONGRESS MAN 4
(irate)
You will pay for this! I swear, you
will pay for this!

The secret service members carry Congress Man 4 out of the room
and close the door. The President leans back in his chair.

PRESIDENT
Ok, where were we?

CONGRESS MAN 1
We need to find people who can farm.

PRESIDENT

Farm? Why farm when you have luxury at your fingertips? Besides, it's

PRESIDENT

not like anyone in this compound is skilled enough to farm during such, harsh, conditions.

CONGRESS MAN 2

Maybe we're just going to have to cut back on meals.

PRESIDENT

(picking his teeth with a toothpick)

Yeah, maybe we will.

Rhonda storms into the office, carrying a bundle of folders in her arms.

RHONDA

Mr. President, I'm sorry I'm late. I ran into some traffic.

CONGRESS MAN 2

Traffic? There's no traffic in the bunkers?

CONGRESS MAN 3

Yeah, I haven't seen a car in almost five years.

PRESIDENT

Ok, that's enough for the day, boys.

CONGRESS MAN 1

But, Mr. President, what are we going to do to prevent a future food shortage?

PRESIDENT

(shooing the congress men away)

We'll let the farmers deal with it. They are the professionals.

The three Congress Men gather their belongings from the table. The three congress men walk pass the secretary while whispering to one another. The three Congress Men walk out of the President's office and close the door.

PRESIDENT

(leaning back in his chair)

I swear, it's so hard finding rational people these days. And my grandfather actually thought that another ice age would bring the rationality out of humanity.

Rhonda stands next to a coffee pot and pours a cup of coffee. Rhonda walks over to where The President is sitting and sits the cup of coffee down on the President's desk.

RHONDA

Mr. President, do you think it's probably time for a vacation?

The President picks up the cup of hot coffee.

PRESIDENT

Vacation? Where am I going to go? Showy Beaches in California?

RHONDA

Well, sir, you do know that it has been reported that Africa has been totally unchanged since the arrival of the Ice Age.

PRESIDENT

Rhonda, you're my secretary, you're not my wife. Now, tell me what do I have planned for the day?

Rhonda opens the folder.

RHONDA

(reading papers in the folder)

Well, you have a meeting with the Mayor of Section Two.

PRESIDENT

I wonder what that idiot wants. Last week, he was bitching about how washing

water is warm. Can you believe that? I wish my bath water was warm. It feels like I'm bathing in a bath of ice cubes.

RHONDA

(looking into the folder)

Well, we are in an Ice Age, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Don't question my intelligence, Rhonda, tell me what else I have to get done during the day before I fire you.

RHONDA

Then you have a meeting with the Green Party at 12 in the afternoon.

PRESIDENT

(sarcastic)

Let me guess, they want Universal Healthcare.

RHONDA

(sarcastic)

Then at 2:00 you have a lunching with the Queen of Iceland.

PRESIDENT

Why did we have to include them in the Union? They are too damn needy.

RHONDA

(looking into folder)

Then at five, you have to drive out to Section 2 to meet with the General of the Navy.

PRESIDENT

(spinning around in his chair)

We are the last of the human race. Why do we need a military again?

RHONDA

And to end your day on a high note, you have to meet with the first lady, at 8, for dinner.

PRESIDENT
(resting his chin on the palm
of his hand)
I want a divorce.

The President looks up at a picture of him and his wealthy friends.

PRESIDENT
Oh, I forgot, there is no money to pay
the divorce lawyer.

Rhonda closes the folder and places it in his arms.

RHONDA
Will there be anything else, Mr.
President?

The President gets up from his desk and stretches his back.

PRESIDENT
No, Rhonda, go ahead and take the day
off.

RHONDA
Are you sure? My shift just started.

PRESIDENT
(putting on his jacket)
Well, it's not like you're getting
paid.

RHONDA
Mr. President, be honest, do you really
want to be the president of Bunker 101.

PRESIDENT
(high tone)
What! How dare you question my
leadership.

RHONDA
I'm just saying, it doesn't seem like
you're into it anymore. Since the
apocalypse, I've noticed that you don't
have the same ambition as you once did.
Is it because money is no longer a
driving factor?

PRESIDENT

(holding a glass of alcohol in
his hand)

You try being the president over a
population who caused this mess. Maybe
if we would've taken Global Warming
more serious, we wouldn't be in this
situation.

RHONDA

Sir, global warming is when a gradual
increase in the overall temperature of
the earth's atmosphere generally
attributed to the greenhouse effect
caused by increased levels of carbon
dioxide and other pollutants. I don't
believe that process would cause an Ice
Age.

PRESIDENT

Rhonda, please don't correct me.

RHONDA

(head down)

Yes, sir.

The president walks past Rhonda.

PRESIDENT

Oh, when you get a chance, can you
please send a team out to find me some
penguin? I'm tired of eating squid.

RHONDA

Yes, sir.

The President stands at the door and looks back at Rhonda.

PRESIDENT

(smiling)

Also, you should probably consider
going out more. I hear Spain is rather
chilly during this time.

The President walks out of the office and closes the door behind
him. Rhonda walks over to the counter where the bottle of
alcohol is. Rhonda picks up the bottle and pours herself a glass

of alcohol. Rhonda picks up the glass of alcohol and holds it close to her mouth.

RHONDA
I need a vacation.

INT. BUNKER - LABORATORY

Darlene lays asleep, in a chamber, while breathing through a ventilator. David lays in a chamber, sleeping, talking to himself without saying a word.

5 YEARS AGO

INT. KITCHEN

Darlene stands in the kitchen frosting a cake while listening to soft music.

INT. DOORWAY

David runs through the door, closes it, and rests his back against the door while panting. Darlene walks out of the kitchen and sees David in a fuss.

DARLENE
David, what's wrong.

DAVID
(breathing)
People are dying out there.

DARLENE
(confused)
Dying, what are you talking about.

David looks into the living room at the news. David walks past Darlene, walks into the living room, and sits on the couch. David picks up the remote and turns up the volume on the TV. On the TV, there is a State Of The Union from the president. The President sits at his desk with a mini-microphone clipped on his tie.

THE PRESIDENT
My fellow Americans, I am here to bring
you breaking news. Our country is in

the middle of an epidemic, and unfortunately there is nothing we can do to contain it. As your President, I advise that you stay close to your family and hope for the best. This is your President saying goodbye and thank you for everything.

The TV screen cuts off. Darlene stands behind David who is completely lost for words.

DARLENE

A pandemic?

DAVID

(head down, soft tone)

Yeah, a pandemic.

DARLENE

So there's nothing they can do to stop it?

David sits in the couch, speechless. David gets up from the couch and walks up to Darlene.

DAVID

Pack your stuff, we have to get out of here.

DARLENE

And go where?

DAVID

We'll figure that out later, all I know is we have to get somewhere safe before this spirals out of control.

The sound of cars crashing into each other startles David and Darlene. David and Darlene walks over to the front door, opens it, and sees chaos running rampant in the streets - cars crashing into each other, people fighting, and people falling to the ground while coughing.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

David and Darlene pack clothes into two suitcases that are laying in the bed. David walks over to the window, looks out of it, and sees people going crazy in the middle of the street.

David walks back over to his suitcase, zips it up, and places it on the floor.

DAVID

We have to hurry up. It's getting crazy out there.

DARLENE

(packing clothes)

You still haven't told me where we're going.

David looks over at a picture of him, as a boy, sitting on a cabin's steps.

DAVID

I think I have an idea.

EXT. BALCONY OF RESTAURANT - DAY

People sitting at tables, dressed in luxurious attire, eating luxurious meals and drinking luxurious liquor.

George, a successful business, sits at a table with his wife, Michelle, the owner of a modeling agency.

George is eating a large piece of steak. Michelle is reading a magazine.

GEORGE

(cutting steak with a knife and fork)

I said medium-rare, not well done.

MICHELLE

(reading magazine)

I told you we should've went to the steakhouse downtown. But no...you wanted to save \$50 on a steak dinner.

George digs his fork into a piece of steak. George picks up the steak, analyzes it for a few seconds, and stuffs the steak in his mouth.

GEORGE

(chewing)

It could use a little more seasoning.

MICHELLE
(reading magazine)
There's a saltshaker right next to you,
honey.

George picks up the salt shakers and sprinkles a little salt
over his steak.

GEORGE
I was thinking, do you think we should
take that trip to Costa Rica? I was
thinking Jamaica would be a better
option. I haven't had good Caribbean
Jerk in years.

MICHELLE
(reading magazine)
Whatever you say, George. As long as
you are the one paying for it.

GEORGE
(cutting steak with knife)
I was thinking that we should leave,
sometime, next month. Flights are
cheaper during the winter.

MICHELLE
(reading magazine)
What's the difference in paying \$5000
for a cruise in the winter, compared to
paying \$6000 for an all-inclusive
resort in the summer?

GEORGE
(annoyed)
Can you just shut up and look pretty
for a change?

A Waiter, carrying a tray of wine and champagne, walks up to the
table that George and Michelle are sitting at.

WAITER
(to Michelle)
Can I interest you in some wine, my
dear lady?

MICHELLE
(reading magazine)

Sure, but please make sure that it's
Merlot.

The waiter picks up a bottle of Merlot. The waiter fills
Michelle's glass full of wine and places the bottle of wine back
down on the tray.

WAITER
Is there anything else I can get for
you, my lady?

MICHELLE
(holding out a \$100 bill)
No, thank you for your time.

The waiter takes the \$100 out of Michelle's hand.

WAITER
Great, I can use this to put gas in my
tank.

The waiter walks away from the table, carrying the tray of wine
and champagne.

GEORGE
(stuffing his face)
Damn, slob.

MICHELLE
(reading magazine, holding
glass of wine)
Look who's talking.

Michelle takes a sip from the glass of wine.

A man, sitting a few tables away from Michelle and George,
begins to cough rigorously. He places his hand over his mouth
but continues to cough.

GEORGE
(looking over at man, to
Michelle, stuffing his face
with food)
Some people have horrible table
manners.

MICHELLE
(reading magazine, holding
glass of wine)

Look who's talking

Michelle takes a sip from the glass of wine. The owner of the restaurant walks out in the middle of the floor.

OWNER

(to all customers)

May I have your attention please? The restaurant will be closing in a matter of ten minutes. We understand that it is happy hour but rest assure we will be back up and running as soon as possible. Thank You.

The owner walks away. Customers at tables chat with one another. The waiter walks over to George and Michelle's table and sits the check on the table. George picks up the check and looks at it.

GEORGE

(looking at the check)

Are you kidding me? And they call this happy hour.

MICHELLE

(reading magazine)

I told you, we should've went to that steakhouse off Carlton.

George tosses the check on the table.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. BUNKER - LABORATORY

George slowly opens his eyes. George looks around and notices that he is in a large chamber. George presses a button next to a computer. The chamber doors open up. David steps out of the chamber, holding his head, and wiping his eyes. David looks over at George with his eyes still, slightly, cracked.

DAVID

Where am I.

GEORGE

One of the last known laboratory in the world.

DAVID
And who are you.

GEORGE
A wealthy artist pretending to be a
scientist. You should try it sometimes.
It makes you feel more important during
these times.

David looks over at Darlene who is laying in a chamber.

GEORGE (O.S.)
You don't have to worry about her.

George gets up from his desk chair. George walks over to the
chamber that Darlene is in.

GEORGE
Her blood pressure is stable and we
were able to slow down the mucus
regeneration process.

David places his hand on the chamber.

DAVID
(looking down at Darlene)
My Dear Darlene.

GEORGE
There's hope. Our team has been working
on developing a vaccine. With your
disclosure, we can conduct some test on
your wife.

David looks over at George.

DAVID
What are the chances of her condition
getting worse, due to these
experiments.

GEORGE
Unfortunately, everything is up in the
air. All we can do is hope that her
condition doesn't get worse after the
third phase.

David takes his hand off the chamber. David quietly takes a deep
breath.

DAVID
I need some air.

GEORGE
There's a patio down the hallway on the right. We will start testing tomorrow, once Phase 1 of the vaccine is available.

David looks away, in complete deep thought.

INT. HALLWAY

David walks down a hallway. David looks across and sees two women walking, whispering to one another. David looks back as the two women continue down the hallway. David bumps into Michelle and causes her to drop her papers on the floor.

DAVID
I'm so sorry.

Michelle squats on the floor and organizes the papers in her hands.

MICHELLE
(organizing papers)
It's ok, I just got done working a shift.

George kneels down and picks up some of the papers from off the floor. George and Michelle stand up from the floor. George hands Michelle the papers. Michelle takes the papers and combines them with the papers in her hand.

MICHELLE
Thank you.

Michelle looks at the tag on David's chest.

MICHELLE
You're from Sector 12?

David looks down at the tag on his shirt. David looks back up at Michelle.

DAVID
I suppose.

Michelle reaches down into her coat pocket, pulls out a tranquilizer, and sticks David into her neck. David places his hand on the neck that was stuck with the tranquilizer. David's vision becomes blurry. David falls to the ground, unconscious. Michelle pulls out a handheld transceiver.

MICHELLE
(talking to handheld
transceiver)
Code Green in Sector 23. Code Green in
Sector 23.

Michelle looks down at David's unconscious body.

FADE TO BLACK:

Super Duper Hedeki

written by

Author

Address

Phone

E-mail

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Hedeki is sitting at a table, writing in his secret notebook, and doodling. Hedeki begins to fantasize about being a superhero.

HEDEKI
(thinking)
I wonder what it would be like to be a
super hero.

Hedeki begins to have visions of himself as a superhero, standing on top of a tall building while looking down at the downtown section of the city.

Hedeki jumps out of the chair and puts himself in a super hero stance, both hands on his hips, standing tall, and chest sticking out.

HEDEKI
(thinking)
Now, if I could have any super power,
what would it be?

Hedeki jumps on top of the table and pretends that he is flying in the air.

HEDEKI
(thinking)
Would I want to fly as high as the
birds and touch the sun?

Hedeki jumps up in the air three times in a row.

HEDEKI
(thinking)
Or would I want to bend the laws of
gravity in my favor and reach the
stars?

A group of three young men, apart of The Cool Brezze Group, neighborhood bullies and thugs, approach Hedeki while his back is turned.

HEDEKI

One day, I will be the greatest
superhero in the world.

Crew Member 1 places his hand on Hedeki's shoulder.

CREW MEMBER 1
So, you don't say.

Hedeki, hesitantly, turns around. Hedeki looks up at the group of bullies with fear plastered on his face. The Cool Breeze Crew looks down at Hedeki with sinister looks on their faces.

CREW MEMBER 2
How about we open your back and make
you a pair of wings? I'm sure everybody
would love to hear you squeal.

Crew Member 3 grabs Hedeki by his shirt and throws him to the ground. Hedeki tries to crawl away but is stopped by Crew Member 3 who pulls him by the back of his shirt.

CREW MEMBER 1
Now where do you think you're going?

Crew Member 3 pulls Hedeki up in the air.

CREW MEMBER 3
What's wrong? Don't you want to learn
how to fly?

Crew Member 3 tosses Hedeki on the ground. The group of young men surround Hedeki. The group of young men kick Hedeki while Hedeki lays in a fetal position, shielding himself from the blows. Crew Member 1 grabs Hedeki by the collar. Crew Member 1 looks Hedeki in the eyes, smiling sinisterly.

CREW MEMBER 1
What's wrong, chump, I thought you were
supposed to be a hero.

Tears fall from Hedeki's eyes. Crew Member 1 punches Hedeki in the face. Hedeki falls to the ground. Crew Member 2 digs in Hedeki's pockets and pulls out a few dollars. The group of young men stand over Hedeki while taunting him and laughing.

CREW MEMBER 3
Some hero you are.

The group of thugs walk away, laughing. Hedeki, slowly, picks himself up from the ground and brushes the dirt from his pants while looking sad and beaten.

EXT. HOUSE ROOF - NIGHT

Hedeki sits on top of the roof, doodling in notebook.

ANGLE ON- PICTURE OF HEDEKI AS A SUPERHERO

Hedeki closes the notebook and sits it on his lap. Hedeki looks up at the moon.

HEDEKI

If only I had the power to fight back.

SPIRIT (O.S.)

You can, if you stand up for yourself.

Hedeki is startled. Hedeki looks over his shoulder. Hedeki sees the spirit of a young boy, wearing a leather jacket and spikey hair.

SPIRIT

I remember when I was in the same boat.

The Spirit walks up and sits next to Hedeki, both continue to look up at the moon.

SPIRIT

It took me a very long time to stand up to the kids who used to take my lunch money and bust my lip.

HEDEKI

What changed?

SPIRIT

I gained courage by surrounding myself with others who experienced the same hardship I was experiencing.

Hedeki turns and looks at the Spirit. Hedeki jumps up and gets in his superhero stance, hands on his, chest out, and standing tall.

HEDEKI

Are you saying that to become a hero I have to extract strength from those closes to me.

SPIRIT

No, what i'm saying is that there is strength in numbers. One man cannot take on an army by himself. You must surround yourself with people, like yourself, who are also victims of The Cool Breeze Crew.

A lightbulg goes off in Hedeki's head. Hedeki starts to think to himself.

HEDEKI

So I have to create my own league of anti-bullies?

The Spirit stands up.

SPIRIT

Correct!

Hedeki paces the floor.

HEDEKI

Wow, I never thought of that, but how would I be able to complete such a task.

The Spirit walks up to Hedeki, places his hand on his shoulder, and turns his attention towards a group of kids at the playground.

CLOSE UP - A GROUP OF THUGS ARE BEATING UP ON TWO, SCRORNNY, KIDS.

Hedeki jumps up in excitement.

HEDEKI

I should help them!

SPIRIT

And do what?

Hedeki stops jumping, turns, and looks at the spirit with a confused look on his face.

SPIRIT

It's not like you are strong enough to
take on those two brutes by yourself.

Hedeki drops his head in dissapointment.

HEDEKI

(dissapointed, head down)
You're right.

SPIRIT

But if you were to join your comrades
in battle, You three will outnumber the
bullies three to two.

HEDEKI

You're right.

SPIRIT

Now, let's see how you three do
together, with this power.

The Spirit snaps his fingers and Hedeki appears in front of the
two, scronny, kids who are on the ground brused. One of the kids
lift themselves up, holding their stomach.

KID 1

Who are you?

HEDEKI

My name is Hedeki, an anti-bully hero.

KID 1

(confused)
Anti-bully hero?

HEDEKI

Yes, and you are too.

Kid 2 stands up.

KID 2

We are np heroes? Look at how scrawny
we are compared to them.

HEDEKI

We may be scrawny and they may be
stronger. But together, we can beat
them.

Kid 1 and Kid 2 look at each other and smile. Kid 1 and Kid 2 walk up and stand at the side of Hedeki. The two hoodlums look at Kid 1, Kid 2, and Hedeki with anger in their eyes.

The hoodlums charge towards Kid 1, Kid 2, and Hedeki. Hedeki blows ice from his his mouth and freezes the two hoodlums.

Kid 1 and Kid 2 step back, astonished.

KID 2

Wow, how did you do that.

Hedeki looks up at the roof, sees nothing there.

HEDEKI

(looking up)

I don't know.

SPIRIT (O.S.)

(in Hedeki's head)

As you can see, you are not alone.
There are many kids out there like you
who do not have the strength to stand
up for themselves. You all may be weak
alone, but together, you all are
strong.

HEDEKI

(smiling)

Yeah, that's right.

EXT. SECRET CLUBHOUSE - DAY

A Clubhouse sits on top of a tree.

INT. CLUBHOUSE

A group of young kids, sit in from of Hedeki, who is on stage wearing a superhero costume.

HEDEKI

(speaking to crowd)

Starting today, no child will be a
victim of bullying if we have something
to say about it. We will be the voice
for the weak and those who can't

protect themselves. We will be the
anti-bully league.

The Children in the crowd cheer.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SECRET CLUBHOUSE - DAY

EXT. PARK - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Hedeki and Mardi sit at a park table, under a tree, reading and trading comic books with one another.

HEDEKI

I don't care what you say, Gorilla Man
would destroy Alien Man.

MARDI

No way, Alien Man was able to lift the
entire universe and destroy the source.

HEDEKI

Well, Gorilla defeated the God of the
Universe in his Base Form.

The three members of The Cool Breeze Crew struts across the field, making kids scatter. The three members approach Hedeki and Mardi who are still arguing with one another.

MARDI

Forget Gorilla Man, I actually think
Martian Man is the strongest character
in the Spades Universe.

HEDEKI

You're crazy, Queen Thorna would beat
Martian Man.

Mardi and Hedeki turn around when they see three shadows approaching them.

CREW MEMBER 1

Well, look what we have here. Two
little book worms.

MARDI

(confused)
And who exactly are you guys

CREW MEMBER 2
Oh, so you haven't heard of us.

Crew Member 2 does the moon walk.

CREW MEMBER 3
We are, The Cool Breeze Crew.

MARDI
Cool Breeze Crew.

CREW MEMBER 1
CBC in the house, baby.

CREW MEMBER 2
Southside, baby.

Crew Breeze Member 2 pulls out a carton of cigarettes with the logo, "Cool Breeze" on it. Crew Breeze Member 2 pulls out a cigarette, puts it in his mouth, and lights it with a lighter.

The members surround Mardi and Hedeki.

CREW MEMBER 1
Now, what are you two doing in our park.

Hedeki turns his face into a frown.

HEDEKI
Just reading comic books.

Mardi slips under Crew Member 3's arm and runs away, leaving Hedeki alone. Hedeki gulps then looks up at The Cool Breeze Crew.

CREW MEMBER 2
Looks like your boy left you hanging.

Hedeki stands up and gets in Crew Member 2's face.

HEDEKI
That's fine, I can take you three by myself.

CREW MEMBER 2

Oh really?

Crew Member 2 snatches the comic book out of Hedeki's hands.
Crew Member 2 opens up to the first page.

CREW MEMBER 2
Gorilla Man Issue 45. Now, this is a
classic!

CREW MEMBER 3
(rubbing his beard)
Yeah, we can get some serious loot off
of this one.

Hedeki charges towards Crew Member 2.

HEDEKI
Give it back.

Crew Member 2 pushes Hedeki on the floor. Hedeki gets back up
from the floor, charges towards Crew Member 2, and punches him
in the chest repeatedly.

CREW MEMBER 2
(taking the hits, smiling)
Is this supposed to be a joke.

Crew Member 2 slaps Hedeki and knocks him on the ground.

CREW MEMBER 1
You know what, kid, you have heart. You
want to join The Cool Breeze Crew?

Crew Member 3 reaches out a cigarette to Hedeki.

CREW MEMBER 3
You would never have to worry about us
bullying you again. Besides, you would
make some serious loot if you joined
us.

CREW MEMBER 1
(arms crossed)
So, what do you say?

Hedeki looks down for a moment and then looks up. Hedeki slaps
the cigarette out of Crew Member 3's hand.

HEDEKI

Never! Never would I join a group of things that terrorize kids who are not strong enough to defend themselves.

CREW MEMBER 3
(cracking his knuckles)
You've made your choice.

The Cool Breeze Crew closes in on Hedeki. Hedeki closes his eyes.

TYRONE (O.S.)
Hey, guys, what's going on here.

The Cool Breeze Crew turns around and sees Tyrone standing behind them.

TYRONE
What's going on?

CREW MEMBER 2
And who the hell are you?

TYRONE
I'm Tyrone Johnson.

Crew Member 2 steps in Tyrone's face.

CREW MEMBER 2
Do I know you from somewhere, man?

CREW MEMBER 1
(thinking to himself)
Tyrone Johnson? Now where have I heard that name before.

CREW MEMBER 3
Wait, are you related to Gary Johnson?

TYRONE
Yeah, that's my brother.

CREW MEMBER 1
Gary Johnson? Are we talking about two time All-Football Gary Johnson? Gary Johnson who is a three time wrestling champion Gary Johnson?

TYRONE

Yep, the same Gary Johnson who is 6 "4
and 240 pounds.

CREW MEMBER 3
Damn. What's up, little bro.

TYRONE
Oh, nothing.

Tyron walks up and wraps his arms around Hedeki's neck.

TYRONE
I just came here to chill and talk to
my friend, Hedeki.

CREW MEMBER 2
He's your friend?

TYRONE
Yeah, we've been friends for quite a
while now. He's also friends with my
brother.

COOL BREEZE CREW
(together)
Really!

TYRONE
Yeah, and Gary has got a long stronger
and muscular. Hasn't he Hedeki.

HEDEKI
(confused)
Yeah, I suppose.

Crew Member 2 walks up to Hedeki and hands him his comic.

CREW MEMBER 2
I think this belongs to you.

Hedeki takes the comic from Crew Member 2.

HEDEKI
Yeah, I think it does. Thank you!

CREW MEMBER 3
Yeah, sorry, man. We have better things
to do. Well, see you around, Hedeki.

The Cool Breeze Crew runs away, leaving Hedeki and Tyrone alone.

TYRONE

I don't think you'll be seeing them in
a very long time.

HEDEKI

Yeah. Thanks, I really appreciate it.

TYRONE

Anytime, friend.

HEDEKI

Friend?

TYRONE

Yeah, that night, you taught me
something, Hedeki. You taught me that
using my strength to harm others, won't
get me that far in life.

TYRONE

But if I use my strength for good, I
could become a hero, someone who
protects those who cannot protect
themselves.

Hedeki smiles.

TYRONE

If you ever need anything, just give me
a holla.

Tyrone walks away. Hedeki looks up in the sky and sees a cloud,
shaped like a superhero.

CODY (O.S.)

So, Hedeki, what are you going to do?

Hedeki turns around.

HEDEKI

What I should've done the beginning of
7th grade year.

Hedeki gets in a superhero stance.

HEDEKI

(looking up, talking to
himself)

I am Hedeki, The Anti-Bully Hero and
leader of The Anti-Bullying Task force.
All heroes, unite and fight against
injustice.

CODY

(smiling)

Now, we're talking.

FADE TO BLACK.

Comic Book Samples

ISUUE 1

PANEL 1

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Shot of shipping docks. Downtown Jazmine City is in the background. Large boats parked at the docks.

PANEL 2

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A bald Caucasian man, wearing a black jacket with a grey shirt underneath, opening a wooden crate.

PANEL 3

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Open crate with a variety of assault rifles in it.

PANEL 4

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bald Caucasian Man holding an assault rifle in his hands.

Clicking sound (bald Caucasian man pulling back the chamber)

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

The boss is going to love these.

PANEL 5

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

2.

CLOSE UP - ITALIAN MAN WITH CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH. SMOKE
BLOWING FROM THE CIGARETTE. SINISTER SMILE ON ITALIAN MAN'S FACE

ITALIAN MAN

He better. It took me two months to get my hands on these AR's.

ITALIAN MAN

And let me tell you, the Russians are not cheap.

PANEL 6

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bald Caucasian Man holding assault rifle in the air. Two men wearing skull caps and black hoodies walking away with crates in their arms.

ANGLE ON THE FRONT OF BALD MAN AND THE BACKS OF THE TWO MEN WEARING SKULL CAPS. PLACE THE TWO MEN IN THE BACKGROUND BUT KIND OF CLOSE.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Russians? I thought Mr. Blackstone hated the Russians.

PANEL 7

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - BALD CAUCASIAN MAN SPOOKED

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Huh

PANEL 8

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Italian Man hanging upside down and knocked out unconscious. Above him, on top of one of the crates, is a shadowy figure.
3.

PANEL 9

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - THE GREY DAWN LOOKING DOWN WHILE STANDING UP

PANEL 10

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Three henchmen looking up with assault rifles in their hands.

HENCHMAN 1

It's the Grey Dawn.

HENCH MAN 2

Kill that bastard.

PANEL 11

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The three henchmen shooting the assault rifles at an upward angle

PANEL 12

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn dashing to the side while firing two silver pistols.

PANEL 13

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The three henchmen being shot up with bullets. Blood splashing everywhere. Assault rifles flying in the air.

PANEL 14

4.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn in the air. Henchman aiming assault rifle directly at the Grey Dawn.

PANEL 15

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - THE GREY DAWN THROWING A BLACK FLYING DISK.

PANEL 16

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The black flying disk knocking the assault rifle out of the henchman's hands.

PANEL 17

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn punching the henchman in the face.

PANEL 18

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bald Caucasian Man pointing handgun directly towards the Grey Dawn.

ANGLE ON THE BACK OF THE BALD CAUCASIAN MAN AND THE FRONT OF THE GREY DAWN. THE GREY DAWN IS AT A REASONABLE DISTANCE.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

(yelling)

You son of a bitch.

PANEL 19

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS - SPLIT PANEL INTO TWO

5.

SIDE ANGLE - THE BALD CAUCASIAN MAN SHOOTING ASSAULT RIFLE

SIDE ANGLE - A ROPE PULLING THE ASSAULT RIFLE AWAY FROM THE BALD MAN. THE BALD CAUCASIAN MAN IS STARTLED.

PANEL 20

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn kicking the bald man in the stomach.

PANEL 21

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The bald man laying on the ground holding his stomach. The Grey Dawn standing over him.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Son of a bitch.

THE GREY DAWN

Who are you working for.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Kiss my ass.

PANEL 22

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP THE GREY DAWN'S HAND GRABBING THE BALD CAUCASIAN MAN BY THE COLLAR. THE BALD CAUCASIAN MAN IS FROWNING

PANEL 23

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The bald Caucasian man and The Grey Dawn standing face to face. The Grey Dawn still has his hand around the Caucasian Man's collar.

6.

GREY DAWN

You can make this as difficult as you want.

GREY DAWN

It doesn't matter to me one bit.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

You have no idea who you are dealing with do you?

PANEL 24

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn punching the Bald Caucasian Man in the stomach.

PANEL 25

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn pointing a handgun down at The Bald Caucasian Man

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Do what you want but I will never talk.

PANEL 26

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - GUN FIRING

PANEL 27

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bald Caucasian Man holding left knee that has bullet wound in it.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

(yelling)

Shit!

7.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

You shot me you son of a bitch.

PANEL 28

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn holding the gun under the Bald Caucasian Man's chin.

GREY DAWN

Next one's going to your head.

BALD CAUCASIAN MAN

Hey, you'll be doing me a favor.

PANEL 29

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn sensing danger.

PANEL 30

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A bullet grazes the Grey Dawn's shoulder and hits the Bald Caucasian Man in the forehead.

PANEL 31

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Grey Dawn firing in the direction of a black car using two silver pistols while the car is driving away.

PANEL 32

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Grey Dawn looking down at Bald Caucasian Man. Add police sirens in the background.

8.

GREY DAWN

Damn it.

GREY DAWN

I was so close.

PANEL 33

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Grey Dawn looking at the docks that are swarmed with police while standing on rooftop.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

This city reeks of corruption.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

I still don't understand why God hasn't dropped a bomb on Jazmine City.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

Maybe it's because he has a moral compass that I do not possess.

PANEL 34

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

CLOSE UP/ FRONT VIEW OF THE GREY DAWN STANDING ON ROOF TOP

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

I have been given certain abilities that could put me on the level of a God of some sort. But to me I am more of a mercenary who lurks in the shadows devouring everything that is wrong with this world.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

At night, i'm the Grey Dawn.

PANEL 35

EXT. BUSY SIDE STREET - DAY

Jason Turney walking down a busy street.

9.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

During the day, I am Jason Turney.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

Writer at the Jazmine Tribune.

PANEL 36

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

SIDE VIEW OF JASON'S FACE

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

I wasn't always like this.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

There was a time when I was just like you.

GREY DAWN (V.O.)

I still haven't forgot about the night that changed my life.

PANEL 37

INT. BAR

CLOSE UP

Jason's eyes open. Startled look.

PANEL 38

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason with a long beard, bummy clothes, medium-sized afro.

Jason resting his forehead on the palm of his hand. Jason is tired and exhausted.

JASON (V.O.)

It was just another dream.

BARTENDER (O.S.)

Hey, buddy are you ok?

10.

JASON

Yes, I am alright.

PANEL 39

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Bartender holding a glass in his hand. Bartender cleaning the glass out with a white cloth.

BARTENDER

Well, make sure you keep your head up. This isn't a hotel.

PANEL 40

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason with his hand covering both his eyes. A glass of alcohol on the table next to his hand.

JASON (V.O.)

This damn city. When will the noise ever end. All I want is a little peace and quiet. Is that too much to ask.

PANEL 41

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason drinking a glass of alcohol.

PANEL 42

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason standing up putting on his jacket.

PANEL 43

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason falling over the table (sign Jason is drunk)

11.

PANEL 44

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason on the floor covered in alcohol. Place bartender in the background (in front of Jason but behind bar). Bartender is irate.

BARTENDER

Damn it, and I just cleaned that floor.

JASON

I'm sorry.

BARTENDER

Get the hell out of here!

PANEL 45

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason walking out of the bar. Bartender watching as Jason is walking out of the bar.

BARTENDER

Damn bums. And you would think these people would get a job since they have enough energy to drink alcohol.

JASON (V.O.)

People can be cruel but what do you expect from a people who live in a land of savages.

JASON (V.O.)

It's not like God intended for this world to be peaches and roses you know.

PANEL 46

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Jason walking down a busy side side street. Jason with his arms folded(signaling that he is cold) People walking past Jason.

12.

JASON (V.O.)

You would think I would've had found my way by now.

JASON (V.O.)

But, here I am, wondering this world like a narrator without a script.

JASON (V.O.)

Or a soul without a vessel.

JASON (V.O.)

Only a hero would understand such torment.

PANEL 47

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

ANGLE ON THE FRONT OF JASON'S BODY

Jason walking into an alleyway.

JASON (V.O.)

Home? Where is Home?

JASON (V.O.)

This is the only place in which I can consider to be a home.

PANEL 48

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Three homeless men surrounding a trashcan that is on fire,
trying to keep warm.

JASON (V.O.)

A place where the most broken souls reside.

JASON (V.O.)

A place where the most alienated can find refuge and live
amongst one another.

PANEL 49

13.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason sitting on the floor while resting his head against a
brick wall.

JASON (V.O.)

Me, I do not consider myself a victim, an outcast, or even a
broken man.

JASON (V.O.)

I see myself as a man who is trying to find his way back from
turmoil, which is something many men are unable to do.

PANEL 50

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason with his eyes closed. Same position as Panel 29.

JASON (V.O.)

But for now, all I want to do is rest and go to sleep.

PANEL 51

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Three male shadows standing in front of Jason as he sleeps.

PANEL 52

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason being punched in the face by Hispanic Male.

PANEL 53

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason looking up in fear.

PANEL 54

14.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Three young men looking down with sinister looks on their faces. One young man is Hispanic, one man is Caucasian, and the other is African Descent. The Caucasian man is holding a chain, the African descent young man is holding a pipe, and the Hispanic young man is wearing a pair of brass-knuckles.

CAUCASIAN YOUNG MAN

Now, this is going to be interesting.

PANEL 55

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason getting hit in the face with chain. Blood flying from Jason's face.

PANEL 56

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason getting hit on the back with wooden rod. Jason screaming in pain.

PANEL 57

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

All three young men stomping Jason. Blood flying everywhere.

PANEL 58

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

All three of the young men looking down at Jason, who is unconscious, with a sinister smile on their faces.

HISPANIC YOUNG MAN

Damn, man, I hope we didn't kill him.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

Who cares, The doc just needs him for an experiment.

15.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

After he's done with him, we'll dispose of him like we do the rest.

PANEL 59

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - JASON'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY. SWOLLEN FACE AND BLOODY NOSE AND MOUTH

PANEL 60

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - TWO NIGHT LATER

A black van parked on a bridge.

PANEL 61

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Caucasian Young Man pulling Jason out of the van.

PANEL 62

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

African Descent Young Man leaning against the bridge rail smoking a cigarette. Caucasian Young Man and Hispanic Young Man holding Jason near the edge of the bridge's rail.

HISPANIC YOUNG MAN

Are you sure he's dead?

CAUCASIAN YOUNG MAN

Has to be. The doc pumped him up with so much of that shit there's no way that he was able to survive.

HISPANIC YOUNG MAN

I think the doc is starting to enjoy this shit.

16.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

I heard Mr. Blackstone mentioning that the doc was kicked out of the military for performing biochemical test on wounded soldiers.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

Talk about a man with passion.

PANEL 63

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hispanic Young Man and Caucasian Young Man throwing Jason over the bridge.

PANEL 64

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jason's body falling down towards the river

PANEL 65

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jason's body falling into the river.

PANEL 66

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

FRONT ANGLE - ALL THREE YOUNG MEN LOOKING DOWN

HISPANIC YOUNG MAN

How long do you think it will take for his body to wash up?

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

Probably a week or so.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

Thinking about it, we probably should've tied two stones to his ankles.

17.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

And turned him into fish food.

CAUCASIAN YOUNG MAN

Like they say in the movies, "No body, no murder." Right?

PANEL 67

INT. RIVER

Jason sinking to the bottom of the river.

ISSUE 2

PANEL 1

INT. ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Jason laying in a bed wearing a white t-shirt, sleep, with a blanket covering half his body.

PANEL 2

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - JASON'S EYES OPEN

PANEL 3

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason leaning up in the bed with his hand on his forehead(signaling Jason has a headache)

JASON

Where am I?

PREACHER THOMAS (O.S.)

Somewhere safe.

PANEL 4

18.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason looking over in the corner at Preacher Thomas, a man wearing a white and black dress shirt, with black dress pants. Preacher Thomas is sitting down in a chair and reading a book.

PANEL 5

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP - PREACHER THOMAS READING A BOOK

PREACHER THOMAS

Found you at the bottom of the bay earlier this morning.

PREACHER THOMAS

Them boys sure did a number on you.

PANEL 6

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason sitting on the side of the bed with his head down.

JASON

You were there.

JASON

And you did nothing?

PANEL 7

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas walking over to where Jason is sitting.

PANEL 8

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas sitting next to Jason. Pastor Thomas looking over at Jason who is worried.

19.

PREACHER THOMAS

Tell me, how do you feel?

JASON

I feel, I feel stranger.

JASON

It's like my body is floating in a river but I can't feel any water.

PREACHER THOMAS

I know that feeling too well.

PREACHER THOMAS

Shouldn't be too long until your body falls into hyperthermic shock.

PANEL 9

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason looking over at Preacher Thomas with a shocked look on his face.

PANEL 10

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason yelling while covering both his ears with both his hands.

JASON (V.O.)

What is that sound?

JASON (V.O.)

Cars? People?

JASON (V.O.)

How is this possible?

PANEL 11

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas standing over Jason. Jason in the same position as he was in Panel 73.

20.

PREACHER THOMAS

Heightened senses.

PREACHER THOMAS

Increased intensity.

PREACHER THOMAS

Increased strength.

PREACHER THOMAS

A sense of rage.

JASON

What are you talking about, old man.

PANEL 12

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas covering Jason with a black jacket. Jason looking sick with his head down.

PREACHER THOMAS

I'm talking about your abilities.

PREACHER THOMAS

Your God-giving abilities.

JASON

Are you saying God did this?

PREACHER THOMAS

Sometimes the lord will allow the devil to do his work.

JASON

This feel more like a curse, old man.

PREACHER THOMAS

All blessings come with some downfall. Even Jesus Christ had to give his life to make sure we had salvation.

PANEL 13

21.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas putting on his hat.

PREACHER THOMAS

Come see me when you get better.

PANEL 14

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Preacher Thomas walking out of the room. Jason watching as
Preacher Thomas walks out of the room.

PREACHER THOMAS

I will be waiting.

JASON

Waiting?

PANEL 15

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason standing up.

JASON

Who was that man?

PANEL 16

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Jason walking down a side street carrying a back pack over his
shoulder.

JASON

These voices?

JASON

What are they trying to say?

JASON

Am I going crazy?

PANEL 17

22.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SIDE VIEW OF JASON'S FACE

JASON

Or is God trying to tell me something?

Video Game Script Sample

Post_Apocalypse - Video Game Script

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ABANDONED LABORATORY

Cadmus, a robotic-artificial intelligence, sits in a pod that is filled with a gluey-liquid substance. Cadmus eyes light up blood-shot red. The gluey liquid drains from the pod and spills onto the floor as the pod descends below its base. Once completely drained, a set of three wires, attached to Cadmus's back become dethatched from his body. Cadmus steps out of the pod and looks around the laboratory. He takes a deep breath and releases a screeching scream.

Cadmus falls to his knees and pants rapidly, catching his breath as liquid drips from his body. Cadmus looks up at a picture of his creator, Dr. Sasuke.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
Father?

Cadmus looks left and right.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
Are you here?

Cadmus gets up from the floor.

Cadmus walks closer to the picture of Dr. Sasuke. Cadmus takes his hand and, gently, slides it down the picture. A whisper comes across his ear.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
You are here.

Cadmus turns his attention to a door on his right. He walks over to the door and stands in front of it, analyzing it from up and down. Cadmus places his hand on the door. He hears a whisper comes across his ear.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
But how? How do I get there from here?

Cadmus turns and sees a hand scanner on the side of the door. Cadmus looks down at the palm of his hand. He takes the palm of his hand and places it on the hand-scanner. The door opens.

INT. HALLWAY

Cadmus walks down the hallways marveling at the creations of Dr. Sasuke. He makes his way to another door that is sealed shut. He places his hand on the hand scanner beside the door but there is no response. Cadmus puts his ear against the wall.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
I can hear you.

An opening opens at the top of the door. Cadmus steps back. A Ray of red light appears from the opening and scans Cadmus's body. The door opens up. Cadmus looks inside the room.

INT. ABANDONED LABORATORY SECTION

Cadmus walks into the room. The lights come on. Cadmus looks around and sees groups of oncemores in test tubes from the floor all the way to the ceiling.

CADMUS
Are these my brothers? Sisters?

A whisper comes across Cadmus's ear. Cadmus walks over to a computer that is in the middle of the room. Cadmus observes the computer. Cadmus's heart begins to beat in his chest, causing a beating light to appear from his chest.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
I see.

Cadmus takes all five of his fingers and inserts them into ten slots on the computer. His eyes light up as data is transferred throughout his body.

CADMUS
(talking to himself)
We will start a new order. An order
that you have envisioned, father.

The pods surrounding the oncemores begin to descend.

CADMUS (O.S.)
A new way for humanity, a species who
has lost its conscious.

The oncemores awaken from their slumber. The oncemores descend from their pods and onto the laboratory floor. Cadmus looks around and sees that he is surrounded by an army of oncemores. Cadmus creates a map of earth in the palm of his hand.

CADMUS
This planet is rotting. I can feel it's
energy withering away from within.

The map of earth transfers to the brains of all the androids.

CADMUS (O.S.)
But we will cleanse it. We will make it
pure once again.

Cadmus walks over to the computer. Cadmus turns around. A chair appears from the floor. Cadmus sits in the chair and connects to the computer.

CADMUS
We are the chosen. We are the ones who
will bring light to humanity despite
their disobedience. We are the ones who
will show the world the true nature of
light.

Cadmus goes into the a comatose state. The entire lab lights up in a variety of colors.

EXT. LABRATORY GATES - DAY

The laboratory gates open and an army of oncemores run out of the gates and spread across the land.

ONE WEEK LATER

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A villager sits in front of a pond, scooping fish with a large net. The villager dumps the fish into a bucket. The villager place the net on a strap on his back and picks up the bucket full of fish. The sound of chirping startles him. The villager pulls out a flashlight and shine it on the bushes.

VILLAGER
(startled)
Whose there!

It becomes quiet. The villager steps back and feels something standing behind him. He slowly turns around and sees a oncemore standing behind him.

VILLAGER
(tongue-tied)
Wha Wha

The oncemore pounces on the villager.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Shot of a village sitting in the middle of the woods. Shots of village houses sitting side by side, some lit up with light, others completely dark.

INT. KEN'S BEDROOM

Ken lays in the bed, reading a book.

Optional: Use controls to command Ken to turn the pages.

Use controls to command Ken to close the book.

Ken closes the book. Ken sits the book on his desk, beside his bed.

Use controls to command Ken to get out of the bed.

Ken gets out of the bed.

Optional: Use controls to command Ken to walk over to the window.

Ken walks over to the window and marvels at the mountains that are not too far from the village.

Optional: Use controls to command Ken to walk over to his closet.

Ken walks over to the closet. Ken opens his closet. Hanging in his closet are a variety of school uniforms.

Optional: Use controls to command Ken to walk over to the wall and analyze the posters.

Ken walks over to the wall. Ken analyzes the variety of posters that are plastered on the walls.

Use controls to command Ken to walk outside his room.

INT. HALLWAY

Ken walks out of his bedroom and into the hallway. Ken walks over to Ren's bedroom and knocks on the door three times.

KEN
(knocking)
Hey, Ren.

REN (O.S.)
(from inside room)
What, I'm busy.

KEN
I needed to ask you something.

Moments later, Ren opens the door and stands in the doorway from the inside of his room.

REN
(annoyed)
You know you can really ruin the mood,
Ken.

KEN
Have you heard from mom and dad?

REN
(high-tone, authoritarian)
Yeah, they called earlier in the
morning when you were at the
university.

KEN
I don't know, it just feels like
something is wrong.

REN
(annoyed)

I don't have time for this. Get some
rest, we have an exam tomorrow.

Ren closes the door in Ken's face.

Use controls to move Ken halfway down the stairs.

Ken walks halfway downstairs and peeks through the banisters
where he can see Akira playing the video game.

Use controls to move Ken back upstairs and back to his
bedroom.

Ken walks back upstairs. Ken walks over to his bedroom door,
opens it, and walks in his bedroom.

INT. KEN'S BEDROOM

Ken walks back in his bedroom. Ken closes the door behind him.
Ken walks back over to his bed. Ken sits on the side of his bed.
Ken picks up the book from his dresser. Ken analyzes the book
titled, "The Essence of The Soul." Ken hears a disturbance
coming from outside the window.

Use controls to command Ken to get up from the bed and walk
over to the window.

Ken sits the book down on the dresser. Ken gets up from the bed.
Ken walks over to the window. Ken looks out the window and sees
a woman running away from an oncemore. She falls to the ground.
The oncemore pounces on her, ripping her limb from limb.

Ken slides away from the window. Ken rests against the wall and
pants repeatedly. Ken rushes over to his bedroom door and runs
out his bedroom.

INT. HALLWAY

Ken rushes to Ren's bedroom door. Ken bangs on Ren's bedroom
door.

KEN
(yelling, banging on door)
Ren! Ren!

Ren opens the door, wearing a set of headphones on his head.

REN

What the hell is wrong with you. It's season 4 of League of Giants and I'm trying to get The Golden Giant.

KEN

(stuttering)

There's something outside.

REN

I don't have time for this.

Ren attempts to walk away. The sound of Akira screaming grabs Ren and Ken's attention. The two run downstairs. Ren and Ken watch as Akira runs around the table while being stalked by a oncemore.

AKIRA

(yelling)

What the hell is this thing!

Ken looks over at a ball on the floor.

Use controls to command Ken to pick up the ball.

Ken picks up a ball.

Use controls to command Ken to throw the ball.

Ken throws the ball at the oncemore. The ball hits the oncemore in the head. The oncemore turns his attention to Len and Ren. The oncemore charges towards Ken and Ren. Ken and Ren jump over the sofa. The oncemore falls to the ground and grabs Ren by his ankle. Ren kicks the oncemore in the head, but the oncemore holds on. Ken looks over his shoulder at the trophy case.

Use controls to command Ken to grab the trophy.

Ken grabs a trophy from the shelf.

Use controls to command Ken to hit the oncemore with the trophy.

Ken walks over to the oncemore and smashes the trophy against the oncemore's head. Ren gets up from the floor. Akira rushes over to Ken and Ren and stand beside them.

KEN

(panting)

Let's get the hell out of here.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Ken, Ren, and Akira sneak outside and make their way to the front of the village. Surrounding them are other villagers running away from oncemores and being devoured by them.

REN
(frightened)
This can't be. This can't be.

Ken looks around and is shocked by the scale of destruction.

AKIRA
(slapping himself)
Please tell me I'm dreaming. Please
tell me I'm dreaming!

Ken grabs Akira.

KEN
(authoritarian)
You need to get yourself together.

Ken looks to his left and sees a path leading to the woods.

KEN
Come on, this way

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ken, Ren, and Akira, run through the woods with Ken leading the pack and Ren and Akira running side-by-side. Ren turns around and sees that they are being chased by oncemores. Ren turns around while still running.

REN
Hey, guys, they're catching up to us.

Ken looks ahead and sees that there are two paths.

Use controls to command Ken to choose Path 2.

KEN
Come on, this way.

Ken, Ren, and Akira turn right and follow Path 2 all the way to the side of a road. Ken, Ren, and Akira run up to an abandoned truck.

Ken takes his hand and yanks on the door handle.

AKIRA
((panting))
I hope it has gas.

KEN
It's locked.

Akira looks around until he finds a large rock on the ground. Akira picks up the rock and walks over to the driver's side of the vehicle.

AKIRA
Move.

Akira smashes the driver's window with the rock.

Akira unlocks the door from the inside.

KEN
I'll drive.

INT. TRUCK

Ken hops into the driver's seat while Akira and Ren hop in the back. A swarm of oncemores appear from the side and rush the truck.

REN
(panicking)
Ken!

Ken panics, looking around for something that could start the truck.

Use controls to command Ken to open the glove compartment.

Ken opens the glove compartment and sees a screwdriver.

Use controls to command Ken to grab the screwdriver.

Use control to command Ken to stick the screwdriver in the ignition.

Ken takes the screw driver, sticks it in the ignition. Ken turns the screwdriver and turns on the engine.

Ken presses on the gas and speeds off down the street while being chased by an army of oncemores.

ONE WEEK LATER

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ken hides in a bundle of bushes as an oncemore walks past him.

Use controls to command Ken to look in and out of the bushes.

Ken sneaks past the oncemore and disappears deeper into the woods. Ken comes across a dead woman who has been mauled to death by an animal. Ken approaches the dead woman's body to get a closer look. The woman's eyes light up as she slowly rises from the dead. Her body morphs into that of a oncemore. The oncemore charges towards Ken.

Ken falls to the ground. The oncemore jumps in the air and lands on top of Ken. The oncemore leans it's head back and attempts to bite Ken in the face.

Use controls to command Ken to grab the stone.

Ken grabs the oncemore by the neck. Ken looks over at a rock on the ground. Ken grabs the rock.

Use controls to command Ken to hit the oncemore with the stone.

Ken hits the oncemore in the head with the rock which causes the oncemore to jump back. Ken stands up from the ground still holding the rock in his hand. The oncemore charges towards Ken.

Use controls to command Ken to dodge attacks.

Ken dodges the flurry of attacks.

Use controls to command Ken to hit the oncemore with the stone.

Ken hits the oncemore on the head. The oncemore falls to the ground. Ken looks over and sees a broken sign on the ground.

Use controls to command Ken to pick up the sign.

Ken picks up the sign and holds it up in the air.

Use controls to command Ken to smash the oncemore's head in with the sign.

Ken smashes the oncemore in the head with the sign and kills the oncemore.

FADE TO BLACK.