



Message from the Author

Mikkuelle's Asylum and other places mentioned within this work are located within an imaginary city located in an imaginary State within the United States of America. Though at times real life people are referenced within this work, they are not done with malice or any sort of prejudice toward the individuals themselves.

Books are a form of entertainment and no matter good or bad it's all in the spirit of helping the reader to learn something new, have fun or simply escape whatever he or she may be going through in their personal lives. With that said, I hope that you enjoy this piece of work and I sincerely thank you for taking the time to pick up this piece of work and please remember to tell your friends as well as your enemies about it. Thank you.

*Written in Google Docs and Edited with Microsoft Word 2016

Dedicated to my Grandpa, Mr. Maurice Osawa Pharr Sr. See you soon, Love Always.

Book One

Isabelle Leigh

How do I recuperate from the damaged that has been done?

How do I remain stagnate when all I really want to do is run?

How do I play this game of love when I am no longer having fun?

I know just how to suffice my pains but I've seem to have misplaced my gun...

Chapter One

“Welcome to the Asylum”

“**W**hat happened?”

I looked over and watched as Nurse Green, the head nurse, came into the room. She walked over to me but kept her eyes on the man sitting on the edge of one of the many stretchers occupying the infirmary ward of Mikkuelle’s Asylum. He was dressed in a dingy white jumpsuit without any shoes on his feet.

“Where are his shoes,” I asked.

“He prefers to be barefoot,” answered Nurse Green before turning her attention to a nurse who stood at a computer behind me.

“He had a breakdown during TV time and attacked Nurse Robinson,” the nurse spoke coming from behind me and handing a file folder to Nurse Green.

“Mario Mickey Fickey,” Nurse Green said reading the name on the edge of the folder. “Acting out again I see.”

A voice came over the intercom asking Nurse June to come to the front of the building.

Nurse June made her way around Nurse Green and I over toward the exit.

“Wait a minute,” I said causing Nurse Green to look up at me and for Nurse June to pause at the door. “Did you say, Mickey Fickey?”

“Yes,” Nurse Green responded. “Why? Do you know him?”

“No. Not at all,” I began. “It’s just that...”

“Mickey Fickey is an odd name,” Nurse June cut in. “I said the same thing when I first met him.”

“That'll be all,” Nurse Green told Nurse June while moving her eyes back to the file folder. “You're here to evaluate the patient himself, not his name.”

I knew that last part was for me and wanted to get smart back, but seeing as how this was my first day and the rent on my overly expensive loft was already a month past due, I had to kiss as much ass as possible. At least until my name was broken in and held a little weight in this place.

“But you can learn a lot from a person's name,” Nurse June said giving me a quick glance and a smile.”

I could see the flame grow within Nurse Greens cheeks. I figured Nurse June saw it too because she hurried out of the room.

“These are the patient's files,” Nurse Green said handing me the file folder on Mickey Fickey.

“Mario Fickey,” Nurse Green continued. “Is the patient's name. “Mario Fickey has been here for all but a few months. The correct time and date is located somewhere in that file I gave you. Along with his background information or at least what we feel you should know of it. Which shall or shall not include the direct reason he is in here. Some patient's files are sealed and above your pay grade so don't ask. Do you have all this?”

I quickly nodded my head in agreement.”

“I will need a verbal confirmation,” Nurse Green said. “Did you get all of that?”

“Yes,” I said swallowing the urge to become reckless at the mouth.

“Good.”

Nurse Green gave me a weak smile and said, “Welcome aboard.”

“Thank you,” I said giving her a weak smile back.

I watched Nurse Green until she was out of the door. When the door closed I let out a long sigh of relief, thankful she was finally out of the room.

I looked over at Mario Fickey. He was slouched over staring at his feet. His skin was as pale as an onion. He didn't seem to be out of shape though he hadn't much muscle.

I took a couple of slow steps over to the side of him and noticed the waistband wrapped around him that held a chain connected from it and the bed in which he sat.

I was relieved inside. They said this crazy fucker attacked one nurse, I didn't want part two of that attack to start on me.

“He’s sedated.”

I looked over and jumped a little. I hadn't seen the other nurse standing on the opposite side of the bed.

“I'm sorry,” she said holding a frail little hand to her chest. “I didn't mean to scare you.”

“Oh, you didn't,” I lied with a smile.

“People say it’s because I'm so small that they don't always notice me,” she smiled.

For some reason I felt sad. Her voice was so soft it was as if her words glided to your ears on a pillow filled with the feathers from doves.

“My name is Christy Johns but everyone here calls me Nurse Mary.”

“Oh, but if your last name is Johns why do they call you Nurse Mary?”

“I believe it's because there is another nurse here with the same name as me. She's been here longer.”

“So why don't they just call you Nurse Christy?”

She just smiled at me without answering.

“So what's going on with him?” I asked turning my attention back to Mr. Fickey.

“He had a spell,” Nurse Mary said looking at him sideways with an expression on her face as if she could see everything going on in Mr. Fickey’s mind.

“Is the nurse he attacked alright? I asked looking at her.

“Nurse Robinson is ok. She went home a few minutes ago. Company protocol.”

“Company protocol,” I agreed with a head nod.

“We sedated him enough for him not to hurt anyone or himself,” Nurse Mary said. “Have you met any of the other patients here yet?”

“No,” I replied folding my arms and moving in front of Mr. Fickey.

“So he will be the first one that you evaluate?”

“Yes”

“Oh.”

I squatted to try to look into Mr. Fickey’s face. His eyes were a glacier blue. They were mysteriously beautiful. In fact, if he straightened his spine, cut his long unkempt hair and trimmed his Wildman beard, Mr. Fickey could possibly be a very handsome man. Which made me laugh.

“What's funny?” Nurse Mary smiled at me.

“Nothing,” I said.

“A good laugh is needed every once in a while in this place,” she said turning to a computer that sat beside her at the head of the bed.

I felt sad again. I don't know why but something about this woman's movements and the way she talks makes me sad. Its borderline fucking depressing. Fortunately I was built for this sort of environment. I spoke to people about their problems and have listened to some of the saddest stories imagined. I could sense that Nurse Mary had some personal issues going on. She was far too calm. She seemed to be at peace yet sorrowful. It was as if she held the weight of the world on her shoulders. That or she was on something heavy. However, I didn't want to get into all of that with her and stray from what I was sent here by the courts to do.

“It's just that,” I began to speak after a brief silence. “I was thinking of something a friend had told me a little while ago.”

“Oh”” Nurse Mary said looking at me with wonder in her eyes.

“She said that the beautiful ones are always crazy.”

Nurse Mary looked puzzled. Then she looked over at Mr. Fickey and thought for a moment before looking at me. Slowly her lips creased open and she burst into laughter. As if her regular speaking voice didn't make you sad, her laugh was freaking ridiculous. I didn't know rather to laugh along with her or cry endless tears of joy for whatever joy it was that she may or may not be feeling. Needless to say however, I liked her already. But I had to get away from her before I winded up being admitted into the asylum my damn self.

“How does it work? She asked me.

“How does what work? I countered.

“Do you hook them up to a lie detector test or something?”

For a moment I was confused and then I caught on. “You mean, when I'm evaluating them?”

“Yes,” she said with a nod.

“You've haven't seen the others evaluate him?”

“No. the last time they evaluated someone was a few months ago. I started working here last month and you're the first to do it since then I've come on.”

“Well,” I stood up straight. “I talk to them.”

She waited for me to say something else but I didn't.

“That's it?” She asked.

“Well...Yeah. About twenty percent of it is me asking questions. Sixty percent of it is me listening and the last twenty percent is just me somewhat diagnosing the individual. Giving my honest opinion on the person.”

“Oh,” she said turning back to the computer.

I glanced over at her. “You seemed disappointed.”

“Well, I just thought there was a little more to it than that.”

“What did you think was gonna happen?”

“I don't know. I thought maybe you had something different planned. Like electrocuting him or something.”

I laugh. “No. I don't electrocute them. Where'd you get a thing like that from?”

“Movies,” she answered plainly. “I watched this movie last night where a doctor was hooking patients up to a machine and shocking them until he got the results he desired.”

I smiled and shook my head. “Let's just hope that it doesn't to come to that.”

Of course I wasn't serious. It was illegal to use excessive force such as electroshock therapy in this state.

She smiled at me before turning back to the monitors.

A voice came over the intercom telling me to come to Nurse Green's Office. I said goodbye to Nurse Mary and a catatonic Mr. Fickey. I then made my way out of the infirmary and up the hall to the front of the building where Nurse Green's office was. Of course it would be at the front of the asylum so if something broke out she could be the first to escape. Nurse Green had the presence of a strong black woman that didn't take any shit from nobody but at the same time she seemed like the type to leave everyone behind and save herself if something dramatic were to happen.

“You called for me,” I asked while rapping lightly on her opened door.

Nurse Green waved for me to come in. She had her head bowed over some papers on her desk. I walked into the office and stood a few feet from her.

“Here,” she said pushing a piece of torn paper across her desk toward me.

I moved to retrieve the paper.

“This is a list of the people you were sent here to see,” she told me. You have the files on the first one, the others will be made readily available to you upon request. Do you have any questions or concerns?”

“Yes,” I answered. “Where shall I set up my things?”

“On that paper I just gave you there's a room number on the top of it. Follow the hall you just came from until you get to a stairwell at the end of the hall. Go down the stairwell and walk the hall downstairs until you find the room you're looking for.”

“Ok,” I said turning as I read the piece of paper. “Thank you.”

“Miss Remedy?” Nurse Green called to me.

“Yes?” I answered turning halfway around.

“Do remember that you get paid per patient and that you have limited time to get them all done. I advise you to use your time as wisely and as professional as possible.”

“I know,” I said feigning a smile and leaving out the room.

I walked out of Nurse Green's office and made my way down the hall until I came to a dimly lit stairwell. I crept slowly down the stairs, taking in my surroundings as well as the sounds of the building as I moved.

When I reached the bottom floor I paused to take a look around. There was a long hall about six feet wide. The yellow lights on the ceiling made the entire place look creepy as hell. There were a dozen rooms on both sides of the hall. Most of the doors were barred up and closed but some rooms had the doors removed and were filled with old furniture and stacks of papers. Probably a nest or two of rats within them as well.

I found my office halfway down the hallway. It was a holding cell converted into an office. Well, an emptied room with a desk and two chairs in it.

I walked in and set my things down on the desk. I then scanned the room with my eyes, searching for bugs or anything that may scare the hell out of me before I took a seat and settled in. By the look and feel of the environment as well as the people within it, I knew that this was going to be an experience like none other. Whatever happens I was ready for it. At least I had hoped I was.

Chapter Two

Mickey Fickey

“Here you go, ma'am. Patient Numeral Uno.”

I looked up from my desk to see a man dressed in a dark khaki jumpsuit standing at the doorway to my little dim office. Standing beside him looking down at his feet was Mr. Fickey.

“Oh,” I said standing to my feet...

“We have to keep the cuffs on him,” the man spoke as he guided Mr. Fickey into the room and over at the chair setup in a far corner facing my desk.

“That's fine,” I said watching them. “Just so long as he's comfortable. Things tend to go better when everybody's comfortable.”

“Understood ma'am,” The man said.

“Call me Mimi,” I said with my attention focused on Mr. Fickey.

“Nice to meet you,” the man said. “I'm Will.”

“Nice to meet you Will,” I said giving him a swift smile and turning my attention back to Mr. Fickey.

“So, you're the one that 'spose to brain fuck these psychos, huh?”

I looked at Will from out the corners of my eyes. “Don't call them that.”

“Don't call them what? Psychos?”

“Yeah.”

“Why? That's what they are.”

I looked directly in his ugly green eyes. “They are people. Just like you and me.”

“But aren't you a psychiatrist.

“Yes I am.”

“Isn't a term for what you do called Psychotherapy?”

I moved my eyes back to Mr. Fickey. This idiot was right. They could very well be considered psychos. But so what. Maybe I jumped at the lip a little too quickly but I don't...

“How long have you been doing this?” He asked sensing that my mind was elsewhere and that I wasn't gonna respond to his query. Or maybe he could see the red flushed all over my face. Either way I was glad he changed the subject.

“For about six months. This is actually my first case.”

“As a professional?”

“Right. As a professional.”

“Well, if there is anything that I can do to assist you all you have to do is yell. There's noise sensors in the walls that can pick up screams or any out of the ordinary sounds just so long as they're loud enough for it to pick up.”

“Oh really?” I asked interested in this new bit of information that may be useful in saving my life may something go wrong. Not that I thought that things would go wrong but better safe than sorry. “How does it work?”

“Well,” he smiled turning to point to a small intercom beside the exit door. “See that box?”

“Yes I do.”

He yelled really loud causing me to jump a little and by reflex stick my fingers in my ears. A few seconds later a voice came across the intercom asking if we needed any assistance.

“I don't believe I've ever seen anything like that before.”

“Yeah, there's a few things about this place that's upgraded. Even though the rest of the place looks like shit.”

“Yeah, I was about to say something about that. This place is like a hundred years old. This type of tech would be the last thing you'd expect to see here.”

“From what I know...One of the people that own this place, his kid sometimes uses this place to try out some of his experiments. I've seen him a couple of times but we never spoke.”

“Experiments? What do you mean experiments?”

“Like the Yell Security Systems that are incorporated within this entire building. He’s some kind of inventor.”

“Oh, I see.”

“You didn't think I meant he was doing experiments on the psychos did you?”

“Oh no, not at all,” I said looking at Mr. Fickey who remained deathly still.

“Well, I gotta get back to work,” Will said turning to leave. “If you need anything let me know.”

“I’ll be sure to do that, thanks.”

Once Will had left I leaned back in my chair behind the desk. I glanced over at Mr. Fickey who continued to stare down at his feet. I knew I had to take my time to choose what to say to him first carefully. First impressions meant the most in my line of work and the wrong word or phrase could cause a conversation to go bad quick or sometimes never even start.

After a few uncomfortable moments of complete silence I decided to start the conversation by simply introducing myself:

“Hello Mr. Fickey. My name is Remi Remedy. But my friends call me Mi-Mi. You can call me that as well if you’d like.”

I paused for a reaction from him but got nothing.

“Mr. Fickey?”

He finally looked up at me.

“Mr. Fickey. My name is...”

“I heard you the first time,” he said looking directly at me through strands of knotted jet black hair. “You're here to tell me how crazy I am.”

“No. Not at all.” I moved my seat a little closer to him but still behind the desk so I could write notes down when I needed to. They told me that when you're trying to get to know

someone; especially someone with a delicate mind; you should keep all of your attention on them, only look away when absolutely necessary. However I found that I couldn't talk to someone with eyes such as his looking back at me. At least not without getting wet. Perhaps it was the fact that I was fresh off my rag and horny as hell. Either way I would have to call up one of my exes when I got home to get this itch taken care of. This is ridiculous.

"Then why are you here?" Mr. Fickey said breaking me out of my perverted thoughts.

"Well, I'm here to talk to you and get to understand who you are."

"You know who I am."

"Not exactly."

"I'm a murderer. That's who I am. A serial killer."

He looked away toward the door. For a second he sat quietly staring off as if he were contemplating on bursting out of his restraints and making a break for it. Lord knows I wouldn't try to stop him. Nope. I wouldn't be dying today. I got plans this weekend.

He then took a deep breath and let out a low sigh saying, "At least that's what the papers said about me."

"So you read the newspapers?" I asked seeing an opportunity to get him to open up about himself. I grabbed my ink pen to jot some notes down.

"I do," he answered looking around the room taking in his surroundings for the first time since entering the room.

I waited for him to say more but he remained silent.

"When do you read the newspapers?" I asked.

"In the mornings. After breakfast. After they doped me up again."

"Are you doped now?"

"I am. It's how you are able to talk to me without me bursting into tears."

"What do you mean? You start crying?"

“Yes ma’am.”

“What do they call that?” I said mostly to myself as I wrote down notes.

“Pseudo bulbar affect,” he said.

“Yes,” I agreed. “PBA.”

I wrote PBA down on my notepad before continuing, “So you have crying spells. Do you know why you have them?”

He turned his head to the left so far I thought it would snap. I did hear a pop however. He then turned his head all the way to the right until it popped again. Then he looked down at his feet and said, “Does anyone with PBA know why they cry?”

“Not always,” I said thinking to myself how smart this guy seemed. I had silently hoped that he wasn’t one of those quiet killers. The ones that lure you in with kindness until you’re guard is weak enough to penetrate and then strike. I really should’ve read through his file before seeing him. But what was I saying? It wasn’t like I was trying to *date* this guy. I was there to evaluate him. To get every little bit of knowledge about him that I could and make a note of it all.

“Sometimes there is a certain thing that will trigger the tears,” I continued. “Something like a photograph, a song, a smell or even a name.”

He sat quiet.

“Mr. Fickey?”

“I can’t say her name,” he responded giving me a quick glance before returning his gaze to his feet.

I started to open my mouth to speak but he cut me off.

“Don’t say her name!” He spoke in a soft but demanding voice now staring over at me with those spine tingling, coochie damping eyes.

“Why can’t I say her name?” I asked. Even though I wasn’t about to say it. Hell, I didn’t even know it.

He looked away from me toward the door. "I'll cry," he said.

I felt sad. Damn I really should reconsider my profession.

"I can help it as long as I don't hear her name."

"That's good to know," I said making a note in bold writing to not say the name of the woman he lost. At least not around him.

"Damn," I thought to myself. "I wish someone would go crazy when *my* name was mentioned. That's that crazy love. No pun intended.

"How long will you be evaluating me?" He asked.

"I don't know really. It just depends on how well we get along. How much information I can get out of you."

"Information like what?"

"You know, just some info on your background and such. I would like to know what you went through as a child, ya' know? Things like that."

"Doesn't my files say all of that about me already?"

I glanced over at the file then back at Mr. Fickey who stare at his feet.

"I don't wanna talk about my past anymore."

"Ok. That's fine. We don't have to talk about the past."

I sat quiet for a second contemplating on what to say next. I really had planned on evaluating him based on his past and upbringing but if he doesn't want to talk about it there was no way I could force him. That may make him lock up on me and then I get nothing. I looked over at his file folder again. Grabbing it I scrolled through the pages. There was indeed a pretty good amount of detail on his background that other psyches have typed up on him. So, what is it that they expected me to find different to evaluate him further than he has already been evaluated?

“I believe they want you to talk to me about what I did.” Mr. Fickey said wiggling his toes and smiling down at them.

“What do you mean?” I asked closing the folder and looking over at him. His demeanor was so calm and he had a playful sense about him now. He reminded me of a kid on a swing set that didn’t know how to get himself moving so he just flung his legs back and forth. Although his legs were planted firmly on the ground. I had to get the name of whatever drugs he and Nurse Mary are taking before I leave this place today.

“The last person that came to talk to me said that someone else would come and talk to me,” he said. “And that the other person would want to talk about why I am in here and what I’ve done.”

“I see...And who told you that?”

“The last person that came to see me,” he answered.

“Duh,” I told myself.

I sat quiet not really knowing what to say. I froze up on my first case. Good going, Mi-Mi. It was no question that I was happy the meds he was on has him verbally cooperating. I was also surprised at how intelligent he was. The more we spoke the more I wanted to know about him. I know why I was brought there, but now I just wanted to know how such a seemingly polite person could commit any crime at all.

“It’s alright,” he spoke looking down at his feet. “She said that it was ok to talk about it.”

“Who said it was ok for you to talk about it?” I asked. “The last person that came to see you?”

“No, he answered.

“Who then?”

“I can’t,” he said looking at me, an expression on his face like he had a super-secret that he was dying to tell me but an imaginary hand was covering his mouth so that he couldn’t. Then I realized that he must have been talking about the girl whose name shall go unspoken. At least in his presence.

“Ok,” I said setting my ink pen down and turning my full attention to him. “Whatever you want to say I'm here to listen.”

He sat silent for a small moment, then started wiggling his toes. “It doesn't bother me any.”

“What doesn't bother you?” I asked.

“What I did. It doesn't bother me to talk about it. But it may bother you.”

Deep down I was a little scared of what he may tell me. The last thing I needed were nightmares. That's not even why I'm here. Then I started to try and talk myself out of it, thinking to myself that the file on him held enough background for me to write up an evaluation based on that alone. Even though it didn't say exactly how or why he did what he did to get in there it did say that he was in there for multiple homicides. I could add in what I've learned from this little talk and be done with it. Boom! One down. Nightmare avoided.

Just then a low buzzing similar to a fire alarm sounded from somewhere within the building.

“What's going on?” I said standing to my feet.

“Somebodies in trouble,” Mr. Fickey said looking over at the file folder spread open on my desk.

“I gotta take him back,” Will said suddenly appearing in the doorway causing me to nearly jump out of my skin.

“Holy Fuck! You scared the shit out me,” I said holding a hand to my chest. “What's going on?”

“I don't know for sure,” Will said hurrying over to unhand cuffed Mr. Fickey and stand him up only to cuff him again. “They got an intake in this morning so it could be that.”

“So why does he have to go back?” I asked pointing at Mr. Fickey.

“Well, when the alarm goes off it means that something bad happened and that usually only happens around med time or when a new crazy has come in. Since *dope* time isn't for another four hours, I figured the intake was acting up. So that's why I said that.”

“Oh. So is this normal?”

“A regular occurrence?”

“Yes.”

“I’d say so.”

“Ok. Well when will I be able to finish talking with him?”

“Beats me. They’ll be locked down until their next med time so you can wait a few hours or come back tomorrow.”

“That’s right, you can’t leave and come back.”

“Crazy rule, I know.”

I turned to Mr. Fickey and smiled. “Well, it was nice talking to you. I hope that we can pick back up on this later. That is, if you’re up for it.”

He looked at me but didn’t respond. It was almost like he didn’t want to talk while Will was in the room.

“See you in a few Mr. Fickey,” I said waving him goodbye as they moved out of the room and into the hall.

Mr. Fickey stopped just outside the door and turned his head to me. He cracked a weird sideways grin and replied, “Call me Mickey.”

Chapter Three

The Notebook

“Castrate my competition

They aint wanna listen

Push my girl up out the car if she start to trippin’

You think I’m bullshittin’?

Go and ask the chick

When you're done come get this dick up in your ass bitch.”

CLICK

“I was listenin’ to that.”

“I honestly can't listen to black music anymore. I just can't.”

I stood and watched as my best friend Kim dropped the remote control to the television on the couch beside her daughter Cassie and walked down the short hallway into her bedroom.

I waited patiently with my arms folded across my chest while she rambled around her bedroom getting dressed. I looked over at Cassie lying across the couch with her eyes glued to her cell phone.

“Whatchu’ duin’?” I asked.

“Buying land,” She responded.

“Doing what now?” I asked unsure of what she was talking about.

“Terra Online.”

I was still oblivious to what she was talking about. “Terra Online?”

“Maaaaaaaaa!” Cassie bellowed.

Kim came rushing out of the room. “What’s up? What’s wrong?”

“I told you she wouldn't know anything about it.”

“Know anything about what?” Kim asked.

“Something about Terra Online something,” I said uncertain.

“Ah shit,” Kim said throwing her hands up and stomping back into her room. “I’m almost ready. I just gotta find my purse.”

I shook my head and scanned the apartment with my eyes to see if I could spot her purse lying somewhere. It was a cozy little place. Not much room to walk around but at least if you tripped over something chances are you’d land on something soft.

“Alrighty. I'm ready,” Kim said coming out of the bedroom dressed like Satan’s polecat.

She wore a black patent leather one piece with thigh high heels. Her shoulder length hair was hidden beneath a jet black Cleopatra wig and her makeup resembled the Egyptian Queen as well.

“What?” She asked looking at me shake my head at her.

“Nothing,” I said. “How long are you gonna be on this date?”

“Not long,” she said. “On the real, how do I look?”

“You look ok,” I lied. “I like your heels.”

“I know you’re lying,” she said turning to her daughter. “Cass’, how I look?”

“Like a slut,” Cassie answered not bothering to look at her mother.

“I love you too,” Kim said kissing her fingertips and moving to place them on Cassie’s forehead.

“Bye Ma,” Cassie said wiping her forehead clean of the dampness her mother's fingers left.

“See you in a bit,” Kim said walking to the front door. “Call me if you need anything.”

“I will,” I said seeing her out.

Closing the door I locked it and turned back into the living room and over to the couch opposite of Cassie. Sitting down, I clasped my hands together and took a deep breath. Letting it out slowly I spoke to her.

“Hey, I said.”

“Hey,” she responded not looking away from her phone.

I sat trying to figure out what to say to her. I knew I didn't really have to say anything at all seeing as how her cell phone had her plenty occupied. I could sit and watch TV until Kim got back and Boom! Job well done.”

Instead I said, “I know we don't really know each other all that well. At least not on a personal level, but since me and your mom are best friends, I figure we should be friends as well.”

Her head remained pointed at her phone but her eyes moved to meet mine.

“Not saying that we have to be best friends but at least we can be regular friends.”

“Everybody's a friend until you make them your enemy,” she said moving her eyes back to her phone once more.

“That's so true,” I said nodding my head. “And I think I'm going to steal that and put it on a plaque.”

“Put it on a what?” Cassie asked looking back at me.

“A plaque,” I said.

“Like what's on your teeth?”

“No,” I said with a giggle. “A plaque. You know like what they give you as an award. Same spelling, different meaning.”

“Oh,” Cassie said moving her eyes back to her phone.

I sat quietly looking around the room. The television was back on but muted.

“Sooooo,” I said making myself a little more comfortable on the couch. “Terror Fun Time, huh?”

“Say what?!” She said giving me a sideways look.

“The game you're playing,” I said pointing at her phone.

“Terra Online,” she corrected. “And you wouldn't be interested.”

I felt a little offended but I kept cool. “Well, nothing is ever interesting until you try it.”

“Nice quote,” Cassie responded as bland as ever. “You get that off of a cereal box?”

I sat through a few uneasy moments before I said something else.

“Hey, can I tell you a little about me?”

“I guess.”

“Well, I grew up on a farm a few miles from here. I was an only child. I didn't have any friends because no one lived around us. At the time, technology wasn't all as it is now. Which none of that mattered anyway because my parents didn't believe in the ol' technology thing.”

What about Television?” Cassie asked.

“Nope. Not even a radio.”

“Sounds boring.”

“It was,” I agreed. “We had horses, pigs, cows and chickens. I hated the horses though. Still do. Got a slight fear of ‘em actually.”

I slid back to the edge of the couch and continued.

“I was home schooled. My daddy was a psychologist but sold fertilizer on the side. My mother was an in home nurse. Both of them worked at home. Which we had a guest house for patients and such. But anyways, I was kinda happy that I was home schooled or else I would've went to school smelling like cow dung every day.

Until I went to college. I got a place on campus where I met your mother. I remember she couldn't stand me." I laughed at the thought of the wild past Kim and I share.

"Why did she hate you?" Cassie asked.

Through my mental reverie into the past I hadn't even realized that Cassie was looking at me somewhat interested in what I was saying.

"Well," I cleared my throat and continued. "Part of the reason is because I'm white."

"Yeah right. My mama aint no racist."

"You mean she *isn't* a racist and No, she is not. I didn't say she was either. But back then all races pretty much had issues with each other. Black, White, Mexican, Russian, Asian..."

"Why?" She cut in.

I inhaled deep and let it out slow before responding, "Because that's what people do, sweetheart. We group up and war with whoevers not with us."

"Seriously?"

"I have no idea. I heard it on a movie."

Cassie smiled and shook her head. I felt proud of myself for getting her to smile.

"Anyways, one day your mom was playing pool and I had never even heard of a pool table before I got to the college. It looked extremely interesting though and I wanted to play.

I remember standing around the table while your mom played game after game after game by herself. I could tell she was bored because as time went on she went from hitting balls straight in to knocking balls off of the table. She finally said something to me about an hour into being solo. I remember she said, "Why you waiting around here Crackah? You can't play no pool."

Cassie burst into laughter.

"Anyways," I said laughing a little myself. "Needless to say we started fighting."

“Y’all got in a fight with each other over pool?” Cassie asked sitting up on the middle of the couch.

“Yeah,” I answered. “We fought a dozen times after that. Always at the same place. Always over the same thing.”

“Wait a minute. Y’all went to the pool hall and fought over and over? Why?”

“Well, it wasn't a pool hall. It was a study room at the college that had a pool table in it. Thing was, it was located on the predominately black side of the college. None of us were bullies or anything, but it was always a little tense when I went there.”

“Why'd you keep going over there then? I wouldn't have went to a place where I wasn't wanted.”

“Because I wanted to learn how to play pool. None of the white people I knew played mainly because of where the table was located. The black kids weren't gonna teach me because of fear of what the next black kid might say about them helping a white girl.”

“So then what happen?”

“There was this pool tournament someone was throwing. The winner got a hundred dollars and their very own pool stick. Back then a hundred dollars was a lot of money. Plus, my boyfriend's birthday was a couple of days away so I could've use the money to get him something. So, in the tournament it came down to me and your mama.”

“Who won?”

“Well...Your mom won the game. But I felt like I had won too.”

“What did you win?”

“Her friendship.”

“Y’all became friends after she beat you in a game of pool? That sounds like a TV movie.”

“Yeah, it does. But it's true. It came down to the eight ball. I missed my shot but she made hers. After the game was over she came up to me and told me that if she knew that I knew how to play she would have been beating my ass on the table instead of the pavement.”

Cassie laughed. "Sounds like mama."

I laughed too. "You see the thing was, I had went to that place and watched others play over and over until I pretty much had the game of pool down pack. I was pretty much a noob who almost beat a rookie so along with getting your mother's respect I also gained the respect of a lot of the people there as well. So I actually won in more ways than she did."

"So what's the moral?"

"The moral is, just because someone doesn't know how to do something doesn't mean they're not open to wanting to learn."

Cassie lay quiet for a moment. Then she asked, "So what do you do?"

"You mean workwise?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"I am a psychiatrist who specializes in psychotherapy. But I also like to write."

"You work with handicapped people?"

"Sort of. I work with people who appear to be normal but have psychological issues."

"Sounds interesting."

"It is actually. Today was my first day but I had to cut it short."

"Why'd you have to cut it short?"

"They had an issue at work and I wasn't gonna be able to continue my work there for a few hours. I didn't want to wait around though doing nothing. Besides, I forgot your mother had asked me yesterday if I could sit in with you for a few hours today."

We sat quiet for a second then Cassie said, "Just because I'm paralyzed doesn't mean I can't take care of myself."

“I have no doubt that you can,” I said. “But it’s just for your mother's peace of mind. You're her only child so she is always gonna be a little over protective. Trust me, I know how it is.”

“You know,” I continued. “I was there when you were born.”

“You were?” Cassie asked.

“Yes. And I was there when your parents split up and your dad took custody of you. Your mom was so sad. I think she was even sadder that y’all didn't live in the same city as she though. But I know for sure she is happy as ever now that you're here.”

Another moment of silence came between us before Cassie asked, “What kind of stuff do you write?”

“Well, I like to write about people falling in love and stuff like that,” I replied. “But, I'll write a haiku or two every now and then.”

“What’s a Haiku?”

“It’s like a small poem.”

“Oh.”

More silence.

“You really wanna know?” Asked Cassie.

“About what?”

“About what I’m doing.”

“The Terra thing?”

“Yeah.”

“Yes, I do I would love to hear about it.”

Cassie sat up and maneuvered her legs to sit Indian style. “Well, firstly it's called Terra Online and it’s not a game but a way of digital life.”

“A way of digital life?”

“Yeah. It's stupid I know but it's their slogan or something.”

“Oh no, I get it. A way of life, a digital way of life. So what's it about? I heard you say something about buying land earlier.”

“Well, the best way for me to show you what it's about is for you to actually have it installed on your own phone. Do you have one?”

“A cell phone? Of course I have one.” I reached into my purse for my cell. Pulling it out, I searched it for the store app and opened it. I then hit the search bar and typed in the word “Terra”. It was the first one on the list. I hit install and waited. When it finished I said, “Got it.”

“Ok,” Cassie said. You have to open it up and make an account.

I opened it up and started to make an account. I got past putting my name and age in when I received a call. The caller I.D. read that it was Nurse Green and I answered right away.

“Hello Nurse Green,” I answered. “How are you this...?”

She cut me off. “I have your schedule if you would like to write it down.”

“Schedule? What do you mean schedule? I was under the impression that I would be able to come in whenever I...”

She cut me off again. “We have a routine schedule here that will not be modified or changed for you or anyone else for that matter. Thank you. You will work the following days because the following days are the only ones open and available to you.”

I switched to speaker phone and quickly opened my memo app. As she spoke I typed:

“Tuesday, in by 5 out by 10. Wednesday, in by 5 out by 10. Thursday, in by 5 out by 10 and Friday, in by 5 out by 10. And keep in mind that if you choose not to be out of the facility by 10 then you volunteer to stay until the following day. Do you have any questions or concerns?”

“Is that five in the morning or the afternoon?” I asked looking back over the list.

“Morning,” she replied. “Anything else?”

“Not that I know of, “I said thinking if there were any issues. Then I noticed something. “Wait, yeah there's something.”

“And that is?”

“Well, Tuesday is my mother’s birthday so I won’t be able to work on that day.”

“Tomorrow.”

“No. Not tomorrow, but next week. The last day that you have me on the schedule.”

“Then I suggest you look into rescheduling your mother’s birthday.”

I wanted to jump through the phone and choke this bitch until her eyeballs exploded in her skull. But I needed this job.

“Another thing...”

“Of course there is.”

“Well, today’s Monday.”

“Indeed it is.”

I bit the inside of my jowl to keep from becoming hostile over the phone. “Well, today there was a situation in which I was unable to finish an interview with a patient. He had been locked back down...”

“And your issue is?”

“Well, you said that I get paid based on the number of patients that I do. But the courts only gave me a month to get it all done. And now that you’re giving me a schedule instead of me being able to make my own, which would give me less than a month to get it all done.”

“Miss Remedy, if you choose to take your time to do whatever it is that you need to get done then that is on you.”

“Ok, but it's just that... Well, I was told I had about a dozen patients that needed to be seen and...”

She cut me off, “Get to the point I am a very busy person.”

“Well I have a few court cases this month in which I absolutely *have* to be at. I also have a dentist appointment later on this month as well as an appointment with my gyno. I would have to spend every minute of every day and night working in order to get everything done that needs to be done. And if what happened today happens often then that would mean I would have to work around every situation that occurs within the asylum. I would wind up having to stay overnight which I really...”

She cut me off. “Miss Remedy what time is it?”

I looked at the time on the edge of the phone's display. “It's almost 6.”

“And what time do the doors close here?”

“10.”

“Then I suggest you get back to work and stop wasting your time complaining to me.”

“Oh. But what about the “*in one out one*” rule?”

She hung up on me.

“Shit, I said before remembering there was a kid in the room. “I mean, shoot.”

“What’s wrong?” Cassie asked as I sat there strolling through my call log.

“I think I have to go back to work,” I said.

“You *think* you have to go to work?”

“Yeah,” I said finding Kim’s number and swiping it to call.

Kim picked up after the third ring.

“What’s up?”

“How's the date going?”

“Terrible. I'll tell you all about it when I get there.”

“What do you mean? You're on your way home now?”

“Yeah girl.”

“Wow! That was the quickest date I've ever heard of.”

“There's a reason for that.”

“Well either way, my boss just called and told me my schedule.”

“Schedule? I thought you made your own schedule.”

“Me too. But, in order to get caught up on my bills and stuff I have to work every single day that this bitch has open for me.”

“That sucks.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Well if you have to leave now then you can go ahead. I'm only a few minutes away. We will catch up another time this week.”

“Ok. I'll see you sometime this week then.”

“Love ya, girl,” Kim said. “Smooches.”

“Smooches,” I replied before hanging up.

I let out a small sigh of both relief and grief. Relief that I was free to leave without feeling bad about leaving Cassie by herself; but grief because I had to actually go back to work.

“You're leaving?” Cassie asked, her eyes back glued to her cell phone.

“Yes,” I responded. “But can you do me a favor?”

“What's that?”

“I'm going to set up my account and stuff on this app when I get a moment to. Do you mind if I text you if I need help with it?”

“Sure,” Cassie said sitting up and taking my phone as I held it out for her to put her number in it.

I said goodbye and was out the door back on my way to work. Back to see Mr. Fickey or should I say, Mickey.

When I got to the Asylum, Will was standing at the front door to let me in.

“Welcome back,” he said holding the door.

“Hi, Will.”

“Who will you be seeing today?”

“Same fellow from earlier.”

“Mickey Fickey, huh?”

“Yes,” I said trying not to grin at the name too much.

“I'll get him right down to you.”

I made my way down the hall to the stairwell, down the stairwell, down another hall and into my claustrophobic nightmare of an office slash prison cell. I had left my work materials there so they were already spread out and ready for me.

I sat down behind my desk and started to sort through the papers when something caught my eye. It was Mr. Fickey's mug shot. He looked exactly like I imagined he would.

Briskly, I reread Mr. Fickey's file as I waited for Will to bring him down to me. Which didn't take long. Unfortunately it didn't say much of the crime other than what he was charged with and the outcome of it.

“Knock knock,” Will said standing at the door to my hole in the wall office.

“Hi,” I said glancing up quickly to shoot him and Mr. Fickey a smile.

“I have to hurry and get back,” Will said walking Mr. Fickey to the chair in the corner and cuffing him to it. “They haven't taken their evening meds yet so he may be a little out of it. I have to go help with the others.”

“Ok,” I replied. “If I need anything I’ll scream for you.”

He turned and gave me a smile before hurrying out of the room.

Mr. Fickey sat quiet staring at his feet while I continued looking through his file.

“Did you read it yet?”

I looked up to see Mr. Fickey staring over at me. “Did you read it?” He asked again.

“Read what?” I asked curious to what he was referring to.

“The notebook.”

“Notebook? What notebook?”

He looked down at his feet and sat quiet.

“Mr. Fickey?” I called to him.

“Mickey,” he responded not bothering to look up. “Call me Mickey.”

“Sorry,” I said. “Mickey. What notebook are you referring to?”

“The notebook that I wrote.”

“I haven’t seen any notebook,” I said. “What’s the notebook for?”

He went quiet again. Staring down at his toes, he started to wiggle them and smile.

“Why do you do that?” I asked watching him closely.

He didn’t respond.

“Mr. Fic...Mickey,” I said trying to regain his attention.

After a minute of toe wiggling he finally spoke, "The woman that came to see me before told me to write in a notebook."

"Was this the same person that told you I was coming to talk about your case?"

He didn't respond.

I remember seeing the names of all of the people that had come to see him. All of them evaluated him and added their evaluation papers to his file. Which was another thing I didn't quite understand. Why did they need so many people evaluating one person?

"It took me a while to write it," he said looking over at the door with his head tilted sideways.

"I don't see anything about a notebook," I said grabbing the last piece of paper in the file and holding it in front of me to read.

"Maybe someone stole."

I looked from the paper at Mickey and thought about what Nurse Green had told me about some things not being made available to me because they were above my pay grade.

"What's in the notebook?" I asked

He didn't respond.

"Mickey?"

Still no response. Then I noticed his eyes were focused on something out in the hall.

"Mickey? Is everything ok?"

Still no response.

I looked at my cellphone to check the time. It was almost 8. I had two hours to get what I could out of Mr. Fickey before I had to get out. At the moment I was having tough enough time just getting his attention.

"How's everything going?"

I spotted Will standing at the door and had never been happier to see him.

“Hi Will,” I said waving for him to come in. “I could probably use your help with something.”

“Sure, what can I help you with?”

“Well, Mickey here said something about a notebook someone had told him to write in.”

“A notebook?”

“Yeah. He said one of the psyches that came before me asked him to write it and that it should be in his file. But it isn’t.”

“A notebook. What kind of notebook?”

“I don’t know. I was asking him some questions about it but it doesn’t seem like he is able to answer.”

Will looked over at Mr. Fickey whose gaze was still set upon whatever it was out in the hall. “Ah, I see.”

“What is it?”

“When he doesn't have his meds he's pretty useless. As the same with most of the patients here.”

I looked over at Mickey as Will spoke, wondering what was going on in his fragile mind.

“The evening meds are given to them right before they go to bed. You could wait and ask him some questions then but that would mean that you would have to spend the night here. Or you could wait until the morning. The morning meds that he gets are a bit different from the evening meds. A little stronger. He will be more responsive in the A.M. than the night.”

“So what you’re telling me is that I’m likely not gonna be able to get anything out of him at all tonight?”

“Not a lot if you do.”

“Damn,” I said shaking my head. “And that bitch knew I wasn’t going to be able get anything done if I came back.”

“What’s that?”

“Nothing,” I said waving it off. “I believe him when he said that he had a notebook. And if another psyche was the one that told him to write it then I’m sure it was for a reason.”

“There's nothing in his file saying anything about it?”

“As far as I can see, no.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“I need that notebook.”

“But why?”

“Well, mainly because I have a job to do and I feel like if I’m going to do something that may or may not have an effect of someone’s life, I need to know each and everything about the situation at hand.”

“Do you? Or are you just the nosey type that feels she *needs* to know everything that you think everyone else knows?”

I ignored his query. The way he worded it made it sound as if he was arguing with someone before coming here and that that question was meant for them not me.

“You really believe that he has a notebook somewhere?”

“I think there is.”

“Well, what do you think happened to it?”

“I don’t know for sure but if I were to guess I would say that if there is one then it would be somewhere in Nurse Greens office.”

“Well, lucky for you Nurse Green left for the day.”

“Awesome.”

“But I have to warn you that you could get into a lot of trouble for going into her office. Judging by the way she’s been acting as of late I’m pretty sure she’ll fire you.”

I had to sit and contemplate for a moment. I didn’t give a fuck about Nurse Green feelings toward me, but I needed this job. I had less than a month to evaluate a dozen people. I could do that, but that’s under the assumption that I am able to make my own schedule. I could do a few this week and a few next week and that way I can still keep the plans and appointments that I’ve already made. Then the thought of Nurse Green telling me to reschedule my mother’s birthday shot across my mind.

“You know what,” I said restacking the papers on my desk. “Let’s do it. I gotta finish this file and I really don’t have the time to wait for Mr. Fickey to sober up in order to answer any questions I have to ask.”

“That’ll be in the morning,” Will said standing in front of my desk with his arms folded across his chest. “He’s pretty much going to be like he is right now for the rest of the night.”

I glanced over at Mr. Fickey. “Could you take him back to his room and I’ll meet you up stairs by Nurse Green’s office.”

“Naw,” he responded shaking his head but moving over to get Mr. Fickey up. “If you wait by her office door one of the other nurses will see you and tell on you. Meet me in the infirmary.”

“Ok,” I said watching as he unhand cuffed Mr. Fickey, stand him up and cuff him back before leaving out of the room.

I waited a few minutes to give Will time to get Mr. Fickey back to his room. I then grabbed my cell along with Mr. Fickey’s file and headed upstairs into the infirmary. When I got there Will was already in the room waiting on me.

“Shhh,” he said placing a finger to his mouth and waving for me to come over to where he stood in the far corner of the room.

I walked over and spotted a door slightly smaller than a normal door, located on the wall in front of where he stood.

“This door leads into her office,” Will said grabbing the knob and turning it. “Just be careful not to knock anything over.”

I followed behind him into Nurse Green’s office but waited inside by the door while he walked over to a large metal filing cabinet on the other side of the room.

“It’s locked,” he said in a low voice wiggling the handle.

“Where’s the key?” I asked glancing around the room.

“Well, if I knew that then it’d be open.”

“You don’t have to get smart,” I said moving over to him but stopping in the middle of the room when he turned and walked over to Nurse Green’s desk.

“My bad,” he said opening her desk drawer and searching through it for the key to the filing cabinet. “I get that way sometimes when I’m focused on something else.”

“Do you think she may have taken it with her?” I asked changing the subject.

“Got it,” he said walking back to the filing cabinet. “I think.”

I waited and watched as he went over to the filing cabinet and slid the key into the keyhole. He turned it left then right but it didn’t open. He tried again and it still didn’t open. “Damn.”

“Not the key?”

“I don’t believe so.”

I turned and moved over to the desk to look through it myself. Bending over to snoop through one of the drawers I heard a popping sound. I looked up to see Will standing with the filing cabinet open. “Got it,” he said.

“You broke it?” I asked hurrying over to him.

“No,” he replied standing aside so I could go through the cabinet. “I just popped it.”

“Sounds like you broke it.”

“Not at all. It’s an old cabinet so all you really have to do is pull up on it and jerk it for it to come open. Lock still intact.”

“How do you close it?”

“Reverse your last actions. Push down on it and push it in.”

“Gotcha,” I said fingering through the file folders until I found one that had Mr. Fickey’s name on it. “Found something!”

I pulled a file folder out of the cabinet and turned to quickly get out of the room before someone came. I could hear another popping sound behind me as Will closed the cabinet drawer back.

We both went back down to my office. I sat back at my desk and began going through the file to see if in fact Mr. Fickey was telling the truth and there really was a notebook. Will stood leaning against the doorframe with his arms folded.

“I never did understand why she hid parts of files in her office,” Will said. “Kinda pointless if you need someone to examine a patient.”

“Evaluate,” I corrected him. “Examining someone would mean that you’re pretty much studying that person or thing without really giving your insights or opinions on the information that you’ve come up with.”

“And what about evaluating?”

“Means the same thing all around except you give your opinions afterwards.”

“Oh,” Will said walking over and taking a seat in the chair in the corner. “I guess you stand a chance to learn something new every day.”

“Indeed we do,” I agreed stopping my paper flipping and pulling a single page out of the file.

The file folder was a record of what Mr. Fickey had been up to since being in the asylum. The paper I held was from the last person that came to see him which was dated a month ago.

Will waited and watched as I read over the piece of paper. “What did you find out?” He asked.

“It appears that Mr. Fickey was telling the truth about the notebook,” I said still reading.
“But....”

“But what?”

“I believe its back in her office inside of another drawer.”

“In another drawer?”

“Yeah, there’s a number on here that says MF-19b.”

“Motherfucking nineteen B,” Will said leaning on my desk to look at the paper I held.

“Mario Fickey,” I laughed. “Nineteen B.”

“Do you think it’s the file cabinet number?”

“I think so. Though I don’t recall seeing any numbers on the filing cabinet that we were looking in.”

“Me neither.”

“Damn,” I said leaning backwards in my chair. “I gotta go back up there.”

“I’ll go,” Will volunteered. “No need in both of us getting into trouble if we get caught.”

“That’s kind of you,” I said standing to my feet. “But I don’t want you to get into trouble over something I am involved in. I can do it.”

“No,” he said holding his hands out in front of him to tell me to stop. “It’s ok...I got it. Plus I’m sure I won’t get into as much trouble as you would.”

“Why is that?” I asked as he walked toward the exit.

“Because I doubt very seriously that she would fire me,” he replied.

“Why is that?” I asked. “You and Nurse Green having an affair or something? I didn't peg you for a cougar chaser,”

“Not at all,” he said giving me a weird look but grinning all the while.

“So why wouldn’t she fire you if she caught you snooping through her stuff?”

“Because she’s my mother.”

I wanted to say sorry, my bad, but he had left out of the room. I decided to yell it out anyways, “Sorry.”

“It’s cool,” he yelled back from out in the hall.

I left the sheet of paper that had the filing cabinet number on it out and to the side while sliding everything else back into the file folder.

After a few minutes of waiting Will was coming back into the room. “Found it,” he exclaimed dropping the notebook onto the desk in front of me.

I picked up the notebook. On the front of it written in black magic marker was the name, “Mario Fickey.” I opened it and read a small paragraph written on the first page:

To Whom It May Concern,

The contents within this book are personal and confidential and shall not be used to incriminate or further incriminate the writer or any persons mentioned within. No editing has been done to this work or shall be done to it in the future. If you should have any questions or concerns please see Nurse Green.

Written in bold letters below it read the words:

“FOR PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCHING PURPOSES ONLY!”

“What does it say?” Will asked sitting back in the chair in the corner. “Is that what you were looking for?”

“I believe so,” I said flipping to the next page and reading it to myself.

“What does it say?” Will eagerly asked.

I stopped reading and closed it. Looking over at Will I replied, "This is it."

"That's good," he responded. "But what does it say?"

I looked at my cellphone for the time. 9:45. "Damn," I said placing the notebook on top of the file folders and my cellphone on top of that. "Why the fuck is time going by so fast today?"

"You're gonna leave without telling me aren't you?"

"I can't really say right now," I said standing to my feet.

"That is so wrong," Will said shaking his head. "I do the dirty work and don't even get paid for it."

I smiled at him, "I will tell you everything that I read once I've had a chance to read through it all. But right now I gotta get out of here before I'm locked in."

Will walked me back up stairs and to the front door of the asylum. I said goodbye and he watched me cross the parking lot to my little red Volkswagen Beetle. The car was driving on its last leg and could die on me at any given moment. I had the money to get another car but the Beetle was a college gift from my parents so it had sentimental value to me somewhat. Plus, I wasn't big on cars as far as looks go. Besides, who was I trying to impress? No one.

I made it home to my uptown loft a little after ten. My ex-boyfriend who was an interior designer, designed and furnished the entire place to suit my every need. I remember he had once told me that "In order for someone to be comfortable with where they're going they first had to be comfortable where they're at." And then he fucked my cousin. I found them together in my walk-in closet getting it on. That was the first time I had put my hands on another person with the intentions of harming them in a long time. Looking back on that day I could say that my causing him to have to get staples placed in his head to close the womb I put there, was due to the fact it was my own blood kin that he was fucking. Or it could've been the fact that my cousin wasn't a girl. At least not at that moment in time.

I ascended the stairs to my bedroom and dropped Mr. Fickey's folder files and notebook onto the king-sized bed. Carrying my cell with me in the bathroom, I turned the shower on in the tub and stripped nude. My stomach started to act up so I sat down on the toilet and took a shit while playing Flappy Birds on my phone. When I felt I was done, I wiped, flushed, waited until the water in the shower was right, pulled the curtain aside and stepped in.

I had stayed in the shower until my fingertips were wrinkled before finally getting out. I then dried off with a towel and slid on a pair of panties and an old t-shirt that read “Badrock Gym” across the front of it. The shirt had belonged to my other ex-boyfriend. He was an MMA fighter, ripped and sexy as hell. But I had to leave him alone after he started using enhancement drugs that twisted his emotions. Sometimes I would come home to find him punching holes in the walls for absolutely no reason at all. There was that and the fact that the pills made it so his dick stopped getting hard.

Just then my phone rang. It was Kim.

“Hello,” I answered after the fifth ring.

“Why do you wait so long to answer?” Kim’s voice echoed through the phone.

“Because,” I said while holding the phone to my ear with my shoulder as I wrapped a towel around my hair. “It’s late, and if it’s not that important then whoever’s calling will hang up after the third or fourth ring.”

“That’s crazy to think like that you know that, right?”

“Or genius.”

“Whatever,” Kim said sucking her teeth. “What you doing?”

“Just got out the shower.”

“What happen at work? Why did you have to go back in?”

“I thought I already told you why I had to go back in?”

“You probably did but my mind has been all over the place today.”

I told her everything from what happened the moment I got the call from Nurse Green about my schedule to borrowing Mr. Fickey’s notebook.

“Don’t get fired over that shit,” Kim told me. “You always were a nosey b-I-t-c-h.”

“Well, in my line of work it literally pays to be a nosey b-I-t-c-h.”

“You’re damn sure right about that.”

While we had been talking I had flipped through a few pages in Mr. Fickey’s notebook. I flipped through it briskly until something caught my attention.

“You know what, I’m tired as hell,” I lied. “I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

“Ok,” Kim said. “But before you go I got this guy that...”

“Nope,” I said cutting her off.

“You aint even hear what I was gonna say.”

“After the last guy you hooked me up with I don’t want to know any men you or someone you know knows.”

“Come on now,” Kim pleaded. “How was I supposed to know that that dude was on the down low?”

“Whatever,” I said.

“Speaking of which, I saw your cousin the other day, did I tell you?”

“I don’t believe you did.”

“He was at Victoria’s Secret in the mall.”

“Eww, gross,” I said trying hard to keep the image of my cousin in lingerie out of my head.

Kim laughed hard before finally saying goodbye.

“Bye,” I responded before hitting the end key and tossing my phone behind me on the bed.

I looked down at the notebook and flipped it to the last page that had writing on it. From looking at the writing right off one would say that the person who wrote it was educated. I remembered seeing something in his file stating that he had graduated from high school with a 3.0 average and did some college courses before going to prison. Though he wasn’t a standout student in school, Mr. Fickey wasn’t a trouble maker either. He was an ordinary citizen by

governmental standards. Of course that was until recent events labeled him a menace to society. So why did he do what he did and why did they need so many people evaluating him?

Whatever the reason, I was certain that the notebook I was about to dig into held some of the answers I was searching for. If not all.

I turned back to the beginning of the notebook, laid on my back and began reading...

Chapter 4

Allison Madison

Her name was Allison Madison and she was an aspiring hand model. We met during the two months that I spent in college. I was studying for an exam in the school library but was having a difficult time with an essay I had been working on. She had walked by and caught a glimpse of the book that I was studying from and offered to help.

“That’s a good book,” She said looking over my shoulder.

“Kinda noseey aren’t you?” I responded covering my paper with my hands.

“Sorry,” she replied turning to walk away.

“No, I’m sorry,” I quickly turned to say as she started to walk away. “It’s just that I have been working on this damned paper for hours and haven’t gotten anywhere.”

“Well,” she began turning back toward me. “If you want I can help you. I’ve read that book a few times myself.”

“Umm, yeah,” I said. “Sure. I would like that.”

“I’m Allison.”

“I’m Mario but my friends call me Mickey.”

“Nice to meet you, Mickey.”

“Nice to meet you, Allison.”

I watched as she walked over and sat at across from me at the table. She dropped her book bag onto the floor beside her chair. It hit the ground with a heavy thud.

“What you got in there?” I asked. “Bricks or something?”

“No,” she said with a chuckle. “Not bricks. Just books. I like to read.”

“Cool,” I said wiping eraser dust from off of my paper.

“So, what you got?” She asked leaning forward eyeballing my work.

“So far,” I said ripping a sheet of paper out of my notebook, balling it into a ball and tossing it over her head into a waste basket that sat a few feet away. “Not much.”

“Nice shot,” She said turning just in time to see it go in. “Do you play basketball?”

“Me? Naw.”

“Why not?”

“I know I probably look like I do but I don't really have a passion for sports,” I said. “I was always told that if you're not truly passionate about something then you shouldn't make a profession out of it.”

“Well, I didn't ask if you wanted to be a basketball player when you grow up. I asked if you played.”

If not for the smile on her face I would've thought she was trying to be a smartass.

“No,” I said pushing my notebook over toward her. “I don't.”

She grabbed the notebook and pulled it in front of her. As she read I took the chance to look her over with my eyes.

The very first thing I noticed was her straight Armenian-like shoulder length hair. It was dyed hot pink but you could tell she'd had the dye in for a while because of the black new growth showing at the roots. She had hazel eyes that were outlined in dark black eye shadow and full, lusciously glossy lips that reminded me of that black chick from that show Scandal. The one chick that was screwing the president.

I could tell Allison was of a mixed nationality with her mulatto complexion and straight hair. I would've thought her hair to be a weave or something when I first looked at her but you could easily tell that it wasn't. She didn't wear any kind of blush or foundation like nearly all of the girls that went to the college did. My grandmother had once told me that if a woman will hide her true looks from you she will hide other things as well.

Allison wore black overalls with the words “She Ready” bedazzled on the front pocket. At first I thought maybe the “S” had fallen off or something because in a literary sense “She Ready” wasn't the correct way to say it. “She's ready” is what I figured it was supposed to say. But based on the spacing of the words, this was indeed the way it was intended to be writ. Must have been some sort of hip hop jargon or something.

I watched as she used her pointer finger to move a strand of hair from her face and smoothly place it behind her ear. She had the most beautiful hands I have ever seen. Well-manicured, a light gloss on her short nails, no marks or abrasions whatsoever. And unlike most if not all of the women I have met, she hadn't a single ring on either finger.

Moving the strand of hair revealed an ear filled with diamond earrings that glistened in the sunlight that was beaming in through the large windows behind me. I have never seen anyone with so many rings in one ear before. Maybe on television or a magazine, but never in person. She also had another small ring in her right nostril. This one was gold and in the shape of a clover.

“Good thing you're not Medusa,” she said still looking down at the notebook.

“Huh?” I said unsure of what she was referring to.

“The way you're staring at me I probably would've been turned into stone.”

I thought for a moment, running her statement through my head a few times before I responded.

Giving her a light chuckle to let her know I wasn't trying to be a smartass myself, I replied, “Well, Medusa supposedly only turned people into stone when you looked her in the eyes.”

Then she looked up at me and I felt my heart melt right in my chest. I had already familiarized myself with her overall features so those didn't bother me too much. What did however was the look she gave me. Her bedroom eyes were enough to make any man drop to his knees and put a ring on it. Thankfully she looked back down to continue reading or else I probably would've came on myself right there in front of her.

“This is very interesting,” She said reading away.

“You think so?” I asked trying to see what part of my writing she was reading.

“I wouldn't lie to you,” she said turning to the last page that I stopped writing on.

I liked her. Other than the fact that she had my insides jelly, and she liked my work, there was something about her that attracted me to her like a moth to a flame, a dog to a fire hydrant, a bird to a power line... You get the point.

“This is very interesting,” she said finally finishing and sliding the notebook back across the table to me. “But it doesn't sound really like an essay. At least not to me it doesn't.”

“How's an essay supposed to sound?” I asked.

“Well, an essay from what I know is something that gives an argument on a certain subject...Or something like that. But what you seem to have is some kind of story based on another body of work. Do you get what I'm saying?”

“I believe so.”

“You actually have characters and what seems to be a plot. That could easily be considered a book all in itself.”

“That's what I was going for,” I smiled.

“It is?”

“Yeah. It's not really a story but more like an elongated example explaining the subject in story form.”

“Well put,” She said smiling. “Either way I would love to read it when you're finished.

“You mean if, I finish.”

“I guess that's the part I come in, huh?” she leaned forward and propped her arms on the table. “What is it that you need help with?”

“Allot of it really,” I said.

“Let me see the book you're basing your work on.”

I slid the book over to her. She picked it up off of the table and held it in front of her face. Looking at the cover she read the title aloud, “Lilith in the Garden.”

“Yep,” I said not realizing that I was staring at the book as if I could see right through it at her face.

“What made you write on this book?” She asked setting the book down on the table in front of her.

“A friend of mine gave it to me actually. I read it and fell in love with the unexplained knowledge it holds.”

“I like how you said “Holds” instead of “Held”.

“Why is that?”

“Because “Held” would assume that it had something but no longer has it. “Hold” says that it still has whatever it held.”

“I didn't even notice that. Interesting.”

“I tend to be sometimes,” she said grinning.

“You must be studying philosophy or something like that,” I said.

“Why you say that?” she asked.

“Because of the way you talk.”

She looked down at the book.

I had to catch myself from staring at her and looked away, silently praying that I didn't get hard. Today was laundry day and I had on sweatpants. The last thing I needed was for little me to be up playing when he should be sleeping.

“Are you religious?” She asked saving me from myself.

“Not really.”

“Christian?”

“To be honest with you, no...I'm not.”

“You do believe in God though don't you?”

“Of course. I'm not an idiot,” I chuckled. “But I can say that before I came to this school, back home, I was going to a Christian church with my parents. They are real heavy in the Lord and would lay me out if they knew I was claiming not to be a Christian.”

She burst out laughing but then quietened down when a librarian looked at her with a finger placed to her lips.

“Why you laughing?” I asked smiling. “I'm serious.”

“Oh, I have no doubt that you are,” she said. “My father is a deacon. He flipped on me when I told him that I had doubts about the whole Bible thing.”

“Oh,” I said.

“So trust me, I know exactly what you're talking about.”

Just then the bell sounded signaling that school was over for the day. For the students that had morning classes anyways. Including myself.

“Damn,” I said. Wish you could've came to be nose y a little sooner.”

“I wasn't being nose y,” she responded with a light giggle. “But if you want, I can come by your dorm a little later and we can go over it all.”

“That would be great,” I said gathering my things.

“Where do you stay?”

I pointed out the windows behind me at a large brick house across the street from the library.

“Victory House,” she said looking out the window.

From the expression on her face I could tell something was wrong.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she replied. “I used to have a friend that stayed over there.”

“Boyfriend?”

“No. Just a friend.”

Even though I made sure not to show it I was happy on the inside.

“He died though,” she said.

Now I felt guilty for being happy.

“I'm sorry to hear that,” I said. “He wasn't murdered was he?”

“Car accident.”

“Dang, that's still messed up.”

“It was a while ago so I don't cry or anything like that anymore. But I try to avoid that place as much as I can.”

“Oh, ok. So do you want to meet somewhere else? Maybe we could meet back here tomorrow.”

“Its fine,” she said grabbing her bag off of the floor. “What time should I stop by? I'm free after 8.”

“Anytime is fine with me,” I replied walking around the table to her. “You want me to carry that for you?”

“It's ok,” she said. “I got it.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah, thanks though. Do you have a number I can call you at when I'm on my way over?”

“Oh yeah,” I said quickly pulling my cell out of my pocket and handing it to her.

She typed her number in my phone and used it to call her own cell. Her phone rang with a duck quacking as her ringtone. She pulled it out, answered it then hung up.

“Got it,” she said. “See you soon.”

I watched as she walked off through the library. She didn't have much of a booty but the way she walked made it look sexy as hell. I shook my head side to side in the rhythm of her stroll before I turned and walked toward the exit. I didn't really believe in love at first sight but I sure felt I should after meeting her. Hopefully she was single. I was so caught up in her beauty that I didn't even think to ask.

I left out, stopping by the mess hall to grab a bite to eat before heading home. When I got home I finished washing my laundry before showering and lying down on my bed to watch some TV while waiting for Allison to come by.

Victory House was a five bedroom house occupied by 4 people including myself. 2 of the people didn't actually go to college but worked as night security guards there. The other guy that lived in the house had went home to visit his family a week ago but was yet to return. He had a nice flat screen TV in his room that I wanted and if he wasn't back in another week I was surely going to snatch it up before the other guys did.

I pretty much had the entire place to myself. Though I stayed in my room the majority of the time.

I was always a simple kind of person. My room had a bed, a dresser that held a small flat screen television, a desk, a microwave and a mini fridge. I also had my own bathroom. It looked like a mid-level hotel room. And I liked it that way. I didn't smoke, drink or do any drugs so there was really no reason for me to go to any of the many parties that went on around campus. Though every now and then I would go out to listen to people tell jokes at the comedy club or hit the movies up whenever something that interested me came out.

I winded up dozing off for what seemed like a decade before waking up to the sound of my cellphone ringing. By the time I got off of the bed and found the phone buried inside of a basket of laundry I had finished washing earlier, they had hung up. I looked at the call log and saw that I had 3 missed calls from the same number. A number I didn't recognize right off. Then I remembered Allison was supposed to be coming over.

“Fuck,” I said aloud while hitting the button to call the number back.

The phone rang four times before Allison's sweet voice answered it.

“Hello?”

“Hi,” I said. “You call?”

“Yeah,” she replied. “Like two or three times.”

“My fault,” I said yawning. “I fell asleep.”

She giggled.

“What are you doing?” I asked hoping that she’d say she was on her way to my place.

“I’m at home,” she replied.

“Oh,” I said.

“What’s wrong?” She asked. “You sound disappointed about something.”

“Oh naw. I thought you were going to come by is all.”

“I am,” she said. “I’m outside your house now.”

I hopped up out of bed and hurried to my bedroom window. My room overlooked the front of the house so I could see the street as well as the college across the street. I spotted Allison standing at the door with her back turned to me. I made my way out of the room and down the flight of stairs to the front door to let her in.

“Hey,” I said as she smiled at me.

“Hi,” she said. “Took you long enough.”

“My bad,” I responded. “I fell asleep...”

“I’m just messing with you,” she said still smiling. “I heard you running down the stairs though.”

“I wasn’t running,” I lied closing the door and locking it.

I turned and held my hand out toward the stairs to lead her up into my room.

“You act as if I know where to go,” she said taking a sip from a cup she held.

“You said you been here before,” I replied moving in front to lead her up.

“Yeah, but that was a while ago and I still wouldn't know where your room is.”

“You're right,” I said. “I get dumb when I first wake up.”

She laughed. “Last time I was in here there was people everywhere.”

I stopped at my bedroom door to allow her to go in first. She walked by me into my room and stopped a few feet from the door to look around. I got a whiff of her perfume and felt myself begin to rise.

“How long ago was that?” I asked walking in behind her. “You can have a seat on the bed if you want, it's clean.”

“Thanks,” she said setting her cup and purse onto the dresser before making her way over and sitting at the foot of the bed. “Last time I was here was over a year ago.”

“I wasn't here then,” I said walking over and grabbing my backpack off of the floor and setting it on the bed.

“This place used to be a fraternity house.”

“Was it?”

“Yeah. They threw parties every other day damn near.”

“What happened?”

“The school shut it down after a couple of kids got shot.”

“That is crazy.”

“How long have you been here?” She asked.

“About six months.”

“That isn't long at all.”

“Do you go to the college?” I asked turning the volume to my TV all the way down.

“Me? No. I just use the library from time to time to read or get away.”

“Get away from what?”

“You know...The world in general. I feel that sometimes you gotta take some time off to yourself every now and again in order to keep a firm grip on what's real and what isn't, ya know?”

“I believe so. You must have a lot going on.”

“Not really.”

“Do you have any roommates?”

“No. I live alone.”

“Alone? Where about?”

“Not too far from here.”

“Where're you from?” I asked grabbing my folder and book out of my bag and setting it down on the bed. She grabbed the reading book and held it in her hands.

She answered, “I'm from up North. What about you? Are you from around here?”

“Not really. I grew up in the country but I've been living out here for a while now.”

“You have any family?”

“Yes.”

I started to tell her about my family when her phone began quacking.

“One second,” she said answering her phone. “Hello?”

I sat down on the bed while she stood and walked over by the bedroom door to talk on her phone. She talked for all but 30 seconds before hanging up and moving back to her seat on the bed.

“What were we talking about?” She asked.

“This essay I’m working on,” I said changing from the previous subject.

“Ok,” she said. “I know we were talking about family but it's cool if you don't wanna talk about that. I don't really like talking about my family either.”

“It's not that. I just wanna get this essay out of the way.”

“You have plans tonight?”

“No. Not yet.”

She looked at me and smiled. “How can I be of assistance?”

We worked, talked and laughed deep into the night. By the time we were finished with my essay I had nearly 50 pages written.

“O-M-G,” She spelled aloud while stretching her hands high above her head and yawning. “It's getting light outside.”

I turned to see the dawn of the sky glowing from out the edges of my window curtains. “Damn, it is,” I agreed.

“I am so tired,” she said. “I have to use the bathroom before I go.”

“You can stay here if you want,” I said not realizing what I was saying and how fast I offered.

“You would like that wouldn't you?” She asked sliding off of the bed.

“It’s not that,” I said defensive. “I just thought you may wanna get a little rest before heading home. I would feel bad if you fell asleep at the wheel.”

She gave me a look but grinned. “You aint gonna try to take advantage of me are you?”

“I would never,” I replied.

She stood up and crossed the room to the bathroom. I watched as she stepped inside and shut the door. Cleaning off the bed I laid down on the edge being sure to give her plenty of room to lie down beside me. I didn't want her to think that I was going to try anything and risk making her second think coming back over.

A few moments later the bathroom door opened and she walked out holding the pants she wore over in her hand. I watched as she dropped the pants on the floor at the foot of the bed.

“Are you sleepy?” She asked crawling unto the bed overtop of me.

“A little,” I answered feeling myself rise as she continued to crawl, moving her face closer and closer to mine.

She placed her hand between my legs and slid it smoothly upward resting on my penis.

“Take your sweats off,” she said in a soft whisper.

I did as she commanded trying hard not to seem too desperate.

“You have any protection?” She asked.

“FUCK!” I yelled in my head.

“I sure don't,” I answered.

“When was the last time you had a checkup?” she asked sliding back off of the bed and moving toward the dresser where she set her purse earlier.

“Last month,” I answered watching as she reached into the brown bag and pulled out another little brown paper bag. Opening the bag she stuck her hand in and pulled out a little red condom. Turning around she tossed the condom over to me.

I grabbed the condom and tore it open. Before I could put it on she was crawling back over top of me.

“I hope this doesn't give you the wrong impression of me,” she said placing her lips lightly to mine for a quick kiss.

I didn't respond or more so I couldn't respond. It had been a little while since I had last been with a woman. I knew what to do but I was so lost in the moment that I couldn't move. Fortunately she seemed to enjoy doing all of the work herself.

“You ok?” She asked kissing me on the cheek and then on the forehead.

I shook my head up and down slowly, feeling my eyes growing extremely heavy as my cock grew extremely hard.

She looked at me and smiled. "I like you."

I opened my eyes to look at her. She didn't wait for me to respond as she moved her head down toward my mid-section. Closing my eyes back I felt like I was about to explode as she grabbed a hold of me in her hands and kissed on the tip.

"I like you too," I said in a low voice more to myself than to her.

She looked up at me, grabbed the condom I had half opened in my hand. Fixing the condom on me she moved up and slid me inside of her. I came instantly. If she felt it or not I didn't know and luckily for me I stayed hard as if I hadn't come at all. It was like I had popped a little blue pill or something.

We had sex for nearly an hour before we both passed out in each other's arms and body sweat.

We spent the next few nights together. She would come over to my place and we would hang out and talk about our past as well as our futures. She wanted to be a hand model which I felt with her hands wouldn't be a problem at all. I've even helped her with building a portfolio, taking pictures of her holding various objects, soda bottles, shampoo containers, things of that sort.

She told me a lot of things about her family. About how her real father was killed by a drunk driver and how her stepfather; who used to be her uncle; sexually abused her mother to the point she began to actually enjoy it. She also spoke on her only brother being in the Military. He was stationed overseas for four years without a single incident but then came back home to North America only to become a victim to a terrorist attack in which he lost his right arm as well as his right ear.

I told her all about my family. About my father who along with my mother ran a small dairy farm. How I used to run away from home only to be found by our ginormous English Mastiff named Foghorn Leghorn and literally dragged back home by him. She seemed to find that so amusing. Looking back on it I guess it really was.

Then one day, in the blink of an eye, everything changed.

We were supposed to go out tonight to see a movie. It would've been the first time that we've gone out since we started hanging together. She was also going to introduce me to her friends for the first time. However, she showed up at my door step with a DVD movie, two boxes of candy and some popcorn.

I tried to focus on the movie but couldn't help but touch on Allison the entire time. She wore a black lace shirt with a hot pink bra underneath. The button on her black miniskirt was undone with a lace thong showing that matched her bra. Her toenails were colored pink and black along with her fingernails to match her clothing Her hair was dyed pink on the right half of her head while the other a solid black. Her eyes were shadowed with a light pink eyeliner while her lips glistened with a smear less glitter gloss. I found out they didn't smear when I rubbed her lips with my fingertips.

"You're not even watching the movie," she said grabbing my hand and calmly moving it from her lips.

"Yes I am," I lied as she gently rubbed my hand with hers. Truth was, I had already seen the movie twice before. Though I told her I had never seen it.

She lay on my chest watching the movie while I quietly inhaled the aroma of whatever flower scented shampoo she used on her hair. I started to dose off a couple of times but fortunately I had taken a nap earlier that day so it wasn't hard to fight it.

The movie had finally went off and I was ready to get it on.

"I gotta pee," she said sliding off of the bed and going into the bathroom.

I half hoped that she would come out butt naked but she didn't. Fully dressed she walked out of the bathroom and crawled back onto the bed.

"What did you think of the movie?" she asked.

"It was ok," I replied as she lay down on her back beside me.

"I told you that you weren't watching it."

"I was."

"Then what was it about?"

“It was about a boy who was accused of killing his best friend then got tormented by everyone for it until he snapped and really started killing people.”

“Do you think he did it?”

“Did what? Kill his friend?”

“Yeah.”

“I don't know. At first I didn't believe it but after he started killing motherfuckers I'm pretty sure he did.”

“Well, I don't think he did.”

“Why's that?”

“Because it didn't make sense for him to. He didn't have any family and that was his one and only friend.”

“So why did everybody treat him like he did kill him then?”

“Because that's just how life is.”

“And how is that?”

“You're guilty until proven innocent.”

“That's true,” I agreed wrapping my arm around her as she moved over to lay her head my chest.

“The part that didn't make sense to me though was the judge finding him guilty with no real proof or evidence of any kind.”

“He was the last one seen with him,” I said.

“Yeah, but that was hearsay basically. The people that said they saw him with his friend weren't even around them at the time.”

“You know what I think?”

“What's that?”

“If you ever get accused of killing someone, you're pretty much going to be forever guilty in the eyes of most people unless they find the person who really did it.”

“I can see that. Aint that how they did that O.J. guy?”

“Pretty much so.”

We lay quiet for a few minutes. Just as I started to doze off she turned to kiss me on the cheek, then the lips. Just as I started to kiss her back a loud knock came from the front door. I peered out of the window to see who it was and spotted a large red pickup truck parked at the curb. In front of my door stood a large individual with their back turned my window making it so I couldn't see their face. However, when Allison looked out of the window it seemed she knew exactly who it was. She quickly got dressed and left out of the room without so much as looking in my direction.

I walked out into the hall in time to see her open the front door, walk out and close it behind her. I started to go down the stairs and see what was happening but I figured it may be her father and if she wanted to introduce me she'd do so. Instead, I walked back into my room and sat at the foot of the bed staring over at the window. Then I started to hear arguing. I could hear a man's voice yelling and cursing so I got up and moved to the window to see what was going on. By the time I got to the window however the truck was pulling off.

Two days had went by and I hadn't heard a thing from Allison. On the third day I had found out that on the day she left my house she was involved in a car accident. The truck they were in had flipped a guardrail, rolled deep into a patch of woods and into a lake where they would remain until they were found two days later by a man and his son fishing. It was said that the man driving had broken out a window but had gotten stuck trying to get out of it and drowned. Allison wasn't wearing her seatbelt and upon crashing her head had smashed against the dashboard of the car, killing her instantly.

I didn't know what to do. I felt so empty inside. I stayed in my room for days crying and crying until my eyes could cry no more.

Then one night I got up and decided to take a walk. I walked and walked and walked with no particular destination in mind. I walked around the college campus until I came to the park located in the middle of campus. There I saw a man and woman sitting on a swing set kissing. I instantly thought of Allison and began walking the other way. I walked back toward

my place but walked by the library and started to think of Alison again and winded up turning and walking in another direction.

I walked until I came to a strip mall where a movie theatre lie. The same movie theatre Allison and I were supposed to go the last night she came to my house. The place was packed with cars. No one was outside however save for two men who stood aside the building kissing. I grew sick to my stomach. Partly because of seeing two men kissing but also because I wanted someone to kiss. The way they held each other made me think more and more of Allison. I missed her so much.

Once more I turned and walked in yet another direction. Away from the strip mall, away from the college, away from the library, away from my house. I seemed to be able to walk away from everything but that I wished to walk away from the most. Reality. A reality that no longer held the person I loved. Allison.

I somehow winded up at the county hospital. It was around midnight so the hospital was fairly empty. I walked down the halls, finding an elevator and getting on it to ride all the way up to the top floor. As I rode the elevator I thought of going up to the roof and throwing myself off of it. When the elevator stopped suddenly I waited and watched as the doors opened, deep down hoping that the doors would open and Alison would step in. instead the doors opened and an old lady in scrubs stepped onto the elevator. I stepped out and walked off. I was on the Labor and Delivery floor. I looked at all of the many pictures of newborn babies posted up on the walls. Alison and I hadn't talked about babies but I was sure she would've wanted to eventually. And as beautiful a person she was I was sure we would have a wonderful kid.

I made my way down the hall and opened a door leading to an emergency stairwell. I thought about tripping myself at the top step and tumbling down, or simply falling over the edge of the guardrail. However, I walked heavy footed down until I came to the very bottom floor. Opening the door to the bottom floor I moved in and down yet another hall. This one was a little cooler and the lights shown a little bit dimmer than the rest of the hospital.

I walked up the hall until I came to the entrance of the morgue. Without thinking I pushed open the door to the morgue and walked inside. It was cold. Instantly I thought about a movie I had watched where they said that whenever a ghost was near, the air around you would grow cold. I could only imagine how many ghost must have been inside of that room.

I made my way over to a filing cabinet set beside a wall of cold chambers. Slowly I opened the filing cabinet and searched the files for Allison Madison. When I found her folder my eyes instantly flooded with tears. It seemed as if before when I heard she was dead, in my mind it was just hearsay even though it had been on the news and in the newspapers. Still, my

mind chose not to believe it. Until now. Now I knew it was real. Now I knew that I would never be able to spend another night with her. I would never see her smile. Never hear her laugh. Never hug her, squeeze her, touch her face or kiss her lips. I would never again feel the warmth of her embrace or feel her heart softly beating to the rhythm of my own against my chest as we lay together. I was damaged goods.

After staring at the file folder for nearly five minutes, I pulled it out and searched for her chamber number. I knew it was going to fuck me up even more than I already was but I just had to see her again. I spotted the number, made a mental note of it and slid the folder back into the drawer before closing it. Searching the cold chambers I found hers a few feet from the cabinet, grabbed the handle and slowly pulled it open.

There she was. My beautiful Allison. She was so cold. I just wanted to pull her out of there and hold her in my arms until she warmed up, kiss her and tell her that everything was going to be ok. I rubbed my hand across her lips and down the middle of her bare chest where a long scar lie from when they cut her open and sewn her back shut. I continued moving my hand down her midsection to her side and onto her hand. I took hers in mine and pulled it up to my cheek. Tears rolled out of my eyes and onto her hand as I rubbed it across my face.

“I want to be the most famous hand model in the world,” she had told me.

Her hands were cold yet still soft and flawless.

I set her hand back at her side and turned toward a desk that sat on the other end of the filing cabinet. I walked over and searched through the drawers until I spotted an X-acto knife. Placing my thumb to the button on the side of it I pushed the blade up until it was sticking out halfway. Looking at my wrist I contemplated slicing the veins open. One single slice would be all it took. I could lay on the chamber table, hold Allison in my arms and meet her in the Afterlife.

I walked back over to Allison. Looking into her face I bent over to kiss her on the lips, hoping, praying that she would kiss me back...But she didn't. She couldn't. She was gone.

Without second thought I grabbed hold of her arm and slid the X-acto knife into her skin halfway up her forearm. I dug the blade in until it touched the bone, then I slowly pulled the knife around her arm until I was back at the entry point. I set the knife down on her cold, lifeless body, grabbed on tightly to her arm with both hands and bent it until her bone snapped in half like a limb off of a tree branch. I moved over and did the exact same thing to the other arm, being super careful not to damage her hands.

I found a couple of evidence bags inside of one of the desk drawers and slid her arms into their own separate bag. When I was finished I kissed her one more time before pushing her back inside and closing the door to the chamber.

When I awoke the next morning I had no recollection of the night before but found a large ice cooler sitting beside my bed filled with ice and the two bags that held the hands of my dearest Allison Madison...

Chapter Five

The Saga Continues

When I finally set the horror story that is Mickey Fickey's notebook down, I couldn't sleep a bit. I tried everything from Nyquil to table wine. I had even smoked a joint that I had been saving for a rainy day. Yet, I lie on my back in the middle of my bed staring up at the ceiling fan as it turned around and around and around.

I just couldn't believe how his life turned from sugar to shit in such a short span of time. I understood how love and death could drive someone to the brink of insanity but the way he had written it in the notebook, I couldn't see a point to that said he had lost his mind. One could argue that the sudden death of a loved one drove him to do what he did but with no mental issues in his background, that was a hard argument to win. At least in court it was.

And then there was the issue where he thought about harming himself a few times but had not.

Also, he spoke of them being together for about a week, only spending nights together. Speaking on their past, family and friends without actually meeting any of them. Sure it was easy to catch feelings for someone after spilling your life to them and them to you, but would that really drive you to the point as to where you'd pull their body out of a freezer in the morgue, amputate their arms and abscond with them? Maybe this was why they wanted so many different people evaluating him. Maybe this is why they called me. But I was fresh out of college with not really much experience under my belt. The people that evaluated him before me had years of expertise to their names. Maybe they needed or felt like they needed some new blood on it. Seeing as how when I looked over the others documented work they all came to the same conclusion that he was of sound mind when the crime occurred. Which by reading what I read in his notebook, Mr. Fickey was anything but of sound mind.

Something that didn't sit right with me was the fact that this didn't even seem like a crime at all. The person was already deceased at the time in which he took her arms. What crime could that possibly be? It was indeed sick as shit, but a crime it was not. At least from my perspective it wasn't. However, it was no doubt that he was indeed in the right place. As Will would probably say, "The crazy fucker."

After rambling to myself for I don't know how long, I finally dozed off. As horrifically twisted as Mr. Fickey's notebook was, the dream I had that night was even worse. I had dreamed that I was the one being pulled out of the freezer and getting my arms chopped off. Only I wasn't dead. I was paralyzed somehow but I could still feel every bit of him slicing away at my limbs. And to make matters worse, he used my amputated arms to fist my vagina and rectum. I tried my best to wake up but lucky me, the damned marijuana I had smoked along with the wine kept me under.

When I finally did wake up the sun was high in the sky which meant that I was late for work. Extremely late.

I jumped out of bed and hurried into the shower. The nightmare I had last night had my entire body soaking wet, and not in a good way. I quickly washed, dried, got dressed, made sure I had everything that I thought I may need and sprinted out the door.

On the ride to work I called ahead to try and get Will to sneak me in. Thankfully he was there and was happy to help me. Even more so, Nurse Green was in court and wasn't going to be in until late. I had totally dodge a bullet this time and vowed that I'd never let myself get that close to being late again. However, like the saying goes, never say never.

I sat behind the table in my office looking over the notes within Mr. Fickey's folder when Will came in and sat in the chair in the corner.

"So," Will began looking at me with an eager expression on his face. "What did the notebook say?"

"You're really hung up on that aren't you?" I responded moving the folder I was reading to the side and grabbing Mr. Fickey's notebook.

"I gotta admit I am a little curious," Will said. "I've been thinking about that damned thing all night for some reason."

"Well, trust and believe," I began. "It is not something that you wanna think about all night."

"Was he talking about killing people in it?"

"No. not at all."

I told him everything that I remember from reading the notebook. He nearly puked when I told him about Mr. Fickey cutting Allison's arms and storing them away.

"Sick sonofabitch," was Will's response.

"What I don't understand is how he got caught and charged for anything at all," I said. "How is it a crime to cut a dead person's arms off?"

“It actually is,” Will said. “It’s called body stealing. Or something like that. I read in the papers not too long ago about a dentist upstate that had gotten busted for stealing body parts from morgues and selling them to institutions and shit. Old dude made like 40 mill off body parts.”

“Are you serious?” I asked with a disgusted look.

“Yeah,” Will responded shaking his head side to side then looking over toward the exit. “Almost makes me wanna chop my own damn arm off and hock it on the Black Market.”

“You're sick,” I replied smirking.

“So you're done with him?”

“Who? Fickey?”

“Yeah.”

“I don't really know for sure. Could you bring him down so that I can ask him a couple of questions? I just have to clarify a few things.”

“Sure,” Will said standing to his feet and looking at his wrist watch. I’ll be right back.”

Will left the room and a few minutes later walked back in with Mr. Fickey. He sat him down, cuffed him to the chair and went to stand by the exit.

I looked over at Mr. Fickey who sat with his head down. I looked over at Will and then back to Mr. Fickey.

“Could you give us a minute,” I asked Will.

“Awe come on,” Will said. “I can't stay?”

I smiled. “Just give us a minute. I'll keep you posted. I promise.”

Will gave me a disappointed smile and left the room. Soon as he was gone Mr. Fickey looked up at me and smiled.

“Good Morning,” I said.

“Morning,” Mr. Fickey replied looking over at the exit to see if anyone was standing there.

“It’s just us,” I said. “How’d you sleep last night?”

“Ok.”

“That's good.”

I grabbed his notebook and held it up in front of me. “This is yours, right?”

He looked at the notebook and then at me. Nodding his head once he replied, “Yes.”

“I'm sorry to hear what you went through,” I said setting the notebook down. “I know it must've been very difficult for you to lose someone like Allison.”

I froze in place with my eyes planted firmly on Mr. Fickey. I had forgotten all about the note written on my own notebook telling me NOT to say her name. I waited for him to burst into a rage of emotionally uncontrollable tears. But he never did.

“Something wrong?” he asked after looking at me stare at him for a whole two minutes or so without saying a word.

“No. Not at all,” I responded. “I just thought I said something wrong. No big deal.”

“What might that have been?” He asked.

I looked at him as he looked down at his feet. I thought maybe he didn't hear me say her name and I dodged another bullet. Then he glanced up at me and said, “I loved Allison.”

No tears. What did this mean? Maybe this wasn't the name that set off his PBA. But if it wasn't then what was?

“I know,” I said. “It seemed as if you two had been through a lot together in the little time you’ve known each other.”

He didn't respond.

“This notebook,” I began while flipping open the cover of Mr. Fickey’s notebook. “It’s really well written. Almost as if you were writing a book or something.”

“She taught me that,” he said looking toward the exit.

“She? She who?”

I waited for him to respond thinking that this may be the person's name he was really referring to that upset him.

He looked at me and replied, “Cris.”

“Cris?” I asked closing the notebook. “Who is that?”

He didn't respond. He looked over at the notebook lying on my desk and then over at the exit and back to the notebook.

“Is everything ok?” I asked watching him closely.

“Where's the others?” He finally asked.

“Other what?”

“The other Notebooks.”

My eyes grew wide.

“I didn't know there were others,” I said.

He smiled at me and quickly dropped his head. I started to say something when the reason he dropped his head and went mute walked into the room.

“I gotta take him back,” Will said making his way over to Mr. Fickey.

I threw my hands in the air above my head and let them flop back down onto my desk in exasperation.

“But you just brought him down here,” I said frustratingly.

I watched as he unhand cuffed him, stood him up, cuffed him back and walked him toward the exit.

“Could you come back after you put him away?” I asked shaking my head.

“Sure thing,” Will said from out in the hall.

I had wanted to ask Mr. Fickey a few more questions, maybe get to know more about these other notebooks but I figured if there was indeed more of them then they would no doubt be in the same place as the one I already read. At least I had hoped.

About ten minutes later Will walked back into the room and stood in front of my desk with his hands jammed into the pockets of his jumpsuit. “You wanted to see me?”

“Is everything alright up there?” I asked.

“Yeah,” he answered. “Nurse Green wanted all the patients locked down for something.”

“So she’s here. Did she say anything about me being late?”

“Naw. It’s not documented”

“What do you mean?”

“If I was to put down that you came in late she would ask who let you in. Then that person would get chewed out.”

I shook my head side to side. “I don’t understand what the problem is. Why do we have to be here before five in the damned morning and out by ten or risk being locked in?”

“It’s just how this place operates,” he said.

“So it isn’t a rule that she made up on her own?”

“No. It was like that before she came.”

“Oh.”

“Is that what you wanted me to come back down here for? I was thinking maybe you wanted to ask me out or something.”

I smiled. "Actually, I wanted to ask you if you happened to see any other notebooks in the place where you found this one."

He twisted his mouth and looked at me sideways before saying, "Yeah. There is."

My eyes grew wide with excitement. "Why didn't you get all of them?"

"Come on now," he said. "If I were to grab all of them notebooks Green would surely notice."

"Damn," I said picking Mr. Fickey's notebook up. "I have to see the others."

"Well...I can get them to you one at a time with no problem. Just not all at once. And I have to take that one back first."

"You would do that for me?" I asked holding the notebook out to him.

"Of course," He said smiling and grabbing the notebook. "If you would go out with me."

I gripped the other end of the notebook as he held onto the opposite. Our eyes locked for a few seconds before I let go.

"That's ok," I said grabbing Mr. Fickey's file folder and opening it.

I didn't look up but could almost feel the disappointment Will was expressing on his face as he turned to leave the room.

"Hey," I called out as Will cut the corner.

He came back and stood in the doorway.

I smiled at him and said, "I'm feeling like pasta tonight."

The ecstatic look now on his face was priceless. "Be right back," he said before turning and disappearing from view.

"I didn't mean right now," I yelled out to him.

While I waited for Will to return I went over all of Mr. Fickey's files once more. Searching for anything that may stick out to give me a better understanding of who he is as well as who he once was. And if he had even changed from that person at all.

"Here you go," Will said dropping another notebook on the desk causing me to jump back a little. "Sorry. Didn't mean to scare you."

"You do have the tendency to sneak up on people," I said grabbing the notebook and looking at the cover.

"I had knocked and everything," Will said. "You always get so deep in your work that you can't hear someone right in front of you?"

"Sometimes," I replied. "It's something I had developed when I was in college. My roommate did nothing but party and bullshit the entire time I was there. I had to learn to block things out in order to get my school work done."

"Cool," was Will's response. "Wish I had that ability. I can barely focus on doing some things even when I'm the only person in the room."

I chuckled lightly while looking at the notebook in front of me. It was identical to the first with all of the same writings on the front. I opened it to see the exact same note as the other had on the first page warning the reader that it was to be used for psychiatric purposes only.

"You know if she catches you with that you can kiss this job goodbye," Will said standing in front of my desk.

I quickly closed the notebook and moved it beneath a sheet of paper.

A voice came over the intercom requesting Will to report to the day room. He said goodbye and left the room. I spent the next five minutes staring over at the piece of paper that hid the notebook, fighting the urge to read it right then and there. But it wasn't a chance that I could or was about to take. So I spent the next few hours playing games on my cellphone and writing down my views and opinions on Mr. Fickey so far. Being sure not to mention anything that referenced the first notebook or any of its contents.

After a few hours of sitting down my ass started to hurt as well as my stomach. I decided to head up to the cafeteria on the third floor to grab a bite to eat. Through having to rush to work and everything I hadn't a chance to eat breakfast. I was starved. I hid the new notebook in one of the desk drawers, stacking a bunch of papers on top of it that I got out of one of the other rooms.

When I reached the cafeteria I spotted Nurse Mary and Nurse June sitting at a table eating and giggling about something. I figured I may as well be a little social and seeing as how they were so nice to me my first day here, it was safe for me to call them friends. "Everyone's a friend until you make them your enemy," I remembered Cassie telling me.

I went over to a vending machine and bought some food and a drink before making my way over to them.

"Hi there," Nurse June said as I approached and sat down at their table.

"Hello," I said setting my sandwich and soda down.

"I saw you come in a little late," Nurse Mary spoke in her pillowy voice. "I hope you didn't get into any trouble."

"Not at all," I said opening my soda bottle. "Will let me in."

Nurse Mary looked over at Nurse June and Nurse June back at her then at me.

"What?" I said curious to why my comment about Will made them look at each other.

"Nothing," Nurse June said eating a potato chip.

"Her and Will used to be an item," said Nurse Mary.

I looked at Nurse June as she gave Nurse Mary a sideways look.

"It was a long time ago," Nurse June said. "We went to high school together."

"Oh," I said opening my sandwich wrapper. "How long did you go out for?"

"A few months."

"Were y'all in love?" I asked mainly because I wasn't about to date Will if one of my friends was once in love with him and he her.

"That's a strange conversation starter," said Nurse June.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm just a little nervous I guess."

“Don’t be,” Nurse Mary said. “We’re all friends here.”

“Most of us anyways,” said Nurse June. “But to answer your question, “What’s love got to do with it? “I don’t even think I know the meaning of it anyways.”

“Yes you do,” Nurse Mary said. “Don’t be like that.”

“I know the dictionary meaning of it,” said Nurse June. “But other than that I couldn’t tell you. But I’m sure you’re going to say that its butterflies and rainbows, chocolate kisses and teddy bears.”

I would’ve thought Nurse June was being rude to Nurse Mary only Nurse Mary threw her head back and laughed.

“So,” Nurse Mary said. “That’s my opinion of it.” She looked over at me. “What do you think love is?”

“You asking me?” I asked taking a small bite of my sandwich.

“Yes,” Nurse Mary replied.

I swallowed my food before asking, “You want the dictionary meaning or my opinion of it?”

“We already know the dictionary meaning,” Nurse Mary said. “I wanna hear your *personal* opinion of it.”

“Well,” I began to speak setting my sandwich down on the wrapper I ripped it out of. “The dictionary would say that it’s an affection, a deep affection that you have for someone or something. I would say that it is an emotion.”

“What do you mean?” Nurse Mary asked.

“Well, when I was in school we had to do this project in which we were to take a word from which was already defined and give it new meaning in sorts. I chose Love as my word.”

“Were you in love at the time?” Nurse June asked eating a potato chip.

“I was,” I responded.

“That would explain why you wrote on that particular word,” said Nurse Mary.

“Probably so,” I said.

“What did you come up with?” Asked Nurse June.

I took another small bite of my sandwich before answering. “I can’t remember exactly what I wrote but the basic of what I had written was that Love is an emotion. Emotions are feelings that are triggered by circumstance. I went on to add in my paper that there are four major emotions, Hate, Sorrow, Regret and Love. Though all of these emotions are different they all share the same *requisite* in which they must be fed in order to maintain and or survive.”

“Wow,” Nurse June said. “That is very interesting. “Requisite is like a requirement, right?”

“Right,” I agreed.

“What do you mean by they must be fed in order to survive?” Asked Nurse Mary.

“Well,” I began after grabbing a chip out of Nurse June’s bag as she held it out to offer me some. “Let me give you an example...” I finished the chip and swallowed before continuing...

“Say that you’re in a relationship with someone for a year. When y’all first start off you go out places, you buy each other things, tell one another how much you love the other person every day, and then one of you stops. You stop going out, buying each other things, telling each other I love you and so on and so on.”

“The love dies down,” Nurse June cut in.

“Exactly,” I said. “Like a car, if you don’t feed it gas and take care of it then it’ll ultimately break down and quit on you. Though not intentional, it’s just how it works.”

“Ohhh,” Nurse Mary said. “I think I got you now.”

“But wouldn’t that theory fall under the category of *buying* someone’s love?” Said Nurse June.

“Well, to me there's no such thing as buying love. You can buy affection, attention, sex, friendship and you can even buy happiness. But you can't buy love.”

“You know, that could easily be said that those four things are what make us human,” Nurse Mary said sipping from a straw in a bottle of juice.

“That too,” I agreed nodding my head.

“I like you,” Nurse June told me. “You seem like a very smart person.”

“Thank you,” I smiled.

“But as for Will and I,” she continued. “We were just two entirely different people so we decided to break it off and just be friends.”

“And then y'all both started working here,” I said. “I would've thought that to be fate.”

“I'm married now,” Nurse June said.

“With two beautiful little girls,” Nurse Mary added.

“Good thing we're friends,” Nurse June told Nurse Mary. “You're telling *all* of my business.”

Nurse Mary blushed and looked away.

“Has Nurse Robinson come back to work?” I asked changing the subject.

Nurse June shook her head side to side. “She won't be back.”

“Oh? Why is that? Was the incident with Mr. Fickey that bad?”

“Not really,” said Nurse June. “But to be honest she was done with this place a long time ago.”

“She had been in a few incidents prior to the recent one,” Nurse Mary spoke still looking off through the cafeteria. “Mickey Fickey just gave her a reason to finally say enough is enough.”

“Speaking of Mickey Fickey,” Nurse June began. “How’s your evaluation on him going?”

“It’s going,” I said taking a bite of my sandwich. “That’s about all I can say.”

“Don’t tell me you’re one of those confidential Docs,” said Nurse June. “I was just starting to like you.”

“No, no, it’s not like that. I really don’t have much as of yet to go on.” I wanted to tell them about the notebook but didn’t know how they would react to the means of which I got a hold of it in the first place. I liked them but it was too early to know if they were the type to rat.

I continued, “I mean, I have read all the papers that the other psyches have written up on him which all come to the same conclusion...”

“That he should be thrown back in prison until the needle is ready for him,” Nurse Mary cut in.

“Yes,” I said nodding my head.

“What do you think?” Nurse June asked me.

“What do I think? Concerning what?”

“Rather or not he should be put to death for his crimes?”

“I can’t say honestly. If I were to make a spur of the moment decision right now and say put to death, it would be based on what the others have said about him. But I won’t make that decision. I like to do my own research first.”

“But 4 or 5 other Docs said the same things about him,” Nurse June said eating another potato chip.

“Which doesn’t make sense,” I said. “At least not to me.”

“What’s that?” Nurse June asked.

“Why they need so many people to do this one thing,” I responded.

“Motive,” Nurse Mary said finally moving her eyes back to the table.

“Motive?” I asked unsure of what she meant.

“From what I’ve heard,” Nurse Mary began. “They charged him and found him guilty without really establishing a motive as to why he did what he did in the first place.”

“The judge didn't want to sentence him without first knowing exactly why he did what he did,” Nurse June finished.

“Ohhh,” I said. “That makes sense. I guess.”

“There’s Nurse Wilson,” Nurse June said looking across the room toward the exit as a male nurse walked in wearing lime green scrubs with matching crocs. “Watch out for him.”

“Why’s that?” I asked looking over at him.

“He’s one of those that will do anything to get ahead,” said Nurse Mary.

“Including telling on you if you ever do anything that is against the rules,” Nurse June added.

“Thanks for the heads up,” I said watching him as he walked across the cafeteria toward the vending machines. He was a darkened fat guy with glasses and a long black ponytail. When he walked he had a feminine twitch that spoke gay but I wasn't about to speculate on his sexuality. I knew for a fact that all male nurses were not homosexual. I used to date one and he was as manly as they come.

“He’s as gay as a rainbow colored dildo in Geppetto's ass,” said Nurse June watching him give her a look before walking out of the cafeteria.

Nurse Mary broke out in her soft laughter. I didn't want to laugh but Nurse Mary’s laugh made me laugh also.

“Geppetto?” I asked settling down.

“Yeah,” Nurse June said grabbing her soda can and finishing it off.

“The guy from Pinocchio?” I asked.

“That’s right. Gay as hell.”

“What makes you think he was gay?”

“Come on now,” Nurse June said tilting her head to the side as she looked at me. “You got the power to make a person and you gon’ make a little boy.”

I laughed again before saying, “I never thought of it like that.”

“That’s not how the story goes,” Nurse Mary said. “Pinocchio started off as a talking log and Geppetto made him a body.”

“Even so,” Nurse June argued. “He didn’t have a body before so you could have made him into anything you wanted. Why not give him a female body?”

“He would still have a man’s voice though,” Nurse Mary countered.

“A little boy’s voice,” Nurse June said. “That’s borderline girly anyways.”

“But it would eventually grow deeper as he got older,” said Nurse Mary.

“And how many women have you ran across in this place alone that if you spoke to them on the phone, without ever seeing them in person, that you would mistake for a man?”

“Touché,” Nurse Mary said laughing. “Like Nurse Wright.”

“You mean Nurse Wrong,” Nurse June giggled.

I would’ve giggled along with them only I had no idea who they were talking about.

“Y’all are too much,” I said standing to my feet. “I have to get back to work.”

“What are you doing afterwards?” Nurse June asked. “We were going bowling later if you want to come.”

“It’ll be fun,” Nurse Mary added.

“I wish I could,” I said picking up my trash. “But I already made plans. Give me your numbers and if I get a chance to swing through I will.”

I got their cell numbers and said goodbye. Heading back to my hole in the wall downstairs I passed by the infirmary where Will stood with another nurse and a patient. He saw me out of the corner of his eyes and waved. I stuck my head in the door to get a good look at the patient.

“Everything ok,” I asked.

“Everything’s fine,” Will responded.

“Is that one of the people I have to see?” I asked.

“Not sure,” Will said. “Do you have an Erin Karin on your list?”

“I’ll have to check,” I said. “See you later guys.”

I walked down the hall with a vision of the girl sitting in the infirmary in my head. She was as pale as Mr. Fickey, which more than likely resulted from being inside of the asylum for so long. She had long unkempt brown dreads that flow all over the place and she looked tiny. At least from the angle in which I had saw her.

When I got to my office I went straight for my files and found the list of names for the people I was to see while working there. Sure enough her name was on it. Erin Rebekah Karin. I found it funny that she had 3 first names. Then I started to wonder what she may have been in there for.

Quickly I shook the thoughts of the girl from my mind. I had to focus on the task at hand which was Mr. Mario Fickey, or Mickey as he liked to be called.

I sat down behind the desk and retrieved the new notebook Will had brought me. I looked at the time on my phone and saw that I had a few hours to go before the place closed down for the night. I decided I was gonna go ahead and call it a day early but really I just wanted to get home and read this notebook, seeing as how I couldn't read it there at work and risk being caught.

Before leaving I stopped by the infirmary to tell Will that I was heading home and for him to call me when he got off so that I could give him directions to my place.

When I got home I did the exact same thing I did the night before. I used the bathroom, hopped in the shower, stayed until my fingertips were wrinkly, got out, dried off, put some panties on along with a T-shirt and lay across the bed with Mr. Fickey’s notebook in hand. I

stared at the cover for a few minutes then dropped it onto the bed beside me. I felt odd. As if I were slowly becoming addicted to reading these notebooks. I had to remind myself that this was for work and I couldn't tell anybody. Not even Kim. Except for Will because he already knows about the notebooks. Hell, he's an accomplice to my crime. If you can call it a crime. Well technically you can because I took the book without permission but you get what I'm saying.

I slid out of bed and headed downstairs to the kitchen. I wasn't lying when I had told Will that I was feeling like pasta tonight. I decided that I would go ahead and cook while waiting on him and once he got here we could read the notebook together. It wouldn't hurt to get another person's opinion on things and it would make things go a lot faster. Hopefully.

I was never a great cook. When I was dating we always went out to eat or bought take out. Whenever I was alone I ate simple to cook things like microwavables and or pasta. Pasta was probably the easiest dish in the world to make. All you needed were noodles and a jar of sauce. If you wanted to add meat to it you could though I was not a big hamburger eater. I like plain ol noodles and sauce, maybe some extra peppers and seasonings.

I cooked a Pappardelle dish with twisted garlic bread and peppered corn. When I was halfway through Will called and I gave him directions on how to get to my place. Surprisingly he was only a few blocks from me. He got to my house no soon as I was taking the bread out of the oven. We sat down and ate, conversing mostly about the asylum and the people who worked there.

"You don't have anything to drink?" Will asked wiping his mouth with a paper towel.

"I'm sorry," I replied moving from the table. "I forgot all about the damn drinks."

I walked into the kitchen and went into the fridge.

"Soda or water?" I called over to him.

"Water's fine," he hollered back.

I grabbed a bottle of water for him and a can of soda for myself.

"Thanks," he said retrieving the water bottle and opening it.

We finished eating and took the plates into the kitchen. He offered to wash the dishes and I let him. I cleaned the table off and went into the bedroom to brush my teeth. I loved garlic

bread but hated the way it smelled on your breath. Especially mixed with the seasonings in the pasta.

“You don't have a recycle bin?” Will said as I entered back into the dining area.

“No,” I said.

“You should.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, besides the fact that it's good for the environment...You're supposed to.”

“Wow,” I said. “I would've never pegged you for the tree hugger type.”

He laughed and said, “I'm not. But it's good to recycle. I know they taught you that in school.”

“Yeah, like when I was six.”

“Well, I'm pretty sure you didn't realize you were throwing away your money.”

“Whatchu mean?”

He followed me as I walked over into the living room and took a seat on my extra-large sectional couch.

“Have you ever seen an old person who has a shit load of garbage bags filled with cans in their backyard?”

“No, not really. I mean, I know some old people that have trash cans for cans and bottles and stuff. My parents do as a matter of fact.”

“Same thing. Or the people out there on the streets pushing shopping carts filled with cans and stuff.”

“I have, but I'm not about to be out there picking up cans and pushing a shopping cart.”

“I’m pretty sure they never wanted or planned to be out there doing that either. But as fate would have it they are. Even though some of them aren't even poor they just do it cause its money.”

I grabbed my remote to my television off of the ottoman and hit the power button. “I mean, I know you can get paid to recycle trash. I guess I just didn't care enough or haven't been in a position to need to do it.”

“Understandable,” he said sitting down a few feet from me on the sectional. “But hey, if you like throwing *your* money away then who can stop you?”

I looked over at him. “What do you mean throwing away *my* money?”

“Just like I said. It's your money that you're throwing away.

“I heard that but I feel like there's something that I'm missing out on here.”

“That's because you are. Ok, look...” He got up and went into the kitchen and pulled the water bottle he had out of the trash can and brought it into the living room. He sat back down and held the empty bottle out to me. “Hold this,” he said.

I grabbed the bottle and looked at it. “What do you want me to do with it?”

“Do you see on it where it says five cents?”

“Yeah,” I said reading the side of the bottle. “It says five cents or ten cents.”

“Well, when you buy a bottle of water what you're actually paying for is the water or whatever liquid is in it. The bottle itself, you're actually renting.”

“I don't get it,” I said looking at him puzzled.

“How much did you pay for that bottle of water?”

“It came in a pack.”

“How much did you pay for the pack?”

“Like four dollars.”

“Ok, let's say you paid four dollars for a pack of water. Say there's twelve bottles in the pack. One hundred pennies to a dollar makes four hundred cents. That is around thirty cents or so per bottle. I'm not including taxes and stuff cause that doesn't matter right now.”

“Ok,” I said paying close attention to what he was saying. I was terrible at math so I had to listen extra close.

“You following me so far?”

“Yes.”

“Now, say you paid thirty cents for that bottle of water alone. The water that was inside of it actually cost you twenty cents, but the bottle itself cost you about eight cents. And then there's a two cent handling fee which the state takes.”

“So I'm getting ripped off is what you're telling me?”

“Not exactly. “See, bottle companies call it a bottle deposit. You put a percentage down to use their bottle, that's the eight cents. Then they give you the water that you pay for in their bottles. After you drink the water you paid for you bring their bottle back and get your deposit. This helps to enforce recycling so that people don't throw trash in gutters and also helps to keep from having to cut down trees or whatnot to make new containers.”

“Wow,” was all that I could say.

“So yeah, you've been throwing your money away.”

“I guess you said it best before.”

“What's that?”

“When you told me that you stand a chance to learn something new every day. I must've thrown thousands of dollars away in my lifetime.”

“Those pennies do add up.”

“I gotta get me a recycling bin.”

“I'm surprised that you don't already have one. With such a beautiful home.”

“Thanks.”

If I didn't like Will before I sure liked him now. Then again, if I hadn't liked him before he wouldn't be sitting in my house to begin with.

“How do you know all of this if you're not a tree hugger?” I asked pulling my legs up on under me.

He laughed and replied, “My uncle works for the city. He used to get on me and my brothers all the time about throwing stuff away that supposed to be recycled. But don't tell me you have something against tree huggers.”

“Not really. My ex was an environmentalist. He talked all the time about that sort of stuff. Never about getting paid for it or getting what's owed to you as you put it. Rather that we shouldn't make bottles or anything to begin with. It got on my last damned nerves.”

Will laughed.

“Sure it's funny now but back then it was so irritating.”

“So, you're single now?” Will asked looking me down.

“You wouldn't be here if I wasn't,” I responded glancing over at him then at the TV.

“We work together. This could be a business lunch,” he said.

I just nodded my head in agreement without verbally responding. Then he said, “So, did you read that other notebook yet?”

“Not yet,” I said getting to my feet.

“I wanna read it,” he said watching me walk around the sectional and up the stairs to my bedroom.

I retrieved the notebook off of my bed and walked back down into the living room.

“How good is your reading?” I asked sitting back down in my spot on the sectional.

“I graduated,” he replied.

“A lot of people graduate but still can't read worth a shit.”

“I read pretty good.”

I handed him the notebook. “Read it to me.”

Will took the notebook and slid a little closer to me.

“You can skip the first two pages,” I said.

Will read the first page quickly to himself, turned to the next, read it to himself then stopped on the next page where the actual writing began. He read the first line and paused to look up at me.

“I can't hear if you're reading it to yourself,” I said waiting for him to start reading aloud.

He inhaled deep and slowly exhaled before beginning:

“If I knew that that bitch was going to do this to me I would've killed her ass a long time ago...”

(To be concluded)

Excerpt from another Book by Poe entitled: “Vita Leno”

I stood leaning with my back against the hood of my 2017 Cadillac CTS staring over at the front gate to Frozen Lake Correctional Center. I tapped the ash off the end of my third cigarette and took another puff. Being around this place always made me feel nervous. Hell, being around anything that had to do with the government made me nervous. Fact was, If it wasn't for my buddy being released there was no way in fuck you'd catch me anywhere near this place. Or this side of town for that matter.

Frozen Lake Corrections is the only prison in the state and was located literally over top of a frozen lake. The lake which is man-made, started with a crater that was 21 miles wide and nearly 16 feet deep. It was filled with cement and water then frozen with the help of cold machines placed in pipes beneath the ground. Thousands of trees planted throughout the facility serve to help block out the sun to keep the ice from melting in the summertime though the machines beneath the surface do a pretty good job of maintaining the freeze itself.

Every building located within the facility are foundationed into the very surface of the crater while everything around it was ice, save for sidewalks and such.

FLC housed over four thousand inmates they ranged from petty thieves to serial killers. it, not only held prison cells but it also had its own college equipped with a library, an infirmary that could serve as a county hospital and at times did, a lumber yard, a waste management center, a bomb shelter and it's also was the location of the city asylum. "Put the crazies amongst the crazies" is what people would say.

The entire place was surrounded by welded razor wire fences that could slice a bird in half if it landed on it too hard. None ever escaped FLC. At least not with all of their body parts.

I quickly shook clear my thoughts as memories of my time on the other side of that fence began clouding it. It had been years since I've seen the inside of FLC and God willing I never see it again.

As I dropped my cigarette butt and smashed it into the pavement with the toe of my shoe, a loud buzzing rang from a loudspeaker by the entrance to the gate. I looked up to see a pair of suped-up golf carts racing toward the gate entrance. I waited and watched as they stopped just inside the gate and a man hop off of the back of one. Another loud buzz rang and the gate slowly opened. Seconds later the gate was closing and the man was walking over to me. It wasn't until he got a few feet from me that I recognized my old friend.

"Is that that dude? Is that Vita Leno the coldest motherfucker in the city?" I said stepping toward my friend with arms open.

"Damn right it is," he said slapping me five and embracing me with a quick hug.

“How you feeling, man?” I said stepping back and looking him up and down.

“Like I just stepped out of a damn tomb,” he answered. “Let’s get the hell out of here. I’ve seen enough of this damn ice and steel”

We hopped in my car and drove off.

“Damn it feels good to be out of that muhfuka,” Leno said rolling his window down and sticking his face out the window to let the air blow across it.

“How long have you been down?” I asked.

“Too long.”

“About ten years wasn't it?”

He laughed and said, “Naw, seven and a half.”

“Fuck that's a long time,” I said. “I did a month in there and nearly killed myself. How the fuck did you do seven years?”

“One day at a time.”

“Yeah right. Aint no way you did seven years one day at a time. How many days is that? Like a thousand?”

“Two thousand seven hundred and something. I stopped counting my last year though.”

I shook my head and said, “Unbelievable. But really though, how’d you do it? I really wanna know.”

“You aint planning on getting locked up are you?”

“Hell to the naw. I’ll shoot myself in the face before I go back in there.”

“Shit, aint no guarantee you're gonna die if you get shot in the face. There's a dude in there right now with half a skull doing thirty years.”

“Half a skull?! What the fuck did he do?”

“Broke into the wrong person's house. He ran in and head-butted a 12 gage.”

“Fuck me! How'd he get 30 years though?”

“They maxed his sentence because he had priors. All he did was kick the door in and step into the place but they got him for home invasion, night burglary because it was at night, abduction because the kids that were there ran into the room and locked the door...There was a bunch of shit they charged him for.”

“And all he did was step through the door?”

“Yeah. Crazy.

“Crazy? That's fucked up.”

“It is. But you take a chance to go to jail or hell every time you commit a crime.”

“And he gotta do that shit with half a damn head.” I shook my head side to side and pulled a cigarette out of the pack I had sitting on my dashboard.

“You're still smoking that shit?” Leno asked rolling his window down all the way.

“I forgot you don't smoke,” I said holding off lighting the cigarette. “I got some weed if you wanna roll up.”

“Naw, I'm good right now.”

I slid the cigarette behind my ear and tossed the pack back on the dash.

“Where we headed to anyways?” He asked flipping down the visor to check his face in the mirror.”

“You still ugly nigha,” I said glancing over at him.

“You still saying that shit,” he responded.

“What's that?”

“Nigha.”

“Oh, my bad. I didn’t even realize it.”

“You cool. Just caught me off guard cause I haven't been around your white ass in so long it seemed new to me.”

“I don't say the shit that much. Not like I used to anyways.”

“I remember you used to say that shit in damn near every sentence. You used to say it more than real nighas said it.”

I laughed and said, “Honestly, I got jumped a couple of years back because of it.”

“Bullshit?”

“No bullshit. I was hanging out with this dude I used to be cool with at a house party. I was selling weed back then so just about everyone knew me. But at the party, I didn’t really know but like three people there which was my homeboy, this other kid I went to school with and Big Joy.”

“Big Joy?”

“Yeah... You remember Big Joy don't you?”

“Yeah,” he answered looking out his side window to spit.

“Anyways,” I continued. “Me and my homeboy were listening to beats outside of my car and he started free styling so you know me, I go in with the rhymes...”

“You still doing that?”

“Hell yeah,” I said. “I’ll pop in one of my CD’s in a minute but let me finish the story right quick.”

“Go ‘head.”

“Anyways, he was flowing then I started flowing then he went and I went. Next thing I know a crowd had formed around us. In the back of my mind I was sorting through old rhymes I had written in the past, trying to sort out the one’s that didn’t have the “N” word in them. Which

was the majority of them but my hottest shit had all kinds of shit in ‘em, ya feel me? You with me, my dude?”

“I’m with ya.”

“So, there was this fire hot song I had written that I remembered and just so happens the instrumental that I had written it to had come on...”

“Aww hell,” Leno said feeling the climax to my story approaching.

“So the beat starts playing and as soon as that motherfucking 808 kicked in I started:

ALL THESE NIGHAS HATIN CAUSE THEY BITCHES WANNA FUCK ME,
RIGHT UP IN THEY FACES BUT THESE CRABS CAN NEVER TOUCH ME,
CRIMINAL MENTALITY BUT PIGS COULD NEVER BUST ME,
I BE LAUGHIN AT THESE NIGHAS HATIN’ CAUSE THEY WISH THEY WAS ME...

“Next thing I know I was on the ground getting stomped out.”

Leno laughed loudly.

“It’s funny now but back then I was fucked up and pissed. Motherfuckers not only fucked me up but smashed the windows out my car and shit...”

“What happened after that? You get some get back?”

“That was messed up and I was pissed for a while but by the time I got out of the hospital I was over it. Shit, I figured...When I had said the “N” word the first time; cause the damn lyrics started off saying it; so when I had said it the first time they were like, “What the fuck did this crackah just say? Maybe he aint mean to say it.” But then I said it again and they just let me have it. Plus, there were a bunch of Crips out there so they took me saying, “Crab,” to heart for whatever reason.”

“They aint fuck you up to bad did they?”

“Naw, just broke my nose and dislocated my damned jowl.”

“Damn.”

“Right after that was when I had did that month at Frozen Lake.”

“I remember. You looked like a cat being cornered by a pack of wild dogs.”

I laughed and said, “It was my first time in jail. That aint something you can really prepare yourself for.”

“You can. But I feel you. It's not easy and definitely aint for everyone.”

“Damn sure isn't,” I agreed. “Do me a favor though?”

“What's that?”

“Reach in the glove compartment and roll that blunt up for me.”

“Where we headed to anyways?” Leno asked grabbing a cigar pack and a little black Ziploc bag with the words “Smelly Proof” written on the front of it.

“Well,” I started to say but paused to spit out my window. “I wasn't supposed to tell you but your mom is throwing you a surprise party over your grandma's place.”

“Dead that,” he said breaking weed up in a piece of paper.

“Say what?” I asked not sure what he was telling me to do.

“I'm not going over there.”

“Why not? You don't wanna see your mom?”

“Not at all.”

“Why not? What y'all beefin' over?”

“We're not beefing at all. But I was in that damn place for seven years and she didn't come see me one time.”

“Not once?”

“Not once.”

“Damn...Why not?”

“Shit, your guess is better than mine. Hell, you were out here I’m sure you seen her around or something.”

“I probably seen her twice since you've been gone honestly. I don't even stay around this side of town anymore.”

“You don't? Where you move to?”

“The Wasteland.”

“Bullshit?”

“I know what you're thinking and I thought the same thing before I moved out there.”

The Wasteland or Waselan County to visitors, was known as the somewhat lawless side of the state. Years ago the Mayor of Waselan County bought thirty miles of land and declared it to be somewhat a sovereign state. Its laws would be different from that of the rest of the state with a goal in mind to relocate all those that didn’t fit within the society of the norm. The norm being the hard working, law abiding people of the rest of the state.

Upon building independence the county would declare its own laws as well. These new laws would include the legalization of drug usage, same sex marriage, the ability to own and operate independent businesses without a license and the county's main attraction, prostitution. All these laws would come with counter laws such as the distribution of drugs for profit carried a mandatory sentence of life in prison, businesses that didn’t pay a property tax were banned from the county and if caught afterwards carried a mandatory life sentence and prostituting without proper paperwork was a mandatory 10 years in prison for a first offence and a life sentence thereafter. Other things such as murder of any kind carried a mandatory death penalty while theft and other related crimes carried a mandatory 25 years to life.

Though it would seem that the county would be a criminal's dream, the tripled tax law alone would have many reconsidering their life choices.

“With all of the bad shit we used to hear about that place growing up,” Leno said handing me the finished blunt. “What made you want to move out there?”

I grabbed the blunt from him and set it in my mouth. Grabbing the cigarette lighter out of my ashtray I replied, “You see this car?”

“Yeah,” he responded.

“Nice aint it?”

“Yeah. It is.”

“The dude I work for gave it to me.”

“The dude you work for?”

“Yeah.”

“And what type of work is that that you do?”

“Transport.”

“What? Like a cab driver or some shit?”

“Something like that.”

I inhaled deep and held it. Exhaling slowly I explained to him where I worked and what I did:

“I work for a guy named Mako. He is one of the 12 bosses out in The Wasteland...”

“Wait a minute,” Leno cut in. “You say Bosses like there’s some kind of crime family or something.”

“Not at all,” I continued. “Out in The Wasteland there’s a bunch of stuff going on. Mad money out there. The number one business however is catting...”

“What the fuck is cATTin’?”

“Catting is another word for prostituting...”

“Then why they just don't call it what it is then? Prostitution’.”

“Because it’s a lil different and if you’ll let me finish I will explain it all to you...”

“My fault. Go ahead.”

“Catting is the so called legal term for it in The Wasteland. Say that a girl believes she has some special skills that involve sex or acts of that nature. She can get a job working for one of the Bosses who will in turn take care of her...”

“A pimp.”

I sat quiet.

“MY bad,” Leno said. “I won't interrupt again. Go ‘head and finish.”

“By law you can't get caught selling yourself out there or you'll go to jail. That's if you don't have papers. What I mean by papers is a set of documents that state your current health conditions and stuff like that. In order to get papers you have to be employed by one of the Bosses. If a Boss takes you on as an employee then he's responsible for that person's well-being for the entire time that person is employed with them.”

“Damn,” said Leno. “So they really legalized Prosti...I mean Catting. And made laws to go with it.”

“Yep. Thing is, it's not all about fucking and getting your dick sucked or pussy ate and all of that. There's different places for different things and no one place has the same thing. You following me?”

“I think so.”

“So, there's twelve Bosses, right?”

“Uh huh.”

“Those twelve Bosses own twelve businesses. Each business has its own sort of theme to it.”

“And what are those?”

“Mako, the guy I work for owns a place called, Water World.”

“Water World?”

“Yeah. Have you ever been to SeaWorld?”

“Naw but I know what you're talking about though. With the thing you can walk in that has you underwater and shit?”

“Exactly! Thinking of that but instead of fish there's half naked girls swimming in the water.”

“That sounds interesting. And people pay to walk through and look at naked girls swim? I can do that at the public pool and not pay a dime.”

I laughed and said, “It's a little better than that. You would have to see it for yourself.”

“So what are the other places?”

“I'll let all of those be a surprise to you for when you go.”

“When I go? Who said I wanna go? I'm not trying to live out that shit or work for a damn pimp.”

“Trust me, my dude. It's not even like that. Besides, how long do you have to get a job before they violate you?”

Leno thought to himself for a brief moment then said, “Three days.”

“I can get you on out there with no problem,” I said urging my friend to come work with me. “Unless you wanna go back to your grandma's house and work at Build-A-Burger for fifteen dollars an hour.”

“And what's wrong with fifteen an hour? Shit, that's good money prepared to the two dollars a week I was getting in prison.”

“It is,” I said nodding my head in agreement. “But fifteen an hour is nothing prepared to twenty-five hundred a week.”

“Say what!?”

“I knew that would get your attention.”

“Still though...If you work in The Wasteland then you have to live out there. I don't know about living out that shit.”

“Dude, there's more crime and shit out here than there is out there. With the damn death penalty in effect hard as a motherfucker, people aren't about to fuck up. Besides that, the Bosses control all of that shit. Something gets fucked up then they'll handle it. Well, they employ people that handle it.”

“So what is it that I'll be doing if I go work for one of them?”

“I don't know really. You don't have your license I'm sure...”

“Naw.”

“You could get a license and drive like me though I don't believe my boss is in need for any more drivers. Shit, you done put on some muscle in that place so I'm sure they'll have working security. They get paid more than drivers do.”

“Like how much more?”

“My homeboy is a security dude and he said he started at like three grand a week then after ninety days he went up to five.”

“Five grand a week to do security work? Armed or unarmed?”

“Unarmed. Guns are banned from The Wasteland. Get caught with one and your ass won't ever see the sun shine again.”

“Wait here for a second,” I said parking the car in front of a corner store and stepping out the car. “You want anything while I'm in here? A drink or something?”

“Not really,” Leno said. “Grab a pack of gum.”

“Ok,” I said closing my door and moving into the store.

I went in and bought a beer and a pack of chewing gum. When I came back out a friend of mine who went by the name of Bando Banks stood by the passenger side of my car talking to Leno.

Bando was a skinny guy with girly features but a rough voice. He looked like a black Justin Bieber with a voice like he'd been smoking cigarettes since birth. Ironically he didn't smoke at all.

“Yo,” I hollered over as I walked to the car. “What you doing out this way?”

“Dude,” Bando said moving around to my side of the car. “I aint never been so happy to see your ugly face.”

“What’s going on?” I asked opening my door.

“Let me get a ride and I’ll fill you in,” Bando said looking around nervously.

“What’s going on yo? You running from someone?”

“Something like that,” he said. “But nothing that’ll get you into any shit. Just let me get a ride from out this shit.”

“Hop in the back,” I said sliding into the driver’s seat and closing the door.

I handed Leno the pack of gum and cracked open my beer. Taking a sip, I latched my seat belt and threw the car in reverse. Moments later we were back on the road.

“So what you running from?” I asked Bando.

“Man you won’t believe this shit,” Bando started before I cut him off.

“This is my homeboy Leno,” I said. “Leno, this is Bando Banks.”

“What’s up,” Leno said turning to slap Bando five.

“What’s up,” Bando said. “I feel like I seen your face before.”

“I doubt it,” Leno said turning back around and popping a stick of gum in his mouth. He held the pack up to offer me one then Bando.

“You sure?” Bando asked taking a stick of gum.

“This dude’s been locked down for the past decade,” I said. “He just got out not even an hour ago.”

“Oh shit,” Bando said. “Congrats on being finally free.”

“Thanks.”

“Where were you locked up at?”

“The only place a motherfucker can get locked up around this piece,” I said.

“You right,” Bando said. “Unless you came from out of state.”

“Naw,” Leno said. “Frozen Lake.”

“That’s what’s up. My pops is locked up in there. You might know him.”

“Oh yeah? What’s his name?”

“Raymond Paul Sr. but he goes by Ray Charles.”

Leno laughed and said, “Hell yeah I know that crazy fuckah.”

“Why they call him Ray Charles?” I asked.

“Because he used to work with them keys,” Bando said.

“How long he in for?” I asked.

“What you think?” Asked Bando.

“He got that one-way ticket,” Leno said shaking his head. “Shame to, dude cool as hell. Funny as fuck too.”

“They handing out Life sentences like traffic tickets out this bitch,” I said grabbing the rest of the blunt I had put out in the ashtray before going into the corner store. “But what was it you were about to tell me you were running from?”

“Oh,” Bando said leaning forward between the seats so we could hear him better. “Man, you wouldn’t believe this shit...Before I tell you though let me get a few hits on that to calm my nerves.”

I lit the half a blunt, took a puff and handed it to Bando.

After inhaling deep a few times Bando handed the blunt to Leno who took it and handed it to me.

“You don’t smoke?” Bando ask him.”

“I do,” Leno responded. “But I gotta wait until I get working and shit before I start back up.”

“You got a probation officer?”

“Yeah. They drug test you if you’re not working within 72 hours.”

“Shit you know I got you,” I said holding the blunt back out to Leno. “Job and everything already set up so go ahead and hit this shit.”

Leno took the blunt from me and took a small hit before passing it to Bando.

“Been a while, huh?” Bando said taking the blunt.

“Hell yeah,” Leno said with a cough. “Gotta take baby steps til I’m right.”

“I feel ya,” said Bando.

“So what happen?” I asked.

Bando took a quick puff and began telling his story:

“You remember seeing me the other night out your way, right?”

“You mean Water World?” I asked.

“Naw man,” Bando said. “You know I can’t go over that shit. “Out there at Clapperz. You remember you was dropping one of them chicks off and I yelled across the way at you?”

“Oh yeah, I remember.”

“Anyways, me and the girl I was with had picked this chick up from there to have a threesome and shit. We had been partying and drinking the entire night until it was getting light outside. Them freaks were popping pills and shit so they were wide awake. I mean them dames were fucking wired. We winded up going to get something to eat down the street from there

because you know aint nobody bout to eat no food out of Clapperz. I don't give a fuck how fine the girls are that work there, that place got roaches.”

Leno and I both laughed.

Bando continued...

“After we had eaten we went back to the Clapperz, to the room to get down with the get down cause we aint have but about an hour or so left with the chick, ya know.”

“I'm wit' ya,” I said nodding my head that I understood what he was saying.

“Anyways, we get to the room and these chicks were already going at it. Kissing and tonging each other down making their way to the bed and shit. I get the idea to get my phone out and record some shit cause this was too good and I wanted to remember this moment...”

“Now you know you can't record that shit,” I cut him off. “You asking to get beat down.”

“I know,” Bando said. “I started to but the chick saw me and warned me to put it away so I did...Anyways, I watched them go at it for about five minutes or so before I even started taking my clothes off...”

“Any of that blunt left?” I cut him off again.

“My fault,” he said handing the blunt up to me. “But yo, I jumped on the bed and started giving it to ol girl. Not my girl but the girl we paid for. She was badder than my girl I aint even gonna lie but yo, her coochie wont no good.”

“Her coochie wont no good?” Leno asked turning to look at him. How can I coochie be no good? Was it dry or something?”

“Like trying to masturbate with dry ice,” Bando replied.

I laughed before asking, “How were you beating it up then?”

“Lube fool,” Bando responded. “I lube it even if it's already wet. But it was whack because she was too fucked up. She aint have no control over her body to work with me. I'd pick her ass on her knees while hitting it from the back and her damn legs would just collapse from under her ass like spaghetti off a spoon.”

“You’s a stupid motherfucker,” I said laughing so hard I nearly swerved off of the road.

“But yo, I move off of her so my girl can suck it a lil. ol’ girl is eating my girl out while she’s sucking me. We did that for about three minutes before my girl turned on her hands and knees for me to smash it from behind. So I slide it on up in her and start grinding it slow, cause my girl aint the baddest but she got a nice fat ass and her pussy Campbell Soup.”

“What that mean?” asked Leno.

“That shits Mm Mm Good,” I said.

“Gotcha,” Leno said nodding his head.

“Yo,” Bando continued. “So I’m grinding inside of her and shorty starts eating my ass...”

“You’s a nasty motherfucker,” I said disgusted but laughing.

“Whatever. That shit felt good as fuck but...”

“But what?” I asked waiting for him to tell me she stuck her finger in his ass.

“See, I had been drinking all night and haven’t went to the bathroom or nothing. Then on top of that I had ate Chinese food. Man, that girl stuck her tongue in my ass and my fucking butthole just opened up. I shitted all over her face.”

The entire car nearly shook off the road as Leno and I erupted into the laughter.

“Yeah its funny, but that bitch got them fools after me now.” Bando said sitting leaning back in his seat. “My damn girl aint picking up the phone. I had hitched a ride all the way from The Wasteland to where you picked me up at.”

After a minute or so we calmed down long enough to talk.

“So what you plan on doing?” I asked. “I can’t ride your shitty booty ass around all day we got shit to do. And I hope you wiped before getting in my car.”

“Shut the fuck up yo,” Bando said laughing. “I stopped by one of my other girl’s cribs and showered and shit.”

“She ant ask you what happen?”

“Naw, she wasn’t home. I got a key.”

“So why not just stay at her place then?”

“Cause her punk ass baby daddy still be going over there and that nigha don’t like me.”

“I see why, you shitting on nighas,” I said. “Literally.”

Bando sat quiet and I could sense that he was about to get in his feelings. “You can roll with us if you want but we’re headed up to The Wasteland now though.”

“For real?” Bando said contemplating going back out there. “Fuck it. Ill roll with y’all. They can’t beat all of us.”

“You damn right,” I said. “But we aint about to jump in nothing. If you see them fools, you better take off running and we will pick you up somewhere on our way out.”

“Understandable,” Bando said.

“This is that CD I was telling you about,” I said to Leno.

I pulled a CD out of my visor and popped it into my CD player. We listened to my music as I drove toward The Wasteland.

When we reached The Wasteland I drove us to a small neighborhood where I had a triple wide trailer. I had to pick up a few items needed for work before we headed to our destination. I parked the car in front of my trailer, went in and got what I needed and came back out. Minutes later we were pulling up in front of my boss Mako’s office which was located directly across the street from Water World.

When you saw the building from the outside you would never think that the man on the inside was worth millions. Paint peeled from the front of the building, the windows were boarded up and the sidewalk was growing weeds. However, once you opened the tinted front door of the building you’d know instantly that whoever owned the place had money and lots of it. As soon as you enter the building you stepped into the waiting area. The waiting area was a large room with floors of navy blue and black marble. The walls were a dark wood covered in paintings of all the different women that worked at Water World including the girl sitting behind the desk at the far end of the room.

I made my way over to her walking slowly so she could finish the phone call she was on.

“Hey Shells,” I said as she hung the phone up.

“Hey Bob,” Shells said shooting me a quick smile before grabbing the phone again and quickly dialing a number. “Give me a second.”

I stood quietly looking around as she spoke to someone on the phone. When she hung up I looked at her and asked, “Why you keep calling me Bob? You know I hate that name.”

“I do,” Shells said. “But I like the name Bob. And it is your name after all.”

“My government yeah, but you know don’t nobody call me that.”

“Which you prefer me to call you by your street name Mr. Blade? Mr. Bobby The Blade.”

“It’s just Blade,” I said. “And naw, you can call me Bob. It sounds sexy coming out of your mouth anyways.”

She smiled and rolled her eyes before saying, “He is in a meeting right now but they should be finishing up in a second because he has an appointment in a few.”

“Tell him I got that guy with me that I talked to him about yesterday,” I said as she picked the phone up to call into the boss’s office.

I looked her down while she spoke on the phone. She wore a sexy navy blue one piece that looked nearly painted on showing her amazing curvature even while she sat down. Her breast though not really big were pushed up by a black lace bra that nearly popped them out of the top of dress. She wore her long black hair up in a bun as she always did and her grey contacts made her creamy white face even more beautiful.

“I need his social security number,” Shells said hanging the phone up.

I turned and waved for Leno to come over. He got up from the seat he sat by the entrance and made his way across the floor to us while Bando remained seated in a chair beside where he had sat.

“Sup,” Leno said.

“she needs your social,” I said.

“My social?”

“Yeah. They gotta do a background check.”

“A background check?”

“It’s for credibility. Gotta make sure you aint no violent person.”

Leno reached in his pocket and pulled out a piece of folded paper. He handed it to me and said, “This is all I got.”

I grabbed the paper and unfolded it before handing it to Shells.

Shells took the paper and looked at it before setting it on the desk in front of her and turning her attention to her computer. “I’ll call you when he’s ready,” she said.

I turned and walked to a seat by Bando while Leno moved back toward his own seat. Before I got a chance to sit down Shells called over to us saying the boss was ready to see me.

“We’ll be back in a minute,” I told Bando as I waved for Leno to follow me to a door across the room beside Shells desk. We walked into the door and was greeted by a large man dressed in a black track suit. In his hand was a metal detector wand which he waved over us before allowing us to move further.

“You know I don’t ever carry shit in here,” I said as Big Ron waved the wand around me.

He didn’t respond just continued waving and once finished nodded his head for us to go ahead.

The room was twice as big as the waiting room with the same marble floors in it. The walls however were painted solid black without any pictures on it. The room was dimly lit in blue lights with clouds of smoke flowing through the air. I hadn’t even realized until I made my way over to his desk nearly thirty feet from the entrance that there were other people besides Boss Mako and Big Ron in the room. There was some to the left of the room and some to the right, all sitting in chairs lined up as if they were sitting at a dinner table except there was no table. Looking out of the corners of my eyes as I moved forward through the room I recognized a few faces right off. They were Bosses which meant that they were having one of those meetings where they were either setting new rules and laws amongst each other or someone was about to be excommunicated from the lot.

“How you doing Boss?” I said as I approached his desk, stopping a few feet from it. There were no chairs in front of his desk so we just stood there.

Boss Mako didn’t reply. He looked stare at Leno for a moment, looking him up and down. I looked over at Leno who was glancing around the room at the other Bosses that watched us quietly. Some were smoking cigarettes and hookahs while some had girls standing around them.

“What’s your name?” Boss Mako finally spoke. His deep voice penetrating the quiet of the room.

“Leno,” Leno replied looking at Boss Mako.

“Leno,” Boss Mako said rolling the name over in his head. “Do I know you?”

“Naw,” Leno said. “I wouldn’t imagine you do.”

“Where are you from?”

“Northside.”

“Northside. I know some people out that way. Around what block?”

“Morningwood.”

“Morningwood...I used to know a guy from Morningwood. You said your name was Leno?”

“It is.”

One of the bosses began to mumble.

“What is it?” Boss Mako asked the other boss.

I recognized the other boss to be Fat Chan. Instantly I thought of Bando sitting in the waiting room. If fat Chan were to see him he’d surely be in for the beating of a lifetime.

Fat Chan was a half Chinese half African man who stood at six feet and weighed nearly four hundred pounds. He sported a bald head and looked a lot like the Buddha statues but never tell him that or let him hear you call him that.

Fat Chan said something to one of the Asian women he had with him who turned and said to Boss Mako, “Leno is Latin for Pimp.”

Boss Mako thought for a moment then cocked his head back and began laughing. His laughter made some of the other boss’s chuckle.

Leno looked over at me and I could tell by the look in his eyes that he was uncomfortable. I knew my friend well. Even after all the years he spent away I still remembered that when he became uncomfortable in a situation he simply removed himself from it.

“Chill,” I said in a low voice.

“Have you ever worked security?” Boss Mako asked.

“Naw,” Leno said. “But I’m sure it couldn’t be too hard to get the hang of.”

Boss Mako sat quiet. Then he looked at me and said, “Give us a minute.”

I turned and nodded my head for Leno to follow me out of the room.

“Not you,” Boss Mako said to Leno.

I looked at Leno and gave him a look telling him to be cool. I then turned and left the room.

Boss Mako waited until I was out of the room before saying anything else.

“How long have you know Blades?” Boss Mako asked Leno.

“All my life,” Leno replied.

“He tell you about this business? What we do?”

“A little.”

The room grew quiet. After a few moments Boss Mako spoke again, “I’m going to tell you a little story. At the end of the story you will have the opportunity to make the decision to either work for me and make as much money, get as many women, be as famous as you so desire. Or simply turn and go about your way.”

“Alright,” Leno said shoving his hands into his pockets.

Boss Mako grabbed a cigar from a box on his desk and leaned back in his seat. He bit the end of the cigar off and tossed it in a trash bucket beside his desk. He then lit the cigar, took a couple of puffs and began telling his story:

“I once knew this kid who had lost his parents in an accident. The kid was homeless and had nothing, no family, no friends, no food, not even a pair of shoes on his feet. I took the kid in and taught him how to get everything that he needed to survive in this world and not only that but how to make it so that he would never have to rely on anybody else for anything.

Well, one day the kid decides that he wanted more than just to survive. He didn’t want to simply make it in this world he wanted the whole entire world for himself. For whatever reason he felt as if I had owned the world. Which was a ridiculous thing for anyone to believe or even think. But for whatever reason he believed it. So, he plotted against me. He schemed his way into my inner most private places and snatched from me the very things that I cherished most. The things that I considered to be *my* world.”

He sat quiet for a moment. So long of a moment that Leno thought he was finished talking and spoke up, “What does this story have to do with me?”

Boss Mako looked at Leno, took a long drag of his cigar and while blowing the smoke out said, “I want you to kill Blades.”

To Be Concluded.

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