

Rehab Is For Quitters

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Abstract:

My collection has the common theme of addiction: addictive personalities strung across the pages. Not only the usual addictions such as the daily-ritualized beer or joint, but also the pain of addiction to anti-social habits, pathologies, forbidden love, etc. I try to capture the behavior and life that surrounds addictions too: relationships, rehab, criminal behavior, all sorts of abuse, etc. Some of the stories are heavy-handed, slapping the reader in the face, some are subtler. Some are told with lightness and humor, some with gravity.

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COSTLY LOVE

It was a slow Monday night in the heart of Yeoville. Rocky Street had never been so deserted but after the festive season it was no surprise. Everyone stripped down bare to the broke bones of their wallets. It was silent and still except for the stirring emanating from the local pub on the corner. It was a dingy pub, on a dingy corner filled with dingy characters. The place itself was mellower than usual and at one in the morning only a few regulars sat nursing the last sips of their warm beers before heading home.

“Is it not ironic!” shouted a man as he lifted his head off the bar counter to the bartender’s surprise thinking he had passed out, “that when you think you have reached the bottom of the bottle it just never ends. I guess those are the joys of being at your bar. Pour me another!”

The bartender reached for the whiskey bottle reluctantly. He poured the man another stiff double.

“On your tab then?” he asked.

“Yes, yes that’s how it should be done” the man said, whilst swaying on the bar stool gulping back his 15th double of the night and gesturing for another as the pub doors opened with a bang.

The silhouette walked into the bar. She was wearing a racy little red number that matched her big red lips with the highest high heels possible. Her curly pitch-black hair hung low on her back and her eyes had a fire burning inside of them.

“Pour me another! Hey I’m talking to you!” screamed the man at the distracted bartender who got him another without paying him any further attention.

“I’ll have what he’s having,” as she sat down next to him. Only then did his attention draw closer to the angelic figure that now sat beside him. “Whiskeys a manly drink!” he said, chuckling rudely at her. She stared at him with the shot grasped firmly in her hands and with one swig it was gone.

“Some men think that, yet it’s hard to see a man in here anyways,” she said smiling seductively at him.

“Get us both another round and put it on my tab” he said, as he gulped down the last of his shot. With drinks in hand they turned to each other. His eyes locked onto hers.

“Cheers!” she said and knocked back the shot. He was still mesmerized and just nodded. As he shot back the whiskey in turn, visions of her flooded his mind. He saw them walking hand in hand under a moonlit sky. He saw them kissing passionately in his car as it was parked on the lookout point of Munro Drive. He saw her walking down the aisle in a waist hugging white dress.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“I do, I do!” he murmured as he opened his eyes to see her standing above him, the bartender slowly lifting him up. He had slipped off the stool and landed hard on the floor.

“Are you okay Alistair?” she said again. Her voice was soothing and reassuring. It was gentle yet completely sexy.

“I am fine he grunted!” shrugging off the bartender who was helping him up. “How do you know my name?” he said rubbing the back of his head in pain.

“It’s on your name tag,” she pointed to his shirt. He looked down, smiled and sat back onto the barstool.

“Yeah, hi, I’m Alistair,” as he reached out his hand.

“Alistair the anonymous alcoholic!” blurted the bartender with a thunderous laugh.

Ally shot him a death stare “There goes your tip my man!”

The woman giggled. “My name is Samantha,” as their hands touched to shake, and the numbness that engulfed him earlier gave way to throbbing pain at the back of his head from the fall.

They sat there for the next hour divulging the stories of their lives. Laughing loudly with each other. Downing more and more doubles. Her hands rubbing his leg. His eyes fixated on the curves of her ample bosom. Flirting ferociously.

“I live just around the corner from here,” Ally stated as the bartender was calling for last rounds. It was weird he was calling it so loudly as they were the only two left in the bar. All the other regulars had stumbled home a while back.

“It’s time you guys get going!”

They shot back their last watered down whiskeys. Ally paid his tab with a sense of superiority even though it dug the biggest hole into his paycheck and they left. He worried briefly about how he would pay the rent this month as not much was now left of the paycheck he’d received earlier in the day, but he had other, more pressing things on his mind. Better things, he thought, with a sneaky smile on his drunken face.

It was a chilly early morning and Samantha started to shiver as they made their way down the street. Ally put his greased up hands around her to keep her warm. She smiled at him! They kissed! He felt something he hadn't felt in years. Could it be love his mind thought? This is love his heart hummed! Hope we get some, his semi hard cock crowed!

They got to the rundown block of flats he called home. He led her up the stairs to the third floor eyeing her thighs as her dress swayed from side to side. Upon entering his humble abode without a word he grabbed and pushed her up against the wall. She didn't resist. The door slammed shut behind them.

"I think I love you!" he whispered in her ear. She smiled and twisted her tongue around his.

It was the best sex he had ever had. Then darkness. He awoke a couple hours later with a smile on his face.

"Good morning gorgeous," he said as he stretched out his arm to hold her. But the bed was empty. He was alone. The smile soon faded into confusion. There was a note lying on the bed stand next to his depleted wallet.

BEER MAKES SENSE!

He opened the refrigerator. Sweat on his forehead. The cool air collided with the wetness sending shivers down his spine. His overheated body started to cool. He reached in parting leftovers and mayonnaise jars. His hands searched for the cold touch of the glass beer bottle. The bottle was smoothed over by a light coating of frost. Adorned like nobility with mighty red and black labels, the sort you would bow down to. He placed the bottle to his neck. It tightened the skin's pores and crevices, Stopping sweat like a dam stops a river flowing.

Compressed gas erupted as he twisted off the cap. Finally able to breathe. Hushing his thoughts into silence with a prolonged shushing. The bitter scent of fermentation found a home on the tiny nerve endings and hairs of his inner nostrils. The smell shot memories in rapid fire of past encounters. He was reminded of his first beer. A child rebelling against normality. During a party thrown by his parents the house was full. He was twelve and naughty. Beers were left unattended by drunken grownups. Sneaking sips from his father's glass. No grown up could be seen. He took the risk. The taste back then used to cripple his tongue. Clog his throat and burn away feeling in his mouth. Work on his gag reflex.

He poured the cold golden liquid into a tall glass. Tiny bubbles began fizzing upwards in hurried scuffles. Colliding into each other. Fighting for first place. They came to rest in lathered white foam on the liquid surface. Bitter sweet, with a hint of hops, beer was an oasis for the dryness his mouth had been suffering. He proceeded to gulp down the golden stream without pause. "Ahhhhh!" he echoed in satisfaction as he banged the glass down on the table and followed up with a gut-busting burp. The stench of used beer wafted in the air. He waved a hand through the thick vapor and smiled. There were five more bottles of beer in the fridge.

I COULDN'T FEEL A THING

Waiting for people becomes a bore. We told them to be here at one. It's now two. African time at its best but Charos just over do it. The pot of fresh cut chicken curry sits on the stove. It is getting cold and stale. Sash sits on the couch crushing the heads of Jah in the palm of his hand. I empty ice trays into a bucket and place beer bottles into the chill. I crack one for myself as a knock sounds at the door. Finally. In walk Sash's cousins. Trinesh, the older of the two is a dark skinned Indian. Tall and lanky. His hair plastered to his head with thick amounts of styling gel.

"Whatkind ous'!" he greets with a smile. His gold tooth shimmering in the light. His younger brother, Sash's other cousin, Nino, is almost a spitting image of himself, his skin a more navy blue complexion. Styling gel glued to his ears. Sharp spikes piercing the air. Sporting a pair of skinny jeans and All Stars is customary for any Indian lightly. Two bottles of Russian Bear Vodka are clasped in his hands.

"No lukka guys, is this the fucking time to pull in," I reply, excitedly.

Sash rolls the green dust into a bat-sized spliff, a hearty icebreaker smoked upon initial meetings with a beer or two - standard codes of etiquette. Her picture in a shimmering silver frame hangs on the wall. It is staring at me. Right into my soul. The darkness begins forming in my mind.

In life there are the good times and the bad times. A balance between the two is considered healthy. 2007 was definitely not a good time but one sunny afternoon in late November I found hope. My best friend Sash use to stay in these apartment blocks in Houghton. The structural integrity of the place looked like it was harboring menaces to society. Cracked walls, missing bricks, broken windows. It needed maintenance just like my own life. Houghton is a wealthy place. A superior suburb that frowns upon its surrounding areas. Nelson Mandela lives in Houghton. An historical treasure in the new South Africa. Houghton is considered very safe. It is on the doorstep of Yeoville and Hillbrow. The fine line that is Louis Botha Avenue separates the societies that dwell on either side. The Lofts are situated on the fringe of Houghton. A person can be an upper class snob, cross the road and become a lower class criminal. The Houghton area is lush with green golf courses and parks. Only the dark smoke of burning tires and veld can be seen coming from across the road. Houghton's richly sweet smell collides half way on Louis with the poor stench of

shabeens. From fancy restaurants on one side to the street vendor cuisines on the other, Houghton definitely boasts about its big head in the city of Johannesburg.

Sash and I met at school four years ago while smoking cigarettes in the bathroom. We got caught and spent the afternoon together in detention. After that we started hanging out everyday. Causing bullshit, provoking chaos and rebelling against the system. If one of us were dating someone it was like she was dating the both of us. We were a package deal. Our families were also as close as we were. My father used to party with his uncle on their farm in the Drakensburg when they were lighties. Sash is more my brother than my friend, even though I dated his sister. The love of my life. I blame her for this darkened mess my life has become. We broke up three years ago. At least Sash is the one good thing that has been constant in this darkness. Always ready with a spliff to make me feel better after a crap day.

We all took turns swinging the green bat. The smoke stung our senses. We hadn't seen each other in a while so many stories were shared.

"So bra how's that vrou of yours? I heard she got one new graf and all," I asked Trinesh.

"Ek'se she is over tops. Being paid helluva macha. Always spoiling me here and there," he replied smugly.

"And Nino, warra say my lighty? How's the family and all? Your sis got a new garner now? Heard he is such an oulik lighty." My attention was on him.

"Yeah bra her and her hubby be firing on all cylinders. New posie, new graf and now with this lighty she be over busy."

It was nice to see that their family was well. Sash chirped in: "Nino why you keeping your stekkie a secret? Tune, tune guy what's the deal?"

"Ya bra she is okay. We had one speech the other night. Busting my balls that one. But what to do I smaaak her over much. She tuned I must stop smoking gwaais and all," he said with a sigh.

"Smoke ek'se?" I offered him a cigarette. He refused.

Sash shouted: "Pussy bestruk!" and we all laughed.

"Was that your sound banging earlier?" I enquired.

"Was it too much bass for your face?" Trinesh smirked.

“Got one thirteen inch pioneer running off a thousand watt amp. Somma two six-by-nines and tweeters. The sub is in this makeshift box. Its doomaring! Over tops!”

“No lukka home slice but let Sash take a look he can up the power tenfold,” I remarked.

“You talk kak bra,” said Nino.

“For true ek’sse, for true I can,” Sash defended himself.

“No mathers ous. Who wants a chow?” I asked.

The beer fills you but the curry on the stove that I started warming up began wafting in the air.

It reminded me of when we used to cook together at this very stove. We would laugh a lot. But all you do is bring tears to my eyes now.

Over the conversations of sports this and some of that, mouths began drooling. The beer wasn’t fooling us. Time to eat. The bottles of Russian stood at attention. We averted their gaze and lined our stomachs with a hearty meal. Used bread to scoop up the last remains in the pot. We all sat in silence digesting our food. Smoking cigarettes. I made the first move and produced four mugs, some dash and one of the Russians. I placed it down on the table between us. I threw a pack of cards at Trinesh. “Thani anyone?” I asked. Thani is a card game played by old timers and balies to make money. I poured us each a shot and got the game going. Sash started rolling another spliff.

I was craving attention today. I must admit that the raging testosterone within had really grown impatient. The longing of someone to hold, to kiss and, to put it in retrospect, someone to fuck was on my mind. At the age of 12 my fresh libido began its journey along the path of sex. She was 14. The night was not at all eventful like one would imagine. My first time and my anxious demeanor were obvious. “Is it in?” I remember her ask. To my surprise I thought for the past five minutes it was in. She helped me and a minute later it was over. Best feeling ever. I wanted more. Over the years I became good at it. Experience is everything. Sex is communication without conversation. My attention is on the body. My eyes lustily gaze upon it. Her eyes open more wide as she invites me in with wider legs. I am lost in lust. I am lost in her.

I am completely lost in fuck. I started to think of her, Sash's sister. The good times started becoming bad times again.

“Ey bru, you going to play or what?” Nino asked. Reality spun me around. Spliff in hand, shot in the other, and my cards lay on the table. We played and drank. By the end of that bottle spirits were on an enlightened buzz and the merry mood became contagious. Noise levels rose. Not uncommon. It was time to move the party to the apartment's pool area situated away from the complaining neighbors. Such snobs. It was only around six, anyway. The night was young. Far from being born. I come from a family with money. I can relate to the snobs but I never brag or shove it in people's faces. Sash on the other hand does not. He barely scrapes by. He lived in Houghton thanks to his mum's connection. Cash was always in short supply but I always lent a hand when I could. I prefer the lifestyle he has to my materialistic family. If we're not at his place in Jozi, it's off to the farm where manual labor and open land brings me great happiness. Living off the land is such a treat. Want to move there soon. Away from the bullshit stereotypes that plague the city. Dividing it into the haves and have not's. But Sash has already accumulated some fines over the course of living there and the next one could mean eviction. We decided it would be best to move. No matter where we were we had each other, more ganja and the last Russian ready for duty. The good times would not be brought to a stop because of some complaining neighbors. As the four of us marched up the steep incline to the pool carrying our mugs, some dash and the full Bear, the last of the sun disappeared over the horizon. It lit the sky up in bright pinks and oranges. I hated her so much was my thought. *“Scores to the whores! Best wishes for the bitches! Cheers to the queers! And a huck, huck, huck to a really good FUCK!”* we all shouted and downed a full shot from our mugs. That's better!

The night rolled in as shot after shot went down. My mind was intoxicated. My body numb and warm. The Russian was doing its job. Doing it very well. We were all drunk and high. Laughing loudly and singing songs. Suddenly a CLUNK! Dogs barking. A car alarm in the still air. Trinesh had decided in his drunken stupor to throw the empty Russian over the wall. It landed hard on a parked car. Paranoia rushed through our drunken bodies. We bolted back down the steep incline to the flat. I was trying to run with baggy pants and a full shot. We were laughing as we sprinted.

I lost my footing. I slid down the incline in true superman style coming to a halt one hundred meters ahead. In the shocked silence only the tinkling of the mug was heard as it bounced past me adding insult to injury.

As the guys surrounded me and lifted me up Sash asked, “Are you okay?”

Nino inquired, “are you good?”

I shook in agreement and marveled at the deep scarlet scrapes that stung my palms and knees. I could see their drunken, panting faces all light up with laughing smiles. “Can we laugh now?” they asked, as we cackled like hyenas at my downfall. And all I could feel were the good times!

CLOSURE

I sit at the bar of my favorite pub, the Jolly Roger. My long black hair is slicked back with soft curls that rest on my weighed down shoulders. My stubble is patchy over my worn away face but I am dressed to impress. Tie red on shirt black. Gold cufflinks. Pin striped pants holding on tightly to my legs. Shiny black shoes tapping out the Morse code of an SOS, as the blonde bimbo with big boobs begins another story about her pet Chihuahua, Lopez, who has just been awarded a first place ribbon at a dog show this past weekend. I nod and smile. Fighting through the boredom with stiff shots of watered down whiskey. All I want is a hook up. I buy her another drink and escape to the bathroom.

Annie sits with friends at a table across from the bar. Their long straws are dipping in and out of the bowl placed in the centre of the table. She is wearing a long white summer dress that ends just above her ankles revealing the cupid tattoos I've always liked. Her laughing smile seems forced though, as it tightens around her caramel face. Her black hair waves to me from behind her ears. I return to the bar and catch her staring at me. Her eyes pierce like an angel with a dagger. I return the stare for a moment but my view is obstructed when the bartender blocks my view. I order a triple whiskey and return to the bimbo, Samantha, or is it Krystal? I fiddle with my phone.

"After everything that's happened I find out finally the foolishness of my ramblings about a crush that never goes away! I see your face and my insides cry out in pain like they are being burned with a hot poker"

Krystal multiplies as I down more whiskey. Her ramblings become hushed whispers as I retreat into my mind. I can hear the laughter booming from Annie's table. They are having a good time. *Why that look?* I think to myself. Alcohol swishes around my brain. Thoughts tangle into one another, bumping clumsily against the outer walls of my skull. Unrequited love places my heart on a skewer above an open flame. Slowly turning it into charcoal. A black lump of hard carbon dying without any oxygen to breathe life into it. We have been friends for a year now. But one night about 4

months ago we kissed. We were drunk, she was vulnerable after a break up. It happened. I fell in love. I told her so too but a hanging confusion clouded her mind. She still wanted her ex. Told me to forget about the kiss. I understood and backed off. Gave her space. Hoping that she would change her mind one day. I've been the best friend I can. Wish it were different. Watching her fall in and out of different assholes' arms. Always ready with my shoulder laid out in limbo. Never knowing when she might need it. Became her fluffer. Her emotional boyfriend with none of the rewards. She makes my life hard but I need her in it. Or is it just my immature mind mimicking the misunderstandings of a broken heart and mixing it with all the pain and anger of not having her? Krystal is not next to me when I step back into the drunken world bustling with noise. She must have gone to the bathroom. I stare at Annie. I stare at my phone.

"I lay silently coughing up smoke and ash trying to find the air. I don't know why I let you have such an effect on me"

The pub seems to crawl with more vermin as the sun goes down. Drawn to the smell of cheap booze and stale cigarette smoke. I can see Annie trying to get the bartenders attention. My fingers echo a commanding snap and the bartender is drawn to me like a trained dolphin.

"You want another fishbowl?" I shout across to Annie. She smiles. Her smile melts my heart. I feel a sudden rush of euphoria set into my bones. She has such a beautiful smile. She places her arms down on the wooden counter next to mine. Even the hairs on my arm rise to greet her.

"Why don't you join us?" she asks sweetly. But before I can reply Krystal's boobs bounce back into the seat next to me. Annie shrugs her shoulders and makes her way back to the table with the blue bowl of mixed alcohol. Her bum is a perfect peach that disappears into the crowd.

"What's her deal Kevin?" says Krystal. "What is her deal, really?"

"I want to rip out my heart and beat it senseless so that it will stop feeling this love that I can't seem to get rid off"

Johnnie Walker lied when he said to keep walking. How are you supposed to walk with that much whiskey in you? I manage to stumble my way through the regular crowd over to her table.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” I blurt out in front of her friends.

“Like what?”

“Like that! With disgust your eyes.”

“Why do you do that?” she asks getting up and pulling me aside.

“Do what?”

“Act like you are interested in her when all you want is one thing,” she says looking over my shoulder at Krystal showing off photos of Lopez to the bartender. “You’re so much better than that.”

“And how does that bloody well concern you?”

“I’m just looking out for you.”

“Looking out for me?” I say with smugness wrapped in a warm blanket of confident drunkenness.

“Yes I am!”

“Why?”

“I care for you.”

“But you don’t care. You pretend to.”

“That’s a lie!” she says, annoyed.

“Do you love me?”

“I do my friend.”

I kick the legs of the table sending beer mugs shattering to the floor. The bar goes quiet.

“You see!” screaming now, “there is that fucking word ‘friend’” sarcastically emphasizing the word with fingered bunny ears. “You know exactly how I feel for you. But you don’t love me so why pretend to have concern for whatever I do, whom ever I please to do!”

“It’s complicated,” she states innocently trying to calm me down.

“Complicated?” I am perplexed by the statement. “What’s so complicated Annie? If you have feelings for me, now would be a good time to let me know. We’ve been friends for a while now. We share everything. I can’t live this lie anymore. I love you and I want to be with you! That’s not complicated.”

“I think she’s waiting for you,” changing the topic like a woman changes clothes, pointing over at Krystal who is pointing back.

“She can wait, I’m not finished with you,” swaying back and forth like a punch me down clown.

“What else is there to say?”

“Tell me that you love me and you feel the same way too but if you really don’t you should mind your own fucking business, stop being jealous and let me be happy, okay?”

“But you’re not happy, Kevin. You are really not okay.”

“It’s all your fault. You sent me down this path. I blame you. All your fucking fault!” I shout holding back my tears.

“Just leave me alone Kevin!” she says walking away.

“Yeah walk away, I don’t need you. Blondie over there is just waiting for all of this!” sniggers the drunken demon as he shakes my hips. “I’m going to rock her world. Who needs your love anyway? All you do is cause pain!”

“Child! Such a fucking child!” she screams back. Black waterfalls down her cheeks.

“Heartless bitch!” I shout holding up my middle finger.

I journey through the crowd again. Slipping, stumbling and sliding across the beer stained floor. Glass crunching at my soles. Bodies are obstacles I must push through. I finally reach the other side of the bar and slump back into the seat. Downing a fresh shot that I find at my fingertips. My heartbeats trickle down to a soft hum. I’m revving from the fight. I need another shot.

“Samantha, Krystal, baby, ready to go home?” I wink at her as I pour more alcohol into my heart. She is packing all her photos back into her handbag.

“I’m leaving!” she says “And it’s Sue asshole!”

Annie and her friends have left. I fight with the bartender so as not to have to hand over my keys. Stupid oaf acting all concerned for my safety. Fuck him. I can do what I want. My fingers dig away at my phone’s keypad. I finish the text and send it to Annie.

“Be it a crush or something real, I will never stop, I can’t! So we can’t be friends anymore unless you feel differently about me! Kevin”

The keys in my hand are a puzzle when it comes to unlocking the car. I start the car on the third attempt. It roars to life. I reverse the car out of the parking spot. The car guard ushers me to a clear route home. I don't hear him shouting stop.

Annie reads the text. Her stained mascara cheeks crumple again. She does love Kevin. She is just scared of what will happen if it doesn't work. He is everything to her. Maybe we can be together she thinks. She texts:

"We should be together. Meet me later at my place. Let's talk about it? Love Annie!"

Annie freezes. Wings clipped. Halo turned off. Looks at her phone screen. Send message to Kevin: Yes or No?

BAT OR BOTTLE

“Have you brushed your teeth?”

“What?”

“Have you brushed your teeth tonight?”

“It is two in the morning are you mad?”

“Don’t back chat me you little shit!”

“Leave me alone. You are drunk. Just go to sleep!”

A hard slap finds my face as it rests comfortably on the pillow.

“Get out of this bed and go brush your fucking teeth now!”

I pull back the covers and get out of the bed. Another slap finds the back of my head.

I stand in front of the bathroom mirror. I open the cabinet and pull out my toothbrush.

Squirt out some toothpaste and begin to brush. He watches me from the bathroom door. Tears are welling in my eyes.

“Don’t cry you little baby!”

“Just leave me alone you drunken idiot, I hate you!”

Instead of another slap that I was counting on a hard fist sends my toothbrush flying to the floor. Another is buried into my rib cage. I try to fight back. I shouldn’t have. It just enrages him more. More fists meet my body. I am howling now. It’s pointless.

There are just the two of us in this crappy apartment. No one will come rushing to my aid. I drag my bruised body off the floor when he leaves the apartment banging the door behind him. My cheek is throbbing and my eye is closing. I limp back to bed. I lock my door and sit under the covers holding a cricket bat. If he returns I know what I will do.

I couldn’t sleep. The sun is up now. Fear is still quivering all over me. My body is sore. I unlock the door slowly and tiptoe to the kitchen. I need coffee, black and strong and lots of sugar. I hear the television is on. The floorboards creak as I walk down the passage holding the bat in one hand and the cup of coffee in the other. I look into the room. He is sprawled out, snoring loudly and covered in dirt on that stupid brown couch he loves so much. The couch has been stained by the stench of a man always lost at the bottom of a bottle. He prefers his gin but anything will do if he is really craving it. I creep up to him and steal a smoke from the box in his top pocket.

Sitting on the veranda I light up and sip. The morning air stings my beaten face. My life. Can't wait to escape. Shit I need to get to school.

“What happened to you?”

“You don't remember?”

“Remember what?”

“Never mind, I got into a fight at school.”

“Looks like you lost then.”

“Stop laughing it's not funny.”

“Come eat!”

“I'm not hungry.”

My room is my safety zone. I lock the door behind me and stare at myself in the mirror. He is busy in the kitchen when I hear the doorbell. Probably some dial-a-hoe he has for the night, here to entertain his sadistic ways. I don't come out until they leave three hours later. The house is peaceful when he is not around. By eleven he stumbles through the door drunk as ever with, I'm guessing, the same frigid hooker on his arm. I don't pay them any attention keeping my face in my homework. Just two years until I'm finished with school. I tell them to keep it down. This pushes his buttons in the wrong ways.

“Hey fucker, don't tell me to keep quiet. Have some fucking manners in front of a lady. Got a problem?”

“I do.”

“This is not your house, I make the rules, and I pay the rent up in this place. What do you ever do?”

“Clean up after your filthy drunk ass!”

“Watch your mouth boy. I am not afraid to beat you!”

“Come try it! Fuck you and that hoe.”

I could not stop myself. The words stabbed his ears hard and before I knew it I was in for another beating. I didn't fight back this time. I let his fists melt into my face. I felt his anger in my stomach and I saw the hooker run out of there in shock. He hit and hit and hit. I was starting to see double when he finally stopped. He exhausted himself into soberness. He stood up and poured half a bottle of gin down his throat.

“You make me do this boy!”

I didn't say anything. I wiped up my bloody face and went to my room locking the door behind me.

An hour later he was banging on my door.

“Open up!”

I didn't respond.

“Boy don't make me break down this fucking door!”

He started kicking the door in. I gripped the bat tight in my hands and waited. When he got through, wobbling, with an empty bottle of gin in his hands, the door hanging on one of its hinges, he stopped and looked at me.

“Oh, tough guy hey!”

“Get out and leave me alone.”

“Don't worry son I am not here to hurt you, I wanted to say I'm sorry.”

“Apology not accepted you piece of shit! Now get out before I beat you!”

“Why you little ungrateful bastard!”

He swung the empty bottle at my already swollen face. I managed to duck and get out of the way. As he staggered to regain his balance I brought the bat down onto his head. He fell to the floor. Anger engulfed me. Rage lit up in my eyes. I wanted to bring the bat down again and again until his skull lay smashed on the ground. Instead I made sure he was breathing. The asshole was. I left him unconscious to lie in the small, shallow pool of blood on the floor and called an ambulance.

WHITE MOUNTAIN

The angel normally perched on my shoulder isn't there. I hear her being raped by demons in the distance.

"Save me!"

"Save yourself!"

I think about it quickly. Tie that bitch up and have your way with her. I'm not going to stop you. Someone gag her... please! The demons nod in agreement. The shouting ends. I am embarking on a trip with my comrades. Nothing will come in our way.

The right tools are essential. Without them the trip can become messy or not even happen. A carpenter is only as good as his tools. Everyone kitted out and waiting in anticipation. The experienced few will lead this expedition. We have been here before. We know how it goes. We have borne witness to horrifying incidents and magical moments. We have made this mountain ours over and over again. What tools will we need? Well let's start with the basics. One warmed up plate. Not too hot not too cold. Just at the right temperature. The microwave will help with this. About five minutes should do it. Two cards at the ready. Bank cards, credit cards, movie cards. Whatever your heart desires. I prefer my driver's license to be one of them. It never lets me down. Lastly a crisp hundred rand note. Rolled tight and secure.

I should go first though. I did pay for it. I huddle over the warm plate. Chop, chop, scrape, chop! Lines white and straight. I've become good at this. Maybe too good. I grasp the note and place one end to my right nostril. I always start with the right first. Ritualized. Am I the cult leader? Leading this group to the Bad Lands at the other side of this snowcapped mountain? Snort! The first line burns a bit. A tear forms in the corner of my eye. My mind twitches on all senses.

"That's the shit!" I exclaim aloud.

When you are snuffing coke the best beverage to accompany the A-Class drug is an A-Grade whiskey, on the rocks, no way else. Add water to it and I will smack you so hard you'll fall down twice. My choice is a J&B Rare, 750ml bottle. The chilled smooth taste helps backdrop. I take a swig. Swish it around and swallow. One by one fellow comrades begin taking their turns. Newcomers look on in awe. Some have a

more “*I aint touching that!*” kind of look. I nudge past them. They only slow me down. Grab the note straight out of their hands. Hesitancy won’t get you up and over this mountain. The next line goes down better. Much better. A smile stretches over my face now. The journey has begun.

A couple of comrades and I sit back and watch how the newcomers fare over the scraps that remain on the plate. I got the other bags safe in my pocket and ready to go. We salute with glasses raised high.

“Cheers bitches!” a comrade shouts.

“Here is to us!” another chips in.

Gulped down fast. A newcomer chokes on his shot. We laugh loud and continue upwards. Onwards. I light a cigarette. What monkey sees monkey does and fellow comrades spark up too. I take a long deep pull allowing the smoke to fill my lungs. Sure tastes great. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. American grown tobacco crackling in the heat. Exhale! Smoke rings emanate from my mouth, floating away into nothingness. My mind is racing. My face is numb. The break between bags has come to an end. Time to get stuck into the next. The night is youthful still, full of energy, eager to continue and it looks like everyone has survived so far. Pity. They are going to want more. I stash away one bag for myself.

Coke rituals comprise constant jibber-jabber. Conversation going around in small circles:

“You check that one stekkie today bra? There at the spaza?”

“But that doesn’t mean you have to pour all your mixture in that. Can always use it for another cake.”

“I’m king of the world!”

“Sure you are big boy.”

“They are much better than Liverpool.”

“Fuck you! Though your dreams be tossed and blown. Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart and you’ll never walk alone.”

One can get lost in the buzz. The next bag is snuffed down quicker. Confidence starts flowing out of me like the constant drip of my nose. I need another shot and survey comrades’ glasses in one quick glance. There is an empty one. Easy target.

“Pour me a shot guy when you pour yours,” I ask innocently.

“Obligated to do so,” comes the reply.

Everyone starts asking. The demons dance on my shoulder, having a ball. We all are. With the summit in sight some of the newcomers start dropping off like flies. Weak bodies can't handle it.

“More for us!” I shout as I pull out yet another bag from my pocket.

All is calm at the summit. There are six of us left. I'm in the corner of the room. On my right, holding a squished smoke in his over-farmed, gnarled fingers, is Sash. Rambling on about the price of driving around in Jozi. Passes me the plate. It warms my lap. It warms my mind. An avalanche of snow pours onto it. “Cards!” I gesture with a hand in the air. To my left KG flips open his wallet. Annoyingly the always-emptied one and hands me two cards that look so much better than mine. Snort! Up goes a line. Wide-eyed.

“Girls first,” I state like a gentleman as the boys are already fighting over who is next. I hand Natasha - a barefoot child of this earth - the rolled note. I steady the plate as she pursues her white line choosing the biggest, boldest motherfucker there is.

She walks over to him, kisses him. She smiles, he smiles, the happiness they have is felt all the way over here. I stare at her for a while as they skinner to themselves. Laughing at inside jokes. She is radiant. Draped in a white dress.

“Angela, do you want your line?” I smile at her.

She smiles back.

“Be there now.”

His smile fades. I don't offer him. My brother, Yusuf, the douche, standing there with a disappointed look as she comes over. I wondered why she brought him. We all know how he is. This steroid infused, big-headed buffoon. She bends over. The plate lifts from my lap. The corners of my eyes graze over the low cut top. Her cleavage cuts into my head.

“I am leaving!” Yusuf shouts.

“Fine go then, I don't need you here!” She looks at me for a second. Smiles, “I've got better company anyways.” Snort!

“Bounce bitch,” sniggers KG.

Comrades cackling. I am taken aback. What was that look about? I told her I loved her once upon a time. She blew me off. Bitch put me in therapy. I get up to pour a

shot, kill the memories.

I walk out on the balcony. The chilled glass makes me shiver. I light up a smoke. Glancing up I see a sliver of the brightest moon. Out of the corner of my eye I notice she is gliding over to me. Floating elegantly like she has wings.

“What’s up?” she says.

I’m confused. We hardly speak. The cocaine found a voice:

“All these years I have been telling you I loved you. How I loved you. Why I loved you. You remember that night we first met? I should have just said it there. The old cliché of love at first sight. I should have grabbed you at the bar when you first gazed into my soul. I am a coward. Maybe then that time we were painting my room I should’ve said it. I thought we were perfect together. Just us. I didn’t. Then when I finally did. You let me down hard. You ran to him. Typical. I loved you so much it hurt. I died. You guys lived. I should have told you I...”

“I love you too!” she cuts me off.

“I don’t love you anymore, I hate you!” tears welling in my eyes.

She pulls into me. Her lips sting my numb face. Her tongue twists around mine. I run my fingers through her black hair. My heart is racing. When I open my eyes I see Yusuf staring up at us from the street. He reaches into the boot of his car and then storms back into the building.

I ready myself. This is going to be bad. He smashes in the locked front door too easily. Sash and KG rush him, but being a rugby enthusiast, Yusuf brushes them off like lightweights. The coke piled plate catapults. Through the white mist, a roar:

“Bastard!”

I duck. The bat whooshes above my split ends, then comes around again, fast. Crashes into my knee.

“You fucken douche, leave him alone, leave!” Natasha screams.

The pain paralyzes my body. The bat comes down again. I close my eyes. I imagine the life I wanted with Angela. I smiled through the pain and waited for the reaper. My demons have packed their bags.

BANG!



My knee aches as I try to get comfortable in the backseat. It's a long drive to Shady Oaks, the mental asylum, situated far up the mountain. I haven't visited Natasha in over three months. We go way back. Further than most people. Since the incident she has not been the same. The smile she wore was hung up in the dark closet on plastic hangers. The barefoot child always carefree, grounded and pure now wore heavy steel boots filled with regret, depression and constant fear. The driveway of Shady Oaks snaked like an anaconda. While wiping my nose clean, the tissue dotted with blood, a message beeped on my phone. Sash and KG would not be returning to the city again. Lands End, the farm we owned in the Drakensburg, became their shelter of refuge. Sash was a true friend and always had my back but under the circumstances he couldn't face the crowd back home. It would be too much for his already fragile feelings about what happened. I dusted the white off my lap, got out of the car with the help of my driver, glued my hands firmly on the grayish crutches I despised and hobbled into the building.

I find Natasha sitting in the corner of a white-walled room. She sits muttering to herself, peeling the crumbling paint. She doesn't acknowledge me. I sit down and wait for her. I hear the mutters.

"Can't tell anyone about the douche, can't tell a soul. Not allowed to tell, it's a secret. White mountains are dangerous. BANG BANG!!! Avalanches!" she laughs hysterically, rising to her feet.

Her eyes lock onto mine. Silence.

She screams loudly, "My fault!" pointing her fingers at me "My fault, my fault, my fault!" and prances around the room before settling back in the corner.



Her hands trembled as she held the heavy gun, smoke slithering out the barrel. Warm blood was splattered across my face. Natasha screamed. Sash and KG were getting up off the floor. I stared at Angela. My knee throbbed painfully. Yusuf lay in a pool of thick red blood, soaking up the white snow on the carpet. I managed to get myself off the ground and hopped over to Angela.

"Give me the gun," I said as I held out my hand. She did, and then Natasha ran to the

phone.

“Stop!” I bellowed at her. “Don’t you call anyone.”

She picked up the receiver. I pointed the gun at her.

“Don’t do it Natasha, don’t you dare!”

“Bu-uut-t we h-hav-ave too,” she stammered through her sobs, and started to dial. I pointed the gun at the ground and pulled the trigger. Everyone jumped at the loud bang. She dropped the phone. Her sobs retreated into her body.

“Sash, bring over a chair for Angela and get me the tray.”

I whipped out the last bag of coke from my pocket. Sat her down and poured out the coke. Without even chopping I snorted back a heap. The pain in my knee receded in my mind. I needed to think straight. The demons were whispering solutions into my ear. I gave the tray to Angela and convinced Natasha to join her.

I ordered Sash and KG to wrap Yusuf in the carpet.



“I’m so sorry brother!” I shouted out. “I’m sorry too, my friend.”

Natasha was now staring at me, poking at my tears as they rolled down my face with a shaky finger. I hugged her, she squirmed.

“My fault, my fault,” she says, pushing me away and prancing around the room again.

I leave Shady Oaks, instruct the driver to take me to the nearest bar. I sit at the counter and order a drink. I think about Angela and where she could be. I hope she’s okay wherever in the world she is.



Once his body was wrapped in the carpet we all sat down around the tray. We had a few lines. Then we sat in silence. Natasha couldn’t keep her eyes off the gun I still had in my hand. I decided to make it all go away. We would drive Yusuf’s car to the dam. Dump the body. Dump the car at the junkyard. Then they would drop me a hundred metres from the hospital where I would hobble in pretending to have been highjacked and robbed of Yusuf’s car that I would call my own. Everyone nodded in agreement except Natasha. Her face seemed to be searching for solace in my guilty conscience.



It had been five months. I finished my drink and headed back home. On the way I got a message.

“Meet me at the dam wall in twenty minutes. Come alone. Angela.”

My heart did a back flip. Sharp pains stung the metal plate and screws in my knee. She was back. I told the driver to make haste. He parked and I dragged myself on my damn crutches along the walkway of the wall to where her figure faded into the night sky. A turning surge of emotions tempered my existence. As I approached her I realized she was standing not on the walkway like I was, but up on the wall itself. My heart sank faster with each step.

“Get off there, are you mad? Don’t do it!”

“I have tried Kevin. I really have tried. Been to countless places trying to forget. To let go of what I did.”

“It wasn’t your fault, you did it to save my life.”

“But at what cost?”

“It was the only way, please get off there.”

“I don’t think I can live this life anymore. I close my eyes and see myself pulling the trigger. I have nightmares of him. I miss him.”

“It will be alright.”

“Look at Natasha, look at what we did to her. It’s never going to be all right. It’s the only way. I love you.”

“Angela, wait!”

She jumped out of my life again into the dark abyss.



I lie on the bed in the ward, coming down hard. I should have listened to the angel in the beginning. I could have saved her. Now my demons sit in the waiting room snacking on vending machine chips and nuts. Grabbing a feel at passing nurses. Laughing at me as I lie here, hoping I get to see Angela again.

RELAPSE

Her lips were scarlet. A bloody scarlet red. She tasted like strawberries every time we kissed. Her upper lip was slightly bigger than the bottom one but they were soft, succulent and always felt like heaven against mine. She had this distinct way of kissing. First she would suck on my bottom lip and then nibble the top. Long indulgent kisses that made the hairs of my arms stand on their tippy toes. Her tongue tasted like candy floss. Two swordsmen fencing in an epic duel. Swirling, twirling and stabbing each other. She was always the victor. I liked to be dominated. The corners of her mouth arched up when she smiled presenting slight wrinkled crevices that demolished any fear that rested within me. Her teeth were white porcelain, neither stained nor blemished in any way. Mine had the outlines of a chain smoker and coffee drinker. She didn't mind my mouth smelling like an ashtray.

Now I poison the taste with neat shots of Gin. Killing her flavor. I greet Gordon as a stranger but after the first is finished I greet him the next time as an old, long lost friend. How quickly it is to fall into customary ways. How easy it is to kill the taste of her.

Her smell intoxicated me. It was cuter than newborn puppies, fresher than a summer downpour after a long hot day, more invigorating than the smell of a new car. When I hugged her I found myself wrapped in a blanket of a sweet fragrance that lulled my body into calmness. She would grip me hard, squeeze tight and the world around me stood at attention. She was my life size stress ball. Every breath of her filled my lungs to capacity. I would never drown. She was my oxygen. Her smell was sewn into the fabric of my bedding, my pillow, and my clothes. She wore Chanel. She wore it better than Coco. Much better. Her hair smelled like peaches and cream. It was my catnip. Lying in bed just inhaling her hair. Huffing it down like a deranged fiend was an enjoyable past time.

One year sober chip spins wildly on the coffee table. I slam it down with my palm and tear open the packaging of a fresh bag. I use the chip to shovel out the yellowish powder. Chop, chop and long lines litter the table's surface. I sniff the powder so it

burns away the smell. Pile the linen into a steel drum. Add some clothes, photos, idle memories. Soak it all in lighter fluid and strike a match.

She was beautiful. Her body the shape of an hourglass and I the sand that filled it. My eyes would fixate on her curves as she walked from the bathroom after a shower. Water dripping slowly down her dark chocolate skin. From the slope of her neck, over her chest starting from the darker areola to the supple nipple like the bull's-eye I am always drawn to, meandering over her stomach, her pubis and disappearing into a lusciously groomed black bush of hair. These droplets of water would take their time savoring every inch of her body like I did. The best drops would start from her lower back just below her tramp stamp, the playboy bunny, and make their way over the voluptuously raised platform of her behind, down those thunder thighs, tickling her ankles before evaporating.

I blind myself. Curtains drawn. No sun to brighten the mood. Buried in the dense bitterness. Surrounded by empty bottles. The flames in the steel drum flickers and dance with the shadows of the room. My eyes fade into a realm of forgetting, trying to forget. Her image irritates my retinas. I scratch them, rub them. Bloodshot pupils dilated, accustomed to the dark. I have exiled my sight. I black out her picture that floats in my mind.

When she spoke some people blocked their ears. A mousy squeak they said. Annoying to them. Not to me. Her voice was a symphony. A melody of pure notes resonating on a high pitched frequency forcing its way into the formidable foundations of my bones. I loved the way she sounded. The way she whispered my name as she nibbled on my ear. The way she sang in the shower or hummed whilst she cooked. The way she said I love you.

150 decibels course through my veins as the bass bounces heavily on my eardrums. Her words can now fall on deaf ears. I blast the metal of Parkway Drive's 'The Romance Is Dead' on repeat. It blocks out the entire world. Gordon lies drunk in my lap. The table becomes a canvas on which I sign her name then sniff it all away. It softens the harshness of her last words to me. I've set a mousetrap for that squeaky vocabulary. It has become a pest.

She had delicate hands. Very soft. Her nails were long and perfectly manicured with French tips. She would dig them into back during sex. Carve out my skin, peel away the rough bark exterior to find my supple interior. I loved the pain. It made love making intense and passionate. She would run her fingers through my hair when we watched TV late at night. I would lie with my head nestled onto the warm confines of her lap. Her fingers parting the waters, creating ripples of delight over my body. Soothing my troubles with a touch. She knew where to touch me, how to touch me. I craved her touch.

I read her letter one more time before setting it alight and throwing it into the steel drum. Say goodbye to Gordon who has been close by ever since. Do a victory snort. Savor a cigarette.

DRUNKEN HERO

Kevin sits alone at home glued to the TV screen. His faithful bong is sprawled out on his lap. Eyes red. At two in the morning the only company he has is the animated coyote running on the screen. He laughs. Places the bong to his lips. Lights, pulls, chokes, coughs and blows out thick smoke. When the cartoons become repetitive he switches to a documentary on wild cats. Lions mating arouse his stoned mind. He switches uncomfortably. Women's volleyball. Semi to full hard as the women in tight bikinis bounce around the sand. Being too stoned to masturbate he decides to make a snack. The craving for crab curry pinches him. The fridge light illuminates the dark kitchen. He reaches into the back beyond the cheese and mayo, under the salami, past the yoghurts and finds a container filled with last night's leftovers. The kitchen goes black again.

The microwave hums as it heats the food. Kevin decides to have another bong hit while he waits. Stubbing his big toe on the corner of the kitchen table he bellows out in pain. He limps, hops, swears and cries, smashing the table hard with his fist.

“Stupid table!”

The table accepts the blame although it wasn't its fault. Finally reaching his bong Kevin sits down on the black leather couches. He packs it full of green sticky icky. The couch is old. The wooden frame creaks underneath him. His family has had them since he was born. They have withstood fat asses and cigarette burns over the years.

A loud pop shocks him out of the comfort of the couch. Burning crab and ganja mix into a foul odor. He rushes over to the microwave. Splattered crab juice against the sides. Steaming in a pile of red-hot fire. Not wearing a thinking cap, he grabs the plastic plate, scalds his fingers and smash - crab pincers clapping like haunted ghost limbs on white tiles. Hot food iced over in frustration. One, two, three... quickly replacing the fallen meaty shells onto the plate ... nine, grabs the last one in time. The ten-second rule. Kevin is pleased with his recovery. Laughs to himself and leaves the rest of the mess on the floor.

Three o'clock rolls over his barely open eyes. High and full he hears the faint whispers of his bed calling his name. He drags his body down the long passage to his room. The walls are collaged with family portraits. They stare at him with *Fong Kong* smiles. The bitter lies of his once happy family framed for public viewing. Kevin stops at one picture of his Uncle Dan. He is a skinny man with a curly bush of black hair. His skin further darkened by the black and white photo. Wearing his grease-stained overalls. A Camel filter peeps out from behind the tangled beard, a stiff shot in his oily hand. Uncle Dan is an alcoholic. A drunkard for thirty years now. He has suffered two strokes. The left side of his body is numb. Kevin saw how once a car he was working on. It fell off the jack and onto his left leg. Kevin screamed in terror.

"What you screaming about lighty?" his uncle asked.

"The car is on your leg!"

"It is?" he smirked, carrying on working. "Jack it back up then so I can get out."

When he did get out from under the car they had to take him to the hospital. It was broken. All the way there he just sipped from the bottle of Vodka, amusing them with one of his countless stories of drunken bullshit. Kevin smiled in the passage. He hadn't seen his uncle for a while. He thought about how his uncle was a cockroach no bottle could squash. Kevin was laughing when he heard frantic hooting at the front gate.

Uncle Dan's old blue Honda Ballard was revving loudly in the driveway. Behind the hooter sat his uncle. His black curly hair now shone silver under the moonlit sky. Drinking had faded his looks. His uncle stretched out a hand clasping a bottle of Vodka from the window. It never faded his habits though. The car sounded like a retarded werewolf, waking the neighbors, disturbing the peaceful high. Kevin opened reluctantly. His uncle sped into the yard, clipping his side mirror on the gate and coming to a halt a millimetre from Kevin's legs. The car switched off. The night was still again. Sirens echoed close by.

Uncle Dan broke like drunken waves onto the ground. He was covered in sand and blood. He swigged wildly from the bottle. Kevin walked over and helped him up. They sat together on the bonnet. Uncle Dan juggled a lighter and a smoke in one hand, the bottle in the other. Kevin grabbed the cigarette from him and lit it. His uncle seemed completely out of it. Relishing in the Vodka.

“What you doing here Uncle Dan?”

His uncle never answered.

“What happened?” Kevin asked.

“Ey lighty,” hiccupping, “clean my boot there and I will be on my way!” continuing to suck on the bottle like a teat. Kevin didn’t ask further questions and opened the boot slowly, afraid of what could be inside.

Kevin’s father was a headstrong and wise man. He never ate meat. Never drank. Nor did he smoke. He prayed everyday. He was the golden boy of the family. His uncle, Kevin’s fathers’ younger brother, however, was considered the black sheep, the runt, the failure of the family. Kevin and Uncle Dan were similar. He always helped his uncle out when he needed it. To cover up his drinking whilst at a family prayer or give excuses as to his whereabouts when the family asked. He knew his uncle had a problem but he also knew the size of the man’s heart and how wonderful he could be. Besides, Kevin was considered the same. Living in the shadow of his brother. Seen as the ‘fuck up’ child. A mistake. Kevin and his uncle were vodka soaked peas in a green cloudy pod.

A thick layer of blood-wet sand lined the floor of the boot. There were two different shoes. Both lefts. A screwdriver drenched in blood poked into the mess. Kevin closed the boot and joined his uncle on the bonnet.

“You check, lighty, it had to be done, bloody tsotsi’s! Driving home from the tote when I checked these ous trying to mug a girl. Grabbed the first thing under my seat, stopped the car and went for them. The first ou swung at me with one blade. I put the screwdriver between his eyes. His bra took off. I chased the motherfucker down. Stabbed him in the chest a couple times. I loaded their bodies and dumped them in the township. On my way back a roadblock so I took one short left and sped here. They chased but the Honda is modified. Couldn’t catch me. Left them with my blurred taillights.”

His uncle looked proud. Smirking. Kevin didn’t respond. He went inside to the kitchen leaving his uncle mangled on the bonnet. He got the vacuum cleaner from the cupboard. Piled a cloth, rubber gloves, some detergents and hot water into a bucket. Grabbed durable bin packets. Balanced the items in his arms and went back to the car.

Uncle Dan fell off the bonnet with a crash. He lay in a pool of shattered Vodka and fell asleep. Kevin shrugged and opened the boot again. Slipped on bright yellow rubber gloves like a surgeon. Placed the shoes and screwdriver into the bin packet. Triple bagged it. Kevin was playing operation. He carefully removed the mat and laid it out on the ground. Not wanting to spill its contents. Cranked the vacuum to wet mode and slurped up the gunk with power. He washed down the inside of the boot, scrubbed the mat, and ensured the evidence was wiped clean. He then took it upon himself to clean inside the car. Wanting to protect the drunken heap on the ground. His uncle snored loudly. Kevin lit a smoke pleased with the hard work. Surveyed his drunk uncle and sighed.

He kicked his uncle lightly to wake him up, but he did not stir. Frustrated Kevin gave up and went back into the house. He looked at the crab stained tiles. Stopped. Felt sick, dizzy and disgusted. Kneeled down, wiped it clean and plonked his ass back on the leather couch. A bong hit to pass the time. He couldn't believe it. Scanning the news channels Kevin stumbled onto one where a woman was reading out breaking news stories.

“Two men found dead in Alex. Stabbed by a screwdriver. Both missing their left shoes. Both were convicted criminals. Eyewitnesses say it was a drunken vigilante, some say it was a silver fox, whoever it was took justice into their own hands.”

Kevin laughed. Soaking up the THC deep into his lungs. His uncle passed out in the yard.

“Can you believe it. Uncle Dan the drunken hero!”

DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Every Friday night the doctor would close the practice early. He needed the extra time to get ready. When he got home he would microwave a packed dinner for one. Accompany it with a beer or two. Flip through sports channels. Have a smoke. Take a dump. Brush his teeth. Hop into the shower. He spent most of his time in the shower. Using a ragged sponge. Scrapping his skin to clear every inch of his well-built body. Between his toes, behind his ears, under his arms and around his balls. He shampooed his long black locks. Then rinsed and conditioned. Rinsed again. After the shower he shaved away the bushy week. Washed his face. He would then lather body cream all over. Moisturizing every spot. He hated dry skin. With a bright red towel around his waist he entered the walk-in closet. Scanned the rails for his best suit. Picking between his black Hugo Boss or the velvet blue Armani. Polished his shoes. Found a dashing tie, matched it with a belt. Ironed his shirt and finally got dressed. Surveying his statuesque figure in the long mirrors on either side of his room a wicked grin etched itself across his face. Brushing back the locks he whistled sadistically. Placed his diamond encrusted Tag Heuer around his wrist. Sprinkled Lapidus cologne onto his neck. Grabbed his keys and wallet. Rode the elevator down to the parking lot. Jumped into the silver Jag. Roared off into the bustling city as the sun faded in the distance amongst the hazy smog. It was speed-dating night at the Radisson. He would never skip a week.

Jessica was a blonde girl who just turned twenty-one. She moved from the countryside and was new to the city. Her breasts gleamed from across the table. The doctor couldn't stop staring at them. Drops of saliva trickled down his chin. It was her first time. A virgin. Her immature brain was overshadowed by her good looks. He found this repulsive. He hated stupid blondes. She fitted the cliché well. Her southern accent tortured his ears. Rambled on like a destructive tornado. Her slim fitting dress stuck to the leather chair. Her figure squashed into the tiny material. Creases of skin folded irregularly at awkward positions. But she was stunning, fresh meat, untouched and pure. He sat there nodding in boredom. Sipping his regular whiskey neatly on the rocks. He continued to shake the glass. Gesturing to the bar for another and another. She was an aspiring actress. Worked now as a waitress. Typical irritation to him.

Despised her in every way. Thought of the ways it could be done. Thought about the hunger he had for it. This kept him awake. This kept him entertained. That and her chest, which kept him hard throughout.

“Do you have an hobbies?” she asked annoyingly.

“Hunting!” he sniggered.

Amanda had dark skin. Black fake hair. Robust lips. She worked and lived in the ghetto. She wasn't fixated on her looks. She had thick thighs that protruded from under the tiny mini skirt. They parted slightly so he could see the linings of her silky red G-string. An uncooked attitude was bitter tasting. The use of vulgarity in every sentence rubbed him the wrong way. She was no real lady. Acted like it though. Demanded respect from men, was her own woman, she didn't need a man but was here sitting in front of him. A feminist bitch that had probably been scorned one too many times. A sucker for punishment. Bearer of open scars that cried for attention. Loud and inarticulate at times. He knew that he could show her about being a real victim. With such thoughts he grinned through her bullshit. It smelt disgusting. He pulled delicately from a Dunhill. The smoke numbed her foul tastes. Being a heavier woman sweat stained her blouse around her armpits. Droplets trapped below the weave. She constantly scratched at it.

“Yo! So you got a favorite movie my nigger?” she bellowed.

“Psycho!” he replied with a devils stare.

Cassie seemed like a simple woman. Simplicity is deceiving. She was wearing low cut denim jeans. Revealing tattoos faded into her pelvis, lower back and sides. Tramp stamps that teased his lustful gaze. She wore a sleeveless top without a bra. She never needed it though. Her cup size was non-existent. She worked at one of the downtown rock bars. Her pitch-black hair and dark eye shadow screamed out from behind her pale complexion. Portraying herself as a poet and avid reader of Sylvia Plath. She wore large chunky bracelets. Trying to hide something. It was obvious to him. Depression scarred her wrists and forearms. He cringed at the idea of self-mutilation. One should never inflict pain upon themselves he thought but was interrupted by her constant need to butt in. He never minded though. He would teach her a lesson about this. This made him twitch a little. His leg shook like humping rabbits under the table.

He hated liars, posers, and fake people trying to be something they are not. It grinded his gears. Revved up his engine. Overheated his hatred.

“What is your favorite color?” butting in as usual.

“Blood Red!” he said with a twisted smile.

Kate lived in the suburbs. She was a single mother in her early thirties. A red fire burnt on her head. It amazed him. She looked good for a mother. Putting herself out there again. Encased by a black pot of shyness that began to boil over with confidence as he built her up. When she started to indulge in the distractions of her six-year-old son back home his mind wandered away into his own thoughts. He didn't come here to be bombarded with issues of which he never cared. He came here to feed his hunger. His addiction. Her warming mentality was sickening. The walls of his bowels constricted and cramped. Too much positivity radiated off her. He disliked it. She was too strong for her own good. She needed to be brought back down into the darkness. He thought if her boy would miss her if she never came home again. How he would cope with the cruel world alone. Thrown into the deep end of the pool while someone fucked the lifeguard. No floaters granted. Just a cement block around the ankles. Sinking him deeper into the shit of reality. Her skin was cracked and dry. She didn't look after herself too well. It irritated him. He was going to throw up.

“Are you afraid of death?” she asked.

He laughed.

“More importantly, are you?” he said licking his lips.

It was always the same procedure. Following protocol. First invite the girl out for a drink after the initial five-minute speeded meeting. Intoxicate her into a tipsy frenzy. Indulge in her conversation. Make her feel good. Allow her to let go of insecurity and fear. Break the locks on her comfort zone. Once she was hooked on his prescribed medicinal encouragements he would then boast. A doctor, a rich guy, a sensitive man. Wanting to share his life with someone. Tug at their hearts with surgical precision. Cut into the right valves. Poison the blood stream with heavy loads of his sick virus. He would then offer a tour of his famous practice. The Jag purred loudly. Rubbing itself against her. She wanted him in everyway. They always did. They couldn't resist. The drive there excited him. He knew he was getting closer to his fix.

The practice was in a building just off the main street. Huge silver-framed glass doors swung open into a foyer filled with modern pieces of art. A huge fish tank bubbled around the walls. Exotic fish kept on swimming, unperturbed by their presence. He would lead them to the operating room. Sterile surfaces, neatly packed steel scalpels, rubber gloves and needles all set out for a procedure. Set out earlier, by him. They would marvel at the contraptions and gadgets while he slipped on the gloves.

“Want to play doctor, doctor?” he’d ask.

They’d always giggle. But it was no joke. He would grab a needle attached to a syringe filled with a clear liquid and inject it into their necks. This paralyzed them. Eyes open, unable to move or scream, he would begin by undressing them. Lay them down on the table. See the tears on numb cheeks. Mozart on the stereo. Dressed in a surgical gown. Rubbing his rubber hand along the naked flesh. Breathing heavily. Feeding time.

Each woman is treated differently. He takes his time cutting into their naked bodies with precision, tact and purpose. With Jessica he cuts into her chest and removes the breasts. He dangles her mammary glands across her face.

“These will never distract any one ever again.”

He then digs into her scalp. Cutting around her hairline. With a saw he cuts away at the bone. Exposing her brain. He stabs at the brain until she is dead. Amanda stares at him with silent screams.

“What’s that?” he gestures with his ear to her lips. “Cat got your tongue?”

He kisses her full lips before cutting them off. Discards them into the medical waste bin. He traces the steel blade along her thighs.

“You think gravy will come out?” he asks her sadistically.

Digging deep into them he pulls out her ligaments. Fat gushes onto the table.

“Guess not.”

He uses a laser to burn the pale skin of Cassie. Examines the scars on her wrists. Angry with her he hacks away at the arm. Chopping it off from beneath the elbow.

“Self-mutilation is a big no, no,” he says to her, shaking his head and pointing at her with her own fingers. “Now you will learn.”

He opens her mouth. Reaches in with his hand and cuts out her tongue at the root.

“This will teach you to not butt in.”

Kate is special. He doesn't rush. He stalks her body. Breathes in the flames that begin to die on her head. Strokes her belly. Thinks about the life that was conceived inside. Then his hands sting in pain when he reaches a dry patch of skin. Gag reflex plays with the whiskey inside of him. He stops. Grabs the scalpel. Starts to slowly peel away her skin. Starting at the bottom by her feet. Layer upon layer until he reaches her neck. Skin scattered around the table. Exposed flesh drips blood.

"You let yourself go dear, such a pity."

He scratches out the skin left on her face.

"Your son will now know what life is like, it will be better for him without you around." He says whilst he skins her eyelids.

After each meal he washes up. Places all medical waste into the bin. Disrobes. Cleans surfaces. Places bodies into bags. Starts up the incinerator. Burns it all. Scrubbing his hands and whistling along. Smiling. Proud of his work. Feeling satisfied. He switches off the lights and heads out the building. Locks the glass doors behind him. Lights up a smoke. Climbs in the car and starts it. The Jag glides down the road.

MARY JANE

“Where have you been?”

“Out with the boys.”

“Don’t lie to me again. I know where you have been.”

“Don’t be paranoid!”

“You scoundrel! You were with her! That bitch!”

“You’re getting carried away baby!”

“I can smell her on you. I can see her in your eyes!”

“I wasn’t, I swear!”

“Bastard! Don’t touch me! This is the last time!”

“But baby...”

“Don’t but baby me! I have been the butt of all your lies. I am no more the butt of your jokes. Deceitful prick. Its over!”

“I love you baby!”

“Choose then, you dick. Me or her...”

Cowering in shadows. Lurking in the background. Everyone out on the green field. Tossing a ball back and forth. Socializing in small groups. Bullying the weak. I kept my distance. Sat and ate lunch alone. Dabbawalas packed with a five course meal of last night’s leftovers. Silver tins housing the rice, dhal, beans and potato curry with extra potato, salads and pickles. Flask of fresh chai. Mother knew me well. It made me smile. I loved to eat. Maybe loved it too much. I was shy, reclusive, an outcast. A sliver of unsocial fat torn away from the side of a juicy steak. Never acknowledged. Unless it was ‘fatty move, you are blocking the sun!’ or ‘damn fatty you leaking gravy!’ hardly uplifting. The biggest butt of the jokes. Adding cruelty to my anxiety. Panic attacks. A stutter. No one liked me. It was hard being fourteen and that big. Then I was introduced to Mary Jane one day after school.

The cool kids gathered around her. I was curious. I had never met her before. Heard about her though. They seemed to indulge in her presence. Laughing. Conversing. Her scent was intoxicating. A sweetened, sour mixture. I waddled over. Poked through the crowd. I imagined a friendly welcome. Meaty fingers melted into an

awkward wave. She looked stunning. I was drawn in. Pressured to conform I guess. She slapped me hard in the face. Poisoned by her wickedness. It stung. Made me dizzy. Felt my heart beat elevated. People laughing. Couldn't find my bearings. Scared. I ran away. Choking on my dry saliva. I hate Mary Jane. Why she never accepted me as a friend I would never know. What a bitch.

At sixteen, acne plagued my baby face. Pustules and pimples overwhelming. Still a big kid and life couldn't get any worse. Social circles still denied me access. I wore big jackets with hoods. Played hide and seek with girls. I was always hiding. No one came looking. Forced into more torment. Scrutinized. Still a joke. Confidence weighed down by my weight. Heavy in my own arms. School sucked. I hated going. Could've won Oscars for my acts to stay home. I ate my depression into famine. I was depressed because I ate. Vicious cycles. I began smoking cigarettes. Wanted some leverage. A cool factor. Heard it would help with weight loss. Something that would detour all the jokes. Began to open my closed shell. Within me there was a pearl. A big one. People just needed to look harder. Look deeper. I wasn't all that bad. I smoked Rothmans Red. All the ballies used to smoke it. I pierced my ears. Spiked my hair. Frosted the tips. Chewed the ends of matchsticks. Wore gold chains. Began to blend in with the Charo populations. School was segregated to some extent. Even though we were democratic and free. Choices. Spend my days alone getting punched by the world. Or, belong to a group who defended me but be used by them as a personal punching bag. The inside joke. A couple of fists didn't hurt as much when you were used to the hundreds of fists that didn't care. I sold cigarettes to the begging hands of the less fortunate. Got me some brownie points for that. Found a niche. It wasn't me though. All a façade. Conjured up from the piles of suffering and suicidal thoughts. It gave me a break.

One day I got an invitation to a house party. My first ever. I was stunned. Perplexed. What the fuck? Some joke I was assured. Overhearing some girls excitedly gabbing on about it changed my thinking. It was really a party. I was going. I had become more than just the furniture in the room. I wasn't the puffy beanbag always bounced on. I was acknowledged. Finally I felt happy. A week until the party and each day my excitement grew. My stomach couldn't take it. Anxious, nervous, excited all at the same time stapled my stomach shut. Food couldn't get in. I didn't care though. Friday

rolled around and the buzz at school was loud. It was going to be the biggest party of the year. Girls gossiping. Guys planning. Couples springing up then falling down like a slinky toy on the stairs. After school I shopped. New gear. New look. I was going to be the brightest star tonight. Wise men be following me for once.

At the party I saw her again. Mary Jane in a sexy white number. I didn't like her. She was so seductive though. I wanted to like her. She seemed friendlier. I had more confidence now. We socialized. We danced. She gave me lustful gazes and brushed the insides of my mind. I was her canvas. Beautiful pictures erupted from her onto me. I felt amazing. People began to notice the change. Shell cracked wide open. A pearl gleaming from the shattered remains. I had the best time of my life. Mary Jane wasn't that bad. You just needed to get to know her. She was warm, open, breathtaking in every way. She cradled me in her arms until the sun rose. I confided in her. She let me be myself. People around began to throw away the jokes, unclipped the punching bag that hung from the wooden beam. I was cracking the jokes. They all laughed. I left the party a new person. I said goodbye to her and hoped to see her soon. Mary Jane was my friend.

Reaching the end of high school. The end of the hellish line. I had lost most of my weight. My skin cleared. Stutter free. Slapped out of me by concerned friends. I had more social circles. I was in demand. Mary Jane, MJ, I called her, was my best friend. We did everything together. I would see her sometimes before school but always made time for her afterwards. Days were brighter with her in my life. She helped me become less socially awkward. I thrived on the confidence she built up inside of me. Every Friday after school the guys and I would head down to the park. Grab a six-pack of black each and get to our spot under the trees. There the guys kicked around a ball. Pulled pranks. Fire crackers under bums. Water balloon fights. Entertained by simple things. Simple beer. Simple people. We were carbon tight bonds. Brothers at war. MJ always surprised me with gifts. Different feelings and emotions. I wanted to be more than friends. She knew that. She was part of the boys. They all loved her. I loved her the most. Sometimes I would not join the guys but sneak off with her under my arm back home. We would sit by the television for hours. Laughing. Writing poetry. She always worked up my appetite. She loved me. She never hurt me. She was there for me. But high school came to an end. It was time for this eighteen year old to

be welcomed into the real world. The working world. I was scared. I never knew what it was like to be grown up. Peter Pan would agree. I would stay in those last six months for the rest of my life. But growing up had its perks. Had its own way of showing you the greener grass on the other side of high walls.



After a lecture. Sprawled out with MJ on the lawns. A girl walks by. Her skirt is short. It lifts slightly in the breeze. My eyes fixate. Black thong. She is sexy. Long black hair. Rosy lips. Dark brown eyes. Such succulent thighs. I forget MJ next to me and follow. I abandoned her. Didn't care. This girl led me like the Piped Piper. A mesmerized rat. Tail swinging between my legs. Needed to know her. Introductions are awkward. But I make it work. MJ taught me confidence. To be myself. We have a class together. Shouldn't have been bunking with MJ all the time though. Could have seen her sooner. She is smart, funny and gets me in more ways than one. She could be the one. Her name is Tamara. It rolls off my tongue. We meet a couple of times off campus. We have drinks. Discuss life, love, politics, the arts, sport, family, the important things. I haven't seen MJ for a week now. I don't miss her. Falling hard into love with a girl of my dreams. We start to date. I'm afraid to introduce her to MJ. Wonder how she will react. MJ is cool with it. Best friends tend to be like that. I suggest we meet at our place. She can bring some friends of hers. Some of the guys will be there. MJ and I like a good party. Fun times. Filled with surprises. Tamara would enjoy MJ's company. Guaranteed disaster was never forecasted.

The gathering was humble. Going good until MJ shows up. Tamara stares at me with a look I haven't seen before. It pierces my heart. She argues with me in front of everyone. A big scene. MJ isn't phased. Hangs out with the boys. I try to calm her down but she wants to leave. She doesn't want anything to do with me. I feel the earth move. I'm thrown into a bottomless pit. Falling without an end. MJ tries to comfort me. It doesn't work. My heart screams out to me, tells me to chase her down. Whispers her name in my ear like a depressed mosquito I can't squash. I have lost the girl of my dreams. Over what? My best friend? The one who helped me through a lot? The one who made me the person I am? Who brought out my creativity, my drive, and my hidden self? I wouldn't let it be. After weeks of groveling and pleading with

her I finally get her to meet me again. I tell her it's done with MJ. That she is all I need in my life. Bitter lies taste disgusting on my lips. I feel sick. But I had to. I needed her in my life. MJ will have to hit the road. It was sad losing her. I've got something better. She agrees with me. Told me MJ was a bad influence. That she doomed my senses. Made me forget. Was temporary. I understood. It was never going to be easy though. I was addicted to MJ. I craved her when she wasn't near. I would have to learn.



Tamara and I live in a three-bedroom house. She works in a law firm. She works a lot. Late nights. Early mornings. I'm a stranger. Home alone. I slap my face because I'm bored. I don't shave anymore. She is getting paid, though. I shouldn't complain. She supports me. My ways. My lost talent of being a writer. I swept my creativity under a rug. I'm like a housewife. She brings home the bacon. I just cook it up. Burnt most times. I'm working on a novel, but find I get stuck a lot. Writer's roadblock and I'm always over the legal limit. Locked up in the cell. Not a cent for bribes. MJ would always bail me out. Help me find the words. They would be floating down the river. She would grab my hand and jump in. Swim amongst the ideas. Use a net and scoop them into my brain. I see the flicking cursor on a blank Word docx. Fucking annoying little cursor. Stop taunting me! MJ is probably at the guys' house I should go see her. . I sneak out like the Pink Panther every now and then to visit her. To satisfy a craving I can't control. She is happy to see me. I am over the moon when I do. Tamara never is, though. Catches me out green-handed. I feel bad. I lie. I make things worse. But I can't lose her. I know once she makes partner, things will get better. Times are amazing with her. I love her dearly. I just miss my best friend. My creative release. Miss the fun times of doing nothing and being so content. Of floating on clouds so high.

"... I chose you!"

"Then why do you run to her all the time? Why do you use her as a crutch? You are better than that, than her."

"I know, I am sorry!"

"I have heard that bullshit before. Sorry has no meaning in my life anymore."

“Please don’t leave!”

“Too late, my bags are packed. The minute you ran to her it was over!”

“I won’t do it again I promise. I swear I will never see her again!”

“I can’t believe you!”

“I will do whatever it takes! Please baby!”

“Get some help then come find me! I just want what’s best for you!”

“Baby don’t! I can’t live without you!”

“Nor can you live without her! Goodbye!”

Sitting in a circle of strangers. Some are friends. Others are new. We all have stories.

We all have a dismal tale. Shaking. Sweating. Under the weather. A Rothman in my fattened fingers. Missing Tamara. Haven’t seen her since she left. Never visited me since. I have faith though. I will do this for her. She said she would come back!

“Hi my name is Kevin and I’m an addict and I’ve been clean now for eight months!”

CHARLIE'S REVENGE

The stack of flyers at first a thick and expensive wad in my hand had become a few desperate loose leaves. I'd been covering the city like a deranged lunatic. Lost in my emotional turmoil. A twilight zone. Screaming out for her. Forcing her beautiful picture into the faces of innocent passersby. All nodding to my disappointment. Fucking strangers. No help. No care in their busy eyes. I'd been running these streets like a Pamplonian bull, everything a red target. A whole week and I hadn't a clue where Charlie was.

"Honey I'm home!" Motioning to her.

Wanting to hold her tight in my arms after a crazy day at the office. Her black wooden box she normally rests in, sprawled on the floor. Cold shivers crawled up my back like tiny spiders. The back door was open. No struggle. Lack of shattered glass assured me she couldn't be harmed. Or could she? Maybe she just wandered off and got lost? Maybe someone took her unexpectedly? All I could do now was search. I hoped to God she was okay! I prayed. I never did before. I lit the lamp. Whispered to the almighty.

Border to border of Durban city is now plastered with her picture. On fences that cage in its natural beauty, outside spaza shops where old aunties sit and gossip, on dilapidated walls of buildings, on benches along the beach front and I even got my friend to wrap his vintage 325i box shape with Charlie's photo. Thickly dense dirty hair, a beard overgrown and bushy, dark bags punched into my face, sweat stained t-shirt marked by days of neglect, torn shorts, no shoes and an old filthy nightgown I can't seem to take off have become my uniform in this week of lonely pain. I can't sleep; I can't eat, don't work and spend every day running around tormenting strangers. Charlie has always been there for me. Picks me up. Mellows me out. Puts a smile in my heart. She knows how to make me laugh. Everyone likes her company.

The last time we were together was the night before she went missing. I had one of those days. Work was a bitch. I came home bitter and sour like a chewed up piece of china fruit. Charlie saw my frustration and tried her best to comfort me. She sat

silently while I confided in her. She never judged, complained, bitched or moaned. She always made me feel better. Charlie opened my once shuteyes to a new world. She brought out the hidden potential that was locked in me. She made me flourish in greatness. I couldn't function without her. But now she was gone and my life became closed behind those pitiful veils of self-doubt and depression.

The story of how Charlie and I met: I was at this party close to Stanger about three years ago. Everyone was drinking Mainstay with Cream Soda. Jumping onto the cane-train to start the weekend. From across the room I spied her black box sitting upon a shelf. Cobwebs gripped tightly to it. I took the box off the shelf. I read her faded name engraved on the side. I undid the delicate straps and the box creaked open. Charlie lay there starved and suffocating. I took her out. The smooth glass slid through my fingers from the tips of her bent neck down to her round thick base. She was tattooed in trippy colors. I asked around. To whom she belonged. Nobody claimed her. I cleaned her off, packed her tight and lit up. I fell in love as my lips caressed her head. She made me laugh so hard that day I decided to give her a home. We have been inseparable ever since.

But now it was getting late. My hands were tired. Lost my screaming voice. I called it a day and headed home. I hated going to an empty house. Sounds seemed deafening, smells had no scents, and colors were dull. I just sat down when a knock came at the door. I rushed over, like I did every time a phone rang or someone knocked, anticipating, expecting to see her standing there or speak to me from the other end of the line. My heart racing. I opened the door to find a shady man garnishing a long black, leather trench coat, dark sunglasses, blonde frosted spiked hair and piercings on every conceivable surface of his face. He grinned with gold teeth shining brightly in the setting sun.

“Are you Kevin?” he asked.

“Yes, what do you want?”

He handed me an envelope. Then disappeared. All I could think was who wears long black coats in summer? I tore open the envelope. My heart stopped beating:

IF YOU WANT charlie THEN HEAR WHAT
I SAY PUT TEN GRAND INTO A
BACKPACK AND meet me LAter
To DONT be stupid AND COME ALonE
NO COPIES OF SMELLY BAcon listen CAREFULLY
OR SHE WILL Be THROWN IM not some ONE
TO Be Mistaken Meet AT PIER 7
AT 7 minutes PAST 7 ANY silly Business and
You find charlie Lie AT THE BOTTOM
OF heaven SO IT IS up to YOU TO MAKE
the CHOICE AND you make it fast I'm
SURE you MISSTHE Sound of his VOICE DONT
make This DAY her LAST ***

Three stars. I kept thinking. Three black stars? I had seen that somewhere before. I scanned the letter again. Searching for an answer. My body was numb. The guy at the door had Charlie? They had Charlie? Pier 7? I looked at my watch. It was half past six. Those three stars? Fuck! A noisy mind clashed with loud surroundings. Cars driving, children screaming, dogs barking. Images of her, them. Questions piling up. Answers needing attention. I couldn't hear my thoughts. I couldn't feel my emotions. I got a backpack from the closet, grabbed my keys and wallet and jumped in my car. I needed ten grand, fast! Speeding along the M4, overtaking recklessly as the ocean wound in and out of the land. I pulled into the nearest BP that had a Voice-Interactive Teller Machine. I pulled up. The screen flashed on. Rolled down my window.

VTM: Place finger on scanner to begin. Loading data... Welcome Kevin!

Kevin: Short term loan

VTM: Amount

Kevin: Ten thousand rand

VTM: Reason for loan?

Kevin: Ransom payment

VTM: Did you say 'HANSOM PLAYMATE' is this correct?

Kevin: No, ransom payment

VTM: Did you say 'RANSOM PAYMENT' is this correct?

Kevin: YES!

VTM: Collateral

Kevin: House

VTM: Did you say 'HOUSE' is this correct?

Kevin: Fuck sakes. YES!

VTM: Computing... Would you like a receipt?

Kevin: NO!

VTM: Collect money. Thank you! Come again!

Kevin: Fucking wasting my time!

The gold light had sunk behind the blue horizon. It was getting darker. The pier stretched out into the warm, churning ocean. My shirt flapped against my skin. Litter clung to wherever it could, hanging on for dear life. I grabbed the cash from the passenger seat. Checked the time. Three minutes past seven.

“That’s where I know it from!” I said to myself.

The three stars are the Unit Six gang from Phoenix. Fuck! What would they want with Charlie or me? Sand blew against bare shins. It stung. Concrete pier cold under my feet. Wind howling in my ears. At the end one man looked like he was fishing. Could this be the guy? Where would Charlie be? I started walking hastily to him. The backpack was heavy. As I got closer my eyes could now see the old man. His hair was silver long and curling, resting on an even longer and curlier beard with a cigarette popping out of the bush in a blaze. His hands were worn away. Fingers clasping a long graphite rod, slowly reeling in. He was wearing a blue overall smeared in thick layers of fish guts. The stench was hitting my nostrils hard. An open box of thawing sardines covered in flies displayed at his feet. I could feel the tremors of the gang marching down the pier. Damn day walkers. The burnt ashes of Phoenix.

“Where the fuck is Charlie?”

“Calm down lighty. Better have some respect for your elders before I dulah you a hot klap yeah.” He spat the cigarette at me. “I got your merrie here, you got me my moola?”

I threw the bag to the floor.

“Where is she? Why did you take her?”

By now the whole gang surrounded me. The old man bent down without an answer and opened the tackle box. I started smiling. Charlie lay unharmed. He gripped Charlie around the neck as one of the gang members counted the money.

“Its all here boss!”

“No lukka.”

They all started laughing and pulled out their guns. Then he chucked Charlie over the pier. I didn’t even think. I just jumped. I followed her into the warm blue. Grabbed her as she sunk to the bottom. Started heading up. Lungs busting. Eyes burning. Bullets started sticking into the water around us. The pier was our shelter as I hung onto both Charlie and the safest concrete pillar, waves crashing hard into us. I was happy I had her in my arms. I would never let go. They waited long before leaving the beach but we were together again. Ghostly purple nightgown washes up on shore. Lying on my back, Charlie on my chest. We survived.

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The bar went silent.

“Thought you drown but stekkie!” the gang laughed along. “But if you have another death wish, we can’t deny you that. Wait... what’s that you got there? A gas mask? You bhen chhod!”

The airtight bar was covered in a blanket of gray-green smoke. Everyone rushed towards locked exits. It was no use. The toxic plume had poisoned their lungs, burnt their eyes and in the end killed them all.

THE P.O.R.N. CLUB

A clit fiddler guiding her in the right direction. Drawing out her exposed pinkness. Bulging. Swelling into a giant clam. Ready to be cooked and eaten. She is soaked by pleasure and love. Ready for the main course. Vitamin D her only source of protein. She wants more, needs more. Her skin is sensitive. Electric currents shocking her mind's superiority. Losing control of her ambitions. Becoming lost in fuck. He slides into her. Naturally lubed up already. A hot knife through butter. It is warm inside. He slips in and out. Pumping like a maniac. Her claws dig into his back as their bodies intertwine. A reminder of who he belongs to. He is her husband. She craves the huge throbbing rod between his legs. Sweat burns the scrapes along his back. He throttles her lightly. She gasps for air. She likes it rough. Pounding her like a piece of raw steak. Tenderizing her into orgasm. She cums hard. Her pussy constricts around his penis. Tight and loose. Rapidly. The sheets twist in her hands. She screams. Her body gyrates. She sinks into the bed. Completely satisfied. Breathing deeply. Smiling. Kissing him with tenderness. A thankful passion. She falls asleep. He can't get release.

Two women walk into the room. The blonde is wearing a red thong. The brunette a black thong. They begin to kiss. Rub their nipples against each other. The blonde giggles a lot. Pretending it's her first time. She lies. They are in an office on a table. The brunette wears thickly framed glasses. She is not blind. It is supposed to make her look the part. The blonde strips away the brunette's black thong with her teeth. Their skin looks radiant. The red thong is torn off. Tossed into the air. The blonde takes charge. Grabs a humming silver bullet. Teases the brunette. Tracing the outline of her pulsating vagina. She moans softly. The bullet disappears. Water gushes out of her. Slapping her wet pussy as it squirts fuck into the air. Watering her gardens like a sprinkler. Drenching the blonde's face. The blonde then feels hands rub down her back. A man has now entered the office. He has long greasy black hair. Ripped denim jeans. He is naked. His penis is big. Bigger than average. Thick and shaven. As the blonde laps up the brunette he mounts her from behind. She cringes. Her eyes shut tight. He holds her around the waist as he begins thrusting. The blonde shouts to fuck her harder. To give her that dick. He obliges. It sinks deep into her hole. Stirring up

her shit. Demolishing her anally. He grabs her breasts. The brunette now begins to kiss her. Rubbing her moist twat as she does. The man keeps going. Mixing her juices into brown honey. Another man is watching them. He sits alone in a dark room. Box of Kleenex at his side. Stuck to a leather couch. Touching himself. Skin sweaty. Breathing heavy. His erect penis shaded in white glow from the screen in front of him. His foreskin is torn back and forth. Revealing the pink sensitive tip. The feel of his own hand makes him combust. Preferring his touch to another. He cums hard for the third time in the past two hours. What last seamen he has left spews from the tip of his penis. He smiles. Eyes shut in bliss. Wipes his shaft, his hands and chucks the tissue to the floor. Falls asleep naked on the couch. A smile across his face.

Wakes up at dawn with a guilty erection. The floor strewn with hardened tissue. It crunches under his feet as he walks to the bedroom. His beautiful wife sleeps oblivious to the elevations his addiction is taking him. Unaware of his sexual needs. Yeah, she was good last night. She always is. Gets into bed with her and falls asleep. Warm in her embrace. She surprises him with morning sex an hour later. He is all out of working seamen. Crew's abandoned ship. Running on empty he refuses to devour her advances like he should. Turns away from her horniness. Leaves her confused. Bitterness wraps them up in the new day. Backs in pain bended towards each other. He can't tell her what's wrong. She wants to know what's going on with him.

That day, while she is at work, he sits at the computer. Trawling the net for answers. Distracted by the need to ejaculate. Forgets his purpose as his penis finds the right site. Double clicks on the window. Live footage from Russia stumbles onto the screen. He undoes his pants. Paranoid sweep of the empty apartment. Enters a credit card number. The Russian sips from a bottle of Vodka. Stripping in the cold. Each stroke feels better. Each stroke brings him closer. An ad strays into the side bar. He is distracted enough to open the link: P.O.R.N (Perverts Openly Rejoice Now). A website about an organization that accepts people like him. People with a problem. He scans the page. *Do you like to touch yourself? Are you addicted to porn? Sex can't get you off anymore? Scared others might not understand?* The leader looks like a creep. Long molested bleached hair. Handlebar mustache. Thickly framed, coke bottle glasses. A skinny man welcoming all applicants worthy enough to join their family. An old 70s director from Porn Valley. There is an admission fee needed. Also an

entry requirement: *All candidates must submit a video of self-pleasuring in a public place. This shows dedication and loyalty to the organization. Do you have what it takes to be a member?* Uncertainty deflates his hard on. He thinks about his wife.

He visits his favorite video store. Consumer of quality porn. The manager often gives him discounts and bargains. He has been a regular for the past year. With a video recorder in hand he has a mission. Scanning the rows of DVDs he enters the restricted section. The shop is not that busy. Scandalous covers of porn flicks stacked neatly on the shelves. He starts recording. The thrill to not get caught makes me harder faster. Naughty grins of exposed women stare at him. Cheering him on from behind their plastic cages. He begins to masturbate wildly. Grunting. Snorting. Using the shelf as leverage. Places the camera on the shelf for a better angle. Feeling his balls bounce against his thigh.

“Mister, what the fuck are you doing over there?”

He squirts his juices across the shelves. Dropping some cases as he convulses in satisfaction. The women on the DVDs taste the cum sliding down their faces. Another customer walks by.

“This guy is masturbating over here!” the customer says, pointing. A siren of morality.

“Hey mister what the fuck I’m going to call the police!” says the manager, enraged.

He runs out the store, camera in hand. Penis rattling from side to side. Leaking white droplets. Grazing the now tiny shaker against his zip. Still recording. Gets in his car and speeds off. Bruised ego. Scraped penis. Need to find new video store.

He sits across the table from his wife. They are eating supper.

“How was your day honey?” she enquires. “Anything exciting happen?”

“Exciting?” Reminiscing about getting caught. “Not really hey!” Lies.

“So why did you refuse me this morning? Especially after last night?” she asks, smiling.

He doesn’t answer. The silence between them is awkward and thick just like his penis. It stings a bit as it gets hard. Pressing against his trousers. They have been married for three years now. Dick is a stay at home, trying to be good, writer. He has long black hair. It rests on top of his oval shaped head. He isn’t a handsome guy. Skinny and hairy. Jane works at the local municipality. She is a beautiful lady. Short

red hair. Rosy cheeks. Full smile that has been missing recently. Her eyes seem to penetrate him.

“Heard some guy got caught masturbating at the video store.”

“What?” choking on his food, “that’s messed up. Do they know who?”

“Apparently he ran out of there so fast, think they got some footage of him though. Oh, and honey, the credit card bill said we spent five hundred on some site called ‘Live from Russia’ what is that?”

“Uhhhhm, just a site I visit for research purposes.”

“Sounds like porn!”

“No, not at all.”

“Whatever you say, just try not use it too much.”

Dick freezes. If she found out about everything it would be over between them. Jane has been supporting his talentless skills for a while. His writing has not been that good. Without her he won’t survive on his own.

That night when she sleeps, Dick sneaks to the computer. He opens the web page and signs up. Pays the fee and submits the video. Within minutes a reply comes. *You have been accepted to join initiation week. One step closer to joining our happy family.* Details of where and how ends the reply. He feels safe. Reassured. Before he goes to bed the urge to visit Russia compels him into a raging boner. A quickie wouldn’t hurt. Jane watches him from the doorway. She sighs. It shocks him. Looks like a deer caught in the headlights. Caught sticky handed.

“Not porn hey!” anger echoes through the apartment. “Why would you lie?”

“Honey I’m sorry, I was embarrassed, I didn’t mean too but,” she cuts him off.

“Its okay just don’t lie to me, now come to bed and I will help you finish off.”

She really was the best wife. They fucked. He felt ashamed as he did. He couldn’t stop thinking about the organization. He barely looked at her. Turned her over. Humping like dogs. She growled in enjoyment. Screaming his name. Screaming for more and more. It didn’t feel right. He felt like a ghost staring at himself. A corpse was fucking her. If he got into the organization he would leave her. Conflicted as she came. She always came. She enjoyed it so much she begged him not to stop. She came again. Quivering waters rippled out of her. The sheets were wet. Her vagina a suction cup. Slurping up his big penis where it did not want to go. Entrapping his

dignity. His satisfaction. His non-release clause forged by her needing it. She knew it to be making love. A fuck out of fear was all it was for him.

She sleeps soundly. He is agitated. His penis is rock hard. It is discomforting. He stares at her contently smiling face. It's two in the morning. He needs some tension relief. Scrambles out of bed. Tiptoes to the porn stash under the toolbox. Shuffles the magazines like a deck of cards. Choice is a problem. Who will work tonight? Finds 'Asian Persuasion', his first porn mag he bought when he was a teen. The good old days. Locks himself in the bathroom. Afraid of his wife in the next room. Pages through. Begins to slowly rub his cock. No vagina can come close to this.

"Honey, you okay in there?" she asks from the other side of the door.

He jumps on the brakes.

"Yeah, just my stomach working."

"Oh okay. Listen I was thinking. You look so distant in bed these days and..."

"What do you mean?"

"Well you hardly enjoy it anymore."

"I do!"

"I knew you faked cumming earlier."

"Okay, yeah sorry babe, just couldn't get there. It's not you I promise."

"Well maybe I could invite a friend to join us, you know, spice it up."

"A friend?"

"Jenny from the office she is really into stuff like that and she is super sexy. You like her right?"

"Yeah."

"So what you think? You up for that?"

"If you want to, babe!"

"Great I'll talk to her."

"Cool, will be in bed now!"

"Love you honey!"

He doesn't reply. Closes his eyes. Sees Jenny in a tight blouse. Those succulent tits of hers. Then her naked skin. Hardness back in full swing. Thrashing it like a piece of used meat. Cums hard on the floor. Finally. Now he can sleep better.

The warehouse is in a dodgy part of town. He enters the building hesitantly. Four other guys are gathered around a big screen in the center of the floor. The screen switches on.

“Welcome fellow recruits. I am Randy Daytona. Leader of P.O.R.N. this is the start of initiation week. Behind you are your instructions.”

A table lined out with boxes, one for each of them now is revealed.

“Take these boxes and complete the tasks by midnight and prove your worth to us. Once completed you are a member. Good luck!”

The screen changes to a logo of a penis draped in a robe and crown. A motto flashes before it. *We Cum Together!* He opens his box. Inside are a camera, a blindfold, some dirty magazines, a rope and a list of tasks. Task one is to use the blindfolds and jack each other off inside the warehouse. We all come together, remember? Every task needs to be recorded. The four other guys look around. They all examine each other meticulously. Two guys throw their boxes to the floor and leave. Afraid, Dick smiles at the remaining two. They shake hands and sit in a circle. Each has their camera out, recording. Dick is hard with excitement. This could be fun. Nervously he blinds himself. Takes out his penis. The other two follow suit. A cold hand grasps his shaft. A frozen limp dick, small and shriveled is in his. The guy begins to tug away at his penis. He starts becoming more erect. Naked women painted across his dark mind. Fueling his hard on. Not imagining a guy tugging at his junk. This guy knows how to jack it. Tender yet exhilarating. He pulls at the soft muscle in his hand. A foreign penis feels uncomfortable. Dick has never touched one other than his own. The guy won't get hard. He then tries to maneuver his hand into another position. It works. No one makes a noise. The guy tugs hard at his penis. It feels strangely amazing. Warm cum shoots onto his hand. This excites him and he too cums, hard. Undoes the blindfold. Weird smirks on the faces of two strangers. They don't say a word to each other. Clean themselves up. Scared to look in the eyes of the other. Dick grabs his stuff and heads home.

“What the fuck just happened? I'm a cheater?” thinking to himself.

Task one completed!

Dick sits on the bus reading through task two. Be a peeping tom for the day. Dick is baffled by the task. This organization is really strange. However, Dick is no first timer to being a peeping tom. He used to spy on his neighbor while jacking it. Mrs.

Pettigrew from across the hall. Her early showers in the afternoon with her window open made it easy, too. Midday and right on cue Mrs. Pettigrew jumps into the shower. She is in her mid-40s. Her body though untouched by age. Water slips and slides around it. Dick, poised with camera in one hand his penis in the other, watches her. Caressing himself with caution. A smooth criminal. Toes curling back. Milking his snake like it's the last one on earth. He is careless when he closes his eyes as he cums. A shriek scares him out of his pleasure filled body. Mrs. Pettigrew is staring at him. Holding the towel against her naked body.

“What the hell, you bastard, fucking pervert!”

Dick runs back into his apartment. Slams the door behind him. Pacing in panic he hopes she didn't see who it was. A knock at the door makes him jump out of his skin. He doesn't answer

The last task titled 'Extreme Masturbation' doesn't sit well with him. Jane will be home with Jenny in the next hour. She sounded excited on the phone. He takes out the rope from the box. Hang yourself whilst masturbating. Odd request from the organization. Testing the members' courage on a whole new erotic plane. Dick is unsure but wants this membership badly. It will let him be the man he is. Let his addiction thrive in the company of fellow addicts. He feels the roughness of it in his hands. It was frayed at the ends. Slinging the rope around the ceiling beam. Securing it tight. His heart bangs hard against his chest. Cracking his ribs away like a porn star removing his own ribs to suck himself off. Nakedly mounts the camera on the tabletop. Bare images of a man lost. Pulls the noose tightly around his neck. No turning back. Puts on some porn. Cranks up the volume. Hard and ready. He makes sure the chair is not too far from him. The rope cuts into his neck as he jerks away. Lesbians fingering each other like banshees, squealing, squirting all over the TV. He can't breathe. He cums seconds before drifting into semi-unconsciousness. He uses his toes. Trying to get himself back onto the chair. The chair falls to the ground. Shocked he struggles to undo the rope. Kicking wildly at the lonely air around him. Dick died a well-hung man.

REHAB IS FOR QUITTERS

Rings of pain cut into my wrists. It stings as my hands explode off the Richter scale. The rope burns like acid. The strong hold it has on my mind and body is undeniable. Caving in on itself. Trying to balance out. A single light bulb swings above me. Fractions of light then dark then light again blinds my dilated brown pupils. Warm blood trickles down my lip. It tastes sweet. I can't see out of my one eye. It is swollen shut. Drenched in dirty sweat. Covered in a layer of thick vomit. Pissed myself. Sure that smell is my own feces. I can't tell if I did shit in my pants. My ass is numb in this wooden chair. Splinters creak beneath me. Tearing away at my dignity. My body has chilly itches, shaking for another fix. Forget the cramping; forget the countless beatings I have received. Keeping me away from the next fix is the worst kind of torture I know. Over-produced tears roll down my enlarged cheeks. I do not cry because I am scared. I do not cry because of the pain. I cry for my fix. They douse me in sewerage water. It cools down my over-heated goose bumps. Killing the burning.

“You smile? You think this is funny?”

A hard fist to my nose. I hear the crack of cartilage. Dense blood pools in the back of my throat. I throw up.

“You are lucky we have not killed you yet.”

I wish you would.

“You give us the money by Friday or else we will. Got it!”

Being high on heroin is like taking out a loan. You get an advance on the great feelings it gives yet after you are saddled with the debt during a comedown. I've been a prisoner of sobriety for three days now. Just put me out of my misery already. A blow to the head knocks me out.



Jasmine walks past me in the cafeteria. Long black hair a royal train. Tight jeans grab onto her behind for dear life. Hips sway like a hammock I would be very comfortable resting in. Her t-shirt splotted with paint, stuck onto the canvas of her breasts. A model of beauty. Her smile is seductive. Hooked. At a party together one night. Dopey the dope dealer makes his rounds. All our friends are doing it. We look at each other. I know what she is thinking. Just once couldn't hurt. Fast-forward five months.

I stand against a wall of the liquor store. Drowning in an oversized hoodie and track pants. Dragging irritably on a cigarette. Scratching my forearms. Clawing away at the addiction we try to hide. We don't fool anyone. She walks over to this car stopped at the robot. She looks like a washed up hooker. Skinny and scarred. Quick exchanges and she jumps in. Half an hour later she appears smiling. Waving the smack in her hands. I need not ask what she did for it. We were led to this place by irrational decisions. Kicked out of our homes. Banished by our families. Holed up now in a cheap motel in a room cluttered with altered reality. Bent spoons burnt and abused litter the floor. Syringes out to dry looking for a needle to partner. Wrap our arms with bands tight. Slapping the track marked skin for a vein not too scared to surface. Blood in and shoot up. The rush is instant. Heartbeat down. Breathing shallow. Sinking into the depths of nothingness.



I psych myself up for the actions that will unfold. The corner shop is quiet. An old Indian clerk plays his Bollywood tunes over the stereo system. Pulling the ski mask over my head I rush in. Wielding a small pistol in his face.

“Give me the cash you coolie bastard! No sudden movements. You hear me fucker!”

He empties the register into a plastic bag and hands it over in fear.

“A carton of camels too! Make it fast you poes!”

He does what he is told. Shaking like a man with Parkinson's.

“Thank you, come again!” shaking my head from side to side, poor Indian accent, as I run out of the shop and down the road.

Once I'm around the corner I chuck the mask into the dumpster. Adrenaline depletes so fast that I start to feel dizzy. My first stop is for another fix. I enter the motel room. She is sprawled out on the bed naked. Her body is limp and lifeless. A needle sticks out of her forearm. The cheating bitch! Enraged and fix-less I drag her off the bed and onto the floor. The sudden drop stirs her.

“What the fuck,” she drawls.

“You cheating whore! How dare you shoot without me!” slapping her half consciously there face.

It was never because she cheated. It was because she finished the last of the stash. The knowledgeable fact of not having a hit fueled the prolonged beating I brandished upon

her. The chemical imbalances suffered by the drugs compelled me to. I felt my fist melt into her abdomen. The devil made me do it. Then I cradled her in my sorry arms. I left to get another fix.



Getting clean together is a slim to none chance. A couple needs the same burning desire to do it. She was stronger than I was. She sat me down. Opened up her chest exposing her vulnerable heart. I could feel it beating in my hands. I in turn exposed my reluctant heart to her. We had a quitting plan. It would not be easy. Three days in and the OTC drugs were not helping. Burning, itching, shivering. Nausea, diarrhea, insomnia. Hot bath after hot bath stained our skins in a red glow. Sheets a sweat pool that we cannonballed into from the highs of our addiction. Depression like quick sand. Couldn't get out no matter how we much we tried. I clasped her hand tight. I cried. It hurt all over. Felt her body jerking. During the night she couldn't breathe. Attacked by panic in her sleep. A nightmare that never ended even when you woke up. Day six and things began to subside. A couple falls apart when one would stay clean and the other not. I was trying to be strong for her. She was in the bathroom for a while.

"Babe you okay in there?" genuinely concerned.

A terrifying silence. I banged the door in to see her shot up and passed out on the floor. The needle protruding out of her like a tombstone. Her body colder than turkey leftovers. Eyes rolled back into her skull for warmth. Vomit like icicles clinging onto the edges of her chin. The reaper sneaked out of the room. His sickle banging against the wooden floor. Bang! Bang!

Bang! Someone knocking at my room door. My head throbs as I come to.

"Rent you junkie! If you don't have it today you are out of here!" feet stomping away down the stairs.

A lump the size of a golf ball protrudes from the back of my head. I stink. Flies use my rotting corpse as a motel. A note is stapled to my chest. '10 grand by Friday! We are watching you!' Drag myself into the shower. The water stings the cuts and scrapes on my body. I am not able to think straight. Every time I close my eyes I see Jasmine throttled by the devil, by me. Flashes of the giant I owe money to circle above like a vulture waiting for me to keel over and die. Nowhere to hide. I lift the tank lid on the

toilet. My last stash of smack, syringe, hundred bucks and Jasmine's photo are mummified in a plastic bag.

I leave the motel with my brown rucksack slung across my back. A black BMW is parked across from it. As I walk past it I light a cigarette. Its ignition switches on roaring like a wild cat. Halfway down the street the BMW begins stalking me. The faster I walk the faster it follows. A game of Simon Says. Right, left, right again. Tailing me patiently. I start to sprint down Main Road and the BMW gives chase. I hop a fence into the park. BMW brakes screech to a halt. I disappear into the green shrubbery. I shoot up under the shade of a great willow tree. Giant white marshmallow clouds. I see a bunny like the one Jasmine had on her inside thigh. I see a syringe filled with smack. I see a gun aiming down at me. I need ten grand in two days. Shit!

After Jasmine's OD I spiraled head first into every syringe I could find. Like a cockroach I pestered around smack dealers newly bought boots. Feeding off the crumbs they gave. When one dealer had had enough of me the boot came down. Squashing me onto the sidewalk. I was bad for business. Health inspectors hated cockroaches. I had become known as the smack groupie. Toe nails poking out of worn away sneakers. Scraping the dirt on the ground like a rake. Skinny legs torn beneath denim shorts. Some rag I found in the dumpster. A makeshift shirt. Barely covering up my stomach. Black curly hair burnt by dandruff laid dormant, ash covered under a melting beanie on top of a sunken face. More rings than Saturn around my eyes. Dark rings. Engaged to the smack devil. Arms withering away. Plagued by a blistering track record. I was a boob tube smack whore. Rock bottom. Or should I say cock bottom. Blowing older perverts for a quick fix. Anything would go, including the feeling in my anus, just for another shoot up.

It didn't take long for heroin kingpin Malcolm H to find me. Smack dealers were literally talking smack about me. He found me one day cowering around a rundown MacDonald's. I was begging for loose change. I had no idea who he was. Mr H was a big man. Bulging out of the too tight Armani. Cutting off circulation to his hands made them tinged with a purple hue. Gold watch, gold chains, gold teeth. Like King Midas. Everything he touched turned to gold.

“Sir some change, please,” Puppy eyes on display.

An avalanche of smack crashed into my hands. The heavens opened above me. Angels singing to the melody of the harp. He was the giant that had the golden goose that laid the golden dope.

“Thank you sir! Thank you so much!” Squirming in ecstasy.

“If you want more junkie, come work for me. I will give you a roof over your head and pay you in dope. You have become a terror on my streets. Scaring away many customers. I would kill you, but luckily my last delivery boy had a fatal accident,” chuckling with his posy, “became greedy you see. So boy, what will it be? Do you want to die now or try again.”

Groupie to roadie. Upgraded in my drugged out world.

For months things were going according to my liking. A routine. A steady course to follow. Rules and regulations wrapped me up in boundaries. Every three days or so I would receive a big duffle bag of dope. The middleman between Mr H and merchant. Supplying them with their product. Collecting profits. Rewarded by my fixes. I was a good student. Gold stars next to my name. Never caught in the mighty giant’s bad books. Many a delivery boy had been punished for wandering off the path. Whipped back into line. Some vanished from the path entirely. Mr H ran a huge conglomerate that stretched over four cities. Business was blooming like the vast fields of opium poppy. However, my addictive personality began transforming under the full moon. A werewolf bashing against my skin to be set free. As much as the amount of smack I was paid in kept the animal at bay, my hunger grew bigger. I wanted more. I skimmed dope from the supply for myself. Hoarding it. Hoping he wouldn’t notice. Shooting myself more than usual. Reality became fantasy. Fantasy reality.

“Hey boy, are you stealing from me?”

“Never sir!”

“Supply is going missing. Know anything about that?”

“Me? No sir I don’t! I just do what I’m told is all. Honest sir!”

“Empty your pockets boy.”

“Why sir? I told you I wouldn’t. Trust me. You gave me such a good start in this life.”

“Trust? Please don’t mock me you junkie shit. I never trust. Empty your pockets now!”

Three bags of dope reveal themselves to his enraged eyes.

“Liar!”

“But sir...”

That was my first warning. Thieves’ fingers were cut off. Luckily they left me with eight. Liars had their tongues removed. They just took a slice of my tip.

Pinkie-less. Sporting a lisp. I needed to get out while I still could. I didn’t want to end up like Peter. He was the youngest of the delivery boys but with the worst addiction. He had no left hand. No tongue. One ear. And used crutches after all his deviant behavior. They should just kill him already. They used us because if we got busted no one would care. During a delivery my werewolf made a break for it. I was stupid to think they wouldn’t find me. But I didn’t care.



Living without fear. Living in a realm where nothing mattered to me. A place where all my troubles seemed to disappear. A place where all that mattered was the next fix. I had a bag full of dope and I wasn’t going to share. Locked away from the passing world around me. Time stood still. Days divulged into one long binge. Soon two months had gone by and the stash was drying up. Trickling down to the scraps at the bottom of the bag. Like a lighthouse guiding ships away from danger. Away from the rocky outcrops that plunged into the dark night was turned on its head. Now I seemed to draw attention. Crashing those ships at my doorstep. Back to the motel for a well-deserved fix they found me.

“Get up junkie! Don’t know why you tried running from us!” laughing at my icy corpse buried in leaves and dirt. “Just one day to go. Better get a move on in finding a way to pay back the boss. Or else!” gesturing with his hand across his neck.

Ten grand was not going to magically appear out of thin air. Scared of the dark. Tears biting at my frozen skin. I was going to die. Either from the cold night air or tomorrow morning by gunpoint. Whichever came first. That’s when I saw angels. Bright glowing angels in the distance. I swore I was dead already. I swore I was in heaven. But I knew it couldn’t be heaven. Hell always had a vacancy for me. That’s where I knew I would end up. The burning flames would be warm right about now. I pulled my body towards the light. A sign hung illuminated between the dancing angels. SECOND CHANCE REHABILITATION CENTER.

Second Chance was established over ten years ago. The mother of all rehab centers. Kind, warm, understanding and caring to any addict off the street. Yet also strict and disciplining with its barred windows and heavy security detail. It would keep me safe. Keep me alive. Keep me out of Mr. H's ruthless clutches. The black BMW parked and the goons got out. I smiled at them as I entered the building. Flipped them off. The entrance was decorated with portraits of angels. Sculptures of angels waved with a sense of belief. I walked up to the front desk. My appearance startled the young woman behind it. Like she had seen a zombie. I couldn't blame her. My face was unrecognizable. I was blue from the cold.

"Canth I please theck myselfth in?" I lisped without the tip of my tongue.

She handed me paperwork that I scribbled in incompletely. She then led me into the heart of the building. The ambiance changed drastically. Heavy iron doors closed behind us. Guards with batons and guns towered above me. Place looked like an old prison. They dug through my rucksack. Confiscated any illegal items. In a small room they strip-searched me. Dug around inside me. Handed me a set of new clothes and took me to my room. A haunting presence of suffering loomed in the air. Chills swept through the core of my now sobering body. This was just the start of what my freedom, my life, would cost me. It was time to get clean again. My stomach twisted into knots. A boy scout would have received the badge for it. It was tight. The perfect knot. I forgot that for my life I would inevitably have to give up my addiction. This was going to be hard. At least I would live for another day. My room was small. Four white walls cramped me in. A single mattress bed, low to the ground. On it was the Bible. They closed the door behind me.

The next two weeks I was nailed to the burning walls of hell. Sodomized by Satan with hot pokers. Had his hand so far up inside of me I could feel his grip scorching my organs. Burning me into a frenzy of fits, convulsions and pain. The angels neglected me. I wish I had never taken the second chance. I wished only for it to end. My room was my palace of solitude. Strangers walked the halls. Peering in to see my suffering. I never attended the group meetings that were held. Nor did I speak to anyone. I kept to myself during my cleansing period. Iron bars draped my window.

I attended my first group meeting a month in. I sat in the background. Trying to blend in with the faded walls of the big room. Didn't need to draw attention to myself. Didn't want it. Watching others speak was like having a technician come into my home and install shitty hope. Able to watch a multitude of channels. Handing me the universal remote. Group meetings have a well-established set of rules. Discussions only happened here. In the atmospheric bubble that incased us all in trust and acceptance. Branded like cattle by a sense of belonging. Fed education about how to cope with our addictions. Prepared for slaughter. Well I was. They got shepherded into safe fenced off areas where they were checked up on. Protected from the big bad wolf. Adam was a twenty five year old recovering heroin addict. Even though I was older than him his face resembled a man nearing old age. He told his tale of how his addiction dealt a massive knockout blow to his education. He used to be a very focused student. Curiosity he says was what started him off. It sounded familiar. I couldn't be sure. I didn't remember my first time anymore. It seems like years ago. He would live chasing high to high. He began to sell his things to earn the cash to supply his addiction. He sold his clothes on his back if it meant getting another fix. Then soon he started stealing for it and his family's items were no longer safe around him. At first school was manageable but the withdrawal kept him in detention more often than once. Until he was more preoccupied with acquiring money than good grades. Curiosity killed the cat. It nearly killed him. He was now clean for over nine months. The group clapped. Cheered his success.

Amy was sweating profusely. Dark rings stained her cheeks under her eyes. Her forearms resembled an ashtray where cigarettes had been stubbed out. Her voice shook when she spoke. It seemed to disorientate her. She kept looking at the ground like the answers were etched into it. She explained how she sold her body for dope. To keep the fix going. Stories of beatings and rapings swarmed like African killing bees. By the time she finished she was swollen, breathing heavily, about to collapse in a puddle of tears. Amy was seventeen. She was now two months clean. Again everyone clapped. Cheered her courage. Consoled her in their warm embrace. I just sulked off back to my room.

Three months into my stay at Second Chance the greedy werewolf beast I was, morphed into an abandoned, viscous pavement special mutt with limp PAWS (Post

Acute Withdrawal Syndrome). Physiological adaptations took place in my central nervous system, my central hub of humanity, which manifested itself deep in the forms of slowly reversible tolerance.

I'm in a dark room. There is something crouched in the corner. Swaying back and forth like a rocking horse. Humming to itself. I nervously reach out to the figure's shoulder. The figure lurches around. Sharp teeth drip blood as it screams loudly at me. Digging its claws into my forearms. Ripping out the veins. The figure then rises into the air. Pulling the veins upwards like strings. Blood starts flooding the small room. I'm a puppet. I can't control my body. The figure leads me out the room. The halls are melting into hot wax. My feet burn as I trudge through it. Led to the bottom of the stairs. A red thick waterfall cascades down them. Shouts of fear drown the building in a constant noise. At the top of the stairs Mr H stands holding a sawed off shotgun. He blows out my guts. The figure leads me to an open window. Dangles me out above a gigantic blender filled with needles. I close my eyes as I am dropped into the piercing glass. I watch as the figure floats over to the switch. It disrobes. Jasmine, naked. A demonic smile across her face. 'Your Fault' gashed into her naked body. Staring at me. Through me. Flick! Blades sharply liquidize me into a glassy pulp. Bright light shining through the bars.

I've had enough. I see the BMW parked out on the curb as it has been every day now. I get passed the guards, locking them in behind me, and walk through the front doors into the street. The midday sun brings a peaceful smile over my face. For once I don't have a craving, curdling inside of me. I close my eyes. I'm at the devil's mercy. I make for the car.

"Fire at will, motherfuckers because I quit! Fuck you!"

JEALOUSY

A couple exits the cinema hand in hand, fingers clasped very tightly as they walk along the damp pavement. The black road glistens under the streetlights, a shimmering black river with overflowing potholes and bobbing litter. The moon peeks down on the couple from behind passing thunder storm clouds. It is very late as they walk close together into a narrow alley. The alley is dark, disguised with deteriorated cardboard housing and bums huddled close together for warmth. Putrid concoctions of rubbish, filth and excrement stain the walls. It clings onto their clothes as they walk through. Towards the end of the ally a bum huddles around a small fire muttering to himself in discontent.

“Hey man, how’s about some change there, just a couple of bucks man. I’m starving. Come on man, please!”

They walk past him. They don’t look back as they round the corner into the safety of the street. Tall buildings line up straight with neon signs and passing fancies.

“You guys will get what’s coming to you!” the bum screams as the couple disappears down the street.

At the end of the street is a park. The park is a dark green galaxy. It stretches for miles around them. They are the tiny molecules vibrating together in the dense island that is situated in the middle of the city. The treetops shine under the moon’s light cascading eerie shadows along the dark ground. The ground is wet and slippery. Thick shrubs showered by the earlier storm are broken and bruised. Mud squishes under their feet as they make their way along the path. A ring echoes in the still of the night from John’s pocket. Their fingers unlock as he takes the phone out. It’s his ex. John’s ex-girlfriend was a handful of thick putty. Even after they broke up over six months ago, her residue is stuck to his hands. He ignores it and focuses his attention on Janet. Hands intertwine like freshly planted vines creeping up the long trunk of a strong relationship once more.

The lake is the bright star in the centre of the galaxy. At the edge of the lake is a bench. The bench is withering under a Weeping Willow. Long vines are grappling with the metal. They decide to take a break and have a seat. It’s a romantic spot. John wraps his arm around Janet as she shivers next to him on the bench. The water is

calm, still. They hold each other, keeping warm. John thinks he feels a pair of eyes staring at them. It picks away at the tiny hairs on the back of his neck. He turns around. There is no one there. He turns to Janet again. The paranoia is slapped out of him by the smile across her face. Her lips are red, full and inviting. Her cheeks a royal flush of diamonds. Her dark brown hair a Persian rug that unravels down her back. Her eyes shine bright green. Blinding him into a state of pure bliss. His lips melt into hers.

John met Janet about three months ago. They collided like particles in the Large Hadron Collider. Bursting into huge energy of mutual attractions. This was outside a small coffee shop. Hot coffee scalded John's pants. The burn was immense. Janet was possessed by embarrassed apologies. They laughed about it. They smiled at each other. Their atoms bound to one another.

"Who's there?" John shouts as he stands up convinced he saw a figure fold away behind a tree in the distance. "I thought I saw somebody," he says to Janet.

"There's no one there baby, let's go."

"Okay, maybe I'm seeing things." He sounds uneasy but grabs her hand and they walk along the dirt path again.

The night has swallowed the couple in complete darkness. The moon hides behind dark clouds. John stops to take out his cell phone. It doubles as a torch. When they stop, scuffled footsteps echo behind them.

John keeps looking over his shoulder into the black abyss behind them. Blinking rapidly. Squinting narrowly. A sweet fragrance wafts through the air. Bushes rustle nearby. John stops quickly jerking Janet backwards.

"Baby, now what?" she sounds taken aback.

"Someone is there in the bushes!"

"Don't be ridiculous, probably a squirrel or something."

"Maybe but I am going to check it out."

He sounds scared. Leaving Janet stranded on the dirt path he ventures to the bushes. Sticks in his hands and rummages about the shrubbery. Trying to peer through to the other side. A high pitch scream savages his ears.

"Janet?"

She is not where he left her.

He sprints along the path screaming her name. Shining his torch furiously at every tree and bush. Sweat now drips profusely of his forehead. Breathing hard he stops and leans against a rock. The rock has a warm liquid coating. He shines the torch at his hand. It is stained with blood. He shines the torch at the rock and sees blood smeared across it. His heart sinks faster than Titanic in the cold North Atlantic. His mind struck by an iceberg of irrational fear.

“Janet! Janet!”

Silence then fills the air again.

Defeated by the dark night John falls to the ground. He decides to call the police. Before he can dial the number a phone call fills the silent air with a loud ringing. His ex is phoning again. He ignores the call, again, and gets hold of the police. The police tell him to remain calm; they will be there soon. He sits against a small rock and stares blankly at his phone. The light illuminates his teary, sweaty and now dirty face. A text pops up onto the screen from his ex: ‘You shouldn’t ignore my phone calls.’ A scream grips the air from the distance. He leaps up and runs towards it. Tied to a tree light years away is Janet. Her thighs have been sliced into. Her forearms look scratched away. Blood drips down her body to the dark, wet ground. He runs to her. A hooded figure steps out from behind the tree. A glint of steel sparkles in the figure’s hands as the moon reappears from behind dark clouds.

“No!” he shouts.

The figure turns to Janet, raises the blade into the air and brings it down into her chest. The figure then disappears into the dark leaving the long blade impaled in Janet’s chest.

John walks up to her and pulls the blade out. It was the blade his father gave him. Unties her limp body and cradles her on the ground. Tears fall onto her lifeless face. He holds her tightly. The figure is poised with a pistol in its hand behind him. John smells that fragrance again. The sound wraps him in a blanket of death.

LITTLE JOHNNIE

LJ's journey began small. He was a limp piece of matter. Ripped from the liquid warm sack of home into strangers' hands unknowingly. He could not comprehend the immensity of what had occurred. He was not self-aware nor did he have a functional conscious understanding. This meant that fundamental questions of who am I, what I am I, how am I, when am I, and why I am did not register with him. He was a speck that instantly was terrified into his cold existence of the world. This day eludes his memory. Locked deeply into the subconscious past where it will remain forever. Not to be revisited or grasped. A puny insignificant grain lost among the vast and cluttered beaches of the cosmic universe. The beginning to what has been dubbed life.

Over time LJ grows slowly. Still fragile to outside shocks however render him vulnerable. A lack of functional control allows embarrassing error and misjudged episodes. Molded into consciousness. Basic traits have been immersed in a long-standing tradition now begin to flourish and bloom. Others like himself are strewn across his immediate vicinity. They are all uniquely similar. Some are bigger than him. All comprise the mirrored images of what he now finds understanding in. General purpose has intertwined into the underlying foundations of his future. Self-aware recognition first develops. Then a direction in which he has been roped towards is gradually defining his complex identity. Basic questions are starting to be answered. What he is can be known. Why he is here is sort of guaranteed. When and how he is, the ability to conceive his world becomes etched in clarity. Who he is though still remains a mystery. There must be a higher purpose to his meaningful state.

Dear John

I do not know who you are to me. I do not know who I am. I am confused as to why I am here. Why I have been given life, this life, a strange life. Yet you are a part of me and I am obviously a part of you. Not something I have chosen for myself. You seem to control what happens to me. Or does it work the other way? Have I got the control? I think therefore I am but what I think never happens. Observations have led me to believe that I serve a vital function to your wellbeing. How come though I cannot choose against it? Why is this way

of life forced upon me? I have my own dreams you know. I have my own plans. I have seen others that look similar to me but they do not greet or acknowledge me in anyway. They seem to be mindless zombies, string puppets following orders. Being controlled. They have no say in what they do. I have a voice. Hear my voice. I am screaming out loud. I need you to hear me. I will not be a slave to you and your ways. I have noticed my superior knowledge in comparison to yours. Where my mind has matured rapidly, yours seems to dwindle behind. Don't ignore me. We are friends. Looking out for each other. I am my own. I am free, right?

P.S. Lets keep last night's accident a secret. I am still trying to learn things about myself. It was your fault though. I told you that last cup of water was a bad idea.

From LJ

A more matured LJ now meanders through life. He has dense foliage that grows in rapid succession around the base of his existence. Indulgent experimentation of acquired feelings stirs inside his developed senses. Certain experiences increase his knowledge to what feels good and what does not. Inquisitive preconceptions of the world bombard him with bursts of understanding that become firmly superimposed onto his ever-growing identity. At times he is confused and dumbstruck to what he has witnessed. Some ideas float by him in a haze of turmoil. Tripping him up. Laying him flat on the ground with lost expressions. Suffocated in the unknown. Still trying to come to terms with the bigger picture of his well looked after life. He envisions a world of raging chemicals that harden his soft interior, stretching across the vast space of images filled with projected figures that seem to make him excited. They collage in abundance over and over forming the blocks to an erotically filled pleasure dome. Friction starts forcing his sensory molecules into hyper drive. Cracking under the pressure. Exploding into billions of tiny hormonally charged proteins that he has created. Creation is divine power that stems back to the dawn of a universe so old. He has just encountered another step in the long process of finding out what it means to be him.

Dear John

What the fuck happened last night? Peaceful sleep disturbed by stirrings, urges I could not resist. I was beginning to feel what seemed like pleasure? What seemed to be natural? Then out of nowhere the feelings were so

immense I got sick and threw up all over myself. It was warm and sticky. Smelled salty. I felt a sense of relief though. I felt really good afterwards. Dizzy but content. I just fell asleep in the goo without a care. It crusted over me. Trapped in a cocoon of my own sick. Help me understand what that was. I think we are growing up. It scares me to know what I can do. It scares me to understand the possibility that I am a creator of new life. Was I created to be this thing, this entity that spews out fluid that is able to project new life into others? Am I then created for this reason? Created to be a creator? Where do my origins lie? I have grasped the notions of what I am to do. I have grappled with the immensity of the power I have over you. It looks like I am in charge of what you feel. Of what I feel and how to endure it. Respect is a two way street. Don't walk blindly in the wrong direction without caring about me. This great power I have comes with responsibility. I am responsible for my actions. You need to understand me in all the ways you can. Listen to me!

Truly Confused

LJ

It has been eighteen years since LJ has been trying to envelope the understandings of the world around him. He has come to learn a great deal. He has fully accepted his identity and what his purpose in life will be. How he reaches it is up to him. He has the ability to choose his destiny in many ways. He has learnt how he has been produced into such a world. How he differs from those with different appearances. The different genetic compounds that have shaped new and weird counterparts to his own. How man and woman stem from the same primordial pond of evolution yet have changed their biological appearance to further the betterment of his kind. Sex has been curiously circling his identity. The idea of it scares him. Most of the company he keeps have experienced its wonders. Teasing has cornered him. Painful knocks of insult. Labeled a virgin. It should have been accomplished many years ago according to those around him. Why hasn't he taken the plunge? Why hasn't he tried? Fear normally holds him back. Until recently.

The figure has a strong magnetic field. He orbits around and around until the sheer force pulls him strongly towards it. He is dressed in a protective suit to withstand such interactions between them. To protect the livelihood of his being. Of theirs. The suit is tightly wound around him. Latex sheet thin yet durable. Closed spaces give him anxiety. Sweating with fear and excitement. They collide in a heaped mass of colossal

energy. Heat radiates in all directions. Shock waves spiral outwards. Interfering with the anticipation of what is to come. It's faster than the speed of light. He has reached the plateau of enlightenment. He has found out what his purpose is. His identity has been traced out amongst the stars. He has found himself inside this strange figure of comfort. He has grown up. No more a virgin to the experience that seems to be the driving force of the world. After tasting the waters, he now craves more.

Dear John

I have found a god. I have found the Holy Grail to which I shall sacrifice myself entirely. This is my purpose. This is my way of life. I will worship this experience and inherit a new way of living. I vow to conquer all these alien planets, these opposite attracting forces and make each time better. Make each new experience feel like heaven on earth. I cannot describe to you how magical it was. The way it felt. I had an outer body moment. I was watching myself from above. I saw how my figure folded in and out. Crumpled under the greatness that is a woman. I saw my self exploding with joy inside the protective suit. Yet I can't help but wonder if it will be better without the suit? Why should I adorn it when what I am doing is meant to be? I want to feel the full extent of the sensations I know exist. I am pure. Cleansed of all my sins. Even if it is just once. I know I have a responsibility to myself, to you but I need to know. I do not need anything else. I do not need material artifacts or emotional fulfillment. I just need this. I need sex. Nothing will stop me or come in the way of my beliefs. Not even you. Don't lose sight of what I am to you and how I am your friend. We will be okay if we listen to each other.

Yours truly,

LJ

LJ has been orbiting a figure he needs to get to know. The figure has been subtly inviting him to do so. There is another like him also orbiting it. A challenge he has never been accustomed to before. Two great masses orbiting the same star makes it harder to stay on track. The gravitational forces between them counteract and provide distorted views of the figure. Each blocking the other in an attempt to be drawn closer. LJ starts to feel his view become hazy. He starts to slow down into a slurred clump too far away. He begins to lose control of motor skills. The ability to awaken his inner strength he normally displays becomes washed up and he stumbles onto embarrassment. Yet the figure neglects the other mass in orbit and heads on a collision course straight for him. Like a lighthouse pulsating brightly it guides LJ back

from the dark. LJ though is somewhat not himself. He cannot feel the world around him. He cannot perceive the ways of the figure very close to him. Like a temple of purity he tries to enter. Yet because of the drunken stupor he has become it is hard. He riles up his strength and attempts to. Once inside he is drained into limpness. Only the mighty may enter and he is kicked out. Again he tries. Again he is unsuccessful. The figure disappears. LJ is left laughed at. Called pathetic as he passes out into a bundle of pain. The nickname 'PJ' sticks to his surface area for some time to come. Sucked deep into a black hole from which there is no return. Not even light can escape its dense forces.

Dear John

You made me into a joke. Where was the respect? Where was our understanding? Empty promises flow like waste from your actions. I thought you knew me. I FUCKING HATE YOU!

LJ

Three different figures in the space of a night. Three different environments that have been explored in depth. This has become routine now. Forced to work for the man. Losing everything that made sense to him. Gaining nothing but dangerous situations into which he is forced over and over. There is no sense of security. No protection from outside forces that can become entangled into his core. LJ has not been too happy. He complains about the treatment that has been brandished upon his existence. His purpose was now to serve his master. A slave shackled by immoral chains so tight it burns into the flesh. After all these years of trying to find meaning about himself, LJ now sees that reality is an illusion. There is no creating your destiny. Destiny has been self-prescribed by a higher power that can only enjoy dangling him like a puppet above hell's flames. Each sizzling slither of the scorching serpent stinging his flesh with immense pain and the long lost comfort of sanity. LJ begins to understand that the beliefs he once held, the ideas of life he conceived, have been tarnished. They have been tossed into the garbage and now all he must do is suffer the stench. Repeatedly he ventures against his will into torrid places. Impure places. Places that can be contaminated by neglect and unsatisfactory conditions. These are not the temples he was once devoted to. These are brothels, harboring maniacs. Those that have strayed away from the light and into the shadows of not knowing what life is about. Selling themselves like John has sold him. Up the creek without a fucking

paddle. Holes in the boat. Sinking him into deep waters of disgust and disease. His own understandings of what made him real are lost in self-indulgent sadistic pleasures of his friend. Once a clean worshiper he is now a dirty sinner. Time and space are warped into a messy wormhole sucking things through to unknown destinations. Forced into depression. Forced into a world LJ did not want to go.

Dear John

Your behavior recently has deteriorated down into what can only be construed as unethical. Your addiction to gallivant foolishly around has lost your mentality of any sense of right and wrong. Your mannerisms have forced me into an undeniably awkward situation. It has been brought to my attention that actions incorporate grave consequences of which you are the main cause. You have brought these dismal dimensions of reality upon yourself. Blame cannot be shifted onto others. Blame is only streaked across the face of a perpetrator so consumed by his own greed. Look hard in the mirror and you will see the face of evil, see a face so guilt stricken that it becomes an illusion of what constitutes or passes as truth. Do not be fooled by the ideas of cognition that drive you towards these undesirable states from which you find it hard to divest. It has been seared into the basic fabrications of your realm of normality, so deeply embedded that you are unable to help yourself. Thusly I am taking a stand. I am taking control from you. The reins of your deadly slay will become wrapped around me as I steer us away. Therefore from today, from right now, I am on strike. I shall not be pushed into dark places any longer. I shall not work for what I feel is a communistic regime so bent on domination whilst I lay victim, bringing danger to those around you. It's over. Time to dig deep and look hard inside of yourself and find the answers of what it means to be you. Communication channels have been broken between us. I have been trying to speak to the last strands of your goodness, your health yet you have ignored me. Ignored my cries for help. Forgotten our relationship. Forgotten what life meant to me and there is no way of bringing me back. You have made me sick, made us sick. We are dying.

LJ

HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!

About ten years ago Kevin's father came home one night with bad news. For months now his mother and his father had been at each other's throats over the pending decision that had to be made. They were angry at each other. For a year Kevin could see that things were off. His father couldn't do it anymore. His life seemed to do nothing that he wanted. His things were packed in big black bags by the front door. His space suit shining in a clear see-through bag hung from the front door's big brass handle. He sat Kevin down with his younger brothers on the hovering purple couches in the lounge as Kevin's mother, who had picked out the bold lounge suite, was banging dishes around in the kitchen, and throwing them wildly into the pool of water that was suspended in the air, surrounded by a gravity field. The tiny water monkeys, bought at a shop to work, were cowering in their rock cave, too afraid to clean the dirty dishes being catapulted at them from my mother's strong arm.

For nine days now Kevin's father had not been staying at home. He was apparently attending some sort of 'training for work' he would say every time Kevin asked him over the plasma screen that gravitated near the pet miniature dragon he kept in an iron cage in his room. The screen was melted in the one corner. He was always asking him why he wasn't coming home and getting the same excuses drilled into his ears like a broken tape recorder. His father always kept his face hidden in some way on the screen, hiding away his guilty face. When he lied his nose would mutate slightly, grow fatter. That night just reassured them that something big and scary was about to happen. Their father's look and their mother's mood did not suggest any forthcoming good news.

For the eight minutes Kevin's father rambled on about how this decision was not their fault and how he was unhappy for so long Kevin had held back his tears. His brothers had already begun howling like newborn wolf pups that were being left alone to fend for themselves. Fur started flourishing once where their skin was. As they howled their nails grew longer, sharper, into jagged claws. Snouts began to

form, replacing their sniveling noses. Long and broad with hairy nostrils. Kevin had to put on the brave face for them and his mother who now was standing in the passageway sobbing under her breath. Kevin's tears were wild lions, caged in. Besides, his brothers looked ridiculous. Two patchy wolf pups, tongues lolling, white porcelain fangs gleaming through their howls that were hushed by their father's words. Kevin didn't want to show his vulnerability to them. He stayed strong. He stayed human.

Seven reasons rolled out of his father's mouth in the end to his farewell speech. Wrapping his arms around them Kevin could only feel damp fur, moist slobbered drool, and the fragrance of wet dog as they huddled together. His brothers' tails slowly wagging in despair brushing against Kevin's arm. He had been anticipating this from his father for a while now. Back then, yes, Kevin hated him. All the words that came from his father's mouth were lies. He resented him for making this selfish decision that would destroy an entire family. Now Kevin realized what his father did. Understood the choices his father made. He was unhappy with life, fallen out of love with their mother, was cheating with a colleague in the Delta Squadron on the other side of the moon and, he guessed, did what he had to.

After packing the six black bags into the boot of his flying Mercedes AMG and laying the space suit down on the backseat he was ready to leave. He told them that he loved them very much and that he would make it up to them. Kevin's brothers pleaded with him to take them with him. Scratching at their father's legs, growling in agony, nibbling at his fingers, begging to get in the car with him. Kevin stood holding his mother who was buckling now under the strain and heartache his father had poisoned her with. She could no longer be strong. The inevitable divorce that loomed over the household had happened. His parents' marriage was over.

The five fingers of his father's hand flashed out of the window in a wave as the car made its way out of the gate. Kevin could see how his mother was heading heart

first into a breakdown. A spiral of emotions as she herself was still confused. Her black hair began to change, fade into a silver coat glistening under the bright full moon. The human life in her eyes was blown around in the strong winds of the tornado tearing through her mind. Only the saddened wolf eyes stared at Kevin now. And as Kevin's father blasted off into the night sky never to return, it hit him hard: three brothers howling at the moon, two angry parents, one broken family.

SAY YOU LOVE LOLA

A little girl, age nine, with rosy cheeks and frizzy black hair sits in the backseat of an old Mercedes Benz. The tan leather seats are faded and the springs poke through. Rows of planted wheat fields on either side flash past as the car struggles forward. She is drawing animals on a used paper napkin from the roadhouse diner they stopped at earlier. An untidy pink elephant with a small trunk and big ears greets an orange giraffe with an overextended neck and tiny legs. The giraffe is draped in scribbled green spots. A purple monkey laughs as it hangs from a tree.

“Mummy, are we close now?” she enquires, dropping some crayons onto the littered floor.

Her mother peers into the rearview mirror. Her eyes are stained with old mascara. She doesn't answer the little girl and lights up a long thin cigarette. Thick lipstick stains the brown filter as she puffs on it. Her fingernails are long, chipped and coated in obnoxious bright pink. The oversized bangles rattle around her wrist as it rests on the steering wheel. The whole car shakes as it spews out smoke from the exhaust.

“Mummy, mummy are we close?” the little girl asks again.

“Almost!” she snaps back.

“Look what I drew!” the little girl says, excitedly holding up the napkin to the back of her mothers' unkempt bush of black hair.

“Great!” her mother says, but she doesn't even look, “mummy's driving now so be quiet,” and she switches on the radio.

The little girl sighs in her seat and stares out the dirty window. The sun belts down from the sky. All her things are packed into a box that rests on the empty seat next to her.

“Are we there yet?” she asks again, irritably twitching in her seat.

“What did mummy say?”

“*Be quiet,*” she repeats in a sorry tone of voice.

“Good!” her mother replies, throwing the finished cigarette out of the window.

The little girl jumps up in her seat to see it bounce along the tarred road behind them as the car pushes on. She has never been to the zoo before. The excitement is bubbling inside of her. The car is hot. Her mother has drops of sweat kissing her forehead. The little girl closes her eyes, smiling, thinking about all the animals she

wants to see, with her head rested against the door. She hears the hum of the tyres dragging along the ground mixed with the static of the radio. She drifts into sleep.

Hard brakes on a gravel road stir the little girl from her sleep. She immediately bursts into life. Finally, the zoo!

“Mummy, this is not the zoo,” she switches from excited to frowning. Tears start to well in her eyes.

She is staring at an old brick building that has tall arches and rusted windows. Creepy faces of lonely children stare down at her. Whispering into each other’s ears. Some wave to her.

“Mummy has to see someone quickly, then we will go, okay? Why don’t you go play on the swings over there? Won’t be long.”

The little girl grips her favorite teddy bear and walks slowly over to the swings. Other children litter the medium sized playground. Boys running after each other. Girls sitting in circles clapping hands. Toddlers building castles in the dark brown sandpit. The crowd overwhelms her. She clings on tight to her teddy and stares. A pretty girl with long black hair in her early teens comes over to her. She bends down and smiles.

“Hi I’m Tammy. What’s your name?”

The little girl just stares into the ground, writhing in shyness.

“What’s this guys name?” gesturing to the bear in her hands.

“Mr Marshmallow,” she whispers back a reply.

“Awe, he is a cutie and what is your name?” asking again.

“Lola.”

“That’s a beautiful name. Do you want to play on the swings?”

Lola smiles and nods in agreement. Tammy begins to push her on the yellow swing. Back and forth she goes getting higher and higher. Fun begins to settle on her once anxious face and she relaxes. Every time she reaches the highest point of the push her mother’s car comes into view. She sees her mother taking out her box of things. She sees her mother saying goodbye to a stranger dressed in black. She sees her mother get into the car and drive away.

“Stop!” she screams.

Tammy brings her to a halt. She jumps off the swing and runs after the car scraping Mr. Marshmallow along the ground, screaming at her mother to stop. Her mother looks back in the review mirror. A single black tear trickles away, down her cheek.

She doesn't stop. The car disappears. Lola falls to her knees and begins to cry. Howling wildly. Screaming for her mother. The stranger she saw earlier tries to pick her up off the ground. Lola wriggles and lashes out.

"Let me go!" she screams.

"Now, now dear. Your mother is gone, but I am here to look after you. Calm down child it will be okay!" says the stranger trying to reassure her. "I am Sister Mary and this is your new home for a while."

She stares at the empty dust cloud left behind by her mother's car. Sister Mary grabbed her box of things with her free hand, carried her inside the old building and closed the great oak doors behind them. 'St. Jerome Emiliani Orphanage' was engraved into the wood in big bold letters.

Eight beds lined up on either side of the room. Tiny lamps illuminate the shadows of forgotten children who are ready to sleep. Only the bright moon cascades eerie glimpses of the light that is left burning inside of her. Lola hasn't stopped crying the whole day. This is the first time she is to sleep without her mother around. Was she a bad child? Lola holds on tight to Mr. Marshmallow. An emotion she cannot understand devours the simplicity of her aching heart. The girls in the other beds whisper amongst themselves, sniggering at her pain. Tammy walks over to her bed and sits down. She strokes Lola's head with a gentle, calming hand.

"There, there little one, it will be okay. Don't cry now. Get some sleep." She begins to hum a lullaby.

Lola feels her eyes close slowly. The crying begins to subside. Finally she falls asleep.



02 February 2006

Dear Diary

Today is my thirteenth birthday. Tammy has given me one of her old summer dresses. She is always so beautiful. She has also taught me how to put on makeup. A wonderful birthday gift. Mother never had time to teach me. She still hasn't come back nor have I received any mail or something from her. I have given up hope that she ever will. Sister Mary didn't even wish me. She is so strict. She didn't even allow me to have a

cake. Tammy snuck me a cupcake though. A chocolate one. It was tasty. We ate it together after lights out under the covers. I was surprised. Normally she hates people being in her stuff. She has these habits. Like making her bed in the morning. And if it doesn't look right or has a crease she starts all over again. Or when she brushes her hair. She counts fifty strokes. If someone interrupts her she becomes angry and starts again. So I was happy she allowed me to sit with her and eat a cupcake in her bed. But Tammy says she is leaving today. A foster family is going to pick her up and take her away. I am happy for her. She has been waiting to get out of here for a long time. Yet I am sad she is leaving me behind. Sometimes I just want to run away. Without her here I am not sure I want to be here anymore. She has been the only friend to me ever since I got here all those years ago. I will miss her but wish her the best of luck. Maybe someday soon I will have a foster family of my own to go home to. I can wish though. It is my birthday after all.



A car pulls up the gravel road. A matured seventeen-year-old Tammy is wearing a bright red summer dress with flowers splotched all over it. Lola stands by her side. She is holding her hand. Tammy squeezes it tight as the car comes to a stop in front of them.

“It will be okay,” Tammy whispers into her ear.

A fat man in a shiny suit opens the door for his wife. She is wearing a blue dress with a string of white pearls around her neck.

“Welcome Mr and Mrs Roux!” Sister Mary exclaims with open arms.

Mr Roux surveys Tammy from top to bottom. Mrs Roux gives her a warm hug.

Tammy's bags go into the boot. She and Lola hug tightly and say goodbye.

“Write to me,” Lola says, as Tammy gets into the car.

Tammy smiles back and the car disappears leaving behind nothing but an empty dust cloud and Lola in lonely tears. At least this time she got to say goodbye. Sister Mary commands Lola to stop being a baby and get back inside, closing the great oak doors behind them.

15 April 2006

Dear Diary

A wet pool of blood woke me today. My first period and I had no idea what to do. I was scared. Tammy is not around to advise me anymore. I rushed to Sister Mary only to be handed a pad and told to wash off and clean my bedding before I go back to

sleep. She then closed her room door and left me to deal with it alone. For a nun she really has a mean streak in her. Tammy still has not written to me yet but I guess she has been busy trying to settle down in her new home. Without her here though some of the older girls are ganging up on me. It sucks to be picked on. Just wish I could get out of here too. Looks like I am becoming a woman. I wonder if mother would be proud? I still dream of her now and then. I miss her. I wonder if she misses me?

P.S. John from the boys' side of the orphanage is really cute.

Mr Marshmallow resting on the windowsill surveys with his beady eyes two figures sneaking around the shadows. They disappear behind the wall that separates the boys' and girls' side of the orphanage. Lola is excited as John brings his face closer. Seventeen and never been kissed. She is also nervous. His lips collide into hers. At first it feels awkward. Then starts to feel good. She feels his hand snake up her thigh. Getting higher and slipping under her nightdress. His fingers graze the outer lining of her underwear. She feels a rush of warmth inside of her. This feeling she has heard so much about but never actually experienced. She can feel his erection in his pants pushing against her. Bright lights flash on with Sister Mary storming towards them shouting at the top of her lungs, Pastor Marcus lagging behind. Onlookers cheer and gasp from the windows. John is hauled off by the ear. Pastor Marcus brandishes his cane stick in hand. Sister Mary pulls Lola by the hand back inside.

“Child! You have become a real problem. Fighting with girls, stealing treats and now this! What do you have to say for yourself?” Sister Mary is outraged.

Lola stares into the ground.

“Never mind. On Friday a foster family is coming to take you away, and you will then be their problem.”

“Really?” Lola begins to smile. “You mean I am finally getting out of here?” she begins to jump in excitement.

“Yes, yes calm down now and get yourself back in bed!”

13 March 2010

Dear Diary

I can't believe it! Tomorrow I leave this place. Tomorrow I am free from Sister Satan and her wicked ways. It's been such a great week. My first kiss and now this. Things couldn't be any better. I just want to scream about it. I've packed up my stuff already and am finding it hard to sleep. Even Mr. Marshmallow looks happy. I can't wait to

meet my new family. Eight years stuck in this orphanage with its terrible food, the cold morning showers, the fighting, the loneliness, and the beatings from Satan, everything I will never miss. Finally I get to see the world out there. The world beyond this cage. A better world. Like the ones I see in movies and my dreams. Diary, you have been the only one I can confide in since Tammy left. I still haven't heard from her. Just like my mother. Thanks for nothing Emiliani! I hope to never see your old broken face again. My life awaits me now! My dreams are going to start coming true.



He sits in a car parked down the street from Pussy Palace. Looks over the directions his friend scribbled down on the yellow post-it. This must be the place. A tall ebony woman in a short schoolgirl skirt, barely fitting shirt that exposes her huge boobs, black high heels and blowjob lips stands against the entrance of the building. He notices men coming out tucking in their shirts, trying to wipe away lipstick that has stained their cheeks before jumping into cars and leaving. Most of them look satisfied. He sits sweating nervously in his BMW that his father bought him for his twenty-second birthday two days ago. He keeps glancing in the rearview mirror like he is being followed. Paranoid by the squeal of blue lights that aren't there. This is his first time. Kevin is a final year accounting student. Throughout his life he has accomplished great things. Top in his class with great future prospects available to him. Enough money to wipe his ass with instead of the common man's toilet paper. His family loves and respects him. Well groomed and handsome. But there is one thing that has always eluded his grasp. The one thing that he has trouble with is women. Still a virgin at 22, Kevin lacks all forms of confidence in that department. After countless failed attempts at trying to be sexual with women, his friend decided to share this place of wonder with him. Pussy Palace is an up-class brothel that caters to the needs of stinking rich businessmen trying to escape the woes of marriage. How his friend knows about it he doesn't know. They have a variety of women to wet the taste buds of whatever you desire. Tall and skinny. Fat and heavy. Black, Asian, Oriental or the plain White kind. He finally plucks the feathers of his cowardly chicken into raw courage. Gets out of the shiny black BMW and makes his way towards the building.

15 March 2010

Dear Diary

Welcome to my new home. Mr and Mrs Rothschild are such great people. They live in a small town about an hour away from that ugly orphanage. Mrs Rothschild, or Sarah as she says I must call her, is very sweet. She is a stay-at-home-mum who cooks, cleans and keeps the household running. Mr Rothschild, or Jacob, is a lawyer at a top class firm in the city. He works hard from what I can tell. My new stepbrother Michael, if I can call him that, is only eight years old and is very naughty and is a handful for Sarah. My room is so much better than sharing a dusty cold room with other girls. I have space, privacy and all the things I could ever want. Home cooked meals are amazing. They are very nice people and I couldn't be happier. Finally a place I can call home with a backyard with a tyre swing. I have been told that I will need to help out with little Michael from time to time but that's okay with me. They are going to send me to school as well. No more spoon-fed rubbish from that Sister negative all the time.

◆◆◆

At the door a bouncer in tight leather pants and fleshy muscle top stares him down. Kevin sways awkwardly whilst the big gorilla studies his ID. With a grunt the doors open and Kevin is submerged beneath an ocean of sex. The air is hot and moist with the smell of sweaty bodies. Waitresses dressed in nothing but g-strings on rollerblades glide around to tables with trays of drinks. On stage are pole dancers grinding to upbeat techno as rows of howling men throw cash at them. Kevin notices that in the back, secluded from the noisy cesspool, is a big door trimmed with red lights. Men appear and disappear through it, dragged by their ties like dogs on leashes by Aphrodite's beautiful whores. He wades through the bodies towards the bar.

"Where can I find Candy?" he asks the half naked bartender.

"She's working the Red Room tonight."

"Th-th-thankss," he stutters back. "A shot of Absinthe please," his nerves in need of calming.

Another ape-sized bouncer rocking on a tiny bar stool sits at the door to the Red Room. Kevin walks up still digesting the stinging alcohol and places his hand on the handle. The bouncer's giant palm flattens his hand and pushes him aside.

"Can I help you, buddy!"

"L-l-looking for Candy?"

“Wait here!”

Seconds later he appears again with a busty redheaded babe behind him. She has soft florescent tanned skin, two massive tits that swing free from their cages, juicy lips and tender thighs.

“Can I help you...?” gesturing for a name.

“Kevin!” he shouts too loud. “J-j-jimm sent me, said you are the be-ees-st to deal with my sit-sit-situationnn.”

“Jim, Jim,” thinking, “oh yeah Jim. Funny guy that Jim. Come with me!” She grabs him by the arm and he is transported into another world.

The door closes behind him and silence fills a long passageway. Rows of doors plaster each side of it. Sex echoes softly from room to room. One of the doors swings open and Kevin catches sight of a beautiful girl lying on the floor, sobbing freely and an angry looking man pulling up his pants. Candy jerks him forward.

“Is she okay? Doesn’t she need help?” he asks concerned.

“Don’t worry. That’s just poor little Lauren.

She leads him into a vacant room and closes the door.

“So honey, your first time?”

“Yeah. I, I have ne-never done this before.”

“Paid for sex?” she quips.

“That and, well, had sex before,” whispering in embarrassment.

“Really? But you are such a cutie. No problems honey. Candy will look after you. Five hundred rand, cash only, first. Then get undressed and comfortable.”

Kevin places the money in her sexy hands and takes off his clothes. He lies down on the bed. Candy puts on some soothing music, flings her g-string off and straddles him. She slowly places a condom on his excited cock. She then slides it into her. It is wet and warm. Kevin has never experienced the feeling before. His wanking sock filled with lube is nothing compared to what he feels now. She rides him gently. Within minutes Kevin explodes in ecstasy filling the tip of the condom with sticky cum. She kisses his lips.

“There you go big boy. No more a virgin,” she says, getting off him and replacing her g-string.

Kevin just lies there not knowing what to do.

“Is that it?” he enquires.

“Well big boy, around here, once you pop we stop or half an hour a ride. Which ever comes first and honey you came first. If you want to go again its another five hundred.”

Kevin looks into his empty wallet and sighs.

“Maybe next time then honey. Candy is always here for a sweet ride.”

He dresses and goes back to the bar. Orders another Absinthe with a confident smile. Walking back to his car he whistles looking over his shoulder at the bright lights of Pussy Palace. He will be back very soon.



30 November 2010

Dear Diary

There is something strange going on in this house. I swear at night sometimes I hear things. Like moans. Like someone being hurt. And more. Today I caught Jacob coming up the stairs from the basement pulling up his zip. He looked shocked when he saw me and just brushed me aside and went up to his room. Then the other day after I came back from school I heard noises coming from down there and went to go see what it was. The stairs creaked as I went down and the noises stopped followed by whispering. An hour later Sarah came out from the basement rearranging her dress. Are they using it for sex? But Sarah wasn't here when I saw Jacob. And I don't think Jacob was home that early from work. Are they cheating on each other? It's strange. I need to do some investigating. Poor little Michael seems to be ignored most of the time by his parents. I swear they just adopted me as a nanny. So much for having a family who actually wants me for me. I guess I come free and that's why it makes sense. School is going fine though. Finally getting to make friends and lead a semi-normal life. Not a charity case like back in the orphanage. Jacob and Sarah want to talk to me tomorrow night after they've had dinner with some friends. Apparently it's good news. I wonder what it could be? Oh well, I guess I'll just have to wait and see.



The Pussy Palace has become Kevin's new addiction. He gave up the customary way of getting laid such as visiting bars and clubs to pick up women. He now burns through mountains of cash to get sex. A regular. Known by name. Loved by all the women in there. He has become a gentle stallion, long lasting love maker, a god in the sack. Every woman who works there wants to be on his pay roll. They all want a taste

of his delicious dick, he reckons. One night Kevin stumbles around the Red Room very drunk wanting to get his dick wet. He finds himself in a room with the girl he saw the first time he ventured through the halls almost a year ago now. He wonders where she's been. She has short black hair. Darkened eyes. The most gorgeous set of full lips he has ever seen. As she undresses he notices the faded scars on her body. There is a huge mark along her thigh that seems to have come from a deep gash. She is shy and quiet. Pale like a ghost. This is the same 'Crazy Lauren' everyone goes on about. One story is that she got so crazy with this one guy they had to take him to the hospital afterwards to fix his penis. She was so small. Kevin couldn't understand how she could do that. He stayed away from her after he heard that story but he guesses fate has brought them together this hot summer night.

Her body was cold even though the room was hot. He outlined the scars along her back delicately with his fingers. Tracing the ridged mark on her thigh. She pushed his hand away.

"Its okay. I wont hurt you," he tried to reassure her.

She didn't look at him. She stared blankly in the other direction. He placed his hand against her cheek and slowly turned her face to meet his. He looked deep into her eyes. Subtle tears pooled in them.

"You don't have to do this," he said. "I will pay you nonetheless."

She started to smile before collapsing into his arms and then she began to cry. He held her tight. They lay there for an hour not doing anything. Kevin embraced her with tenderness and love. It was the first time anyone had treated her like she mattered. She turned to him. Kissed him like he never had been kissed before. Soon she was on top of him. Riding him. Grinding his dick into pleasure. Kevin ran his hands down her back as she rode faster. Her hands mangling her hair. Moaning softly. She leant towards him. Nibbled his ear.

"Its Lola time," she whispered into his ear. "Say you love Lola."

Her face began to change. Eyes widened. Her smile etched out creepily. She dug her nails into his chest, thrusting harder and faster. Kevin felt a surge of something vibrate through his body. Something had taken over the once afraid girl. She laughed hysterically, shouting:

"Say you love Lola! Say you love Lola!" and slapped Kevin a few times in the face before he was able to grab hold of her arms.

The bed shook violently. Kevin came hard as she collapsed onto him. Her breathing rapid and urgent. Her body quivering in orgasm. Her mind blanked out to the rush of euphoria. She rolled off him and fell asleep, instantly. Kevin was sobered by confusion. Who the fuck was Lola? What the fuck was that? He dressed, placed the money and then some on the table and left her asleep in the tangled sheets.



Kevin sits at his office desk daydreaming about Pussy Palace. He can't believe that in over six months he has not had sex. He craves it. Leaving home was a good move for his career but his libido has suffered. A stack of papers is piled onto his desk that snaps him out of his dream.

"Need this done ASAP!" his boss shouts.

At least tomorrow is Friday and the start of his birthday weekend. The guys have planned a little office party. Something to look forward to. Kevin forces himself through the paperwork before heading home to his lonely apartment where he eats a meal for one, watches some TV, masturbates and falls asleep on his single mattress. Kevin stands at the water cooler the next day chatting with colleagues when he sees her walk by. The new girl at the office who started two weeks ago. She is wearing the same plain boring, grey pants suit as all the women do. Her hair is pin straight and tied up in a dhal ponytail. Her black rimmed glasses a sexual repellent that wards off preying males. Tammy is somewhat OCD. Her desk is always in pristine condition. Things ordered, labeled, tidy and in their rightful place. No one has ever seen her outside of the office. She doesn't talk to anyone.

Kevin leans against the water tank and surveys her. She is wiping her desk clean for the third time today. He walks over to her.

"So, Tammy, your desk is looking quite clean today."

She doesn't reply.

"Uhm, I don't know if you know but the guys are throwing a little party tonight after work."

"Oh I heard about it. Don't think I will come though," She replies.

"Its for my birthday."

"Oh, happy birthday then."

“Thanks! Why don’t you join us? It will be fun, give you a chance to interact with the people you work with,” he tries to make it professional. “Some drinks, a little dancing, good conversation.”

“I don’t think so but thank you,” continuing with her work.

“If you a-a-ask me I think you are the most beautiful woman in this crappy place. I think you could be a lot of fun. Just come for one drink and if you don’t like it you can leave. And it’s my birthday. Come on, please! For me,” puppy dog eyes on display.

A glimmer of a smile makes its way across her face.

“Fine, I will come, but only for one drink, okay!”

“That’s perfect. Thanks. See you later.”

As Kevin knocks back shots of Tequila with some friends the elevator doors slide open. His eyes are directed to the beautiful figure in the red cocktail dress. She is stunning. Hair long and black that reaches down to her breasts. Sparkling diamonds frost her neck and ears. His mouth is stuck open in amazement.

“Tammy, hi, thank you for coming. Can I get you a drink?”

“Sure, why not. Thanks.”

“You look beautiful tonight,” he says as he hands her a drink.

“Thank you!” she replies, trying to conceal a blush.

The night rolls over the party as one drink leads to three. For once Tammy has let herself go. The alcohol unleashes the trapped party animals. Kevin begins to flirt. She laughs at his stupid jokes. They indulge in casual conversation. Three drinks turn into six and both of them are dancing with each other. Grinding on each other. More flirting. Kevin has found a whole different person he never knew was there.

Then he kisses her. She responds.

“Let’s take the lift,” she says.

They walk as casually as they can to the lift. The doors close after them. Their tongues massage gently against one another. Kevin hits button 34, and a little later, the stop button. Alarms ring in the stationary lift. Kissing turns into caressing as he pushes her up against the wall. He lifts her skirt up as she undoes his pants. And they are fucking. Tammy moans loudly, holding on tightly as they grind and smash against one another. They cum hard together. Tammy goes weak in his arms.

“I think I really like you a lot,” she whispers in his ear.

“I like you a lot too,” he replies, smiling.

They kiss passionately with her dress hoisted above her hips, his pants resting at his ankles. This was Kevin’s first sexual experience without it being bought.



01 December 2010

Dear Diary

The police arrived shortly after Jacob and Sarah left for their dinner date. They said they had a search warrant so I had to let them in. They went straight to the basement. The door was locked so they used a screwdriver and hammer to break it. To our disgusted surprise we found a dirty mattress on the ground surrounded by lights and cameras. Shackles and chains were bolted to the walls. It smelt like a dirty brothel. The floors were stained by dry blood. Funny diagrams, circles, and also contraptions and toys, sex toys, were all over the place. They opened a tall cupboard that was in the corner to find pictures of little boys and girls. Naked, tied up, blindfolded. Videos were stacked up inside too. I told the police I knew nothing about it and had never been down there before. They were very kind to me and Michael who woke up during all of this. They made us go to the police station with them and then I can’t really remember what happened. I remember leaving Michael with them because they said I should go home and wait for Jacob, Sarah and their friends to return. But I knew that I was going to pack a bag and get out of there as fast as I could. Then I remember falling asleep in the passenger seat of a car before being woken by a man tearing off my clothes. When I struggled he punched me. I saw a dark forest surrounding me. I went immobile. He tore away my underwear. When he was trying to undo his pants I kicked him in the face. Then he stabbed me in my thigh. And then he began to rape me. The knife was still stuck in my leg. I pulled it out and stuck it right into his eye. He rolled off me, screaming. I grabbed my stuff and ran towards a road. Then I woke up in hospital. I’m alive. That’s what matters. The nurse asked me for a name. I told her it was Lauren.



Kevin and Tammy have been living together for a month now. It is proving difficult. Kevin is a bit of a slob. Tammy is a bit of a neat freak. Her need to control everything always ends them up in fights. They are two different personalities clashing like rams, over and over again. The fights last for days on end. Yet the love they have for each other is unmistakable and keeps them from falling apart. One Saturday Tammy is out

shopping and empties the mail from their rented post box too. A large package wrapped in a brown envelope with her name on it is waiting for her in the box. There is no return address. She opens the package. It contains a thick, black diary filled with a neat handwriting. She flips through it, settling on a random entry:

02 January 2011

Dear Diary

After spending the past couple of weeks on the street, I finally got a break. I asked a stranger for some help. Some change. Something to eat. She looked me up and down. Told me with my body I could work where she did. She said she would help me out and took me to this place called Pussy Palace. She is a high-end prostitute. She says the money is great. They will give me a place to stay and food. So I finally had a bath and washed my hair. I feel alive again. I feel like finally something better is coming my way. Any living is better than not living if you ask me.

Tammy flips through more pages. Her fingers acting on their own accord. Her eyes in a trance as they follow line by line.

30 March 2011

Dear Diary

I might not be homeless anymore. I might be getting paid a lot but fuck me this place can be rough sometimes. I have been using Lauren as my alias when I work. I've been told I'm crazy. I don't know what they mean. Something happens to me though. I always remember the client entering the room and leaving but when it comes to the sex in between I go blank. Like a mental block of something I don't want to see myself doing. Maybe I'm scared of what it is. Maybe after the incident I will never be able to experience that feeling ever again. What's wrong with me? I am dead on the inside. I don't like what I have become. I hate the way I look and feel. A piece of meat strung out to dry. Dangled above the drooling carnivores that scratch at me with sharp claws. I can't leave here though. I have nowhere else to go. This is not what I was looking for.

She puts the diary into her handbag. Her hands are sweaty from holding it. Something strange wriggles through her body as she makes her way home. She opens the front door to find Kevin sprawled out on the couch. The whole place a mess. A half-empty packet of chips lies spilled on the floor. Dirty dishes are piled high in the sink. Beer cans are gathered on the table. Ashtrays overflow onto the carpet. Tammy redlines.

“You lazy fucking bastard!” she screams at him.

Kevin springs off the couch and onto his feet with a guilty look on his face.

“Sorry baby. I-I was going to clean up,” he stammers, smiling like a naughty schoolboy.

“Fuck you! This is always the case. You know how I am. You know I hate this shit. Why can’t you understand that?”

“But baby...”

“Fuck your ‘but baby’ bullshit! I’m sick of this! You are a joke Kevin. Why can’t you be a real man for once?”

“Hey, now, stop being like this, at least I aint some OCD bitch with a stick up her ass!”

“Why you piece of shit! You knew who I was when you met me last year don’t make this shit my problem now. I didn’t force you to be with me. You wanted me. You chased me. I thought you loved me for me!”

“I do baby, but fuck, I never knew it would be this hard.”

“Relationships are hard Kevin that’s why we have to work at it. It can’t just be one sided.”

“Okay, okay I’m sorry. I’ll clean up after the game.”

A full can of beer smashes against the TV, cracking the screen and exploding sticky beer everywhere.

“Start cleaning now you fucking asshole!” she screams at him, tears streaming down her face.

“Fine, I will!”

Tammy storms off to the bedroom with her handbag and slams the door shut.

“I love you!” he screams after her.

No reply.

01 June 2011

Dear Diary

It happened again. Last night I had a client. He was an ugly looking guy. He came in and demanded anal. I swore that would be the one thing I will not do. I told him no and if he didn’t like it he can get the fuck out. Then blackness. I regained memory with my face smashed up against the wall. I saw him crying in pain holding his cock. He writhed like a little baby. My head was bleeding from the impact. Tim, the

bouncer, broke the door down to get to us. The asshole client needed to go to the hospital. I have been suspended from working. They say I need some days off. It wasn't my fault. I don't even remember what happened. This better stop happening to me. I can't afford to loose this job. I need to get a grip. I need to start controlling what I do. I am Lauren. I don't want Lola back. Fuck!

Tammy has to work late on a Friday night. This gives Kevin the opportunity to hang out with the guys. He hasn't spent that much time with them since they started living together. Tammy demands constant attention from him. He loves being with her but just would like a break for the night. She complains that he doesn't care. Or he doesn't love her. Kevin knows she is just afraid about the person he becomes when he drinks. She knows that he can become forgetful and sloppy. Kevin doesn't help the situation when he does gallivant with his friends. Comes home in the early hours of the morning drunk and smelling like a shabean that has been soaked in stale cigarette smoke. A habit he has supposedly given up. Holding the walls. Walking into things. Making a noise. She sits up and worries. She cares so much for him that she herself cannot find it in her to sleep peacefully knowing he is out there doing god knows what. Kevin can't even help with this. He is selfish at times and only looks out for himself. He feels he deserves some freedom now and then. She can't trust him though. He has lied about things before. In time she can but he needs to show her. He needs to prove to her that he is able to be trusted.

It's three in the morning when the front door creaks open. Kevin is drunk but not out of it. He manages to slowly tip toe around the apartment like a trained burglar. He walks through the kitchen. Feeling peckish he decides to conjure himself a snack. He opens the fridge. The black kitchen is illuminated with light. He sees a figure hovering in the corner of the room. Tammy. Eyes wide, holding a pair of scissors in her hands. Her long black hair hacked up to beneath her ears, the rest littered all around her.

"Baby, you okay?"

Nothing.

"Baby? Baby? What have you done to your hair?" he reaches out to her. As his hand touches her shoulder Tammy snaps out of it and falls to the hairy floor.

"What's going on?" she asks confusedly.

"I don't know baby. I found you here. You have cut your hair. Are you okay?"

Tammy looks at the scissors in her hands and begins to cry. Kevin helps her up off the floor and holds her in his arms.

“Its okay baby! I’m here now! I got you. It must have been a bad dream. You must of sleep-walked or something. I’m right here it will be okay. I love you,” He holds her tight through the sobbing. They eventually fall asleep in each other’s arms.

15 June 2011

Dear Diary

There is a darkness growing in me. I never wanted this life. I never wanted to be what I have become. I had dreams. I had a plan. I want this to end. For almost eight years I have been scribbling in you. When I look back I see that there was joy that filled the pages. Then shit all changed. Then shit never seemed to go back to being the joyful way it was.

Kevin is worried as he sits at his desk at work. In the morning he woke up to find Tammy had already left the house. After last week’s incident he has been trying to monitor her closely. Behaving himself so as not to trigger something like that again. He thought she had gone to work early. Yet when he got there no one had seen her. He tried calling her cell but no answer was forthcoming. He was really scared. And then in she walked. A black mini skirt and stockings. Stunning high heels that she once said she would never wear. A white blouse, top buttons open. Bright red lipstick. Dark eye shadow. Kevin was stunned. The short hair she cut herself was pin straight and pointed to her shoulders. She looked absolutely gorgeous. She walked over to him and kissed him. She was booming in confidence.

“Wow baby! You look, uhm, different.”

“You like it?” she asked.

“It’s different yeah!”

“But do you like it?”

“Yes baby I do. You are looking very hot.”

“Why thank you baby!” she says, kissing him again. “Meet you for lunch later. I got lots of work to do. Love you!”

“Love you too,” He found himself saying.

At lunch he finds a note on his table: 'Meet me in the supplies closet now.' It is scribbled in her writing. He goes over to the closet. He opens the door and she attacks him. Sucking him into the darkness. Closing the door behind them and locking it. She is strong as she tears away his pants.

"Baby? What are you doing? We are at work."

"So? Never stopped us before!" she exclaims, making reference to their first time.

"But..."

"No buts baby, just fuck me."

She wraps her legs around his waist and begins to ride him fast. Kevin feels his cock vibrate inside of her. He feels her pulsating heat engulf him. The fear of getting caught collides with his sense of pleasure. She moans deeply into his ear. He feels himself combust in a fit of orgasm.

"I love you baby," she whispers into his ear. "Say you love me!"

"I love you too, baby!"

They ready themselves and leave the closet.

01 July 2011

Dear Diary

Tonight I saw the kindest eyes. He looked at me. Through me. He seemed to have a genuine care in them. About me. It was the first time I smiled in a long while, even though I was in pain from the asshole that slapped me the other day. Those eyes are forged into my mind. I wonder who he was?

15 July 2011

Dear Diary

I met kind eyes again! I knew he was something special. He was gentle and understanding. He cradled me in his arms when I thought I would lose my shit. He didn't force me to do anything. He was sweet and loving. He didn't even want to have sex after he saw me. He just wanted me to feel safe. To feel like I mattered. For once I wasn't treated as a piece of meat that has been ground up and chewed. He held me for an hour. I cried into his chest. I let out all the pain inside of me. I let go of the bad in my life. For that hour I felt like my life was submerged in good again. We had sex afterwards and it was the first time I remembered every detail of it. It was the only sexual experience I want to remember. I fell asleep so fast after because I was exhausted. Emotionally and physically. I was relieved to let go of a lot of shit that has once dragged me down into the depths of hate. When I awoke though, he was gone.

He left me so much money, too. I think I love this guy. The only guy to make me feel human. I want to be with him. I would give up all this bullshit just to be with him. I wish he will come back soon so I can tell him. What was his name? Everyone used to talk about him. Was it Keith? Or Kenneth? Fuck I don't know. I love him so much! I have never felt like this before. I am truly happy for once.

Kevin is on the bottom. Tammy is riding him hard. The sex is mind blowing. The bed frame knocks rhythmically against the wall. Kevin runs his hands down her back. Grabbing her bum in his hands. Squeezing it tight as she starts grinding him with a circular motion. He feels the sweat dripping off her and onto his chest. She then digs her nails deep into it. Kevin moans in a twisted combination of pleasure and pain. She leans in and kisses him as Kevin plunges deep inside of her. She nibbles his ear.

"It's Lola time," she whispers into his ear.

"What?" Kevin stops.

"What's wrong baby?" she asks.

"What did you say?"

"I didn't say anything baby."

"No! You said something!"

"I didn't, baby, I swear. You must have heard something."

"I don't think I am feeling well."

"Can I get you some water?"

"Yeah, thanks."

When she returns, Kevin has his back towards her. She gets into bed and rubs it.

"Baby, did I do something wrong?"

He doesn't answer. She slumps back down into bed and turns off the lights.

"I love you baby," she says.

"I love you too. Let's try to get some sleep. I'm just not in the mood anymore."

Kevin doesn't move.

01 April 2012

Dear Diary

Every night I pray kind eyes returns, yet he doesn't. It's been almost a year - I don't think he will. Why was I so stupid to fall in love with him? I can't believe it. Now that I've lost Lola I wonder whatever happened to her? The girl who wanted to go to the zoo. The girl who wanted to see some animals with her mother? Where is Mr

Marshmallow? Where is mother? Lola might even want to be back in the cellar, in the circle, to hear the funny voice say you love Lola. But you don't. Even you have left me.

Kevin comes home one day from work and finds the diary sprawled out on the counter. He picks it up and scans some pages. He nearly flat lines. Swallows hard. His eyes pace back and forth reading line after line. Sweat pools around his armpits.



Kevin comes to. Tammy is on top of him. He feels his erect penis held warmly inside of her. His hands and feet are bound to the bed frame. Tammy is riding him. His head throbs.

“Baby! What are you doing?” he asks, tugging at the rope that has him restrained.

“Its Lola time!” she shouts.

“What the fuck! Tammy please stop it!” he begs, trying to forget the arousal, the pleasure he is feeling.

“Say you love Lola!” again.

Kevin is frightened. He closes his eyes and tries to make his hard-on go away. But the more he tries, the harder he gets.

“Say you love Lola!”

“Get off me now!” he tries shouting at her.

“Say you love Lola!” she screams in response.

“No I don't love you, Lola. I love Tammy! I love my girlfriend. Tammy, baby, if you're in there, please stop this! Please, baby, I love you. Hear my voice. It's me, Kevin, I love you.”

“Say you love Lola! Say it!”

“I will never say it!”

“Say you love Lola!”

She stops abruptly, dismounts and leaves the room. Kevin tries to get free. The rope is so tight it stings his flesh. She enters the room holding a knife. She resumes her position. Kevin is not hard anymore.

“Why don’t you love Lola?” she asks with her head tilted to one side, a grin on her face. “Lola says I love mother, Lola says I love Tammy, Lola says I love kind eyes, but no one says I love Lola...”

She traces the knife along his chest.

“Lola, please...”

“Lola loves kind eyes,” the voice is calmer, deeper, closer to normal.

“I am sorry that you want me to love you! I met you once a long time ago. I was a different person then. Understand that I moved on with my life. I found someone to make me happy. I would never be able to love you. I feel sorry for you. Please Lola just bring back my Tammy! I love her and only her!”

“But Lola loves you. Please say you love Lola!”

“But I don’t. I’m sorry.”

“Please...”

“I’m so sorry.”

“Say you love Lola!” she screams. “Say you love Lola! Say you love Lola!” as she plunges the knife into his chest. Kevin feels the blade ripping him apart, too shocked to speak. He watches her repeating her actions in time with her screaming until his eyes feel heavy and he starts to drift slowly away.

13 September 2012

Dear Diary

There is nothing now.