

Anthology Complex

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Volume 3 - Composition 2

(3:2 / 8 / VIII)

Part 7

Chapter 61

“OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE”

3:2:7:61

King Matthew and Queen Heather ride in Silver State Coach to Tornado Royal. (1922)

ON the grounds of the enormous Flanagan estate is a small cemetery that holds the remains of kings and queens from the past. A year prior to our current year of 1930, a former queen was added to rest among the dead queens of old. Her king, who was King Matthew Flanagan, sat on a wooden chair facing her gravestone and thought on the darkening fact that he would soon be among the dead kings of old. He could already imagine the plot just beside his queen, marked with words demanding he be remembered as an honorable king, just as his queen's plot demanded that she be remembered as an honorable queen. But as King Matthew reflected more and more on these demands, it became more and more clear to him how untrue it all was.

Matthew felt deeply, knowing that he was at times an honorable man, but never an honorable king. And he thought deeply of his wife, knowing that she was at times an honorable woman, but never an honorable queen. And perhaps his final thought before his son came to find him was his most potent, that none of their children, because of the titles and reputations and wealth they would inherit, could never be allowed to even be just ordinary humans.

“Father,” Prince Brian said softly, “we are waiting for you. It is almost time.” Today, August the 9th, the Flanagans were celebrating a jubilee. Every ten years they would have the most elaborate ceremony to commemorate their history, which was that of both the past and the future. They celebrated life; new lives and new beginnings, and they celebrated death; those gone and those who had lived a great life of honor and service. And with this celebration, they were also celebrating the beginning of a new marriage as there was to be the joining of spirits between Matthew's youngest daughter, Princess Aubry, and her fiancé, Nathaniel Worthington.

Inside the palace and dolling themselves up were Princess Dorothy and Sabrina. Though Dorothy was often separate of men, she often spoke of them and knew their secrets. “Did you know that Alexander was going to be attending the ceremony?,” Dorothy asked Sabrina. “Alexander?,” Sabrina hesitated, “that's that poet, right?” “Poet?! Noo,” Dorothy dragged out the negative phrase, “Alex was Aubry's first love. From childhood, even.”

Alexander was a poet, and Dorothy knew this, but his artistry to her in her mind came second to the passionate way he had about himself that she had studied of him. Dorothy was not at all attracted to the men that her sister fancied, but she was nonetheless a student of love who learned best from afar.

“Well, if she's invited him to her wedding,” Sabrina put strength into that last word, “then surely they are over each other and have moved on. What does Nat think about the whole thing?” “Nat,” Dorothy helped Sabrina fix her dress, “He doesn't know a thing about their past. In fact, Nat seems to be so dull I don't think he understands the concept of a past at all.” Sabrina, giggling at Dorothy's humor which she suspected to be driven by disdain, had her giggling interrupted when Brigid peered into the room and the two looked from their mirrors to the door.

“Have any of you seen Brian?,” Brigid asked the two of her husband. “Nope.” “No.” And Brigid left the room to continue her search.

Walking through the long and beautiful hallway, adorned with the gold and the silver and the bronze of perhaps a fantastic century before her, she looked through many rooms hoping to find her prince. Going down the spiral staircase, she saw her butler but even he knew nothing of Brian's whereabouts or affairs.

Now on the ground floor, Princess Brigid made her walk through the large kitchen and into another hallway where she found an open door. The door led to a bedroom, of which on the bed was a blanket that imitated the shape of a child. Brigid walked into the room slowly and then quickly flew the blanket off of the child to see what he was hiding.

The child, whose name was Jeffrey Flanagan and was her brother-in-law's son, panicked as he tried to hide the desires of his little heart. Brigid had caught a glimpse of his desires, but it was not until she snatched the photographs from his little hands did she confirm her unsightly suspicions.

Brigid stormed out of the room, leaving the boy Jeffery with a pit of unease in his stomach. She walked all the way back to where she had seen her sister Sabrina doing her make-up and made her presence known when she walked up to the two women and threw a number of photographs directly at her face.

Brigid did not say a word and as Sabrina picked up the photographs, she saw that they were nude photographs of her herself. Dorothy caught a glimpse of the sights as well, but remained silent.

“Where did you get these from?,” Sabrina asked. “Jeffrey,” Brigid gave her a one-worded response. “I... I'm sorry, I thought I hid them well...” “This is the second time he has found your pictures, if it happens again, you're out,” Brigid warned her sister. Sabrina agreed, saying she was sorry again.

“Tell me they were at least taken by Doug,” Brigid said. “Of course,” Sabrina resented the idea.

Prince Kenneth, brother to Brian, sat in one of the palace's many living spaces and spoke to politician Warren Buchanan about his interest in eighteenth century musical composers when he saw his son, Jeff, run through the home and presumed it was a game

being played with his cousins.

“Come on,” Ken said to Warren, “I’ll show you where Valade stayed and composed his masterpieces.”

When the pair arrived to the room in which Boden Valade rested and created, they could both feel his presence, though Warren felt it slightly less. Speaking and moving about the room, Kenneth was intent on playing his two favorite compositions from the composer on the phonographs; that was “The Constant Dream,” which he admired first, and “Somber Holiday,” which he admired second.

Listening to the musical pieces, Kenneth made note that Boden was awarded the seat of the First composer.

Warren had always liked the ear of Boden, but he did not regard him as highly as Kenneth did, and in his humor to make light of this opinion, he soon offended Kenneth. “Valade is great,” Warren said, “but he is no Beethoven.”

Kenneth soon turned around, and in a manner of question replied to Warren, “Beethoven?” Warren knew that Ken knew who Beethoven was, and so he took the reply in the manner in which he said it to be of disdain. “The only reason Valade was given that seat was because Beethoven was not even alive yet. Beethoven is easily the superior of the two.”

Kenneth did not see these words as an opinion of the speaker but as a fact that they were meant to offend him. For this, Kenneth insulted the politician's ears and his intellect. And this was a way that Kenneth often responded to criticism, that any word said against him could not be an opinion in the subjective world but was rather a fact in the objective world. And if this was true, then Kenneth could not change a person's mind, his only solution was to tear it down.

When the politician and the prince broke away, they did not speak to each other for the rest of the jubilee.

Outside of the palace where there was lush green scenery, the head butler, Donald, and the head maid Donna, were directing the staff in setting up and arranging the location of the wedding. Already it was beginning to look beautiful and the only thing that could be more captivating was the princess bride it was being prepared for.

Running in and through and around the preparation were four children; Brian II, Brittany, Jeremy and Cassandra, who were most of the Flanagan line. As they played all around, they were suddenly joined by Jeffrey, who ran all the way from inside the palace and directly to his brother and friend, Jeremy and Cassandra. Already he knew the game they were playing, so he joined in without a word and increased the difficulty of the game.

When all of the children became tired, they all laid out flat on the green grasses.

Often the conversations these children would have incorporated the eventual transformation into their Godly parents. They spoke of princes becoming kings and princesses becoming queens. They spoke of caterpillars who became butterflies and of underdogs who became champions, but none of them had any way of understanding what they were truly speaking of.

When Brittany sat up, Cassandra made note of the fact that she had ketchup on the bottom of her attire. Brittany was confused and then shocked. "I can afford a blemish on my character, but not on my clothes!," she ran back into the house to try and clean it off.

Down the hall that Brittany would eventually run down were walking Oliver and Reagan McDuffie, along with Reagan's mother, Elise. Oliver lead them both in a deceptively happy tune.

"Blue skies smiling at me, nothing but blue skies is all I see," Oliver sang as he snapped his fingers in a rhythmic motion, "Blue birds singing a song, nothing but blue birds all day long." Finishing this verse, a smallish child ran past him in search of cleaning supplies. He thought of the child for a moment, then continued his song. "Blue days, all of them gone, nothing but blue skies from now on."

When the three finally made it to the grand opened doors, they saw out into the beautiful field that was being prepared for the wedding. Many servants were in their sights, and Oliver set his sight on the head maid, Donna, and went near to her to converse.

"Lovely day! Almost as lovely as you," he said to her. Donna smiled and said thank you. "Missed a spot," he continued as he watched Donna wipe down a table. The spot was as nonexistent as his humor.

"I said you missed a spot," Oliver pointed, "there." Donna looked there. "Made you look." Donna afforded him a polite laugh. "Hurry with the preparations, we haven't got all day," he said walking away from her and back to his wife.

"What were you two talking about?," Reagan asked him. "Oh, you know, just making sure she knows her place." "If she knew anything about places she wouldn't be here wiping down tables," Reagan replied.

"What were you two talking about?," Donald asked Donna. "Oh, you know, just letting the little tadpole feel like he has a little power." "If he knew anything about power then Reagan wouldn't talk about his small penis in public," Donald replied.

Douglas thumbed through the nude photographs of Sabrina. Closing the bathroom door, Sabrina began yelling in a soft manner, "She threatened to cut us out Dougy! She said if it happens one more time, we're out!" "Sabby, don't worry, it won't happen again," Doug was now on the final picture. "Don't you understand what a decent hiding place is?," Sabrina continued. Doug began placing the photographs in his back pocket, "I did

hide them in a decent hiding place. That little pervert is just nosy. I wouldn't be surprised if his father has magazines lying around the house because his poor excuse of a wife probably hasn't touched him in years." Sabrina laughed, "At least not the way I touch you." Douglas moved closer to his wife and began rubbing her shoulders to move off the top part of her dress but this action was met with rejection. "Are you mad? It's Aubry's wedding day!" Doug sighed, "I guess you're right."

Hillary began walking faster through the exquisitely decorated hall to catch up with her husband. "Ken!," she shouted. When she caught up, Kenneth saw that she was either upset or offended, perhaps with him or without him.

"Brigid told me Jeff found pictures of her again." "Of Sabrina?" "Yes!" "I'll talk to him." "What are you going to say?" "I don't know Hillary, what are you supposed to say to a little boy who fancies pictures of older women?" "If you can't figure out what to say then I'll have my father talk to him."

Perhaps still uncooled from his quarrel with Warren, Kenneth took extreme offense to the mentioning of his father-in-law, and this extreme offense came in the motion of a slap across Hillary's face. "I told you never to mention him in my presence ever again. And if you ever mention him again, I'll make sure he never sets foot in this palace ever again."

With that declaration, each invited foot had now taken a step on the palace's grounds. The location of which the wedding was to take place had been set by the servants, and one by one the seats were beginning to be filled.

When there were ten in the audience, Warren Buchanan sat down with his wife. When there were twenty, Reagan, Oliver and Elise found their own seats. When there were thirty, Kenneth and Hillary, along with Jeffrey and Jeremy, sat on the opposite side of Warren, who when Kenneth saw, made no communication.

When there were forty, Dorothy sat down alone. When there were fifty, Sabrina and Douglas sat down with their daughter, Cassandra, as far away as possible from Kenneth, Hillary and Jeffrey.

When there were one hundred in the audience, out came Brian and Brigid, along with Brian II and Brittany in new attire.

After a sorts, the ceremony had begun and we as the viewers had that beautiful moment of finally meeting the bride, Princess Aubry, as she is walked down the isle by King Matthew to her groom, Nathaniel.

The wedding of Aubry Flanagan and Nathaniel Worthington was ordinary in every way except in its proportions. The people were noble. The scenery was extravagant. The language was verbose. If you thought you saw a gorgeous dress, the next one was more gorgeous. If you thought you saw the prettiest flowers, the next dozen were even prettier. And finally, if you thought you saw an expensive ring, it's because you did, and there

wasn't one that was more expensive than the one ready to be placed on our princess's finger.

“If anyone knows of any reason why these two should not be married,” the officiant said, “speak now or forever hold your peace.” There was a very brief silence until Alexander stood as he had no intention of holding onto his peace.

“Aubry,” Alexander began, hat in hand, “I have loved you since the day I set eyes on you nearly a decade ago.” Nathaniel looked at Aubry, and then at the officiant, then he motioned for the king's guards to seize Alexander before he could continue. As the guards approached him, Aubry told them to stop. “Let him speak his peace so we may move past this for good,” Aubry said to both the guards and to her fiancé.

Alexander took out a piece of paper from his pocket and told Aubry that he had written her a poem to read aloud to her on her wedding day, and he began reading.

“By moonlight you were the artist, and by sunlight the muse. But you never saw me even with brushstrokes so obtuse. At dawn you were the creator and by dusk the creation. But you never cared to understand me with your cold sensation. You'd look at me and there was nothing behind your eyes. As if I was just one out of many, many goodbyes. Am I nothing to you, that you could cut so deep. Are my hands so dirty that you're a flower I can't keep. All I ever wanted from you was a smile and anything warm. And all you gave me was a broken heart in a storm. You were the only person I ever let into my soul. And you destroyed my dreams in ways you will never know. By moonlight you were my artist, and by sunlight my muse. But I will never see you again in acrylic-based views. At dawn you were my creator and by dusk my creation. But to you I have set fire for you are nothing but human degradation.”

The damage was done. Women made noises at Alexander and some men began throwing objects at him. The king's guards seized him and steered him away from the wedding. Every single character we have seen so far with objective eyes were shocked, including even that of the king, who was named Matthew, and was simultaneously confused and understanding of the words said to his daughter.

As Aubry watched Alexander be attacked and escorted, she could only burst into tears. She ran away from the wedding into the palace and was chased by her fiancé, but standing face to face with Nat in front of many people and in the process to be eternally bound was the final intimacy they would ever share. The wedding was over, infinitely corrupted, and ruined by a poet's words.

Princess Aubry and Alexander see each other for the first time in a bookshop. (1923)

THE MAP OF DREAMS

3:2:7:62

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<?php

error_reporting(0);

$serverconnection = mysql_connect("localhost", "antcom", "VIII");

// connect to server
// include("/home/antcom/dreamadmin/access.inc");

date_default_timezone_set("America/San Rashida");

$current_loc = "Atlantic Ocean";
$num_passengers = "4.1";
$id_pass = 32762;
$est_time = "11 hours";

$weeks_length = 0;
$months_length = 1;

// score of the relevant airport diner
$dis_goal = 607;

$get_misc_flightinfo = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM airline where infoid = $id_pass");
while ($fetchentry = mysql_fetch_array($get_misc_flightinfo, MYSQLI_ASSOC)) {

$destination = $fetchentry['destination'];
$connecting = $fetchentry['connecting'];
$notes_applied = $fetchentry['notes_applied'];

}

if ($notes_applied == 1) {
    $sexposition = "Traveler(s) awarded extended vacation time";
}

if ($dis_goal > 400) {
    $notation = "Qualified for grand prize";
}

?>

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I nudged Lynne with my left elbow and motioned for her to pause with me. As I counted up to three with my fingers we both hit pause on three. I took off my headphones.

“Are there people in this country?” “Yes, I think so,” she replied. She adjusted Kirby who was sitting on her lap and then put her headphones back on. I did the same and counted up to three again so we could resume the movie.

A few moments later I nudged her again. Counted up to three again. Then asked her another question again.

“What's the population?” She looked at me, and then looked at her phone. “Fifty-six million,” she answered. She put her headphones back on and we resumed the movie. I tried to imagine such a staggering population of fifty-six million people.

A few moments later I nudged her again. Counted up to three again. But before I could ask my next question she suddenly started whispering angrily. “If you ask me another ridiculous question I'm going to stick my prosthetic foot up your ass.” I recoiled at her threat.

“Damn, I was just going to tell you that you're so pretty.” The stern look washed off of her face. “Oh... Thank you...” I counted up to three again and we resumed the movie again.

A few moments later I nudged Sara, who was sitting to my right. Took off my headphones as did she as she was watching her own movie. “Do you know if the people are overly-friendly in the place we're going?” “No...” “No as in they aren't?” “No as in I have no clue.”

Putting my headphones back on I went back to viewing the movie. It was still daytime as we flew over the Atlantic Ocean and we still had nine hours left in the flight when the movie Lynne and I were watching ended.

She placed Kirby on my lap and told me that she was going to use the bathroom. While Kirby did not have the same expression as when with Lynne, there was a still a calmness. I knew that Kirby knew he was looking at a different energy.

Lynne walked past many other passengers before she made it to the bathroom. Once inside, she began thinking of the adventure she was about to embark on with her family. And she was proud of herself that in working so hard she was rewarded this gift from her company. It was the first time she or her kids had ever left the United States, and she was well-intent on making their travels a memorable one.

When Lynne came back I gave Kirby back to her after sitting down. Kirby again changed, knowing now he was in the presence of a different energy.

Looking at the two of them, I tried to rank in my mind the most effective of connection through the arts.

Film and music surely are great connectors of the arts. They have inspired and reached generations beyond their own. But I think they are both limited when compared to literature, which I believe is the master of communication and connection, written or oral. To me it seems to be the medium that can be most exact and precise, even if it is sometimes endlessly ambiguous. But I also think, ironically, that there is one thing more powerful than literature, written or oral; presence, even in silence.

With both of our screens on a mode that saved them, I watched Lynne in its reflection as she readjusted Kirby. When she looked back up she caught me staring at her in the reflection and I quickly looked away. Like the pen to his stories and the rose to her sun. After a moment I looked at the screen and this time caught her staring at me, but as soon as I locked eyes with her she quickly looked away. Like the dream to his mind and the song to her lips. I stared at her until after looking away she looked back at me and abruptly I turned away. Like the darkness to his vision and the lashes to her eyes. I couldn't help but look again, and when I saw her this time she abruptly looked away. Like the music to his ears and the feet to her travels. It came soon that her wandering eyes looked at me once more and I looked away once more. Like the body to his strength and the innocence to her beauty. When I looked at her again, this time she didn't turn away. I winked at her and she smiled, then closed her eyes to join Kirby in dreamland.

Looking past her I saw the low Summer Sun and its gold light through the gray clouds that were pressed against the blue sky. And then looking back at her and the baby, I thought on the map of dreams.

If someone's brain experiences physical trauma or injury, and a region of their brain becomes impaired, the brain will have to adapt to find new ways to do old things. Neurons will have to discover new paths to travel, and because each region of the brain has specific duties and abilities, this new path may result in an unusual way of doing something old. Imagine a road being shut down and you have to take a detour to reach your destination. Let's say the old road, which is at the moment shut down, was mostly used by logicians, and the new road you will have to take is mostly used by artists. I'm sure you get where I'm going, no pun intended. What you did in a technical way becomes more eccentric.

So what if we took this concept and applied it to the same organ but in a different land. What if we took it to the dreamland? Does someone who has brain damage, or any type of difference to their brain, do they dream differently, too?

If the logician had to take the new route of the artist, might that person dream of old concepts in new ways? On this new road, might they dream of new people and new places? Maybe their affected senses can cause the reality of their dreams.

One night Lynne and I were talking about dreams we've had of each other. She told

me of a dream where we were together in a field surrounded by trees on a picnic blanket and eating from a picnic basket. Cliche, I know. But she told me that what stood out most about the dream was the intense emotional feeling of love and desire she felt, coupled by the fact that she could visually remember the dream very easily. The scenery was lush green beautiful nature pressed against a light blue sky.

I told her that I had a similar dream, except there was no picnic blanket or picnic basket, there was instead a picnic table. We sat on it, and she was sitting on my lap as we faced away from it. In remembering it, while I felt love and desire, it wasn't emotionally intense. What was intense for me was actual feeling, the touch of her body compressed into me. The physical feeling of her body settling into mine was what I most siphoned out of that dream.

If there is intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence, there has to be in some way, an imaginal intelligence. And this imaginal intelligence, I can see it instructing and constructing the perception of our real world, and infinitely the dream world.

I remember telling you that it is much harder to travel in dreams than it is in real life. A lot harder to get to where you want to go in a dream than it is to take a flight to get there in real life. And I gotta tell you, I remember being young and confused, knowing where I wanted to go in life but not knowing how to get there. It's a true shame that some people spend their whole lives feeling that way. I can't say that I'm on my way to this country because I've finally got my map, but I can say that whatever detours I had to take to get to where I am now, whether it was in real life or in a dream, they were worth it. When you can't be the logician learn to be the artist. When you can't be the artist, learn to be the explorer.

"? ????" I looked at Lynne. Her eyes still dreaming she must have been talking in her sleep. One hour later the Sun had fallen out of the sky and into oblivion. Sarah and David had fallen asleep victim to the night and its Moon, and even though I wish I could have slept, sleeping on airplanes is something I could never do. My mind just won't allow it. I'll try to sleep when we get on the train.

Another hour passed and Lynne woke up. "Did you sleep?," she asked me. I nodded my head. "Are you going to sleep on the train?," she asked another. "I just said I'll try to sleep when we get on the train," I replied. She looked at me confused.

"Do you want to watch another movie, then?," she asked. "No." In the next string of seconds she did not say a sentence but she made a suggestion when she held one earbud in the air for me to take. I took it and placed it in my left ear.

All throughout the music we listened to together I thought of the similar dreams we may have had together. Then I remembered something she told me many years ago when

I first met her, how often she would have dreams of being in a field of apple trees and she was always looking for one to eat. I wonder, that if Lynne dreams in novels as well, if the picnic dreams were a part of that dreamline. Wait a minute. I've never thought about this before. That other people could have the missing pieces to your own dreamlines. I can't believe this has never occurred to me. The way that I see it is; in some other life or dream world where Lynne and I know each other and are in love there too, we go on a picnic date, we are on a picnic blanket eating fruits, maybe we run out of apples and she goes to look for some, and then maybe something happens to the blanket like it flies away or something and when she comes back we have to sit on a wooden picnic bench which is from my dream.

I took out my phone and began to write down the idea because this was a revelation I could not forget. "What are you writing down?," Lynne saw me typing into the phone. "I have to tell you in the train cabin, it's most unusual." She laughed.

At this conclusion I could not wait for the conclusion of air travel. When that conclusion finally came, the plane landed and so did our feet onto a new country that none of us had ever been before.

We were given directions to the trains and so we waited at dawn until they arrived. When the rising Summer Sun made itself visible through the clouds, we stepped onto the trains and found our cabins. We were given two rooms near to each other and each with a built-in bunkbed. Kirby, Lynne and I were to share one and David and Sara would share the other.

Closing the door shut behind us Lynne tended to Kirby on the bed and I arranged the luggage we carried. When I was finished I laid out flat on the bed and looked out the window. I saw many other people walking on the other platform and wondered how many of them were tourists or natives.

"What were you typing into your phone?," Lynne laid down with Kirby. "You know what, I'll tell you at the inn, my eyes are getting heavy."

As I went to lay down with them, the train began moving. I placed my arm around Lynne who placed her arm around the baby. "We should have another one." "You're an idiot." She laughed.

The sound of the train striking the tracks had the missing piece of rain against the windows. Since I gave you the illusion, I wonder if that mattered. The train did go over a bridge, though, and gave us sights of a river. I'm sure she enjoyed it if her eyes weren't closed. If you can learn to love just one thing in your life, be it a person or even an idea, then you can learn to love anything. And if you have the capacity for hate, this applies as well.

I think that the remedy for working hard or doing a job that you don't like will be the

reward of money. With that money you can buy luxurious things and it makes up for having to do a job you don't particularly enjoy. Likewise I think taking a vacation is a response to hard work. Sometimes it's not even the money that is the remedy, coming home from a hard day's work and relaxing is a prize in its own right. If you look forward to spending your money on luxuries and vacations, or even just look forward to going home to rest, it's a sign that what you do for a living doesn't entirely help you to live. But I look around and wonder who is capable of living without rewards? I think this is why one must have a hobby. Something you will do for free, for yourself, reaping absolutely no reward except knowing that you could and did do it.

Chapter 63

THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY

3:2:7:63

Sabrina and Douglas drive through an impoverished dark city after cooling midnight. (1938)

SHE looks at him and he can see the sparkle in her beautiful blue eyes. "I will never forget this night," she says to him. "I am so glad we found each other," he replies. They continue to dance slowly to the mellow music being played in the background, as do all the others who were invited to this exquisite celebration party.

Of the year 1940, of the 27th day of May, the Flanagans hosted the new decade's jubilee which was that of a large charity event to support the ongoing world war.

Princess Brittany, aged seventeen, was dancing with her boy-friend, Christopher Ward, just beyond a beautifully carved statue of a goddess known as Eris.

"I love you with all of my heart," the princess said to Christopher, and as he went to repeat the same to her, they were suddenly interrupted by the princess's father, King Brian.

Christopher relinquished his love to her father and the two went into a study away from all of the music and pleasant chatter. Brian told his daughter to sit down, and then sat down next to her, holding her hand. "This is going to be terribly difficult for you to hear, but I need you to understand." Brittany waited intently. "In a couple month's, Christopher's father will be filing bankruptcy." Brittany gasped intently. "Their family will lose their wealth and their status, and Christopher will not be able to support you as a man should. So you must end your relationship with him as soon as you can."

The dream Brittany had of her life with Christopher fell apart like a house of cards. "I will do it tonight," she assured her father.

Near the entrance to the richly crafted dance hall was Jeffrey Flanagan, who in his mild hunger reached for a food to eat. At the same moment walked through the entrance Gary Gray who was accompanied by his wife Karen Gray. They saw Jeff and went to greet the young man, Gary telling him he was growing to be such a handsome gentleman. In his effort to leave the entrance, Gary attempted to take his wife with him to see the others who had appeared for the charitable jubilee, but she insisted she too was mildly hungry and would eat a small snack. She did not take long to find a snack, and just before leaving, she said to Jeff, "Meet me at the usual spot in ten minutes."

At a table on the edge of the dance hall was being held a conversation that spoke of the Flanagan's great contributions to not just the war efforts, but of their great past contributions to the poverty of the world. "Every time I go to one of those poor countries, I come back sick," Dorothy said to Alexander who was at the time holding Princess

Aubry in his arms. Sabrina, who held Vivian in her own arms and who was only a toddler, told Dot that it was always best practice to keep away from the children of poor countries. She found that they carried germs with total disregard and were most likely to pass them on.

“That’s why you find a way out of them,” Douglas told the table, “I don’t even understand why we are obligated to go on those trips in the first place, we are royalty for Christ’s sake. We’re not fooling anyone.” “Image is every thing,” Alex told Doug, “if you were half the poet I am you would know that words create images and images create the words people use to speak about you.” “Oh, Dougy is an artist alright, just not in the way that you know,” Sabrina laughed.

At the conclusion of this statement someone put forth silverware to glassware to gain the attention’s of the partygoers. When one looked to see who it was, one would see the tallish figure of Warren Buchanan, who was one of the men responsible for King Brian’s declaration of war.

“Excuse me, excuse me,” Warren said to the crowd. In the crowd looked up Prince Kenneth, whose contempt for Warren had only grown in the ten years since their debate on pianists.

“We have raised over one-hundred thousand in currency already for the war effort!,” Warren continued, “Of course most of which will see its way into my wallet,” the crowd laughed. “But to be serious, this is a great achievement that will help our boys to a quick and decisive victory... I’m just glad my actual boys are off at college,” the crowd laughed again.

At “the usual spot,” which was a sort of library room that was seldom occupied in the large Flanagan estate, were Jeffrey and Karen, a tumultuous flame Jeff had had for Karen, as he was the one who had seduced her into this rather unusual affair. He was not even yet a legal adult, and she was thirty-three pressing on thirty-four and also the wife of a pastor who ran the largest megachurch in the country.

While Jeffrey was not yet even a legal adult, Karen saw in his proportions that he was more of a man than her own husband. He could fill both of her lower hollows so that they were hollow no more, and even the upper hollow that she used to speak, she felt him more of a man who could keep her silent.

This was an affair that truly was unknown to anyone other than the guilty parties, and Jeffrey had carried such a haunting passion for the form of the senior woman that she might cause an eternal rift in the supposed Kingdom of God.

Back at the dance hall and around a rounded table sat the king and queen and the queen’s parents, of whom all spoke of Elise’s recent passing into the next life. But the discussion of death was soon killed short when Brigid finally commented on her mother’s

necklace. She had been eyeing it since she laid eyes on her.

“Mother,” she said to Reagan, “where did you get that necklace from?” Reagan looked at her gold necklace, “Oliver bought it for me last week.” Oliver, hearing his name, looked at his wife, then at her necklace, and then looked away.

When Brian out of his peripheral saw Oliver's head turn, he too looked at the gold necklace, and then quickly glanced at his own wife's necklace which was made of silver.

In some other rare parallel universe, the conversation may have ended there, but Queen Brigid was not finished. “Mother, who is the queen of this country?” “Why, you are darling,” Reagan responded. “And mother, who is this jubilee in celebration of?” “...Our family?,” Reagan was not sure what her daughter was getting at.

Suddenly, Brigid stood up and slapped the table beneath her and began shouting at her mother, and the words she said just before she stormed out of the dance hall were indicating of the fact that this celebration was not for “their family” but solely for the reign of the king and his queen.

For a moment, the party was paused as dancers of the celebration heard the shouting, but King Brian soon called for them to resume. And, in getting up, Brian motioned for Oliver to follow him to a second floor room.

“Why is Reagan wearing that necklace?” “I asked her not to wear it. I even asked her to take it off once I saw that Brigid was wearing a silver one,” Oliver said. “You asked? Have you no dignity to keep your wife in place?” Oliver could not respond. “I don't understand how you let your wife talk about you like that in public and do nothing about it. I don't understand how you have to ask her things instead of telling her things. You are a weak pathetic excuse for a man. Get out of my sight.” Oliver walked away and retreated back into the dance hall.

Outside of the palace and near to many vehicles, Christopher led his lover to his parent's car to retrieve the gift he had promised her. He opened the red door to the red car and took out a red package, inside the red package was a red dress riddled in raspberry diamonds. Princess Brittany thought it was beautiful and took it from his hands. She put it to her body and laughed, saying it was the most marvelous gift anyone had ever gotten her. She then went forth and began kissing her love, knowing after this their lips never again would touch and that it would be another boy who had the privilege of seeing her in his diamonds.

Donald, the butler of the Flanagan's estate, was furious when he saw one of his servants enter the kitchen late. “You're late and now you're fired,” he told the young man. When the young man tried to explain his tardiness, Donald would have no word of it. The young man returned to the room in which he shared with other workers and began to pack his belongings to remove himself from the household and exit his tenure with the

Flanagans.

Crossing through the kitchen and entering a long narrow hallway, Donald came across Donna, of whom he told of the firing. Donna then told Donald that the young man had been helping her carry baskets of clothes to and fro the main estate and the smaller estate. Donald was now conscious of the error he had made, but did not make any plan to re-hire the young man. Donna, seeing the expression on Donald's face, made a remark, "He'll find other employment," she suggested.

Half of an hour later, Donna and Donald watched as the young man traversed through the kitchen, looked at them both, and then exited the estate forever. On these grounds, even the servants are void of humility and spirited with excessive pride.

Inside a bathroom on the ground floor Prince Ken was trying to remind his wife, Hillary, where she was and why she was there. Three years earlier in 1937, Hillary was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease which seemed to develop rapidly.

"Honey, today is the jubilee, we are having a party. You remember the jubilees, don't you?" "Your parents? Matthew and Heather?" Kenneth was confused as to why she would bring up his parent's names and wondered if her mind had went backwards in time. "Yes, but they are not with us anymore." "Who is the king and the queen, then?" "Brian and Brigid, don't you remember the ceremony?" The thought of Brigid reminded her of Sabrina. "Oh!," she said with a mean look on her face, "Don't you remind me of that little twat Sabrina. She's the reason why Jeffy is so unusual!" Ken put his hand to his forehead in disappointment. "Come on, let's get back to the party, and try not to seem so paranoid again."

Ken and Hill passed by a room with a closed door which inside was inhabited by Jeremy, Brian II and Cassandra. In their teenage years they were developing a somewhat rebellious attitude, stealing from others a pack of cigarettes which they weren't allowed to smoke. Each one lit a cigarette and took puffs at their leisure, seeing themselves as adults in those popular movie posters that were plastered every where whenever they went into the city.

For the next ten minutes, the three rebels spoke of the rebellious acts they had committed in the last five years and also of their hooligan natures. The judgment they placed on themselves, or lack there of, they felt, was no different than the tyranny of their kingdom and the acts of their parents. "I bet if we got them all in one place, nasty things would come about," Jeremy suggested. "But they are in one room," Brian II answered him. "No, I mean, like in a small tiny room."

Then, like a sudden wave came over her, Cassandra devised their next act. "Protocol for possible threats on the premise is to go underground, to that small room," she said to them. The two boys already knew what she was thinking, but how could they get them all

down there?

“We could make one of those cocktails, the ones with fire, and throw it through a window into the dance hall,” Cass suggested.

One minute later the three split up, Cassandra going to steal a bottle of alcohol from the dance hall, Brian II going to find matches and paper, and Jeremy writing down a threat on a piece of paper.

“If you don't pay us \$50,000, we will expose the fact that Warren Buchanan covered up Alexander's drunk while in charge homicide.” The threat was untrue but the rumor was not.

Jeremy and Brian II stood just outside one of the many doors that led outside and watched as Cassandra, who volunteered to throw the fire cocktail into the dance hall, made her way to the best possible position.

And so the two cousins waited, and waited, and waited, until they heard glass shatter and flames come into reality. Running back inside, they opened the door for Cassandra and they all ran into the dance hall, asking everyone what all of the commotion was about.

The cocktail had flown into the dance hall and hit one of the chandeliers. Exploding on impact, a piece of flame dropped onto Gary Gray's head and set his hair ablaze. Princess Dorothy, in seeing this unfold, unstuck herself and threw water onto his head, taking out the flame and seeing the patch of skin that had been burned. Moments later, it was Donald who extinguished the complete flames that left undisturbed might have destroyed the entire dance hall.

After all of the commotion, a guard attempted to read the note attached to the incendiary device, but it had been too damaged to do so. All he could tell was that the entire family and their guests may have been at the mercy of hooligans.

Just as the three had forecasted, the guards had all of the Flanagans and their guests moved into an underground bunker-style room where they would be safe, but the Flanagans were always more safe in the company of strangers than in the company of themselves.

As the guards stayed above ground to check the premise of the royal kingdom, the Flanagans and their friends stayed underground for safety.

On Queen Brigid's lap now was Spencer, who was only three years old and was sleeping when the attack was executed. When he asked his mother what was going on, she simply told him they were playing a game.

And in Hillary's mind there were games being played as well. With time, with memories, with confusion and emotion. Hillary caught sight of Sabrina, and she could feel deep down in her core that Sabrina was someone she detested. When Sabrina caught

sight of Hillary staring at her, she became offended. "What are you looking at?," Sabrina asked calmly yet loudly enough for Hillary to hear her.

"I may be forgetful in my mind, but I'll never forget you, you little cunt," and after Hillary said this to Sabrina, this caught everyone's attention. Brian II, Jeremy and Cassandra were in for the show.

"Look," Sabrina retorted, "It's not my fault your husband has MissPlay magazines laying around and your son fancies older women." A surgent pulse went through Jeffrey and Karen's bodies. "Shut your mouth," Prince Kenneth said in defense of his wife, but more in defense of himself. "Hey!," Douglas sounded off, "No one talks to my wife like that!"

"What's so hard about hiding some pictures? Are you that much of a moron?," Ken said to Doug.

"Let's all just settle down," Warren tried to calm the two men down. "You," Ken pointed at Warren, "You are not welcome in this matter." Warren suspected that Ken was still angry over their debate of 18th century pianists. "You're still on about that? That was so many years ago!," Warren cried.

"Do something," Brigid whispered to her king. With a shrug, King Brian stepped forward and said "That's enough." But evidently, that was not enough.

"Here comes the all-mighty king," Reagan yelled, "here to save us all from our own emotional incapacitation!" Brian turned around and looked at Reagan to see that she was still wearing the gold necklace. He walked up to her and snatched it from her neck, breaking it in the process and then throwing it into a nearby waste-basket.

Reagan looked at her husband, Oliver, and then Brian looked his way as well. "What are you going to do about it?," Brian asked Oliver. "Nothing," Oliver replied. "That's exactly right, not a God damned thing."

But suddenly Reagan slapped her son-in-law. The crowd gasped. When Brian brought his face back around to look at Reagan once more, he did not strike back. "...If you weren't the queen's mother, I would have you put in prison."

These words were followed by the head of security entering the bunker and telling everyone that there was no threat on the premises, and that this was likely a prank by a group of hooligans. All of the bunker-dwellers left the bunker and the party was effectively over as all of the party-goers were preparing to either go home or to go to their own quarters.

Gary Gray, whose scalp was burned and was being treated by security after the fact was now on his way to the hospital to receive proper treatment. "How can I preach to an auditorium of six-thousand people now? All they will see is this burned part of my scalp!," Gary cried. "Don't be silly, honey, they aren't there to see you, they are there to

hear you and your 'prophetic messages' from God," she air-quoted the single quotes.

One hour after Christopher Ward had arrived home, he received a phone call from the Flanagan residence. It was Princess Brittany, who in her fumbling of words finally admitted to him that she did not have any feelings for him. Christopher was confused, for only a few whiles earlier he could not imagine a future without her. Then Christopher became angry, for now he realized that she waited until he arrived home to tell him this because she was a coward and also a thief. When he displayed his anger at her, she snapped back, saying "Do you know who you are talking to like that?" Christopher knew exactly who he was talking to, and so he hung up the phone, never to speak to her ever again for the rest of his mortal life.

In one of their more fun lounge rooms, Princess Dorothy was playing darts with Donald and Prince Brian II. After missing the board completely, Dorothy turned to her nephew, "You know you're going to be king one day, right?" "So?" "So where is your queen?" Donald hit the bullseye.

"Where's your prince?," Brian II responded. "That's not how it works." "She's right," Donald interrupted, "just because she marries a man doesn't mean he'll be given the title of prince."

Brian II prepared his throw, "Maybe I'll marry a Negress and send shockwaves throughout the kingdom." "Ha!," Donald ejaculated.

"That's not funny," Dorothy replied. Brian II hit the board but missed the bullseye. "We'll have little darker skinned children running around all over the place," Dorothy finished.

"A Spaniard then?," Brian II asked for permission. "Nope," Dorothy replied. "How about a Chinese woman?," Donald suggested stretching out his eyes. "This won't be a game to you in ten years," Dorothy warned the future king. "You mean I have to get married in ten years!?" he replied sarcastically, "Don, you better get me that catalog of Chinese women right away! It's going to be a long night..."

The poet, Alex, and his muse, Princess Aubry, sat just before the Flanagan estate's large lake that by now looked like it contained crystals in the darkness of the moonlight. "Did you know Nathaniel killed himself last week?," Aubry asked her husband. "Does that bother you?," Alex asked her back. "I was never in love with him, so I guess no, it doesn't bother me." "Are you in love with me?," Alex asked his wife. He had been married to her eight years now but it was a question he often asked himself. "I married you, didn't I?" "But you were also going to marry that dud." "But I didn't, you made sure of that." "That's because I love you and wanted the best for you." "...Wanted?" "Sorry, want." "Well, you keep me happy, and you know I'll keep you happy."

Princess Aubry leaned into Alex's face and kissed him slowly. The privacy of the lake

that was surrounded by trees gave them the option of making love, but on these hollow grounds, they made something as hollow as their characters.

At around the same time of midnight, Sabrina and Douglas were driving down one of the country's highways. Reminiscent of their lives, they were going nowhere and going nowhere fast. This was something they did after every family event, a way to get away from their family's ways. To be alone, together. And alone was how Sabrina felt when Douglas brought up again the concept of an open relationship. She was firmly against it, but each time Doug proposed, she felt him love her less and less.

"Who do you have in mind anyway?," Sabrina asked sharply. "No one," Doug lied. Sabrina saw through his eyes. "...Dottie." "Dorothy!," Sabrina yelled, and then she laughed, "Dorothy has absolutely no interest in you." "How do you know? Did she say something to you?" "No, but she is not even interested in men." "She wants a woman?" "I don't think she's attracted to either sex."

Doug thought for a moment as he drove them under the Moon on an empty highway. "You're crazy," Sabrina said at him, "Everyone in this whole damn family is crazy. I'm crazy and I can't believe I can even see the craziness! Take me home, I need to make sure Cassandra has put Vivian to sleep."

After Kenneth had helped Hillary to sleep, he slipped away and began walking through the dimly lit palace. Most everyone else was asleep as well as it was nearly one a.m. But one woman was still awake, so awake that she had left her door unlocked for him, knowing that he would be coming soon as he did many nights before.

Entering Donna's room, he soon found himself on top of her. His wife's mind was crumbling and so too were her sexual desires. He found that with Donna, her mind fresh as new wildflowers, was a way to restore his memories of one's first falling in love.

"I don't know if I would object to your throwing of her in prison," the queen said to her king as they walked toward their master-room.

"I'll have her imprisoned and have Oliver killed for crimes against masculinity," the king laughed. "Him and his little pecker," the queen added.

Walking through the hall, Brian noticed as they passed a painting of his parents, King Matthew and Queen Heather, that it was slightly crooked. Fixing it, and then stepping back to look at it, Brigid made a comment. "Your parents died so young, but long live the king and his queen."

King Brian and Queen Brigid's coronation, held on the 25th of May, on a beautiful spring day. (1931)

*Chapter 64***EPISODE 87**

3:2:7:64

DAY #1

When you draw something, for example, a face, you start out with an eye or perhaps a jawline and this tells you where everything else will be positioned. If you don't follow some kind of logical positioning based on what we can see in the realworld, and you simply draw all the facial features where ever you please with total disregard for realism, you end up drawing something that looks like the incoherent mess of a dream. I think they call those types of paintings abstract paintings, I'm not sure. "Lynne, what do you call those crazy weird looking paintings?" "Surreal paintings." "What are abstract paintings?" "You know those paintings where it looks like the painter just threw paint on to the canvas, usually it's those or just very simple paintings."

Okay so they are called surreal paintings. I think of the pair differences between surreal paintings and realistic paintings, and the dreamworld and the realworld. The major difference seems to be, again, logical positioning. Reality has fixed points of reference while fiction has no fixed points. But what really are the fixed points? What keeps everything here in our world fixed in place and logical as opposed to the dreamworld where everything is chaos? Could it be the fact that our realworld is governed by physical laws while the dreamworld is not?

And this wouldn't just apply to visual arts besides. When you write your first sentence in a novel, it is no different than the first stroke of your brush. And in fiction, we can choose to play by the rules or not.

I wonder if fate could be one of those fixed points. Does fate apply to our dreams? Perhaps fate is actual in the realworld but in the dreamworld fate is not applicable because there are no rules there. If fate is governed by physical laws in this world, and there are no laws in the dreamworld, then fate would not be actual in the dreamworld. But then you have to consider the fact that our brains reside in the realworld while we operate in the dreamworld, and if anything, the neural processes going on in the brain are influenced by physical law.

Getting out of the car, Lynne removed Kirby from it and strapped him to her chest. Sara, Dave and I grabbed all of our luggage and we said goodbye to our driver. I turn around and see the inn that we would be staying in for an entire month.

When we got inside we saw some families and couples eating in a dining area. Someone named Dobbie eventually came and helped us to our rooms. Like before, we were given two rooms with the same arrangements.

Asked if we were hungry, we said yes, and after fixing ourselves into the establishment, all 4.1 of us went down into the dining area to eat lunch. We ate quickly and made it a quick affair. Even Kirby wanted to get out of the public and into the confines of four walls.

When we went back up the stairs and to the floor of our rooms, we went to go see what Sara and Dave's room was like, and we learned that, of course, it was no different than our own save the fact that they had two beds.

“This is a nice little inn, don't you think?,” she asked her kids. “It's beneath me,” Dave responded. We all laughed, and even Kirby seemed to enjoy the joke. A moment later, Lynne received a call from Lisa asking if we made it in one piece and if her son was good.

Glancing out of the window, I began to see people in costumes walking through the street. Then suddenly I heard music. I went to the window and others followed, and soon we were all gazing upon some kind of royal parade. People were dressed as kings and queens and princesses and princes, some riding in coaches, others horses, and we all wondered what holiday we must have landed on in this country.

DAY #2

In the morning while it was still night and before the day really began, Lynne borrowed a stroller from the inn and I joined her in walking through the town with Kirby. Taking a step I felt a small sharp pain in my foot which must have come from the time I got a small piece of glass stuck in it. It's a pain that comes and goes once or twice a month.

Walking through the town was not much different than walking through America. It had trees. Flowers. Buildings. Cars. People. Streets. What is that over there? Oh, that's just a soccer ball.

Sometime into the walk when there was sunlight all around, we finally made it to the park. No one else was there and we decided to sit on one of the benches. After I had noticed a circle with a dot in the middle on the ground, I took out my phone to write in a note, but this was when I saw the last note I took.

“I forgot to tell you about what I was writing into my phone on the airplane,” I said to her. “Oh yeah, what was your most unusual idea?” “Remember how we both said we've had picnic dreams of eachother? If those are our other lives, what if other people can give you pieces to your other lives that you do not have access to?” She began thinking about it.

“In your picnic dream, do I have a prosthetic?” “Yes.” “In my picnic dream with you

I have a prosthetic as well, but in the dream I told you about a long time ago I don't have a prosthetic. And sometimes I have present-time dreams where I don't have a prosthetic. So any dream that I have with you, or have some awareness of you, I have a fake foot, which would make sense since I didn't know you before my surgery." She associated her life with me with having a prosthetic foot, which could mean the associations you have with other people could influence what lives you see. And of course, if you keep associating with the same people and doing the same things in real life, it will become standard. It's not until you meet someone new or go some place new that your life will begin to change, which is obvious.

"So when you have a dream and I am in your memorysphere, you will have a fake foot. You always have to study the objects and people and places in your dreams. Maybe even in waking life," I said to her.

She brought up her forearm and wiped it on me. "...Did I spit on you?" "Yeah man." "Sorry, my bad."

"What if one day I have a dream from the perspective of sitting on your lap on the picnic bench?," she asked. "Then we'd know we can see our other lives together."

There was a break in the conversation as she tended to Kirby, and when she leaned back into her seat I told her the following. "Anytime you have a dream that even remotely concerns me, you must relay it to me just in case I have a dream that concerns your dream. Because, think about it, let's say I have a dream and realize that an object is moved but I don't know why or how it was moved, or even when, you might have the dream where you moved it, and that would answer my question."

She started laughing outloud and I smiled. "We're fucking crazy. I hope we're not making Kirby crazy just by hearing all of this," she said. We were probably a little bit crazy, but I didn't think we were that crazy. If two people's lives are heavily intertwined, sometimes you don't have the dream story within you, and sometimes it's others that have your missing pieces.

"Since we're talking about dreams so much, there was something I wrote a while back but I never showed it to you. Do you want to see it?" "Yes."

She went through her phone and then handed it to me to read it: Conscious dreaming, in between the state of dreaming in sleep and being fully awake, your mind is making connections and observations about the universe. When we do this in dreaming, it's chaos and there is no logic. When we do it in waking life, it's uninspired. But when we're doing it in this realm, we have a shot at creativity.

"I understand it but can you explain it more." "So when we dream, our minds are making connections and observations about the universe but it's chaos and illogical. And when we are fully awake, we can still make those connections but they aren't as

imaginative as the ones in the dreamstate. But when you are like, daydreaming or something and you are inbetween both worlds, you have a hybrid and create wonderful ideas.”

I shook my head. “I see, I see. I could kiss you.” “Please, not in front of Kirby.” A moment later, another couple with a stroller walked up to us. They were like our mirror image; a man and a woman with a baby boy in their stroller. They were full of life and struck up an energetic conversation with us. I followed along with Lynne, who was the mother's baby and of course I, the father. We had been married nearly eight years. Maybe in some other world Lynne and I were legally married with a biological son, but that wasn't the case in this one.

DAY #3

After receiving instructions on how to get to the rollerskating rink, the five of us took a bus to that district. It is the first activity we are all doing since we've arrived. I've never been rollerskating before, which probably is not a shock to you, but hearing from people who ought to know, supposedly Lynne was a rollerskating queen.

When we walked into the facility it was packed with people. Someone helped us with payment and with the rollerskates. David volunteered himself to look over Kirby, who he nicknamed Mordecai, but really he wanted nothing to do with the festivities and would rather browse things on his cellular device. Of course Lynne and Sara picked the prettiest of the skates; I was left with gray ones. If you've ever wondered what colors I primarily wear, they are black, brown and gray. Not that I have anything against men who prefer colorful clothing, but I've always felt like they were best worn on girls and women. As for men wearing clearly feminine clothing, as in dresses and lingerie, that's not something I'd like to see with my own eyes. Of course I don't think there is anything wrong with it, but the sight of a very feminine woman is sacred to me. I find it instinctively offensive, in that reasoning because I was raised in a time when women wear dresses and men wear suits, but I don't find it consciously offensive, as in when I really think about it, it doesn't bother me. Do you.

Today Lynne is wearing a red shirt with blue jeans and a red shoe. Sarah a yellow shirt with black jeans and white shoes. The three of us began putting on our skates, the ones with four wheels in the shape of a rectangle, and one by one rolled onto the rink and the blaring music really became audible then.

I learned that skating is not too hard if all you do is move forward, but before I even went a few feet Lynne was already skating backward. In between the skill-level was Sara, who too was skating forward like me but was sprinting down the skateway through all of

the people.

When I looked back at Lynne she was dancing to the music and still skating backward and looking directly at me. The way she moved her legs to the music was like an illusion as she made unconnected eights. And all of a sudden, Sara was approaching lapping us when she slowed down and skating directly behind me and then began to push me to go faster.

Giving me momentum I skated toward Lynne and she stuck her hands out for me to grab them. I saw Sara speed skate again down the skateway and when I looked back at Lynne I asked her where she learned to skate like that. "Emily." That made sense.

When I let go of her hands she turns around and begins skating forward like a normal person, but decided to put her hands in her pockets and skate in snakes before me.

When Sara zoomed past us for the second time, I saw her hop into the air and do a 180-turn to look back at us, and I learned that she too had the ability to skate backward. It probably wasn't that hard to skate backward, but I didn't feel like finding out.

Now Lynne has taken her hands out of her pockets and does repeated 180-turns almost in a way like she is spinning. Every time she has her face toward me, she gives me a strange expression, and doing our first lap, we find David and Kirby watching us. David shouted something at me, but I couldn't hear him over the blaring music.

When Sara was preparing to lap us again, Lynne took it as a challenge and began chasing her. Sara must have heard the speeding Lynne yell something at her because she looked back briefly, started laughing, and then started going even faster. As she chased her around the rink, I finally did my own backward skating so I could see the expressions on their faces.

"She's trying to murder me!," Sara yelled laughing as she sped past me. Then Lynne sped past me and I could see her laughing. Each time they passed, they looked like they were having more and more fun, until finally Sara slowed down out of tiredness and hugged my body. "Protect me," she said. And soon after, Lynne slowed down and put her arms around both of us. I couldn't imagine how fast both of their hearts must have been beating.

When the two let go of me, Lynne grabbed and then hugged her daughter, telling her she caught her. Despite the murder, Sara hugged her mother back. I can say that it was an unusual sight. No one in our family is what you would call a hugger. None of us hug each other when a person is leaving. We barely say bye to each other. And while none of us are really huggers, when hugging does occur, it's usually Lynne or Sara hugging me to show affection because they have certain feelings toward me as they are both female, but they rarely hug each other. It was just unusual, that's all.

DAY #4

On the first Friday in the inn we were invited to have dinner with everyone who was currently residing there. It was a custom of theirs to eat together in the evening every Friday. None of us wanted to but if we didn't we would look rude. I wouldn't mind looking rude by myself but I didn't want to subject them to my offensives.

Watching Lynne change Kirby's diapers, I thought about how uncomfortable it was going to be around all those people. And I knew Lynne was thinking the same thing. And I knew Dave and Sara in their own abode weren't that far off in that psychosphere. The only person who probably wasn't going to mind was Kirby, but that remains to be seen.

Once Lynne had finished dressing him up, she dressed herself up. Her nails had already been red but now so were her lips. Her shoe had already been black but now so were her lashes. Her long blue dress sent blood coursing through my veins as she walked past me and I caught a shimmer of her red rosed ring.

I was taught the misconception that when in your body, blood is blue, but when exposed to oxygen, it turns red. And because she makes me stupid with lust, I'll believe that lie, because she has cut me in ways leaving me unable to breathe. And like someone out of a murder-mystery book, I watch her silently. Her facial expressions, her actions, the only thing I can't see are her thoughts.

As she stood in front of a desk, I walked up behind and took hold of her right hand. I drew it forward onto the desk and made her index finger most prominent. From my peripheral, my eyes were still on her hand, I could see her head tilt just a little to look toward me but not look actually at me, and I could feel her mind wonder what it was that I was going to do. And with that wonder, I know that the tiniest most imperceptible smile grew onto her face.

I began to draw, on the wooden desk, the invisible letter of "Q." Followed was a "U" and then two "Es" and stopped after the "N." I waited for her to repeat the word outloud. "...Queen," she said. And then I followed with an "O" and an "F," then waited again. "...Of." And then I started again with an "M," then a "Y" and an "S" and a "T" and an "E" and an "R" and finally a "Y."

I looked at her and could see her blushing, which told me she knew what I was trying to say. "Queen of Mystery," she said finally looking at me, the red blush slowly fading away.

When we were all dressed in some kind of formal wear, we went downstairs for the dinner occasion. Dobbie seated us and we sat at the table which had already had some people there. For the next few minutes, the rest of the visitors spilled into the area.

As we all began eating, I could tell the driver of the dinner was going to be the man

sitting six seats to my left, as he was asking the couple who arrived only a day before us what their names were. Their names were Dorian and Sabriana. And as the night went on, each adult that Lynne and I made eye contact with would greet us and tell us their names. There was Briana and her husband who simply went by Briggs. Another named Kendra and her husband who went by Hilo. At one moment during it all someone offered us a bottle of wine but Lynne politely rejected it. "You don't drink?," Auburn asked. "Well, more for me," she laughed retreating the bottle.

Someone across from us I could tell was eager to learn how Lynne and I met. And I found I was right. "How did you two meet?," Dorene asked. I gestured at Lynne. "I moved into his apartment building," she answered. "You're a landlord?," she asked me. "No, I mean he was already living there when I moved in, we became neighbors" Lynne explained further. "You know what's the worst thing about having a boring meeting story? Your wife is always asking others how they met and trying to live vicariously through them," her husband, Jefford, told us. Dorene then told us they met the same exact way and laughed the conversation away.

A moment after this, rain began to tap against the windows. When that moment passed, the rain become stronger and a distant thunder crash could be heard miles away. "Hope the lights don't go out," Jefford said aloud, "because then we might have a murder-mystery on our hands!," he said laughing egregiously.

Across from David was a girl who seemed to be David's age, and I could tell Dave was a bit shy about having to be sat directly opposite her. I'm not sure if Lynne or Sara noticed this, but in all likelihood the girl was shy about it, too.

Some people had begun to ask us about Kirby, and Lynne told them that he was a baby we were babysitting for a neighbor and that he wasn't ours. She must have calculated that if she had played the game of lies again someone would be wiser to it as we would be seeing many of these people over many days in the coming weeks.

As the time dragged on and as the weather became worse, so did it take a toll my comfort. All of the food and all of the fine drinks were more visible to me now than they were an hour before. And all of the men in their formal wear and their ridiculous ways of speaking were beginning to bother me. Even the women in their dresses and make-up were beginning to frustrate me. The sacred sight of the woman was no longer sacred to me, only the sight of Lynne didn't make me feel nauseous.

Lynne was as well dressed as any of the other women at the table, but what made her appear less snobby? Maybe I am unfair and biased towards Lynne. That's what love does, it makes the logical illogical. Short of castrating me she was now able to get away with anything and avoid my judgment.

We are not trained by the world to see the gaining of possessions as evil. It's not

attractive but it also is not evil and is actually even something we are encouraged to pursue. That should scare you. That the majority of the world doesn't label that as evil but actually as something to be dreamed. And the people who do see it as evil and even have powerful feelings about it, their feelings are not powerful enough about it for them to say anything about it. At least not in any authoritative way. Poverty is not a natural state. It is not even a default state. It is not something that nature endorses. At least, I don't think so, maybe I am wrong. It seems to me that it is created by man, knowingly or unknowingly, because part of evil is a consciousness so deprived it is not even aware of itself.

Maybe that's why Lynne isn't a snob to me even if it were her dream to dress like a queen. I know she is aware at a deep level. I can also say I don't know these other people that well, certainly not well enough to gauge their awareness, but I also know I'm not going to stick around here long enough to find out.

Almost done with my plate of food, I became even more lost in my thought through the thunder.

...I have been exposed to things that disrupt the natural human order. When one dies of nature it is a reunion of the spirits, but when one dies of an accident, or something not involved in nature, like a brutal killing, there is a disruption that occurs. And I feel that in my witnessing of these un-natural experiences, my own human order has been disrupted beyond repair. I've seen with my own eyes so many gruesome deaths. I have seen crushed heads, extremities severed, bodies chopped in half, intestines hanging from the torso like strange spaghetti. But none of these have kept me from sleeping at night. There is only one thing that follows me into my nightmares. It is the crushed head in which the facial features remain intact. It is a horror I feel in my core that I cannot fully grasp or understand or explain. You see the brain matter and meat and the soft tissue lying on the pavement behind a face that somehow had not also been destroyed, sometimes the mouth still a little open and the eyes out of their sockets deep into the head making the eyes like black holes, and it's almost as if the the soul is still alive within this person and stuck between the world of the living and the world of the dead, in intense pain, because the natural order of death has been interrupted by murder or accident. You look at that face and you are looking at true disorder. True chaos in an otherwise reasonable world. And I have found no resolution in this nightmare. The closer I get to the truth, the less meaning I find...

DAY #5

When the dinner occasion was finally over at midnight, the four of us said goodbye to the others who were also on their way back to their rooms. Dave and Sara were in so

much of a hurry they went on before us and I waited as Lynne picked up a sleeping Kirby. As we walk back to our room, we don't say a word to each other but we can hear that it is still raining and thundering outside.

Lynne set Kirby aside in a crib located in Sara and Dave's room and then left and went into our bathroom, speaking to me as she did her lady things. "You have to find out what you're going to say for the next three Fridays so none of us have to go through that again," she said. I laughed, but it was a laugh tainted with fear as I had no idea yet what I would say.

When she walked back out of the bathroom she was still in blue, but in sleeping clothes and without makeup, yet when looking at me on the bed her cheeks turned blush. She knew exactly what I was hinting at when I called her the queen of mystery, so I don't know why her body was excited in that way. I'm not sure if it was the act of intercourse in a foreign room that was not in my apartment that made her shy, but whatever it was, it was only making me more attracted to her.

After she walked over to the door and locked it, and then turned off the lights so the entire room was dark, she made her way back to me and I could see her silhouette taking off her clothes. I began to do the same and by that time she was on the bed. She lifts one leg over me and then sits on top of me and positions herself to be more comfortable. As she leans forward toward my face, she drags the blanket with her so that we are fully covered, and I knew then that her blush was gone but that it was there before because we weren't at home.

She reached back and I felt her guide me in, then she wrapped her arms around me and I did the same. We were limited to soft, slow and silent thrusts. It was gentle but we felt everything together. With her breasts laid out on my chest and her face so pressed against mine we were eventually down each other's throats. When she removed her mouth from mine there was a gentle flash of lightning that entered the room and for a second we could both see a skinny line of saliva that connected my mouth to hers.

I slightly re-positioned the both of us, she was now more on top of me as she pressed her left breast into my mouth. My tongue flipped her hardened jutting nipple up and down and then I made to swallow as much of her breast as I could into my mouth. I was sucking so hard that when I sucked off of it and her nipple pressed against my face, it felt even harder and seemed slightly more jutted than when it was in my mouth. I moved my face so that it could re-enter my mouth and began sucking even harder than before and during this I could feel her vagina squeeze me. She let out the tiniest sound, and my body responded by multiple times, one after the other, pumping her full of my seed.

I take my lashes black and my sugar wild. I take my goddess insane and my diamond rare. I take my beauty real and my lady classic. I take my dream bad and my desire

insatiable. I take my skirt modest and my lingerie seductive. I take my smile kind and my sunrise bright. I take my love lightning and my romance thunder. I take my woman strong and my flower soft. I take my ocean deep and my queen mysterious.

We paused for a moment, and then started again, she leaning into my face and stuffing her mouth into mine. Despite the gentle movements, the orgasm came faster this time. Our tongues tied I felt her vagina squeeze again and let out a sound into my mouth, and while it wasn't as much as the first time, I knew that when I removed myself from her there would be a brief creamy leak.

At that same moment, we heard one of the panels outside smack against the window. It scared her and nearly made her jump. "Probably the wind," she said. I got up to go check after putting on clothes and when I looked out of the window I could barely see anything except that it was extremely windy outside. One of the streetlights was actually beginning to wobble. "Come look at this," I said as she put on her clothes.

After some time we noticed that there were many things wobbling outside because it was so windy, and right after we noticed the wobbly roofs across the street, there was a knock at our door. I went and opened it and saw that it was Dobbie who still had sleep in her eyes.

She explained to me that they had received some kind of report for possible tornadoes, and glancing inside seeing Lynne stand at the window, she quickly told her not to stand in front of it. "Don't look out the windows, please close the boards. Things are liable to fly in here. Nature is a wild thing. Don't worry though, worst-case we'll have to go into the basement."

Once she was finished with us I went into the next room to check on Kirby, Sara and Dave. The two siblings of course were still wide awake and either on a cellphone or a laptop. I saw that their boards were already closed, and then told them that Dobbie was talking about possible tornadoes and in the worst-case, we would have to go down into the basement.

When I returned to Lynne I saw that she was standing in the middle of the room looking at her phone. I made my way to bed and suddenly a song began playing from her phone which probably happened because she was watching something. She immediately began laughing at it and a few seconds later started doing little stupid dance moves to it while she looked at me. She kind of looked like one of those dancers who dance with loose clothing flying around them in the wind.

I got up with the blanket and handed it to her, and then put my hands on her hips and lifted her up onto the table behind her. She was confused but didn't say anything.

I then went to each window and opened it, each one when opened brought more and more whirlwind into the room. Eventually there was enough wind in the room that the

blanket I gave her was beginning to dance.

I sat down on the chair before her and this time remembered to put on a good song so she didn't call me a genius like she did last time.

The spirit of the floral blanket became her spirit, and its dance too became her dance. She twirls like the wind of the whirls outside, stepping forward and back and sometimes raising the blanket over her head to fly. And sometimes she brings the blanket lower to her waist to shift it back and forth as if it were a skirt. Ever since I can remember she has always been my delusion, my dream, my fantasy. She smiles at me gently, and then breaks into another fully circle twirl, but she loses her balance and missteps off the table into the air. She began falling toward the ground, but before she could make impact with it she made impact with me. I had gotten up quickly and saved her. Holding her, I looked into her mysterious eyes and told her, "I take my tornado royal and my wife fantastic."

DAY #6

Spheres and circles. The insistence of thermal equilibrium by the universe suggests this pattern could and should be found elsewhere. In many areas of the functions of the universe, we should find the pattern of equal distribution. One such discovery comes from the study of geometry and the shape of the sphere (or circle).

The most basic definition of the sphere (or a circle) is: the distance from the true center to any of its edges is equal. This means if you measure from the true center of a sphere to any of the edges of the sphere (or circle), you will always find the same exact distance. This in essence is exactly what a sphere (or circle) is, as you cannot establish this fact in other shapes, such as an oval, or a triangle, or a square, or any polygonal entity.

This makes the sphere extremely special and especially unique. I also believe that perhaps through the natural selection of concepts, the universe has designated the shape of the sphere as a cornerstone of every aspect of itself, and perhaps even the shape of itself itself. The sphere is prevalent in aspects of the universe and is a shape we will see every day of our lives in some form or another. But it is also important to note why the universe would choose such a shape over others.

I believe the sphere is so prevalent and so chosen by the universe because of the very fact that at its true center, every distance to the edge is equal, maintaining its insistence of equal distribution. In any informational system, such as an atom, designating the true center as the location where all activity will pass through also means when relaying information from the true center to any edge, it will be able to reach that edge in the fastest way possible without causing disadvantage to reaching other edges as the distance

to all edges are equal. This structure of the sphere indeed is very logistical, and what we know of nature through natural selection only suggests that its main priority is efficiency.

When I woke up this morning I took out my laptop to write the above paragraphs down as they were some things I felt were important. Lynne woke up soon after and began working. This was going to be a work day, as the vacation they supplied had the stipulation of still working the same hours but you would get an entire month with the entire vacation paid for.

When I finish writing I get up and go to the room next door. Kirby had still been sleeping but Dave and Sara were already up. I wonder if they slept at all?

“Wassup pops you trying to get that BattleZone in?,” Dave asked if I wanted to play the game on his DreamCube. “Where's mops?,” he didn't even let me answer. “...Mops?” “Brooklynne,” Sara answered my question while looking at her phone.

I played one round with Dave until I admitted to him that I hated BattleZone. It was boring and repetitive and felt more like a job than a game.

I got up and walked toward Sara and laid down on the bed beside her. It wasn't my intention to, but I felt like I had some kind of responsibility to do something with Sara. “You want to do something today?” “Like what?” “I don't know, take a walk and we'll see.” “I'm down.” “Should we ask Dave?” “He's going to say no.” “Dave you want to take a walk with us?” “No.”

We stopped by the other room to tell Lynne we were going for a walk and she told us to be careful.

When we made it outside we began walking toward the Sun. We passed by many stores until we walked inside one. It was a bookstore and Sara was interested in buying one to read while on vacation. We went away from each other and I browsed without any intention to buy something for myself. Between me and you, I hate fiction and I hate writers. They're so self-important and self-involved. I could read non-fiction, I guess, and that's about all I have ever really enjoyed reading.

When I walk over to the non-fiction category, I saw more uninteresting books that I had no interest in. One of them was about the twins from the royal family of this country, Summer and June Flanagan.

When I met back up with Sara she had two books in her hands which both seemed to be about murder, mystery and romance. “I think mom will like these books, too, so I'm going to get these.”

After buying the books we went a bit further into town where we found a place to eat. There we ate all kinds of meats. “Pass me some of that thigh,” I told her pointing in a certain direction. “Let me get some of that breast,” she asked pointing in another direction. “When we're done here I think I saw a place we passed that served ribs.”

“Okay, we'll go there next,” she said with a mouth full of food.

Back at the inn I found Lynne in Dave's room feeding Kirby his bottle so we passed her and Dave the bag of food we brought for them. After they ate Lynne and I, along with Kirby, went back our room.

When we were situated and Lynne was sitting with Kirby, I noticed that he was finally able to hold his own head up by himself. This made me think of his future developments but also his eventual life as an adult human.

The circular theory proclaims that every thing cycles on forever, so if you commit suicide, according to this theory you are putting yourself in an eternal hell of suicide. This is enough to scare some people into not doing it and even scaring them into living a meaningful and fulfilling life. But the inverse risk is living a long life full of suffering and pain and misery and never committing suicide. You are essentially dooming yourself to that same cycle of eternal hell, where killing yourself early in life would have saved you the trouble each time.

DAY #7

In the evening one of the servants came and knocked on our door. Lynne got up to answer it and the young man handed her a box that seemed to be a gift. She opened it, looked inside, and then brought it to me. When I looked inside, I saw two pairs of handcuffs and a key. Lynne was just as confused as I was.

We thought maybe it was one of the other guests trying to give us ideas, and soon after she closed the box, put it on the table, and then went back to work.

A few hours later it was past ten o'clock. I was reading an article about climate-change when Lynne decided to turn in for the night. “You coming to bed?” she asked. “No, I'll be a while,” I told her. She stood there and just stared at me. When I looked back up, I asked her why she was staring at me like that.

“The neighbors told me what you did,” she said. “What did I do?” She walked over to the box of handcuffs and took one out. “You were a bad boy yesterday,” she pointed toward the bed, “no more computer time, get on that bed now.” When I heard the sound of the angry motherly now I closed the laptop lid and ran onto the bed, and slowly she followed me with the handcuffs and the key in her hand.

Getting to me, she locked one cuff to the bed post and then locked the other to my wrist. She placed a knee on the edge of the bed and then her other leg over me so that she could sit on me. She slid her hands up and down my chest and at some point rubbed my shoulders.

“You know, mommy's been bad too,” she smiled. She uncuffed the cuff that was

locked to the bedpost and slowly locked it onto her own wrist. I was wondering where she was going with this.

With one arm she began to take off my pants, but at the same time she felt a pain in her handcuffed wrist and said it may have been too tight. She found the key and went to loosen it, but it seemed to be jammed. Fighting with it, nothing seemed to work to unjam it and all of a sudden we both saw the key break.

We simply looked at each other, and after a moment I said “Okay, get off me please.” I looked at the key and saw there was no way it was in any way still useful. I walked us both over to the box to see if there was a spare key. There was nothing.

I stared at her the same way she stared at me only a few moments ago. “You have been such a disappointment to me,” I told her, “You can't do anything right.” She looked away from me, “I'm sorry, daddy.” “Well, we're going to have to wait until everyone is asleep and then find a tool to break this thing, and then afterwards we'll talk about your punishment.”

We waited until two a.m. which seemed a fair time to assume that most people would be asleep. The first task was to place Kirby in the kids' room. Lynne carried him with one arm and I opened the doors to enter the kids' room. The light was off, Dave was slouched over with the game controller on his stomach and the game still paused. When I looked at the screen, I saw messages from Kane.

Sara was also asleep, sleeping with one of the novels she recently purchased opened on her lap. I told you fiction sucks.

Slowly but surely, we walked over to the crib and placed Kirby inside. Before leaving, Lynne gently tapped Sara, and when she woke up, she told Sara that Lynne and I were going for a walk and we would be back soon.

Going to open the door to walk out of it, just as soon we heard another door on this floor open. We shut the door. Waited for the person to walk by. And then we had to wait another ten minutes for the person to return.

Finally, we left the room and then walked down to the ground floor. After a bit of searching we found the way to the basement. Quickly we began looking for any tools that could free us; power saws, an axe, those giant scissor things, anything. We looked everywhere but there wasn't even anything that resembled these things.

“On our way here I think I saw a garage or storage shed in the back,” Lynne said. We left the inn and went that way. While walking, we saw a light turn on on the ground floor and we immediately ducked for cover. Once the light was turned back off, we walked further toward the garage. Fortunately for us, the door was unlocked.

Going inside we repeated the search we had done moments prior, and this time we found the giant scissor things, two axes, and more importantly, an electric circular saw-

blade. When I went to power it, it seemed to be out of battery as the power of it was weak. “We have to find the power cord or the charger or something,” I told her. We searched the entire garage until we found a power cord that worked for it. I plugged it in and powered it again and this time it made a horrific sound you might find in a murder mystery novel. It was so loud that it couldn't possibly be used here without waking everyone who was sleeping in the inn.

“Charger?,” Lynne asked. So we started a search again. Luckily we found the charger quicker than we found the power cord and we placed it on the dock. The charger read “4%.” It perhaps went up 2% every minute. Once it got to 8%, Lynne and I sat down on the ground of the dirty garage.

We were silent until 20% when she started talking about plans for tomorrow. Or rather, later in the day. She wanted to do something specifically for Kirby, and the things she suggested were the zoo, aquarium or just a walk in the city on a boardwalk. I said any of those were fine, but warned her that it was only going to be the three of us because the kids would not at all be interested in such things.

At 50%, Lynne moved from the side of me to sit in between my legs and this forced me to put my arm over her head and then bring it down around her abdomen. She leaned back into me, saying “Halfway there.”

At 75% she began speaking again, “You want to know how you're not in a bad relationship? When you do something stupid and you're not playing out how the conversation will go in your head with your partner because they are cool as hell.” I laughed. “Do you ever do that with me? Try to figure out how it will go because you think I'll be mad?,” she asked. “No, not at all,” I replied.

At 77% I thought about our friendship. You have to learn how to be friends in the beginning, because when the middle ends you will be forced to be friends again. I know her well, she knows me well, and we have both worked on ourselves and anything that could ever split us apart wouldn't come from the inside, it would have to come from the outside.

At 99% she got up and then I got up after her and we walked together to the power tool. The final step toward it resulted in 100%. I undocked it, she grabbed a flashlight, and we went outside. We began following a dirt-path trail that led into a wooded area. When we walked far enough into the woods and felt that we wouldn't be heard, I did a quick power-up of the power tool and this scared the piss out of Lynne. I was laughing and I could tell she wanted so badly to smack me. I kept the tool going and we put our hands up to a tree and it was surprisingly easy to saw through it, and soon we were free from each other.

The next time when I kept the power tool going is when she was truly afraid because

it was coming toward her wrist. When it made contact with her handcuff, she closed her eyes and never saw the sparks that were flying. I cut about 80% through and then stopped. When she heard the stopping, she opened her eyes and readjusted the flashlight a bit to see what I had done.

“Okay, look, your body is perfect the way it is, you are beautiful, hypnotizing, surreal,” I told her, “but I need your right hand to be as firm as possible for handjobs, so I don't want to cut too close to your wrist.” She looked at me and didn't say anything. “What?,” I asked. “You forgot gorgeous, strong, creative, sexy, intelligent, wise, classy, elegant, funny and a bunch of other things,” she replied. When I laughed she laughed and began trying to break the rest of the handcuff off. When she was finally free, she moved her wrists around and was finally free of the tightness.

Shinning the flashlight on me, I began to saw through my own cuff. When I was 80% through, I did the same exact thing she did and I was finally free of the cuff.

I tossed her my handcuff and after she caught it I told her it was a souvenir for our first vacation together.

Shining the flashlight ahead of us, we began walking back toward the inn. It was still dark out and sunrise was a ways away. It's funny. Women don't want you to put them on a pedestal because they are aware of their flaws, but at the same time that's all they want.

I moved closer to Lynne as we walked and I put my hand in hers, and we walked on toward home through the cooling twilight.

DAY #8

At noon I was sitting with Lynne on a bus and she had Kirby in her lap. We are on our way to an aquarium in the downtown area of the city. Not unlike any American city we knew, and the similarities of the people walking and cars driving and buildings standing, they made me think of recurring dreams.

Why do we have recurring dreams? I know that in waking life we repeat many things throughout the week. So many days of our lives are on a cycle. And these repetitive experiences might echo that concept into the subconscious mind. Into the dreamer. But thinking of the map of dreams I feel recurring dreams can occur for other reasons.

Back many years ago when I worked a stable job, sometimes I'd take a bus much like the one I'm on now to my workplace. And of course the route the bus took was exactly the same each day, which made my experiences on that bus drive to work largely the same.

The same way you might take the same route to work each day could echo the neural processes that occur when dreaming. Or what I'm really trying to say is that we may have

recurring dreams because the chemical process and routes taken neurotically could be repeating, causing you to have a certain dream. If within our brains our memories are stored like a nostalgic city, it would make sense that whatever route our neurons take to execute that memory in dreams could be repeated, or recurred, just by replicating that route.

I feel in the city of my mind, there is a deserted military town that I go through some nights. And in traveling through this town, it gives me the military dreams. I couldn't tell you where in my brain that military town is located, but it is in there somewhere, and every time a neuron fires a round through that town, I know I will have flashes of when I was in the military.

With Kirby strapped to her chest we walked into the aquarium. Lynne could see from the very first sighting of the fish that Kirby was deeply curious and interested in the marine life. As we walked past some of the fish, he would sometimes turn his head wildly to observe a certain fish, and then turn the other way wildly, almost hitting Lynne's chin, to observe another fish. Sometimes he would laugh hysterically when he saw multiple fish, and he may have died right there of happiness when Lynne brought him to the glass so he could reach out his arm and almost touch them.

When Lynne stepped back from the glass Kirby became upset and for the first time babbled something. Other than crying or laughter he had never once attempted to say anything, and while he didn't speak anything intelligible, we could tell he was trying to speak like a human.

Lynne brought him back to the glass and he was content again, but I could also see a discomfort in Lynne's face. When I asked her about it she told me that her stump was bothering her. She was able to continue walking until she wasn't and needed to sit down. She felt as if she could not take another step because it was so sore. I asked her if I should get her a wheelchair. She hesitated and then eventually agreed.

I pushed her and Kirby throughout the aquarium and we saw many fish. Jewel tetras, golden shiners, silver dollars, rock beauties, pearl perches and queen parrotfish. The aquarium seemed to imitate the ocean very well, the only things missing must have been all the secrets hidden and lost within the oceans of our planet. These things, once they are lost, they will never be recovered.

Have you ever been lost in an underwater city in a dream? I'm not asking because I have, I'm just asking because I'm genuinely curious. How weird would a dream like that be? Trying to find your way probably through abandoned ruins. And then maybe you stumble across something that reminded you of someone you once knew in another life. I wonder if that something could be powerful enough to bring back old memories of them.

DAY #9

With music in our ears Lynne and I went running down the dirt-path that was behind the storage-shed. Her stump was feeling better and she didn't want to miss the afternoon-run we had planned after finding the trail. When the trail ended abruptly, she continued on and I was only a few meters behind her, copying her every decision. I run behind her mostly to keep an eye on her but it is really because I'm slower than she is.

Eventually her invisible trail ended at a lake where we both stopped. After we both take off our headphones, I tell her that I hoped she remembered the way back. She didn't answer and just sat down on the grass just before the lake. I didn't sit down but instead laid down on the grass our feet pointing in opposite directions and my head near her hip.

Often she would run her hand across my neck or my ear petting and rubbing it. And she stopped when she suddenly remembered a dream she had two days ago. It was in the afternoon which she deduced meant it was while taking a nap. And of course it was a picnic dream.

She had just finished picking eight apples who were of the colors red, green and yellow. Each of them had dirt on them so she was walking back somewhere, she couldn't tell where, to wash and clean and cut them. But while walking back to this somewhere, she suddenly became lost. Her memory was failing her and she could not remember how to get to where she was going to. Once darkness settled and she was still lost, she found herself walking on an abandoned superhighway. For some reason, the highway had a sidewalk on it which she walked on for miles. After hours of walking, a city began to take shape in the distance. And in checking on the apples, she looked down and noticed that while she had on her old prosthetic, it was designed florally with roses.

When we got up we began making our way back toward the dirt-path but we could never find it. Of course we found ourselves lost in the wooded area and I suspected something like this would happen the moment the trail ended. As we walked around in circles, my mind went in circles, too.

Have you ever felt like the more you learn about something, the less sense it makes? I have this feeling and this thought often when thinking about the universe and all there is to know about it. I feel like the more I learn about the universe or even this small little world, the more confusion I have or the less sense it makes to me. I also feel like this is a joke from God.

Let's say you were the God of this universe and you created something so intricate that you didn't want any of its subjects to ever figure out how it worked or how you made it, what would you do? What I would do personally is make it so that the more knowledge and intelligence a subject gains, the more complicated or complex the

universe becomes. The more knowledge they attain through study, the more confusing it should all become, until they get to the point that absolutely nothing makes sense or it seems like they continue to hit a dead end.

I think God's trick is the irony of consciousness. Humans as intelligent creatures have a brain that helps us reason, but our brain and reasoning itself are why the universe and life can be so confounding. We have this amazing organ that can dream up complex concepts, but the way it is programmed may also be why we as human beings have a penchant for making simple things unreasonably complex. The one thing that allows you to reason was perhaps created by God so that you would not reason well. If we think about actual life that does not have a brain, the universe is simple and clear to them. A virus, a plant, they don't make complex things out of what is actually simple. But we humans, we create religions, fantasies, art and stupid books that try to explain why we are so stupid.

I can see this affect in the natural world, too. You take a theoretical water balloon with unlimited elasticity, which is the total knowledge of the universe, and you fill it with water, which is the total knowledge of the human, and as the water balloon is filled with water it also expands. This would be a demonstration of the idea that as we gain knowledge about the universe, the universe also becomes more complex, and we can never know the total amount of knowledge available. This would also demonstrate that as the water falls out, so too does the complexity of the universe decrease.

I do wonder if we can have such a satisfactory amount of knowledge of the universe that one day we can solidly answer one of the old questions, but if water balloons are real, as we increase in intelligence, the way we perceive the universe will only become more complicated itself.

We don't find the trail back to the inn, but we did happen upon a large field with a big white house in the distance. The people there knew of the inn we spoke of and gave us a ride back to it.

DAY #10

Moments that impacted the world greatly are often recorded, whether in history books or documentaries. And with these moments in time, for example pandemics or wars, you can clearly see the large-scale impacts these events have on the world from the onset. But when we study these events and the events they lead to from a mathematical context, we might discover that the great places we have given to these great events are entirely subjective.

The spread of a virus is a good way to illustrate how one action can have a great reach

into the future, but what is the difference, really, between giving someone the flu or giving someone a dollar for a baseball card? The difference is causing a viral outbreak has very obvious and observable implications, whereas trading currency for an object has far lesser implications and to track it through fate might otherwise seem impossible; but tracking a virus to patient zero might seem far less intimidating.

This might suggest that all events, through the impassionate and objective eyes of the universe, and the chain of events that they produce, that they are all exactly equal in value. We may see the devastating effects from the decision to enter war, but a nameless person walking down a road has the same right to fundamentally changing the world.

Kirby was asleep by the late evening. Like some old married couple from a sitcom, Lynne and I laid on the bed in our room and watched a crime documentary on the television set before us.

The crime actually happened in this country, not too far from where we are now, back in the nineties and concerned royalty. A prince and a princess were found murdered but the crime was never solved.

As the documentary dragged on, I began thinking about Lynne's most recent picnic dream. I tried to go to sleep last night and force a picnic dream but of course that didn't work. If only there were ways to induce certain dreamlines. Maybe lucid dreaming has a way of making that work, but I doubt that. But wouldn't that be cool. Knowing every time you go to sleep you will leave where you left off just like in your actual reality.

A sudden lean forward by Lynne was accompanied with a sudden scream. I hadn't noticed that she had fallen asleep and just woke up from what I'm currently assuming was a nightmare. "What?," I grabbed her shoulder.

The nightmare indeed was caused by the documentary we were watching. She told me it took place decades ago and was about a royal murder. Everything else was a hazy memory to her, but what woke her up was being a witness to the murder.

When she saw the documentary was still on, she got up promptly to turn it off and then came back to bed. "Now I'm not going to be able to fall asleep," she cried.

Her dream made me wonder why the dreamworld can be so frightening to us even though it isn't real. It also makes me think; what is the real difference between a dream and a memory ten years removed?

Let's say you had a dream ten years ago. It was about meeting someone. And then let's say you have a real event ten years ago. It was about leaving someone. In ten years, both the dream and the event are stored simply as memories, so what is truly the difference between the two? I would say nothing really except one thing; the consequences of the event. The dream of meeting someone has no real consequence in your actual reality, while the event of leaving someone will affect you for the rest of your

life. It will affect this world and affect other people, whether this be ten years later or a thousand. In that respect, even though the dream and the event are only a memory with the same significance in your brain, in reality the event is still shaping reality. But other than that, when I think back on my dreams, they reside in the same city as the events of my past, and this must have been one of the reasons for my psychosis.

Chapter 65

HALLOWEEN 1950

3:2:7:65

Prince Kenneth addresses the media about the Mega Church scandal regarding his son. (1942)

THOSE who love to celebrate Halloween often do so because it is a night where they get to be something they are probably not. Secrets of the inner psyche are put on display, and tonight, everyone has a secret they are hiding.

Cassandra Flanagan, who three years ago used to be known as Cassandra Holiday before she wed Jeremy Flanagan, was walking from her home with her husband, of which was a modest home on an unmodest estate. They walked together to the grand castle, where tonight they were celebrating a jubilee on Halloween night.

Her costume was that of an angel dressed all in white with a golden halo above her head. And his costume was that of a demon dressed in the powerful colors of black and red.

When the pair got to the entrance of the castle, they noticed a banner hanging over the door welcoming celebration. It read “Happy Halloween!”

Jeremy squinted at the banner, more squinted at the word that was supposed to be the name of the holiday. “I don't think that's how you spell Halloween,” he suggested. When Cassandra heard this, she looked up from inside her purse to the banner, saying, “That is definitely not how you spell Halloween.”

At one of the bars in which was in close proximity to the party-goers sat Princess Brittney who was drinking alcohol, drinks that when consumed enough of was like an inducer of secrets. While the princess, who tonight was dressed to be Cinderella, was not at all drunk enough to spill unwarranted secrets, she did so anyway fully aware of its consequences.

“Have any of you the knowledge that Cassy lost her virginity at fifteen to some random strange older man?,” she said aloud to Wayne, Dorothy and Jeffrey. “Probably she is a whore,” Brittany said the final word louder than the rest. The three looked at eachother but didn't say a word. Wayne, who she had married three years earlier, knew why she spoke of such things and why she spoke of them in such ways. The princess was jealous of Cassandra, because Cassandra, who had her wedding to Jeremy not long after Brittany's to Wayne, was a far more exciting and memorable wedding day, and Brittany ought to thought that this was intentional on Cassandra's part. This was not known to Jeff and Dottie, who remained confused as to why she would say these things in this way.

“She's just drunk,” Wayne, costumed as a zombie, whispered to the two, who were costumed as a soldier and a witch.

All of a sudden they were joined by Sabrina who came to them in the guise of a black cat. She greeted them all but greeted Dorothy most highly because many years ago Douglas had made advances toward her but Princess Dottie refused them. And it went without saying that while Sabby and Dougy were still married, they were essentially separated.

Sabrina did not join them to stay as she grabbed Princess Dorothy and the witch and the black cat walked away from the party and into one of the private rooms in the castle. It was no surprise that the two were soon to engage in gossip, and it was no surprise that people celebrate everything because they have nothing else to do.

“I didn't want to say this in front of the others, but apparently there are rumors going around that my sister has had a recent psyche evaluation and the diagnosis was not good,” Sabrina said of the queen. “Do you mean, like, what happened to Hillary?,” Dottie asked. “No, no,” Sabrina said of the deceased, “I mean, like, she might be deranged.” A sight of shock grew on Dottie's face as she took in the information.

A moment passed. “...Guess what I just found out?,” Dorothy said smiling. “What?,” Sabrina inched closer. “Cassy is a whore and she lost her virginity to some strange old man when she was only fifteen, she didn't lose it to Jerm!” Sabrina was shocked. All this time she had thought Cassandra was literally an innocent little angel.

Entering the party hall, Cassandra and Jeremy continued their walk deeper into the castle so that they could join the others in celebration. As they walked, Jeremy began to speak, “And now I walk upon the land,” he joked and his wife laughed.

When they reached the others, Jeremy saw his brother, Jeffrey, drinking at a bar. He walked to him and greeted him, and his brother greeted him back, not knowing that it was his own brother who betrayed him many years ago and broke the news that Jeffrey was having an affair with Karen Gray, the wife of one of the most successful pastors in the history of the land. The scandal made worldwide international news and for a brief period brought shame to not only Jeff but to the Flanagan's as a whole, but there is no amount of money that can't refurbish a tarnished reputation.

Before the brothers could depart, along came their father, Prince Kenneth, dressed as a football player, who harbored one of the worst secrets in the castle. After the scandal, he was so wrought with shame that he attempted to have his son killed. The attempt on his son's life was a failure, and after the failure Ken was so afraid of being found out that he called it off and never spoke of it again. But still, every day and every time he sees his son, he feels nothing but shame and regret for having brought him into the world.

Donna, dressed to be a man in a suit with a fake beard and mustache, was told by a service staff member to see Donald outside. When she found him, still wearing the hockey mask he had tossed on because he nearly forgot about the fact that it was

Halloween, he pointed to the banner and she read the words. "That's not how you spell Halloween," she suggested. And the two went inside immediately to find the imbecile who was not familiar with the English language. When they did, they were just as immediately fired and told to pack their belongings and to not still be at the residence by the time the festivities were over. And yet, Donald would have never been hired if it was known he had past ties to racist organizations and Donna should have been fired on the spot if anyone ever found out she slept with Kenneth and had his son while Hillary was still alive and in her final years.

Back in the party hall the music was loud as ever as the hired band played their rock and roll, a relatively new sound to a relatively old spirit. And just past the party hall was a large extravagant bathroom on the first floor that at present was the location of Spencer, the king and queen's youngest son who was dressed as a cowboy, Vivian, Sabrina and Douglas's youngest daughter who was dressed as Bloody Mary, and Shelly, Aubry and Alex's first and only child who was a decade old and dressed as a princess.

Every person born into this world has won a lottery, and though the prize may vary from family to family, these three children have won the jackpot of all jackpots. Born into royalty, their past is unblemished and their future cannot be stained. But to all ticket holders, though you did not purchase your ticket, you will be the one to scratch it.

Spencer in his cowboy costume was not entirely interested in what the girls were doing; that was tempting fate in front of the bathroom window that looked out into a great and wonderful field of nature. In the darkness before them, Vivian recited facts of Bloody Mary that were told to her would reveal the face of her future husband. When this did nothing, she wondered if she was doing something incorrectly. Nevertheless, she gave up trying and began to speak to Shelly of what she envisioned her future husband to be. Tall, powerful, handsome and adventurous, but strange, exactly like her crush, Jeffrey Flanagan, who each time she has observed she has fallen deeper into love with.

The man who was opposite the attraction to her was her father, Douglas, who arrived at the celebration late and alone, dressed as a hotdog because he could not find any of his other costumes. And Doug, who more or less had fallen out of favor with most of the family members saw another pair of disliked family members and joined them at their table.

After greeting them, Oliver and Reagan, dressed as Superman and Superwoman, invited him to sit down and have something to eat. They talked much of meaningless things, but as Reagan watched her queen daughter, dressed as a pharaoh, dance on the floor with her husband, dressed as a jester, she thought of nearly half a century ago when she contemplated aborting Brigid because Oliver was not her biological father.

When meaningless conversation was not enough, Douglas left the table and the

married pair went on to discuss a rumor that Reagan had only recently become privy to. “Did you know that Cassandra lost her virginity to some strange older homeless man?” Reagan asked Oliver. Oliver was shocked. “She is an ignorant young woman. She is young, yes, but I was young once too and I have never been that ignorant,” Reagan finished.

Just past the music of the band were Prince Brian II and his wife Princess Leah. The prince was dressed as a masked thief in all black who also carried a fake firearm, and the princess a very generalized ghost in white. They were playing poker with Princess Aubry and her artist husband Alex, of whom were dressed as a woman in a flapper dress with a cigarette and a vampire, respectively. The secrets harbored by these four were as follows: one had six toes, one was engaged in an affair with Fiona Walsh, one had raped a woman in the past but it would eventually come to light, and one had become bitter at Brittany because she was young and beautiful and had taken her place as the female face of the family.

In the final round of this game, Brian II and Aubry had folded and all of the cards were on the table. Despite the vast riches between the four, like their lives nothing was at stake. When Leah placed down a pocket pair of diamond and heart kings, which matched a spade king on the table, this gave her a three of a kind. This rattled Alex who believed beforehand he had had the game won with his own hand. He slammed down his club queen, which matched a pair of spade and heart queens on the table. “You’re cheating,” Brian II said to Leah, “I just don’t know how.”

As Brian II’s face shifted in direction, he caught sight of Fiona Walsh, the family’s nurse of the last two years, and found her to be staring at his mother, Queen Brigid.

Fiona rose out of her seat and walked toward the dancing pharaoh who seemed to be getting more and more tired as the night went on and asked her if she took her medication for her recent psyche diagnosis. When the queen said no, Fiona took her by the arm and brought her into a private room where she made sure the queen took her medicine.

Two years ago, Fey was hired by the queen to take over nursing duties, but the queen soon turned her into a type of spy that would divulge any secrets to her should they seem important. Among the secrets were the facts that King Brian had fallen for a scam in 1947; Sabrina and Douglas had a sexless marriage which found the pair emotionally cheating on each other; Dorothy, lacking anything that resembled a love life, had recently struck up a friendship with a male pen-pal and was telling all of the family secrets to him; Wayne’s hair, despite his young age, was turning gray and he opted to color it to hide the fact; and Cassandra did in fact lose her virginity at a young age but lied to Jeremy and told him he was her first.

Despite all these secrets, Fiona failed to disclose her own secret to the queen, which

was the affair she was having with her son. And though Brigid knew of this, she said nothing of the matter, as she was not at all satisfied with the character of Leah and knew that should she become queen some day, she would be terribly difficult to control.

Back in the presence of the rock and roll music being played sat now a lone Aubry who gazed at Brittany with intense scrutiny. Aubry felt that Brittany had taken everything important from her. She was once the star of the show, but she had been married for so long now that the lines on her face were beginning to show. And though Brittany was now the center of attention when it came to family matters being presented to the public, as she was now the one who addressed the media and did media events, Aubry knew that she must have been a liar, just as she herself was when she was the window into the family's soul.

Seated at one of the bars now and commenting on the current song being played were decent friends Wayne and Jeremy. They spoke about many things, including a new song that was released by a band they both admired. But this decent friendship, in a moment, was to be broken. Not by the two men, but by their wives.

“Why are you going around spreading rumors about me!?,” Cassandra shouted at Brittany. Aubry's eyes who were already on Brittany widened.

Brittany got up out of her seat and took defense at the situation. “What are you talking about?,” she asked Cassy. “I'm not stupid! I know you resent me because I had the bigger and better and more beautiful wedding!” “You did not!,” Brittany had never been more offended in her life, and this was when the yelling was so loud that even the band's music began to become more disorganized until it slowed to a crawl.

Everyone was now attentive of the quarrel, but no one interfered because this was a sighting three years in the making that everyone felt was coming soon.

There was a moment when both Wayne and Jeremy began walking to stop the argument, but in their tracks they were stopped by King Brian, who told them if they didn't settle their dispute now, then it would continue like a cancer in the family.

And so no one interfered. And when no one came to stop the two women, it escalated into violence. Cassy picked up an apple from the table and threw it at Brittany, the apple smacking her square in the forehead and making a thud sound. A shocked Brittany ran toward Cassy and tackled her to the ground as the crowd, even the band, watched on in semi-terror.

The entire fight was like two wild animals lacking any consciousness. It moved around all along the party hall, included various pseudo-weapons such as chairs and tables, and was filled with grunts and screams. At one moment, Brittany had a clump of blonde hair in one hand, and at another, Cassandra a clump of brunette hair in her own. Deep scratches left behind bloodtrails. Both of their dresses torn though neither of them

ever becoming totally indecent. And at the end of it all, as both lay practically dead on the tiled floor, they were both defeated. The cancer would not stop as the king suggested, it would only grow between the two and infect the future of the family.

People who have not a thing to contribute to the discourse will always affirm what you already believe to be true. If you agreed with them beforehand, you will agree with them even more afterwards. If you disagreed with them beforehand, you will disagree with them even more afterwards. People who truly add to the discourse will offer you a new insight or a new way of seeing something you thought you saw so well. But Halloween in 1950 for the Flanagans was a day where no one contributed anything but rumors, secrets, and feverishly bad opinions.

Princess Dorothy prepares an intimate letter detailing family secrets to Sebastian Conway. (1948)

Chapter 66

SEASON 8: EPISODE 3

3:2:7:66

DAY #11

THE evening before, I had a dream. It was one of those dreams that you are not a part of but are given direct view of the events. The event I witnessed was that of the archangel Michael, in Hell, setting up a boulder to block an entrance. I believe prior to this, there were souls that ventured out to upper levels, eventually escaping Hell and returning to the world of the living as spirits. This made me wonder how sophisticated God was in his designs, if he was sophisticated at all.

A set of simple rules can create a complex system. The popular game GO has rules that are easy to understand, and yet there are 10^{360} possible moves. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet but we have a book as big as the dictionary and a language as confusing as politics. And what can these two examples of thought tell us about God and creation? Well, we as human beings have this notion and misconception that the creator of a system is always more complex, or at least equally complex, as the system itself, but the system is never more complex than the creator. And as we study these systems that seem to have an ability to grow drastically in complexity based on its initial components, we find that to be the case less and less, which leads us to the idea of God and creation.

The question is simple, yet the implications complex; did God create a universe that became more complex than he himself?

There would be so much to discuss if this were true, but I will only engage in a few. Foremost, this would excuse God as a God. He would no longer be regarded as omnipotent, and as such, would no longer be culpable for all the ills of the world. He very well may be unable to affect the universe, and may not even understand the universe if it is too complex and above his understanding. His inability to affect the universe or even reveal himself to us would make more sense if God is not even, in an intelligent sense, aware of the consequences of his "simple rules."

So many old questions become easily answered when one goes against the notion that God is above us in every measure. God may be no more than the equivalent of a 20-billion year old fly in space whose one minor movement was the catalyst of a grand design... And how can you blame a fly for not understanding our concepts of good and evil...

Once the boulder was put in place, no other souls ever found their way out to the upper levels of Hell. Soon after, the angel went to a higher level and began working on a bridge that would lead to a stone door.

Inside our room at the inn there is a balcony with a small table and chairs. I guess technically, that's not inside. But Lynne and I and Kirby, who was sitting on her lap, were outside sitting on the balcony. Kirby was now able to hold his own head up and every once and while babbled something at Lynne.

Looking at the evening sky filled with clouds, I pointed behind Lynne and said "angel wings." She turned around with Kirby and they both looked up at the orange sky.

"Not bad. I'll give you eight points," she said. I continued to look around as I was currently losing, but she suddenly pointed to her right and said "microphone." When I saw it, I agreed that it did really look like a microphone and awarded her nine points. Looking around still, I saw behind me something that looked like a woman's one-piece bathing suit. Apparently she didn't think so as she only gave me three points for it.

A long while went by before either of us saw anything, and as the night grew darker the clouds looked less and less like things until they disappeared completely and revealed the stars in the night.

The fact that the area we were in now had very little light pollution allowed us to continue this sky game, but I know if we were back home it would have ended because there is so much light pollution in San Rashida.

"Cigarette," she pointed toward the sky. I looked in the direction she pointed and I couldn't make out any stars that seemed to form something that looked like a cigarette. She continued to guide me until I found a string of stars in a straight line. I looked at her. "How is that a cigarette?," I asked. She tried to explain, but it was not a satisfactory explanation, so I awarded her one point for her efforts.

We looked and looked into the dark sky trying to see things that weren't really there until finally I came across a constellation that looked like a heart. This sudden realization made me remember a dream I had a few nights ago, where I had set out on a journey through the wilderness to find Lynne's beauty. And I remembered that it connected to a dream I had years ago, where I had found it in the guise of purple light, and after putting the light in a container I traveled out of the wilderness and brought it to a safe place.

I almost didn't even want to point out the heart in the night sky. But I was only down a few points and if I didn't, she would eventually see it anyway and my reluctance would be futile. I didn't really want to point it out because I knew she would become excited about it and think it was some kind of sign or something divine.

One thing I know about Lynne is that if she buys herself something, like jewelry or flowers or something romantic, that's one thing, but if I buy her something, especially jewelry or flowers or anything romantic, she will want to be buried with it. I know that if she finds the heart, she will be ecstatic, but if I'm the one who finds it, it's something she will bring up for years to come.

I pointed in the direction of the constellation and said “heart,” and when she looked that way she couldn't find it. I saw her eyes looking all over that direction and I kept giving her directions to find it but she couldn't. It was strange, because it was so obvious to me but she had trouble seeing it. Literally ten minutes must have gone by and still nothing, so I went inside the room to use the bathroom. When I came out, it almost looked like she gave up trying. When I looked where I knew it to be, I didn't see it any longer, but it couldn't have rotated out of the night sky so soon.

She continued looking, and about a minute later I knew she found it when the adrenaline coursed through her veins. She was so excited about it I know because of the analysis I just gave you; her romantic brain fooled itself into believing I had found it just for her and it was a sign from the heavens that our love for each other was divine.

“You get eleven points!,” she said. I looked at the paper and realized that gaining eleven points would mean I would be winning by one. “The maximum is ten,” I told her. “And I'm giving you eleven.” “Are you sure?” “Positive.” “Then I'm winning.” “Good for you,” she didn't care about losing.

I asked her where she saw it and she pointed, but in looking I couldn't find it. I looked for at least a minute before I gave up trying, and I wondered if she saw the same heart that I did.

DAY #12

Kirby fell asleep in her arms at midnight and she went to lay him to rest. After, the both of us also laid in bed to sleep. I guess I wasn't tired because I couldn't fall asleep. After a moment I took hold of my cellular device and turned it on to see what time it was. It was one a.m., and in looking at the screen, I saw an ant beginning to walk across it. I shook it off onto the floor but didn't kill it. Turning off the phone, I wondered where the ant would have gone had I decided to do it harm. I wondered if ants themselves wondered of afterlives. Probably, they don't, but you have to ponder; if an ant continually saw other ants disappear, would that cause questions to form in its mind? Questions that would meditate on death and the afterlife?

If there was an ant colony and we followed around an ant named Rustin, and Rustin was an extremely healthy ant who worked tasks for the colony that required one partner ant, and every couple days his partner ant would disappear and be replaced with a new partner ant, what reflections would Rustin begin to have?

For full disclosure, these partner ants are actually dying, not just disappearing, but Rustin does not know this because Rustin has no concept of death. When the first partner ant is replaced, Rustin may not think anything of it. When the second is replaced, perhaps

still nothing. But I would bet something would click in Rustin's mind about the constant replacement of his partners. Again, Rustin would not form a concept of death in his mind, and he would also not have a concept of life in his mind either; instead what if Rustin formed the concept of perspective in his mind?

He might think to himself, "All of my partner ants keep disappearing. But what if to them, I am the one who is disappearing?"

If I was the ant Rustin I would begin to monitor my environment to see if anything changes or if anything is replaced when one of my partner ants are replaced. If I saw changes or other things being replaced, that might tell me that I am the one who is actually moving and they may not be.

Lynne suddenly rolled over toward me and positioned her body partially onto mine and I could feel her stump against my calf. For a moment I lost track of my thoughts but began again.

While the ant perhaps would not form the concept of death, it may form the concept of perspective, and through its understanding of work and teamwork, it may begin to assume that maybe the disappearing ants have been given new tasks. And through this understanding, it might reason that "death" is being given a new or different task.

To put this in another perspective we could use another form of life. Say there was a deer, too named Rustin, who could feel fear and its family and friends were often attacked by wolves. Though often attacked, the deer Rustin has never actually seen a wolf kill one of its friends, it only knows that after the chase, one of its friends or family always seems to be missing. This deer, which understands a part of living is about survival, will begin to understand "death" in the context of survival the same way the ant understood "death" in the context of work and being given a new job. The deer, who sees that one of them is missing, may begin to associate death as some kind of failure. And in reasoning that death is failure, it may reason that being alive is success.

As human beings we can appreciate both of these viewpoints; we equate life to success because we assume humans have purpose, and to die and never realize that purpose would be failing. And even as humans, some of us believe that when we die we go elsewhere for a new purpose or a new task.

So that makes me wonder, what thoughts would a human being named Rustin have on death and the afterlife. While we don't know what an ant or a deer actually thinks about death, we do know what humans think about death, and can inversely understand humanity through understanding this.

If an ant understands its existence through hard work and sees death as a new task, and a deer understands its existence through survival and sees death as failure, I believe, based on the overwhelming evidence that human beings have moral-associated thoughts

on death and the afterlife, that a human understands its existence through morality and sees death as the day of their judgment of the way they lived their life.

In this matter there are always two sides and these two sides can give us an insight as to how humans further understand death and the afterlife. Anyone on Earth, when asked of death and the afterlife, will tend to have views that agree with theism or atheism. Because we have created this worldview through a lens of morality, we have also created a group of minds who at their core believe that the universe is incapable of being morally subjective, and we have created a group of minds that believe that the universe is capable of being morally subjective. And because of these two groups, there is a third group; those who have seen evil people punished and good people rewarded, but have also seen evil people go unpunished and good people unrewarded, and so they are caught between theism and atheism.

I wonder. Far down the road when humanity is further evolved and there is little religion and spirituality, when perhaps morality is no more, through what lens will we choose to see death and the afterlife?

DAY #13

Near the end of the second week in this country, Lynne signed us all up to ride horses in the countryside but at the final moment Dave and Sara pulled out, citing they believed they were in the beginning of contracting a cold. Lynne and I were both suspicious but simply went on without them as they watched over Mordecai.

When we got to the farm we were directed to the horses and the instructor. We signed some papers and then were asked if we were riding solo or together. Lynne asked the instructor if it was safe to ride together and said that it wouldn't be a problem as long as we had one of their more experienced horses.

The instructor went over some basic information and then showed us the way to the horses and then to our horse, who was named Heartbreaker. "Why's that their name?," Lynne asked. "Couples who ride this horse always break up exactly one year after," the instructor said with a smile. We've known this guy for half of an hour and he's already making jokes.

After I got on the front-saddle, Lynne got onto the back-saddle and we rode out onto the trail following the instructor. I feel sorry for these horses, they have to ferry dumbass humans for entertainment's sake.

Five minutes into the ride Lynne moved closer to me and hugged my body, wrapping her arms around me. Her style is new, but the personality is the same.

In the sky above and before us there is one big dot. When the day begins it tends to be

yellow, and when the day ends it tends to be white. But at the time now in the evening it is orange. Often white smoke passes through it and causes shadows on the land beneath us. Giant plants that stand one hundred feet tall turn from green and brown to darker shades of green and brown. Where we come from, in the beginning of the year the flags do not exist. Then suddenly they return and retain that green. Like the dot above them they too change colors; green then red then yellow then brown, and like the dot above them these colors are dictated by the times. Below us are the blades that make the fields. And I'm sure somewhere near there is a cup of water that houses life.

After the horse ride, Lynne and I got off Heartbreaker and then made our way out of the farm. A break up is difficult because human beings subconsciously project their future on various levels. Imagine getting married, and your projection is that you will know this person for the rest of your life. And then suddenly it changes and your projection was wrong. What is most jarring about the whole situation is not necessarily the break-up itself, but the act of subconsciously creating a new projection in an instant. What is so painful is the process of creating that projection subconsciously and knowing that person is not in your new projection. The uncertainty and the silhouette of the new projection is so infantile and mysterious compared to the old projection that was at least in its adolescence and had a more definite form. And depending on the amount of difference in the old projection and the new projection surely is the weight of that distress.

This reminds me of a dream I have written down. It was what some might call a visitation dream. In the dream I was a detective for a small city. I was assigned a murder. And then I was assigned another murder that appeared to have the same M.O. When it happened one more time, we understood we had a serial killer on our hands. The method of killing was similar to reports I had been reading about that occurred in a major city. Using the information that January Levinson and Jeremy Watson had provided, I found myself searching for two suspects.

Further information lead me to believe that these two individuals were attendees of a particular mosque, but when I found the mosque I also found that it was abandoned and hadn't been used in months due to arson.

Still, I walked inside to see the mess. As I went to leave, that was when I heard the voice of the dead. January, who I knew to be deceased but official reports said was only missing, gave me some clarity. She told me that my two suspects were innocent of the murders and that it was no longer two men and that Sid had been murdered by his accomplice. Because she was killed shortly prior to Sid, she was unable to update the details.

When I left the mosque I was not happy. I had spent countless days and nights

building a profile on the two men only to find they were innocent, and now I had to start again from the beginning.

DAY #14

David and Sara were indeed sick. For the entire day they quarantined within their room as to not pass on what they had to the three of us, especially Kirby. In the evening lunch was brought to our room but Lynne and Kirby don't eat until she is done giving him a bath. Already today Kirby has vomited on Lynne and has defecated something liquidy on the floor which, because I was already feeling sorry for her, I cleaned up. We don't think he has the same cold the kids have, this is just what he does.

Eating what they gave me, I separated the foods into groups, which is something I always do with my plate of food. And as I ate, I looked around the room and noticed how there too, things were grouped. All of the clothes were in a closet. All of the garbage in a garbage can. Downstairs all of the food must have been in one kitchen, and outside all of the trees must have been in one wood. I looked out the window near the balcony and thought, all of the clouds must have been in one sky.

One of the concept dreams I've had deals with groups. Somehow I am able to travel back in time, and when I go back in time I go with the knowledge of the outcomes of hundreds of bets. I go back to a day where I am able to win the most money and I place a large sum of money on the winner. I win one of the biggest jackpots in the history of the country, and my greed causes me to wait for later days where I too know the outcomes of later bets. But I find that for many of the bets of the later days, the outcomes have changed and are not what I knew them to be. This makes me wonder if my going back in time to alter the data about one bet, that is the earnings it gave out, could affect all of the future bets I thought I could have won.

Did you know that it is possible to have four unique solutions in a beaker that don't mix? They will stay separate from each other, mixing only with their own type or group, creating layers you can see with the naked eye.

If there is precedence for this type of grouping, and I can see the same type of organization in this room and in the inn itself and even in nature outside, it makes me wonder if the universe also groups events.

I changed some of the information about a bet, and this seemed to affect many of the other bets after it, so much so that I could not earn another penny. And though the bets changed outcomes, not much of that universe's story changed much. Things outside of the bets remained largely the same. Yes, I know it's a dream and it's not based on the reality of physics, but it's given me pause and made me think of something.

What if events and their outcomes have a selective impact? If you go back in time and murder a person or cause a person to be born, of course this will impact many other things, but what if it specifically impacts who can be born and who will die? If you change whether someone got sick or not, would it mostly impact future sicknesses and not so much anything else? If you stopped a book from being written, would it impact only what books are written in the future? And last, but not least, if you changed the outcome of a soccer match, will it only affect other soccer matches or will it affect all sports?

At the same time I was done eating Lynne and Kirby came out of the bathroom. As they came toward me they saw that I was watching a documentary that detailed a group of wars that were a direct result of the Vietnam war.

She sat down at the table and also placed Kirby in his seat, where after they began to eat. After a while and after gaining Kirby's attention, she pointed at me. "Can you say papa?," she said to Kirby. He just stared at her and didn't say a word. "Look," she pointed at me again, and then asked the question again but received no answer. Then she pointed at herself, "Maamaa," she said again and again but Kirby never said it.

I know that she's not delusional and I know that she doesn't actually think that she is Kirby's mother, but honestly, I don't know sometimes.

"I don't know if it's a good idea to be doing that," I told her. She looked at me briefly and then went back to Kirby. "You're not his mom, Lynne." Didn't bother to look at me or say anything.

I got up after and began walking toward the bed. "Where are you going?," she finally said something. "Papa's going to sleep."

Telling people you love them while you're both alive. That's a good thing. But I think it's always better to show them. Then you don't have to say it constantly. And if you die abruptly, it's not an issue because they knew; and if they die abruptly, it's not an issue because you know they knew.

DAY #15

The kids were finally better and in the afternoon we went a block over to the local pool. There were a bunch of people there of all ages and even some of the patrons from our Inn were there. In particular, the girl who sat across David at the dinner was there and the two of them were part of the group of kids who were playing pool games, and I could tell Dave and the girl were becoming friendly.

Sara too was part of the group of kids playing the pool games, but there was no indication to me that she liked any of the boys.

At the other end of the pool where there were less young people was Lynne and Kirby. Kirby was sitting on some kind of balloon animal wearing a flotation device and Lynne was wearing a checkered swimdress. Directly in front of them but out of the pool and on a couple pool chairs sat a decidedly younger woman and a definitely older man. They too were staying at the inn but I never saw them much. I saw Lynne glance at the pair a few times, and I wondered what she thought of the large age gap of the pair.

There is no age gap between Lynne and I, so anyone looking at us wouldn't look too long, but I suppose the man on the pool chair might look at me and wonder, if it wasn't because I chose her in my younger age, why would I have chosen her in my older age?

It's no secret that a relationship with the female variety presents its challenges. Whether the female is younger or older, there will be trials. And while the trials with a younger woman has its own challenges, there is nothing like the challenge of the older woman.

The man on the pool chair, I have no opinion or judgment of him. Whenever I play video games with David, I choose the normal difficulty, and if it's not the normal difficulty I choose then it's the easy difficulty. So the man with the younger woman who he can probably easily manipulate and easily charm, I have nothing against him.

That being said, I feel that conquering the challenges of a more difficult woman, at least in my experiences with Lynne, is more rewarding. If you can conquer a difficult woman, she will give you more, and in conquering her challenges you would yourself set challenges for her to meet and conquer as well.

Lynne has and can be difficult, but I know that deep down inside, she is a woman who actually wants to be conquered. And if women are like her in general, they want to follow and be lead. The greatest return of conquering a difficult older woman is not just the woman herself, but the lieutenant she will be for you in your life. With her experience, which of course came to be because of her challenging nature, you won't feel like you have to carry the weight of the whole damn world on your shoulders.

A minute ago all of the kids were done playing and exited the pool. Sara and Dave took Kirby at Lynne's request back to the inn, and currently Lynne had her hands on the ground and was lifting herself out of the pool while looking at me.

She walked up to me in the wet swimdress never giving up eye contact. "Wassup LT you ready to go home?," I asked her. She was confused, "Wouldn't it be 'LS' or 'LH'?", she asked. Nevertheless she sat down on the same pool chair I was sitting on and said, "Nah, I'm finna wait till everyone leaves so you will come into the pool with me."

And so when the night had completely fallen and there were no more people around us save the Moon and her clouds and stars, Lynne got up so I would plunge into the pool with her. Seeing her in the swimdress, really I only wanted to plunge into her.

The water was colder than I thought it'd be but I warmed up to it quickly. "When do you think the pool closes?" "When someone kicks us out."

We were at first in the shallow end, so shallow that even Lynne's feet could touch the bottom while keeping her head above water, but soon she swam away to the deep end where I followed her. She swims to a wall and puts her hand on the ledge and puts one of her legs, still underwater, in a position to push herself deeply into the waters. She also starts to make little movements, as if she is going to push herself, then doesn't push herself, then fakes a push again. I tried to pull myself through the water quickly at her but by the time I got to where she was, she had expelled herself into the middle of the deep end.

When I swim toward her, she swims away. There were several times when I missed her by mere inches, but as long as I was fighting her above water, I wouldn't be able to catch her.

I looked at her one final time, then slowly sunk underwater. Since it was so dark out and there was little light in and out of the pool, it would be more difficult for her to see where I was in the dark and deep waters.

Underwater, I could see her legs turning around in many angles, and after a moment she started to paddle to different places. Like some kind of wild animal, I could smell the fear in her heart and in her mind.

When I was younger I used to have these recurring dreams, or maybe I should say nightmares, that used to trouble me. I'm at a funeral for someone, and knowing that I am sitting in the front row, I assume it must have been for an immediate family member. The thing that terrified me wasn't the concept of death or the dead body before me, but was something that was in being alive and in the living. I had always feared funerals because I was a person who was incapable of displaying feeling or emotion even if I felt them, and so I believed at one funeral or another I would be called out by the others in the funeral for being an animal or inhuman.

This is a worry that as far as I can tell has left me. If someone thinks I am inhuman, or cold, or detached, then so be it. The only opinion that matters to me is Lynne's, and I have found in a great irony that this is a quality that Lynne prefers in me because she is the complete opposite. It's one of those challenges I spoke of earlier; being such an emotional person, when she is overwhelmed she has me to bother.

When she could no longer take the tension she began swimming for the ladder to escape the pool entirely. Because she is a cripple, I didn't want to attempt grabbing her and then have her fall and crack her head on the hard ground below, so I lunged out of the pool beside her and the ladder and pulled myself out of the pool. I heard her scream, perhaps even of real terror, and chased her as she tried to run away. I finally caught her

and grabbed her from behind, picking her up and bringing her back toward the pool. Kicking but not screaming, she accidentally kicked off her prosthetic, and as I plunged back into the pool with her I caught sight of the prosthetic foot on the ground. Anyone passing by would have thought that there was an actual shark attack.

She tried to free herself from me but she couldn't. When she gave up she finally turned around and looked at me, claiming that she had actually let me catch her.

Our arms around us we found each other in the shallow end again. The waters moved us back and forth very slowly and there were sounds of the ocean in our ears. Waters like these are the type you could fall asleep in if you're not careful.

After a moment I found her looking into me, and she leaned forward and gently kissed me. When she was done she looked at her mangled foot on the ground above us, and then told me something I had already known. "I take my dog mad and my wolf lone."

DAY #16

I got out of the vehicle before Lynne and ran around the car to her side. After I opened the door for her, she walked out and looked over the gigantic mall before her. I waved off the driver and he was gone.

I walked quickly ahead of her and reached the mall door first, where after I held it open for her she walked through it in the Fahrenheit of ninety-nine degrees. When she reached the next door, the one that would actually lead into the mall, she waited in front of it, looking at her nails and saying "I need to get my nails done first."

I opened the second door for her and we found the beauty parlor on the second floor after I asked for directions. I went inside and sat in a waiting area and watched her as a woman began preparations for serving her her manicure.

After much time, her nails were done and she called me over to look at them. I saw that on her now 2.5 centimeter-long fingernails the woman had designed little icons of clouds and stars.

"Look! It's like that game we played Spookie! Remember? When you saw the heart in the sky and then I saw it too! It was like the stars aligned just for us! They're my favorite nails ever! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, of course."

I went back to sit in the waiting area as she got half-off on a pedicure, the woman's gift. I saw that from her purse she took out her flowerbook and handed it to the woman. After her feet were serviced, she called me over to look at them, and I saw that she had some of the flower designs she had created were now on her toenails.

"See? She painted some of my drawings on my big toes! Both toes have a different flower I made! I like this one the best! And I like that one second-best! Wait, no! I

change my mind, I like this one the best! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, of course."

The final service to be done in the beauty parlor was the service of her hair. I went back and waited, and when she was done, she called me over to see. I saw that she had styled it and she looked a bit different. Holding up the mirror, she said many things.

"Wow! I love it! It makes me look and feel so feminine! Not that I didn't look and feel feminine before, but it's like a whole new me! It's so wonderful! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, very pretty."

Finally we left the beauty parlor and stood at its entrance. "Now I need to shop for some new clothes."

We saw that there was a clothing store right next door and we entered into it. I follow Lynne around as she browses the various articles of clothing. Finally she chose one and then went into a fitting area where she could try it on, and I waited again for her in a waiting area near it. When she came out, she looked like an innocent but dangerous escort.

"Spookie! What do you think? I think it looks wonderful! It looks sweet and innocent but it also makes me look like I have a wild dark side! Like you can't tell if I want marriage or if I'm promiscuous! I feel so cool! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, of course."

She gave me the clothes after taking it off and I went to the front counter to purchase it, and I carrying her purchase bag, we exited the clothing store and entered another.

She browsed around the store as I followed and watched, and soon she chose some clothes and went into a fitting area.

When she came out it was in a swimsuit that was a one-piece and she looked like a beach babe ready again for the waters.

"I found a new swimsuit! I can wear it when we go to the beach next week! Oh I can't wait! It's going to be so much fun and it fits me so well! I already feel like a mermaid! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, of course."

I now had two shopping bags and it wasn't long until I followed her into the next store. There she browsed again until she found something she might buy.

When she exited the fitting area, she came out in clothes that made her look like a mother who played 1950s rock and roll while she cleaned the house.

"Oh my God! Look at me! Don't I look like a cool mom! I love these vibes! I feel so old-school but at the same time I feel like this look is totally in! Do you think it's pretty???" "Yes, Lashes, of course."

When we left that store I now had three shopping bags to carry into the next one. And this time, when she came out of the fitting area, she looked like a princess from a

conservative royal family.

“This. Is. So. Fabulous! I have been looking for something like this for years! It just brings out my elegance! My little heart is so happy right now! I can't wait to wear this on one of our nights out my love! Do you think it's pretty???” “Yes, Lashes, of course.”

I was carrying four shopping bags when we entered the next store, and I wondered what she was going to try out next. When she came out, she literally looked like a teenage girl.

“I know this exposes my belly button, but I feel so girly! I feel so young and ditzzy! Anything could happen! I have my whole life ahead of me and nothing's going to slow me down! Do you think it's pretty???” “Yes, Lashes, of course.”

With five bags in my hands, the next one would probably be hanging off my arm. We walked into another store and soon she came out in something that looked gothic.

“We have all been sentenced to death from the moment we are born. It is a sentence so callous as to defy the existence of a loving God, but alas we must fight through the darkness to reach the light. I wear this in symbolization of this great battle. Do you think it's pretty?” “Yes, Lashes, I think.”

With six bags I indeed began carrying some of them on my arms as we entered the next store, where soon she came out of the fitting room and looked like a girly bimbo all in pink.

“Darkness out, barbie in! I feel so stylish! I feel like a celebrity! I love pink so much and I could wear it all day and every day! Oh my God I want to be buried in this! Who do I have to talk to to make that happen? The government? So, so pretty! Do you think it's pretty???” “Yes, Lashes, so pretty.”

Seven bags now, and between the beauty parlor and all these stores she was costing me a pretty penny, but nevertheless we walked into the next store. This time, she came out looking like a disco queen.

“Check out these moves! If we were back in the seventies I would own the dance floor with my moves and this super cute look! What an era! Watch out world, here comes the disco queen! Do you think it's pretty???” “Yes, Lashes, of course.”

Adding the eighth bag to my arm took a lot of work, but I followed her into the next store, where after she was done dressing, she called me into the fitting room and she whispered in my ear while looking like a prostitute on the street corner.

“Hey boy... I love this one... It makes me feel sexy. So sexy. I don't have much to say about this one because I think it speaks for itself, doesn't it? I think it tells you exactly how I like it, exactly how I want it. Oh, boy, what I want you to do to me. Do you think it's sexy?” “Yes, Lashes, very sexy.”

I now had nine bags and we were on our way to the next store, where after she came

out and looked like a professional woman moving up the ladder.

“Mr. Julien, did you finish the report for our Tokyo account? No? Well, I guess that means you're going to be working hard late with me tonight, huh? Don't worry, once you're done working come on over to my office and we can play... Do you think I look bossy?” “Yes, Lashes, maybe too bossy.”

Ten bags decorated my arms and I could barely carry them all, but nevertheless I did. She was finally done shopping and I followed her toward the exit of the mall carrying all of her bags. When she got to the exit door, she stood there, waiting for me to open it for her. “I'm waiting,” she said impatiently. “Do you think you can open it? I'm carrying so many bags,” I told her. She looked at me angrily, and then looked down at the door handle. She went to grab the door handle and as soon as she made contact with it, one of her fingernails broke off.

“See!,” she said even angrier than before, “Look what happened! You made me break one of my new nails!,” she cried.

“Lashes I'm so sorry” I said quickly, and without thinking, I used my teeth to open the door for her. Every thing ended up being okay and she wasn't as mad at me as she was before, it's just that I will need to visit a dentist as soon as possible.

DAY #17

The seventeenth day of the vacation was a Friday and was also Father's Day. We were again invited to dine with the rest of the residents in the inn since the last dinner was canceled due to unforeseen circumstances. But David's genius showed us a way out of it. I told Dobbie that the kids were still sick and that Lynne was also coming down with something, and so with that we were free to enjoy our Friday in peace.

I left Lynne and Kirby to go see what Dave and Sara were doing. Sara was nearly finished with her book and Dave was asleep and out cold. Before I left Sara to her devices, she stopped me and asked me a strange question. “What does 'cunt' mean?” “Is it in that book you're reading?,” I laughed curiously. “No... Me and mom were downstairs the other day and a man said that to her.” “He called her a cunt?” “Yeah, a stupid cunt. What does it mean? I think I already know because I looked it up, but I wanted to know what you know.” “When did this happen?” She thought for a moment, “It was the day you guys went to ride the horses.” “Who said it to her?” “It was that guy who was at the pool the other day, the one with the mustache.” It was the older man who was with the younger woman. “But what does it mean, dad?” “What you read is what it means,” and abruptly I left the room and went directly to Lynne.

When she saw me walking directly toward her she closed her laptop and asked me

“What?” “Why didn't you tell me someone called you a cunt?” “...Because if I told you, you would either overreact or not react at all, so I didn't see the point.” “What happened after?” “Nothing, I just ignored him and we left to come back upstairs.” “Did he upset you?” “...Not really.” “Why did he even call you that?” “I spilled a drink and some of it got on his shoes.” “So basically you didn't do anything.” “I spilled a drink and some of it got on his shoes, that's why he got mad.” “...You're sure you're not upset about it? If you want me to say something, I will, but if it didn't bother you, then there's no point in pushing it.” “I am totally fine, I swear.” “...I see what you're doing. You're saving it for when someone really upsets you so you can send me after them.” “What gave it away?”

I stared at her for a few seconds, and after another few seconds she looked away and went back to her laptop. I closed the laptop and looked at her again, “I'm not your attack dog.” She looked up at me. I continued, “...Or you know what, maybe I am. Have you ever seen a dog attack its owner? Is that common?” I moved quickly toward her and dug my face into her chest while using my arm to push her toward me. She was laughing and making sounds of frustration as she tried to escape. When she finally broke free she ran toward the bed and hopped onto it and landed on it, bounced up a little bit, and then landed securely on all fours. Turned around as if she was a dog herself and followed me with her eyes.

When I got onto the bed, slowly, I too was on all fours. And at some point I leapt at her and we began pawing and wrestling with each other. The dog fight didn't last long as I soon overpowered her and layed onto her body. I laid comfortably with the side of my face on her chest and her arm around me, petting the back of my neck with her hand. “If we're going to do this every time, then I'm going to spill more things and get called a cunt more often,” she laughed.

“If he would have called you ugly or handicapped or physically retarded or something and you got upset, I would definitely have words with him whether you wanted me to or not, but ultimately, I would be more upset with you than him because I've made it abundantly clear that you are the most prettiest woman to ever live and I'd feel like every time I make that effort its in vain.” She started laughing and told me that she had stopped looking for any form of validation from other people, dealing with prettiness or otherwise, after I gave her the wedding band four years ago.

“You're a guy so maybe you don't completely grasp the idea, but that day my whole world changed. I know you're particular, and I don't mean that in an offensive way, but I know that you're picky so I don't take the fact that you chose me for granted. I feel like when other women get married, it's the man's privilege to offer it to her, but you didn't offer me anything, you just gave it to me. And I have to tell you, I was trying my damn hardest and I earned that motherfucker. I don't give a damn that you got it for ten dollars

at a yard sale, it makes me feel special and I will never take it off,” from the sound of her voice I could tell she was getting emotional and teary-eyed from what she was saying. I patted her hips, and suddenly she remembered that they had all signed a Father's Day card for me. She began moving to go get it but I didn't allow her to move and stayed on top of her. “It's all right, I'll look at it later,” I told her.

Whereby I fell asleep on her chest, I began to dream. Perhaps it was my mood of being relaxed in the early afternoon, but I dreamed one of the picnic dreams. Lynne and I are in a car and I am driving through woods. When I exit the woods, we see a gigantic screen in a parking lot.

There are other cars there and soon we both realize it's one of those old drive-in theaters. I park the car in a good location so we can see the screen and we begin to watch the film.

At some point during the movie, I became startlingly aware, though not lucid, because I saw a location that I had seen before in the real world. It was that storage shed that Lynne and I were handcuffed in, and underneath one of the wooden tables there was a note. Apparently, the note had a genetic sequence on it that was related to a specific kind of bird.

And then I woke up. I saw that I was still on top of Lynne and she was sound asleep. I got off gently and saw that it was twelve minutes past midnight. Naturally I was curious, so I left the room, went downstairs, and made my way to the shed. When I got inside, I saw the exact table I saw in the dream. I walk up to it, reach underneath, and feel for a note. Shockingly, there was a piece of paper underneath it, and my mind wondered if I had subconsciously seen it back when we were sitting and waiting for the tool to charge.

Ripping the piece of paper off, I began to look at it, but in that very moment the shed door opened. The figure I saw moved like a dark ghost, and it screamed toward me and this definitely woke me up.

When I woke up again, I saw that it was still day and that I was again on top of Lynne and she was again sound asleep. Doing the same thing I did in the fake dream, I went stealthily to the shed, and when I found no paper underneath the table, I was sure I was actually awake.

Entering the inn, I coincidentally saw the man who called Lynne a stupid cunt. A part of me wanted to walk up to him and throw some tea or coffee at his shoes just to see what he would say to me. Of course, I didn't. But one day he's going to say that to a woman, and if she is somewhat married and introverted like Lynne, her husband's probably going to be a lot less diplomatic about it than I am.

DAY #18

There was a fair in town and the kids decided to join us in going. Dave took his camera and made sure to take a good amount of pictures of all the attractions and events. Coming back from the restroom, I saw Sara and Kirby on a ride together as Lynne watched them from the barrier.

“Wassup shortie, who you wit?” She looked me up and down, then said “No one.” I moved to the other side of her. “You ain't got no man; no boyfriend no husband nothing like th” she cut me off “How much money you make?” “Enough.” “You live witcho mama?” “No. I mean, kind of.” “Whatchu mean kind of?” “We live in the same building, different apartments.” “...You take care of her?” “Yeah girl you know I do. I'd do anything for my moms.” “...Where yo ride at?” “Right there,” I pointed in a random direction so she looked in a random direction. “...Kinda nice.” “You tryna go? I'll take you somewhere to eat, then we can go to my crib and you can see my sheets. They got flowers on 'em, you'll like them.” “What kinda flowers?” “Roses.” “What color roses?” “Purple.”

She began laughing hysterically and I knew she got the joke. “You're so dorky,” she said. I looked at her and didn't say anything. “What?” “You forgot smelly, lazy, boring, quiet and a bunch of other things.”

When Sara got to us she told her mother that there was a high likelihood that Kirby had soiled his diapers. She was right, and after Lynne asked me to go find David, her and Sara went with Kirby to the restrooms.

I found Dave a bit away from the fair and sitting on a bench-table near a field; he was going through the camera and deleting pictures he didn't like and saving pictures he did. After a few pictures I noticed a lighter on the table. I grabbed it and saw there was still lighter fluid in it, and then joked with him, asking him if he smokes. He laughed and gave me a resounding “No.”

He kept going through the pictures and I asked him another question. “You've never smoked grass?” He looked up at me confused, “You mean, like weed?” “No,” I said pointing down at the field, “I mean actual grass.” He started laughing and his no became even more resounding. “Me either.”

I grabbed a few grass blades and then one of the fliers about the fair on the wall behind us and I rolled something up with the grass inside. I lit one end of it and took one puff, blowing out the smoke. I handed it to David and he did the same, blowing out the smoke. He handed it back to me but I didn't take another puff.

I told him that I knew he probably didn't see me as a real father figure, maybe not even as a real adult because of the strange way about me that he probably didn't observe

in other adults, namely men, but I told him not to do drugs, and that I was serious.

“I’m asking for your mother,” I said. “She told you to tell me that?” “No, I’m just asking for her, because it would break her heart.”

He took a small while to reply, still going over photos, but after he replied, telling me that he respected me, went on a tangent saying he doesn't even remember what Silvio looked like and that if he died, he wouldn't feel anything for him. Then he told me that he didn't want to seem like a bad kid or anything, or make it seem like he and I are at odds, but he told me to not tell him what to do.

“I’m not saying that because I don't see you as my dad, I do, I just don't want anyone to tell me what to do. And I don't plan on doing drugs anyway.”

When I saw Lynne walking toward us with Sara and Kirby, I quickly dropped the joint and stepped on it. “What are you guys doing?,” Lynne asked. “We were just about to go find you guys,” I replied.

The final ride we went on allowed us all to go on it together. The man conducting the ride gave us each a souvenir, which was a face card of royalty as this fair was sponsored by the monarchy. A queen card for Lynne, a prince card for David, a king card for me, a princess card for Sarah, and because it was all that was left, a joker card for Mordecai.

DAY #19

It was mid-day when I was downstairs and I ran into Jefford. I didn't even know him and his wife were still here because I had not seen them for many days. He started complaining to me about another married couple that canceled on their plans to go to a concert tonight. I just fucking knew he was breaking his way into asking if Lynne and I would like to accompany them.

I wasn't really paying attention to anything he was saying, because my mind was focusing on how I would answer his eventual invitation. I tried to think of an excuse like how David could, but then I imagined Lynne's excited face when she found out she would have a reason to wear some of the clothes she bought at the mall. My reasoning was she had already dragged me halfway across the world, I don't see how a few more miles and one night of loud music could make it any worse.

When Jefford finally asked, I accepted it and he was glad. He told me when Lynne and I should be downstairs, and I went upstairs to tell Lynne about it.

When I got up there Lynne was feeding Kirby his baby food. Six hours later Kirby was asleep and I brought him to the kids room and let them know that Lynne and I were going to be gone for a couple of hours.

For every piece of attire I put on, which was a pair of black sneakers, a pair of black

socks, brown pants and a black shirt, Lynne matched me, which was a pair of black suede ankle-boot heels, sheer black leggings, a small red dress and a black jacket. I'm sure that she felt particularly lush this night because of her coordinate red lipstick and red rose ring.

As we walked out of our room, I asked her if I could put her make-up on her the next time. "Fuck no," she resented the offer. As she walked ahead of me toward the stairs, I watched her and told her that I wasn't going to be fighting any men who tried to talk to her there.

When we got downstairs it was completely empty, so we found a table and sat at it and waited for Jefford and Dorene. "Didn't they tell you they were downstairs?" "Yeah."

After a minute Lynne remarked that she had never been on a double-date before. "Are you excited?" I asked her. She knew me and knew I was being sarcastic, so she looked dead into me and expressed those thick and darkly pronounced eyelashes. "Are you excited," she said in a stupid voice, "shut up," she finished in her normal voice.

One complete minute of silence went by. It wasn't unusual for me to not have my cell phone out but it was somewhat unusual, at a moment like this, for her to not have hers out. We stared at each other, not the kind of staring that is more like leering but just casual looking at another person. Conscious staring. And then I moved my chair closer to her, leaned over and smelled the side of her neck. It was the perfume she had bought a few days ago at the mall.

I brought my head back and looked at her again. It doesn't matter if you're the most physically attractive person in the world, romance requires something novel, because looks can fade even without age. Obsessions grow faint and stories end. I wonder how she has stayed my queen of romance for this long.

When Jefford and Dorene finally came downstairs, they said they were sorry to keep us waiting and that they had an emergency back in their home country.

We left and took a car to the concert. During the drive Dorene noticed that Lynne had a wedding band but that I did not. "Are you one of those married couples where only the wife wears her ring?" she asked us. "We're not married," Lynne replied. "What are you then?" Dorene asked a second question. Jefford nudged his wife, "You don't have to answer that." I responded, "I'm too immature and afraid of commitment."

Lynne laughed, saying "Translation. He's too mature and thinks every other woman is too immature for him, but he's too polite so he lowers himself." We all looked at Lynne, and eventually Jefford nicknamed her the "doctor."

Later, but still during the ride, Dorene asked us if we liked the handcuffs they gave us. "That was you?" Lynne asked curiously. They both nodded. "Let's just say they are our souvenirs to remind us of our time here," Lynne replied. Dorene let out an atrociously

loud laughter and was glad she could be a part of it.

“Jeff and I have done everything under the moon to keep our romance alive, but we're both open about it and can admit that it's dying. What do you guys do to keep the passion?,” Dorene asked.

Lynne and I looked at each other, and then eventually she began speaking. “He writes me amazing poetry and that more than helps.” “Poetry?,” Jeff almost seemed to say disgustingly. I was amazed that she told them that, and I could see that Dorene was confused but it peaked her interest. But it got silent as we reached our destination.

The concert was a romantic one, and I could simultaneously see why their friends canceled on them and why they themselves wanted to attend such an event. The music played was slow and every one in the crowd slow-danced with their partner. I was still amazed that Lynne told them that I wrote her poetry, but I didn't allow that to ruin the night or the mood. I was on my best behavior as I held her close to my body. I patted her behind softly and told her she was my pretty little princess, and that as long as we were in this country, she could have anything she wanted. But I too understand that Lynne possesses the unique distinction of being the only person who has ever made me feel every goddamn feeling from complete bliss to total wrath.

DAY #20

At midnight we rode home with Jefford and Dorene. The conversation on the way back was not nearly as interesting as the one on the way to. We gave them our farewells as they continued up onto the third floor. We went to check on the kids; Sara and Kirby were asleep and Dave must have been playing video games with his friends in America.

Lynne and I went back to our room and we undressed into normal clothes. I didn't need the bathroom for that but she did, singing some of the lyrics she heard at the concert, and when she came back out I was sitting at the table staring into nothing. She was wearing her panties and her bra, and as she went around the bed so I would see her backside, she made little jumps while her feet never left the ground so I would see her butt bounce. When she looked back at me to make sure I saw, she found me looking directly at her. I couldn't tell yet if she realized that I was upset.

When she walked over to me, she put one leg over me so that she could sit on my lap facing me. Again she made little jumps while her feet never left the ground, this time so I could see her boobs bounce. When she realized that I was upset, she asked me if I was mad about the immature remark she made earlier on the way to the concert. Honestly, I had forgotten about that.

“No. You were right about that, and honestly I'm glad you're able to understand me

like that, because then I don't have to ever explain myself to you. I'm mad you told them that I write you poetry." "...But it was a compliment," she pleaded. "Thank you but it is emasculating." "Why? Because of the way Jeff responded? That's exactly why they need handcuffs," she finished. "Whatever stupid fucking gay ass shit I say to you or give to you, it needs to stay between us. I tell you those things in confidence and no one else needs to know about it." "I'm sorry, I won't mention it again," she said looking almost ashamed or embarrassed.

I don't think she realized it, but a very small tear was trying to force its way out of her eye. I couldn't tell if she was trying to not cry, or if she was so surprised by what I was saying it was just an automatic instinctual response.

I brought her closer to me so I could hug her body, "It's okay, I know you were just trying to compliment me." She wrapped her arms around my neck and put the side of her face to mine. I kiss her cheek and tell her that "tomorrow I'm going to take my pretty little princess to the town garden and she can have any flower she wants."

Chapter 67

TORNADO ROYAL

3:2:7:67

Princess Brittany addresses the kingdom on race relations, an event that helped popularize the television medium. (1953)

ON the morning of Christmas Day, 1960, Sabrina stood in front of her late husband's gravesite. Though she and Douglas had never technically divorced, at the time of his death and many years prior, they were emotionally divorced. This technicality allowed Douglas an eternal resting place on the Flanagan's estate, and though today was recorded as the coldest day in recent history, Sabrina still found the audacity to walk to his gravesite, spit on it, and call him a coward for hanging himself.

Inside the Flanagan estate, in her highly decorated royal bedroom, was Princess Dorothy who had no intention in taking part of the jubilee this day. Within the past decade she was discovered by some of the family members to have had written communication with a journalist and was divulging secrets to him, secrets which were now out in the open and public knowledge.

Among the speculation of what she may have told the journalist were these; Jeff's affair with Karen Gray, the wife of Gary Gray who ran the largest mega-church in history; Queen Brigid's mental state, which from a diagnosis many years ago bordered on psychosis; Leah's six toes; Brian II's affair with the estate's nurse, Fiona; and last but not least, the existence of Orlando, who was Prince Ken and Maid Donna's secret lovechild. All of this and possibly more was speculated by the family to have made its way to the public through the mouth of Dorothy, and since this discovery, she has become recluse and has made little way of contact to anyone.

King Brian stood at the large window pane in his office as he gazed out at a wintry snow scene. He had been going back and forth in his mind on whether to integrate his military into the conflict currently ongoing in Vietnam. At first he decided not to, but a sudden impulse caused him to return to his desk and sign the orders to join the war effort.

After signing the papers, he looked at his grandson, Trevor, who was playing with a toy gun. He took his cane, as in his older age he was having difficulty walking, and walked over to his grandson as his mind ruminated on the concept of power.

By this time in his life, he had entered his kingdom into two different wars, and though he had never once fired a single weapon, it gave him a great conceit to know that he was more powerful than any man who had.

When Trevor grew tired of guns and his grandfather's office, he traveled far away to Princess Dorothy's room, a person who he had grown fond of in his little life.

“Dottie, do you want to play with me?” Trevor asked the princess. “Not today,”

Dorothy answered, as anytime she spent time with the child she noticed that he was difficult because he perhaps had a learning disability. Despite her answer, Trevor remained in her room observing the things in it, and as Dorothy watched him, she thought to herself that it was a good thing he would never become king.

Looking at her enormous size in the mirror, Princess Leah rubbed her belly and the set of twins she had been carrying in her womb for the past eight months. A bit moody because she had seen her husband chatting it up with another woman, she had made direct statements on the matter of her disposition earlier in the morning to Prince Brian II. She exactly did not trust him anymore because of his entanglement with Fiona Walsh, who up until a few years ago was the family's head nurse and in the papers was rumored to have seduced the future king.

"This is proof that women are more superficial than men," Brian II declared, "a woman can dislike another woman just because she is prettier than her. But men, we don't dislike other men because another is more handsome, we dislike other men because the other man can do certain things better than him, like lead and court," the prince finished.

"Lead?," Leah laughed, "and who have you ever led? You don't know the first thing of leadership, and anything you ever knew about courtship you have forgotten it in the last few years. You don't even buy me flowers anymore!"

Just then their only current child, Brian III, ran into the room in hiding from some of the other children, and in his speedy nature, Brian II yelled at his son to calm down as to not destroy anything in the royal room.

About a mile west of this location, Prince Spencer and his wife Princess Elaine were waiting outside of their vehicle for a person to bring to them the family gifts. The vehicle was still on and the radio was blaring the new sound of rock and roll. As they were only a few years removed from their teenage years, the newly married pair were staunch supporters of the new sound in music, which did not exactly sit well with the elders in the royal family.

"I'm cold," the princess told the prince. Spencer looked at his wife, and then back at the establishment without saying a word or removing his coat. "Can I have your coat?," the princess asked. "No, why did you think you would be okay with just a sweater?" "Well I didn't know the heater to the car was damaged." "Yes you did, I told you it wasn't working, you just never listen to me that's all."

Elaine looked away angrily, half-freezing from the historically cold day. She thought to herself that the reason she never listened to her husband, or cook for him or clean after his messes or have even sex with him was because he was barely a gentleman. And Spencer, in his own mind, believed he didn't give her his coat because she was lazy and not at all a lady.

When the wait was over they had received many gifts and packed them into the trunk of the car and drove a mile back to the main area of the estate where the large Christmas tree was located. During the drive Elaine increased the volume of the music, saying “At least the radio works.” The short drive back passed them through an arboretum filled with dead plant life and statues. As they passed through the arboretum, they saw Jeremy and Cassandra, along with their two young daughters, Jessica and Victoria, walking through it to make their way to the Christmas celebration that was forthcoming.

Though neither of the parents had mentioned it directly to the family, they were both jealous of the media attention that Brittany and Wayne were going to receive by the end of the day. Because the Flanagans were endlessly dissatisfied with their lives, it was their prerogative to increase their salaries by increasing the taxes on the people of the kingdom they ruled over. But shortly after the news of the tax-increase, it was the family's strategy to announce the recent cancer-diagnosis of Princess Brittany and Wayne's only son, Trevor, which of course was a blunt lie that would be later categorized a gross misdiagnosis.

And this strategic calculation would work; the Flanagan's raising of taxes would go unnoticed, Brittany would receive her well-sought after attention from the media, and every member of royalty would receive an increase in their wages. Despite this, Cassandra, immensely jealous, wished it was one of her daughters who could be used in the ruse.

Every morning, despite the day or the weather, Jeffrey Flanagan would go for a run throughout the royal estate. He would run along the paths that throughed the gardens, ponds, cemetery, arboretum, square, etc. And each run back to the main castle, he would take the same entrance back to his room, but today was most unusual.

There at the entrance stood Vivian, who knew exactly what time he would be approaching the entrance.

“Viv, what are you doing out here in this cold? Go inside,” he demanded. But Vivian had other plans and told him that she needed to talk to him.

“I went into your room and found these letters,” she gave him the letters. They were pieces of literature from an Iranian woman who was unnamed but had claimed to mother Jeff's child. Angry, Jeff nearly struck Vivian but held back, and then asked her, knowing the nature of his family, what she wanted.

If the Flanagans were to ever find out about the Iranian woman and the child she had with Jeff, he would be disowned for mixing the blood of royalty with another ethnicity. What was far worse was the status of the woman; she was a prostitute.

Vivian had only one request, but it was a rather large request. For her not to tell on Jeff for his act of treason, he would have to be her pretend-husband. “I am twenty years

older than you, Viv, that is not possible even if it were make-believe.” “I don't want to have sex with you, I just want to spend time with you. Secret romantic picnics, secret romantic films. If you can agree to that, I'll make sure no one ever finds out about your half-breed child.”

After Jeff agreed, Vivian leaned forward to kiss him on the lips. It was strange to Jeff; he was not at all attracted to younger women, but Vivian was attracted to him the same way he was attracted to women much older than himself.

At 5 P.M., all of the Flanagan family, save Princess Dottie and Queen Brigid, attended the festivities and the opening of Christmas gifts. They each expressed inclement gratitude at their new possessions, and then the same way dusk falls onto day, they disappeared from each other without warning.

The queen did not attend the event because her mental state was currently at its worse. She was now afraid of odors, claiming if she smelled something with any odor at all it would rewire her brain and make her think intrusive thoughts that are not her own. It had been this way for over five years now and no one could figure out what was truly wrong with her, it was only known that wherever the queen may have traveled, the odors in that area had to be absolutely unintensified. And when the smell of things could not be helped, she was forced to use nose plugs.

Situated in their part of the castle, Princess Brittany and Wayne turned on the television and began watching the recording of the princess's message to the kingdom about her son, Trevor, and his poor physical condition. She spoke of the cancer with tears, but in watching this over and over again in her eyes was only jubilation. And even her husband, though it was less intense, was excited for the coming attention his family was about to receive.

When Wayne was finished with his own jubilation, he left the room to finish a chore he had abandoned earlier in the day. As he walked through the grand and royal estate and his eyes followed the paintings of those before him, he walked down the same hallway as a passing Jeremy. When they first met, they had become good friends, but now they were enemies by proxy. They looked at each other as one passed the other with a certainty of disdain, but this disdain was nothing in comparison to the scorn that Cassandra and Brittany had for each other.

And one more person who had a scorn for Brittany was Princess Aubry, whose face was cracking and who still harbored a resentment for the attention she received from the media. One listening to the great family saga of the Flanagans might assume these two scornful women, Cassandra and Aubry, that they might one day plot to murder Brittany for her immense media attention and beingness of the face of the family, but while the Flanagans are many things, the women in this family as of yet are not killers. When they

kill, it is always without intention.

One of the guests invited to the Christmas party was Orlando, the head maid Donna's only child. Though no one in the family other than Donna knew for certain, not even Ken himself, everyone suspected that it was Ken's child. Nearly twenty years old now, Orlando had only been to the estate one other time in his life, which was also the only other time he had ever seen his supposed father; aged six many years ago. Tonight the three of them sat in a room with a cackling fire.

Though there was a certain degree of uncomfortableness and a great degree of unfamiliarity, Ken's increased age seems to stifle much of that. And as the three of them talked about many things, the nightly news on the television caught their attention. First it was a headline and an image of a person who Donna and Ken had known on the estate; Fiona Walsh, who the newscaster had described as being an Irish spy; a photograph of her mugshot was plastered on the screen for all to see, and she was further described as the angel of espionage as she swindled many men into truths. While she was no longer the family nurse, this concerned the prince and wondered what more of the family she may have known if she was sent to spy on them.

Before the prince could call for the other family members so they may also see the segment, he was struck further by the news which detailed Fiona's detailed account of a cover-up by the Flanagans. She claimed that Alexander Huntington, husband to Princess Aubry Flanagan, had raped and killed a woman and the family had the crime swept under the rug. And she suspected that there were more, much more, and cover-ups like this were common place upon the Flanagan legacy.

Fiona was not wrong. In fact, she was so not wrong that her allegations has induced someone's death. "Have you seen the news?," Oliver and Reagan crashed into Ken's room and asked this question excitedly and simultaneously. "Yes, let's go get Donald so he can help us round everyone up, we need to discuss this immediately," the prince demanded.

Everyone went their own way, and in going their own way Oliver and Reagan detoured toward the main butler Donald's room. They knocked on his door for a moment, even yelled out his name, but he never answered. They could hear the sound of the news-station inside his room, so they assumed he had already known, but in walking in, they saw that Donald had been lying on the ground, his hand holding drapes that were forcefully removed from the window. In his panic, his heart gave out under the assumption that Fiona would detail his ties to the Nazi party. His support and his funding of the organization.

They both walked up to him and turned him over, then inspected his body for any signs of life. There were none, and they knew he was gone. Knowing Don was a Nazi, Oliver and Reagan had already been playing out how the world would react if Fiona

revealed this. And so to keep the family name clean of the horrific Nazi moniker, they devised ways they could completely eliminate his identity from royal association.

Donald Hurr leaves an intense meeting held by members of the Nazi party. (1950)

*Chapter 68***PRODUCTION CODE 00268**

3:2:7:68

DAY #21

The final ten days were among us. I used to be hard-boiled. Not that any of what I'm about to say next isn't still true, but I used to do things that another human being stayed clear of; I used to sit in the dark for hours and traveled as far as my mind could journey; I used to go days, weeks, perhaps at one stretch of time a month, without any human contact whatsoever; I used to absorb knowledge knowing fully well it would make me something inhuman. And now I find myself in a commercially community-garden with a girl, I say girl because that is exactly what she's acting like right now, who can't make up her mind about which flower she wants.

“After we leave here we should go to the restaurant, Sara was asking me if I could get her some legs for tonight,” I told her. I'm not sure she heard me.

Before we entered the garden's flower shop, we had spent about an hour in the actual garden looking at all types of flowers that the near-by community fostered. In the garden were all types of flowers; some that were closed and some that were open; some that were big and some that were small; some that smelled bad and some that smelled nice; some with dull colors and some with vibrant colors; but the flower she chose today looked like the aurora borealis sky at night during winter.

“That's the one you want?,” I asked. Before she could answer Sara appeared behind us with Kirby in the stroller. Sara knew we weren't far from the inn and were wandering around in the garden so she decided to join us. With this I ended up buying two flowers, but the one Sara chose wasn't real and was meant to be put in your hair.

We left the garden and went opposite the way we came to find the restaurant that Sara and I visited previously. Lynne was telling Sara about the aurora flower as we walked there, and suddenly, while passing through dining tables and chairs just outside the restaurant, I heard someone shout my name.

When I turned around, I couldn't believe it. It was the therapist I was suggested to see many years ago. We both recognized each other immediately, and hesitantly, I walked toward him to speak to him more effectively. For some reason despite it being none of her business, Lynne followed me. Sara did not, and stayed at the entrance of the restaurant with Kirby.

The therapist stood up from his meal and shook my hand. “Small world,” he laughed, “are you on vacation with your family?,” he noticed Lynne, Sara and the stroller. “Yes, we are here for a month, what about you?,” I tried to be polite in front of Lynne. “Just

enjoying my retirement in this lovely town,” he replied. I could see in his eyes that he almost didn't believe me, didn't believe that I was a family man and that I even knew of the concept of vacations.

I introduced him to Lynne and she shook his hand. When he looked at Lynne I could tell he was trying to analyze her. Not Lynne per se, but what quality in Lynne would be attracted to the qualities within me, but I could tell he was baffled. “You're married?,” he pointed at Lynne's wedding band.

Lynne replied before I could, “Yes, happily,” she smiled, “the absolute love of my life.” Before she could embarrass me any more I ended the conversation and told the therapist that it was nice seeing him again even though we both knew it wasn't.

Walking home from the restaurant I didn't say anything to Lynne but I watched her fix Sara's new flower into her hair.

When we got to the inn Sara went with Kirby back to their room to give David his food and Lynne and I went to our room. It was close to sundown as I watched Lynnette put her flower in a vase near the balcony.

She walks toward the bed and begins to take her pants off. “Question,” I said. Lynne turned back toward me and waited after completely removing her pants.

“Why did you tell that guy that we were married but told Jeff and Dorene that we were not?” “I knew you were going to ask me that.” I waited. “He was obviously some kind of academic or intellectual, and I could tell by the way he looked at us he was surprised by you. Almost like maybe he was one of your counselors who thought you wouldn't amount to anything. So I said what I said to make him feel stupid. When I was in high school they made me talk to someone because they thought I was depressed or had something wrong with me. All I really needed at that time was for someone to tell me I'm not the only person who's ever felt that way. And I became mad and wanted to prove that I would become happy my own way. I hope that answers your question.”

“I appreciate that you want to validate me, but you don't have to do that,” I told her. She looked at me a curious way, and I could tell that she was getting irritated with me because it was the second day in a row I surprised her with sensitivity to a subject.

“You don't have to do that, okay?,” I almost cloned her irritation.

“I'm not scared of you,” she told me in a polite way. “I have no fear of you. Because I know if you ever lost your cool and hit me, you would feel so bad and the pain you would feel emotionally would be tenfold the pain I feel physically. You're a little mama's boy, you love me and you don't want to hurt your mother. I know you know that already and you knowing that keeps you in check which is why I'm able to feel safe. That's what you get for being a good little boy.”

I couldn't tell if she was being serious or playing around, and I couldn't tell if I should

have been laughing or completely offended. There was truth to what she said. And for the second day in a row she has analyzed me and has gone two for two.

I walked toward her with my arms open and told her that I wasn't mad, I just wanted to hug her. When she put her arms out I turned her around so that her bum was facing me and I slapped her right butt cheek with a force I have never exerted in my life. I'm sure the people in the next room could hear the slap clearly. It was so impactful that it even turned my own hand red.

Lynne almost screamed, toppled over and fell onto the bed holding her right butt cheek. She was so surprised but also so angered at the pain I had caused her. Cursing me out I walked into the bathroom knowing that she would never say anything like that to me ever again.

DAY #22

The next day and the day after that, Lynne could not sit down comfortably. When she worked at the table she leaned on her left buttock or just stood up altogether. When she went to sleep she either slept on her side or on her stomach and never on her back. I had rendered her right buttock useless.

Still she managed to walk quite well when we all visited the tourist areas of the Flanagan estate. Dobbie told us that we couldn't leave this country without seeing one of its main tourist attractions. David must have needed fresh air because he actually decided to join us.

Before we went on our way with all the other vacationers we saw a crowd of protesters protesting against a recent tax increase. Inside, our tour was led by someone named Jessica Flanagan. In each room we visited she shared with us intimate details of her family and its history. What I found most funny was Princess Aubry's wedding interruption, some people are so dramatic.

When we went outside we visited the cemetery. We passed by a lake and through an arboretum to get to it, and on the headstones we saw the history of the royal family. Some of the headstones I read; Matthew Flanagan 1864 – 1930; Heather Flanagan 1861 – 1929; Brian Flanagan 1900 – 1962; Brigid Flanagan 1902 – 1976; Victoria Flanagan 1955 – 1982; Brian Flanagan II 1923 – 1997.

Halfway through the tour we were stopped as I overheard someone from security say the protesters were becoming more violent with mention of weapons. I believe I heard the mention of a Molotov cocktail.

I thought to myself, “Why are we even here? These people are not usually admired by residents of their country.” I pulled Lynne aside at the next chance I had and told her that

we were leaving. When she asked why I told her that I overheard someone speaking of how the protesters were becoming more violent and maybe even had weapons.

We told someone that Kirby was having personal issues and we needed to abort the tour and they led us out of the Flanagan estate.

We began walking back toward the inn; it was far but it wasn't far for us. On the way back we stopped at an ice cream truck and everyone got ice cream. As we walked and ate ice cream I simultaneously thought about when the therapist asked if I was here with my family and the threat of violence back at the castle.

Thinking back on rocks that float through space without any intention or meaning or purpose, and it ultimately being an action of pointlessness, when the average person attempts to answer why a human would want to stay alive, they might answer because of family, friends, responsibilities and passions. I don't know why anyone would want to be alive outside of these reasons, but these are all also subjective reasons and don't truly answer the question at a purely objective perspective.

I look at Lynne and her hurting buttock, David and his ice cream dripping from his chin, Sarah and her current state of non-stop hiccuping, Kirby and his constant attempts at speaking, and I see that family is enough to keep you alive and maybe even feel useful, but if this universe has no ending then anything in it is void of meaning or purpose. And because of my beliefs on life and living, I don't think it's possible to actually "waste" your life. Some people may live a foolish life, and others may live a life of "meaning," but if the universe is eternal then a meaningful life over enough time loses its meaning until it is zero.

Entering the inn David was the only one who went to his room, Sara and Kirby came to ours. There was something I needed in Dave and Sara's room so I went over there, and the moment I walked in Dave immediately put down his laptop lid. We look at each other.

"Are you looking at porn?," I asked him. We both started laughing and I told him that I was only joking. I grabbed what I needed, looked at him one last time, then left the room.

After Lynne and Sara were done messing around with Kirby on the bed, Sara left, Lynne put Kirby in his crib and she herself went into the bathroom. I sat down and used the laptop because I wanted to look something up. I went to a searching site and input "flower that looks like auroa borealis." It is unlikely the flower expert chose this flower without reason, so I wanted to see if it symbolized anything or meant anything in particular. But after only a moment Lynne suddenly appeared right in front of me. I closed the laptop lid quickly and she looked at me strangely.

"You better be looking at pictures of me or pictures of dead bodies," she warned. I opened the laptop and went back to my research.

In the evening while we both lay in bed, she was looking through her phone and found a news article about someone throwing a Molotov cocktail through a window at the Flanagan estate today. The protester somehow found a way in, ran through security and hailed it through one of the windows, setting a small part of the estate on fire. The article detailed that the protesters were protesting against increased taxes that provided more wealth for the royal family.

“Good thing we left,” I told her staring at the flower she chose. She placed her phone on the nightstand near her and I'm assuming she closed her eyes to sleep as I can only see her backside.

I rolled over to her so that my body was pressed against hers and placed my arm around her. I began to gently suck on the side of her neck but she suddenly threw my arm away. “What?” “Do you think I'm in any state for that right now?,” she asked sharply. “It still hurts?” “Yes dumbass. So you can blame yourself because it's your own damn fault.”

I rolled back to my side of the bed. After a minute she said something. “Maybe if you rub it and sleep with your hand on it it will get better faster...”

I rolled back over and put my hand on her right butt cheek. I can't believe it's been about twenty days basically living with her and I haven't gone postal yet. But I think we're starting to irritate one another. It is remote, but it's there. Maybe she should stop psychoanalyzing me. Or if she's going to do it at least get it wrong like everyone else. Then I would be able to validate my passive aggression.

DAY #23

Fourteen months. I've been in this fucking solitary confinement jail cell for fourteen months. Listening to the jester Spookieni every single day and every single night. He never sleeps and as long as he's awake he never stops talking. And the things he talks about are mad. Being down here with him is the worst hell anyone could imagine and I have gone fucking insane.

Tonight he was talking about the second World War and how the Nazis did experimental tests on the holocaust prisoners. And now he continues on the brutal nature of life and death.

“...I hav bin ecksposd to thingz dat disrup da nachurule humin ordur. Wen won diez of naychur it iz a reyouneon of da spearitz, but wen one diez uf an acksident, or sumthing knot involvd in naychur, liek a brootul kiling, dere is a disrupshun dat okkurs. Nd I feel dat in my witnissing of dese un-nachurule eckspeeriences, my oan humin ordur haz bin disruptid beyund repare. Ive seen wit my oan eyez soh miny groosum deths. I hav seen crushed heds, extrehtiteez severd, bohdees chopd n haf, entestinez hanging frum da

toarsoh lik straynge spahgetty. But nun of dese hav kep me frum sleaping at nite. Dere is ounlee one ting dat falloes me ento my nitemares. It iz da crushd hed in wich da faysial feeturz remayne entakt. Et is a horroar I feel in my kore dat I cinnot fullee grahsp or uhnderstand or explayne. Yoo seeh da brayne madder nd meet and da sof tisshue lyeng on da payvemint beehynd a pface dat sumhowe had knot aulso bin distroyed, sumtiymes da mowth stile a littul oupin nd da eyez owt of dere sockits deep ento da hed mayking da eyez lik blac wholes, and it's aulmost az if da da sole is still aulive witen this persin and stuc betweene da worlde of da lihving nd da worlde of da ded, en entinse payne, becuz da nachurule ordur of deth haz bin enturruped bye murder or acksident. You luk at dat pface and yoo ar luking at troo dysordere. Troo khaos in an otherwyze reesunable world. And I hav found no resolelooshin in thiz nitemare. The closir I git to da trooth, the less meening I find...”

I could only hear him but I could envision his demented face. I could feel within his voice the chaos and the pain and the need for abstract destruction. And then just like that, after foreteene months of hearing him in solitary confinement, a guard came to tell me I was free to go. For the first time in over a year I heard silence, but by then the damage was done, and I woke up.

It was four in the morning and still dark out and as I awoke I heard the toilet flush, and as Lynne walked out of the bathroom and sat on the edge of the bed on one buttock, it dawned on me. “How do you take a shit?” “How do you think I take a shit,” she snapped quickly at me. I wondered if she leaned like she was now or if she hovered.

The light from her phone outlined her body in the darkness and when she put it back on the nightstand it was once again all darkness. She laid back in bed on her side facing me and then scooted to be onto half on my body. I took hold of her and placed her body on top of mine, then passed my hand down her side where my hand landed on her right buttock. I began rubbing and massaging it and sometimes gently squeezing it.

My mind began to wander but my autoconscious muscle memory still massaged her under the thick blanket. I thought random thoughts until I landed on a series of thoughts I've had before.

The amount of numbers that exist between 0 and 180 is the same as 0 and 1. The subject of decimals allows for this statement to be true. How many numbers exist between 1 and 1? 0 and 0? For myself I would say zero.

If the value is identical, the range of numbers becomes zero, if the value is non-identical, an infinite amount of numbers can exist within the range. And so I would say the range properties of all numbers are either zero or infinite. I might also say that all values in the universe fall on either zero or infinite, and that these two possible values, zero and infinite, are key values in understanding the universe and the way it works.

A way to envision the great infinite illusion is to observe the atom and the planet. Through human perception we see the planet in the 0 to 180 range, and the atom in the 0 to 1 range, and we have already agreed that the amount of numbers within these two ranges is the same, and therefore the amount of information in a planet is the same as the amount of information in an atom despite the great difference we see between the two. And to stretch the mind's imagination one more, this would be an identical case between a universe and its atoms.

If you begin two or more things, each at the same time but with different internal clocks, over enough time each of the things will become wildly different in their measurement of time. This is not just reserved for time but also for anything in which an aggregation is not equal between parties. This is in part because, as we reference the "infinite illusion" concept, the difference between two unequal quantities is infinite. If one of the parties is even a trillionth of a second off, over an infinite amount of time the difference between this party and its peers is a quantity of infinity.

One way this illusion and this concept as a whole has affected our way of understanding reality is perhaps through the idea of "growth." When we think of growth, or something growing, it is usually in relation to something else; either itself or something in comparison to its current state. For example, when we think of a child growing, we instinctually compare the current state of the child to its former state; or we compare the child's current state to another child. But if every thing in the universe was equal in its relationship to time, growth would still technically exist, but would maybe be less observable. This tells us that the concept of "infinity," which must be tied to "duplication accuracy", is the reason why we have the phenomenon of the infinite diversity of things.

DAY #24

Again the next day at four in the morning Lynne had been sleeping atop me as I massaged her bottom. We were both awake in the darkness and she had felt my erection against her. I wanted her in an inhuman way but she stopped me and told me that her right buttock was still dealing with pain, so soon we both began to fall back asleep.

"Spookie," she said half-asleep. "Lashes." "Did you really think that I looked pretty in pink?" "Yes, of course, super pretty," I answered. She giggled. I continued in a more serious tone, "There are two things I will never do. I would never call you ugly or do anything to make you think you're ugly. Never. Not even in kidding. And I would never make fun of your disability. I'll die before I do either of those two things. I'll call you stupid sometimes but never ugly. I'll call you every insult under the sun; bitch, cunt,

republican, but I will never call you ugly and I think both of your feet are beautiful.” And with one of her hands she took hold of my non-massaging hand and interlocked our fingers, and then she quietly fell asleep.

It was difficult for me to fall asleep because it had been multiple days since and the feeling of bloatedness in matters of the pelvic region are entirely uncomfortable, and as I can only speak for men this is a region that feels best when emptied. And if you have grown tired of my unusual way of speaking, to put it bluntly, I needed to fuck her.

When I awake in the morning sunlight I see her standing near the chair using the computer. I didn't even want to look at her. The sight of her only reminded me of the pit of desire and lust in my stomach and testicles. Instead I laid back down until I got up again to check on Kirby & the Teenagers.

When I entered their room I saw that Kirby was sound asleep, Sara was on her phone and David was playing a game that looked familiar to me.

“What game is that?,” I asked out of sheer curiosity. “Death Wars 2,” he replied. Death Wars was a game I had played with him a few months ago possibly for the entire day until we beat it, so I was interested in playing this one. “Is it better than Death Wars 1?” “It got better reviews, and so far seems like it.”

I sat down near Sara and took the controller that was next to her and David and I engaged in the story of a deathly war. And truly, for a long time, I didn't think of Lynne or her body. I felt I needed to stay away from her and this was helping. If I saw her I was liable to lose my mind. I know that she feels the same way which tells me her behind truly does still hurt too much to do it.

Halfway through the adventure Sara had leaned over and began resting on my leg, which was why when we finally beat the game and I got up, my lower leg was asleep. I tried walking around the room to shake it off and at times was making funny remarks to them about how my youth was so different than their youth. And suddenly, without me even hearing the door open, I looked up while the kids were laughing and saw Lynne standing in the doorway. I stopped my limping but she didn't give me anytime to explain the fact that I was not making fun of her disability.

I followed her all the way back to our room trying to tell her that my leg had fallen asleep because Sara was laying on it but she wanted to hear nothing of it. She even went so far as to call me a liar because in the early morning I said it was something I would never do, and I ceased following her when she closed herself in the bathroom.

Only a moment later she came out laughing, telling me that I was way too gullible and that she knew from the start that my leg had only fallen asleep and I was trying to shake it off. And that laugh. That gorgeous little laugh adorned with pearls. I probably should have been annoyed, but I was all pent-up with feelings. If you want to know

patience, your impulses must be tested. If you want to know lust, you have to be one gaze away from deflowering something innocent.

DAY #25

Along the boardwalk at a darker dawn, I jog-ran behind Lynne and we were paralleled the ocean for miles. This time we both listened to the same playlist and started it at exactly the same time. We have been together for so long that I wonder if the lyrics make us sometimes think the same thoughts.

Suddenly she hopped in a very womanly fashion with her arms out to her side over something on the boardwalk because there was no way around it. When I got to it I saw that it was a puddle of water and I adopted the same womanly hop to get over it.

Running with the early Sun shining down on her, I was reminded of a dream. Moreso, a dreamline. This dreamline was previously unknown to me before I met her, but learning of her existence introduced me to it. As a murderer, or more accurately, a serial murderer, I would pick up prostitutes of whom resembled Lynne and bring them back to a motel. There we would have sex and I would find some way to manipulate them into staying with me. After they'd fall asleep, I would poison them and proceed to amputate their left foot. I would never have sex with their corpse, although there may be spin-offs of this dreamline where I do. Instead, I would dress them up and keep them presentable for as long as possible.

Each one of them did not reach that level of confounding beauty until I could not tell the difference between the impostor and the inspiration. But who was the woman I was chasing? Who was the true muse? Who was I running after? I had dreamed of her so many times but I knew of her only in another life. The sunlight on her shining hair; I must have chased her through the wilderness until I caught up to her and physically forced her back to my home. I must have seen desperate terror in her eyes. And those eyes, I cannot forget them. Burned into my memory for me to recognize in every life a thousand times over.

In that dreamlife right now I must be running after her. Chasing her unfamiliar to my character. I must have loved her... And if it wasn't love, all of the corpses that I thought I loved that are rotting underneath this ground must be puzzle pieces to my lustmap.

Lynne stopped at the end of the boardwalk and I stopped behind her. When she turned around she told me that her behind was beginning to hurt, but every word after that never reached me. I simply looked at her. Gazed at her. Each second that went by tamed made her more wildly beautiful.

In the wild was where I found her beauty. After searching for it for miles and for

years, I had found it hanging off of a rose in purple light. When I reached for it, it was drawn into my hand and stayed there. And now that I had it, I was on my way back home to put it in a safe place. Again I traveled for miles and for years; through storms and snowstorms, through heat and heatstroke. And in all that time, her beauty never diminished and her light only grew in the darkness to guide my way.

The emotional world is where she has power and it is always where her beauty truly resided. This was a world I did not fare well in, so I had to get out of it as soon as possible and bring her purple light to the logic world. Truly the one world where I could give her protection. The world where she would shine brightest and I could see her.

I saw her in a dream ten years ago but the sight of her has faded. I know that she wore a dress but the color of it I have forgotten. And the dress brought out her eyes in a dream that cannot be dated. So the color of her eyes are lost on me in a fantasy that I am caught in.

And the sight of her hair it must have excited me so. But the color of it is something that I no longer know. Something that does come back to me is the general shape of her figure. But the intricacy of her delicate design is something I cannot reconfigure.

And her nose and her lips when smiling were perfect triangle tips. But for the life of me her smile is lost on me and hidden behind the eclipse. To remember her breasts and her bottom I try hard but the image does not come. I must have desired her so dearly underneath that midnight sun.

Her reflection is vague and she is a haunting spirit I will never find. But it is now that I see truly that love has always been blind.

DAY #26

Every thing in the universe, whether physical or abstract, in any plane, dimension, etc., has a degree setting to it. What is meant by degree setting is simply its numerical value in relation to other numerical values of the same type. For example, a radio has a numerical volume meter that controls how strong or weak the audio output is. Each color has a numerical frequency. Gravity has a numerical strength on Earth, and a different numerical value on other unique planets. An animal has a numerical value as to how much melanin they have. A human being has a numerical value at which, based on the circumstances, will become prone to anger. A particular outcome has a numerical value as to how likely it is to become true. Each one of these properties has a numerical value, or degree setting, that determines how it will be perceived in the universe. The important thing to understand is that every thing in the universe inherits this degree concept. It may or may not be a naturally selected concept. It may and probably is a base concept.

Where does this effect come from? That is a difficult question, but imagine a universe where there is no degree concept at all. You can't, because such a universe is incapable of existing. There would be no concept of measurement, and its existence itself would be immeasurable, resulting in a universe that cannot logically exist.

We are left only with imagining a universe where this effect is indeed active. And what would happen if you were to introduce one numerical value to another? You may find transformation, or change. Transformation may also be a naturally selected concept, or perhaps a base concept, but it is observable when one degree concept is introduced to another. This is extremely observable in chemistry, such as throwing water onto fire, but it is observable in many other places as well, such as biology in the coding of proteins and manufacturing DNA. What is important to note is that in the process of transformation, each degree concept numerical value affects the number it is being introduced to, which also means its own numerical value will be altered when the transformation process is complete.

Here is something I've been working on to understand this transformation at its most base level:

EXAMPLE:

(a)+8 (b)x3 (c)x6 (d)-1 (e)+3 (f)+7 (g)/7 (h)x3 (i)x2 (j)-6 (k)x5 (l)-3 (m)/8

ORDER OF OPERATIONS RESULT:

(a)24 (b)26 (c)17 (d)9 (e)9 (f)7 (g)28 (h)0.8 (i)0 (j)60 (k)-4 (l)1.8 (m)5

SECONDARY RESULTS:

(a) (b)66 (c)15 (d)24 (e) (f)1.4 (g)42 (h) (i)-12 (j) (k) (l) (m)

RECESSIVE RESULTS:

ALL COMBINATIONS OF SECONDARY RESULTS

SIMPLE EXAMPLE:

8 3 6 1 3 7 7 3 2 6 5 3 8

SIMPLE OOO RESULT:

24 26 17 9 9 7 28 0.8 0 60 -4 1.8 5

TEMPLATE:

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) (i) (j) (k) (l) (m)

In EXAMPLE, the way to read the output is easy: (a)+8 [(a) is just part of the template that makes it easier to match correspondents. + is the operator to use on that numerical value. 8 is the degree, or numerical value.

Each degree will interact with the numbers on either side of it (the first number will only interact with the number to its right, the last number will only interact with the number to its left). The interaction assigned is dependent on the operation, for example, our first interaction, being between the degrees 8 and 3, will be one of multiplication as indicated by the x symbol. This interaction transforms the 8 into a 24. Moving on, the degree of focus becomes 3, and using the order of operations we will first multiply 3 by 6 to receive 18, and then add 8 to 18 to receive 26.

The result from using the order of operations will result in 26, but you can also choose not to use the order of operations, in which case this is labeled as a secondary result, which will result in 66. You get this by instead adding 8 to 3 first to receive 11, and then multiplying 11 by 6 to receive 66.

Secondary results are recessive results, meaning they are not expressed for us or the universe to practically observe. Instead, like a gene, they are repressed. The dominant result, which is the result found after correctly utilizing the order of operations, is what we will always observe. When a transformation is taking place we will never experience the recessive result, instead we are given to experience the dominant result. For example, the outcome of a race may have 1,000 variations, but we will only witness 1 of them. 1 will be dominant (OOO), the other 999 will be recessive.

The first interaction and final interaction never have varied results, they only have one result, which is a good way of indicating if a transformation is the beginning or the ending of a broader reaction (this reasoning may also be a good indication of how to study and understand beginnings and endings as deep concepts).

The degree concept is found in everything, and transformation, which is simply defined as the process of change, is found in every microprocess. This calculation utilized by the order of operations is constantly being executed, sometimes more or less complex, to select which transformations are expressed, and is in every facet of being.

After a very long walk with Kirby, Lynne and I entered the inn and began walking through the establishment. It was one of the longest walks I have ever taken. Where we are now is a condensed place with many buildings close to each other. We walked so far that we found a place that was more of a suburb. It was spacious, and we walked on a wide pavement surrounded by lush brown and green trees and small houses. The path was like one of those you would jog or bicycle on, and because of the spaciousness it was much quieter, too. One of the things I noticed most were the pine trees. In the night, it may have painted well for the place I chased her.

In the lobby of the inn a lot of the temporary residents were there, occupying it for a reason I do not know. The only person that stuck out to me was the man who insulted Lynne.

As we went for the stairs, I could hear the sound of something approaching from behind me. It was smaller and took quick steps. When I turned around it was a dog without a leash. It brushed past me and knocked into Lynne's leg, forcefully knocking off her prosthetic foot and causing her to fall over. The next thing I knew, the dog was running around the inn in a frenzy with Lynne's foot.

Every one noticed when I began running around the inn with it trying to catch it and retrieve her foot. Every second longer it took me to do so, it irritated me. And I know it irritated Lynne even more because now her exposed stump was embarrassing her.

As people looked on, I finally grabbed the dog by its neck and pulled it toward me, forcefully removing the prosthetic from its mouth. That foot was not fucking cheap.

I let go of the dog and begin to walk towards Lynne so she can put it back on and so we can leave, and as she did so, I caught the idiot staring right at her as if he had never seen a crippled person before. "What are you looking at?," I spoke in his direction and it got him out of his stare. "...Nothing, sorry," he walked away. Lynne looked up at me and then at the man walking away, now suspecting that the man knew that I knew what he had called her.

After she had put her foot back on, I folded the stroller and Lynne carried Kirby up the steps. And in the hallway at the top of the steps we saw the same man walking toward us, literally his hat in his hand. "Excuse me," he said in our direction, and then began to walk toward us.

Most of the time he addressed and looked at Lynne in his apology to her, and he explained to me what happened between them a little while ago. He told us that he was just having a bad day and that he was ashamed he had attacked her with such vile words. Lynne accepted his apology and he left us to be.

While laying in bed with Kirby in between us, I was curious, and Lynne and I had a conversation that asked if the man had apologized because he saw me and knew I didn't like him or if it was because he saw her disability.

Once Kirby fell asleep I came to the realization that she was laying on her backside. I asked her if her buttock was feeling normal, and she answered that it was feeling slightly better but still felt too much pain. I wondered if she was just punishing me. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you like that," I said to her. "Don't worry, it'll all be over soon my handsome little boy."

DAY #27

Her majesty, wearing a white dress, took me to the back of the inn where there was a golf cart waiting for us. I looked at it suspiciously then asked her where she got it from. She told me to sit down and she would explain it to me when we got there. “Got there? Where?”

I sat in the passenger's seat and before Lynne sat down to drive I noticed she had put a pillow there for her bottom.

As soon as she turned on the engine some music began to play from the radio. I could tell it was sixties rock and roll. And so with the sound of the sixties we drove on the dirt road through a forest and something told me we were going in the direction of the lake we had ran to many days ago.

When we arrived at the lake I saw that I was right and wondered what she was doing when she exited the cart and went around back. I joined her and I saw what she had stored in the backside compartment of the cart. It was a picnic set with all the items you'd need for one.

I helped her set up the picnic area just outside the lake; a large blanket; baskets with fruits and peanut-butter jelly sandwiches and juice boxes, a little radio, and a few other things.

While we sat on the blanket facing each other, she told me that she was telling Dobbie about the picnic dreams and of course Dobbie told her of the supplies she had to make the dream a reality.

Honestly, this was some crazy ass shit my mother would have done, and in my general nature I became suspicious of her. What if she is trying to poison me? I waited for her to take a bite of the peanut-butter jelly sandwich first, and after she did, while I was less suspicious, I was still suspicious.

I reached over and took her juicebox. “This box looks damaged. Here. Take mine. I don't want you breaking another nail,” I gave her my box. When she sipped from it, I was satisfied. “That was so sweet. I'm like your trophy, huh?,” she batted her lashes.

She handed me a clean apple and took one for herself and we munched on them for a while. “I don't know how long our picnic is going to last,” I said to her as I looked up at the graying skies. I almost made the mistake of saying “your picnic,” which I know at at least a subconscious level would have upset her.

So she got up, turned on the little radio to a certain song and then grabbed a banana from the basket. She put the banana up to her mouth and began slowly moving side to side until she began singing with the music in such a lovely voice.

♪ Blue skies

♪ Smiling at me

♪ Nothing but blue skies
♪ Do I see
♪ Bluebirds
♪ Singing a song
♪ Nothing but bluebirds
♪ All day long
♪ Never saw the sun shining so bright
♪ Never saw things going so right
♪ Noticing the days hurrying by
♪ When you're in love, my how they fly

I was digging the song so much that I began clapping to her rhythm.

♪ Blue days
♪ All of them gone
♪ Nothing but blue skies
♪ From now on
♪ I never saw the sun shining so bright
♪ Never saw things going oh-so right
♪ Noticing the days hurrying by
♪ When you're in love, my how they fly
♪ Blue days
♪ All of them gone
♪ Nothing but blue skies
♪ From now on

The irony is that what I said about the sky is what reminded her that she was going to perform the song for me, and the fact that the skies were now gray. She sat back down on her pillow hoping the blue sky would return but there was nothing to indicate it would, instead it was getting slightly more windy.

The temperature decrease brought Lynne closer to me until she was sitting right up against me. I wrapped my arm around her and she placed her arms on top of mine. After a moment I moved one of my arms upward toward her and told her that I had picked this imaginary white rose for her. She took the invisible rose and began smelling it, telling me it was both the prettiest and nicest smelling white rose she had ever held. I would have picked her a real flower but seeing as there were none around us that wasn't option.

When a short while passed she suddenly passed her hand through the air, and now she

was handing me what she proclaimed was a black rose. I took the invisible black rose and told her I had always wanted one of these things. After she laughed, she told me she gave it to me because her right buttock was now completely free of pain. She was the queen of innocence for so long, but soon that was going to change and she would become as impure as the darkest star.

The moment this thought passed through my mind rainfall had taken over the land. We got up quickly and returned all of the picnic items to the compartment we took them from, and then I ran back and grabbed the blanket and threw it over the golf cart so that it would provide shelter for us from the rainfall.

It was a bit darker under the covers inside the golf cart and I leered at her the entire time. She looked back at me with a tenderness the same the soft fabric of her dress. "Who was that guy?" I had to think for a moment. "A therapist I was suggested to see many years ago." Her look at me changed from confusion to curiosity to confidence. "I'm your therapist now."

Thunder crashed a moment after she said this and an invasive wind blew at the blanket. It has been a week since we've been physically intimate, and while I couldn't see it, I could feel that my cock was pulsing with veins the sight of lightning.

Sitting comfortably without her pillow she started the engine and on came the sixties. She drove for a bit and every once in a while in the silence she gave me an intimate innocent look, letting me know without words and with expression that she wanted to do as much to me as I wanted to do to her.

And that's when it happened. The cart suddenly dropped and we stopped. We already knew that the rain had created a mudtrap. I got out to inspect it and saw that we were caught in it, so I told her that I was going to rock the cart back and forth, and each time I pushed her forward, "pedal to the metal."

I rocked her back and forth for a couple of minutes, each time getting closer and closer to escaping the trap, and on a final push she sped out of the mudtrap and turned right directly into a tree. I run up to the driver's side and pull up the blanket to find her laughing, and seeing that she was all right, I went back around to the passenger's seat.

When we finally reached the backside of the inn, we ran toward the backdoor and found our way in. I went to make a joke but already she had gunned for the stairs, and running after her I slammed the door to our room shut behind me and locked it. The rain was hitting the windows hard and the same windows spoke of a dark sky illuminated by flashes.

She had already removed her white dress and was in the process of removing her starry panties when I looked at her. I took off my pants and then my underwear and as she climbed onto the bed I grabbed her in her process. Her knees were on the edge of it,

her lower legs hanging off of it. I grabbed my cock with its protruding veins and put it inside her. She stretched and it went in so easily because she was already so wet. Each time I went in, I went in deep, and each time I came out, the suffocating skin of her pussy that gripped me tightly revealed itself and followed me out. Being suffocated and choked by the strength of her tightening did more for me than any pills or therapy could ever do. The healing energy of being so deep inside something so beautiful, its comfort found your darkness and siphoned it out of you.

I grabbed her sides on one irregular thrust and started banging against her bottom harder. She made tiny sounds and she must have felt my pulsing veins on her walls. Her butt beat wildly abrupt my body, and loudly, too, and had it not been for the weather I would have been forced to be more tame. But in this exchange no one was tame, I was unhinged, and I gave to her exactly what she desired.

When the thrusts slowed down and became weaker, she knew her power over me. I grabbed her by her thighs and moved her further onto the bed so that her lower legs were no longer hanging off the edge, and then I climbed onto the bed myself. On the middle of the bed I put my cock inside of her again. Like before I watched as the skin of her pussy went back and forth with my dick.

I gently smacked her bouncing buttocks and then grabbed both of them, squeezing them and manipulating two handfuls. As I became rougher with my thrusts, she made again tiny sounds and I watched as she grabbed the bedpost with one hand and squeezed the blanket with another.

I was again fixated on the sight of me entering her over and over again. And as I squeezed her bottom harder and thrust harder, I lost myself in her healing energy and felt the release and emptying of the bloatedness I had carried for days. We had both orgasmed so hard, and when I collapsed onto her back, her body gave and collapsed onto the bed.

Heavy breathing is all that could be heard. And I was so wrapped in feelings that I didn't want it to be over. I grabbed my cock again and spread one of her cheeks to the side and slowly plunged into her. Laying on top of her, I repeatedly felt her bottom press against mine as I fucked her. I ran my hand through her hair and at times pulled it, thrusting harder and more heavily. The heaviness of my thrusts caused her to bite the pillow her face was pressed against. And through and into the pillow I could hear her moaning softly and uncontrollably. Her moans made my thrusts heavier, rougher, to the point I was slamming so hard against her that her prosthetic came off and fell onto the ground. I stopped and looked over the bed but only heard a rough demand from her, "Don't stop." And so I started again and grabbed her hair. I could tell she liked it when I played with her hair as we made flowers. And when I was so close to completely

depleting myself, I re-positioned myself for a better angle and hold, and I slammed against her body in delirium.

“I love you,” she barely managed to say these words through the moans and the repeated pounding. “I love you too,” I said back as I entered and re-entered her as deeply and as roughly as I could. And finally her love depleted me as I slowed down in thrusts and rested on her back.

When I rolled off of her my cock was completely covered in her fluids and my semen, which made it seem white and creamy. And when she got up off the bed, there was a wet spot of where her ladypart was. I watched her as she put back on her prosthetic and then began walking toward the bathroom. I noticed that as she walked, my semen was seeping out of her vagina and was slowly running down her leg.

DAY #28

There were two days left in this country and Lynne didn't want to leave it without seeing its ocean, but in getting breakfast in the morning she overheard Dobbie talking with a new guest about how the beach was closed.

“Did you realize there was a tornado warning last night?,” she asked me when she came back up with our food. “No.” “Dobbie said the beach is closed because of it. The beach was flooded, the winds threw debris on it and there apparently are high tidal waves. So we can forget about going to the beach this afternoon with the kids.” Thank fucking God. And what's with this place? Is it tornado season or something?

Instead of dragging me to the beach, Lynne dragged me to a store that sold random items that she noticed last week. There was absolutely nothing interesting in the whole store until she came to me with temporary matching tattoos. One the face of a happy theater mask and one the face of a sad theater mask. I laughed for two reasons, one of them you know, and the other because it made sense because our life was so dramatic. Someone should give us a television show.

She bought them and when we got back home I applied happiness on her right bicep and she applied sadness on my left.

When the day was nearly gone and darkness fell I felt in my heart that I did not want to go to the beach tomorrow in the afternoon with all those annoying people, so deviously I gave her the suggestion of sneaking into the beach this night instead. “Chances are it will probably be closed for at least a week and we'll be gone by then,” I persuaded her.

She stared at my bicep for a while then looked at me curiously. “You're saying that because you don't want to go in the afternoon tomorrow when all the people are there.” I looked at her. “Fine. Since you spent thirty consecutive days with me in a foreign country

and only hit me once, I'll allow it." "I appreciate it. And I didn't hit you, I spanked you."

We walked all the way to the beachside. There was indeed debris on the beach and one of the light poles had fallen over. There was no one else around so we had the beach to ourselves, and while I've never been the biggest beach person, I don't mind it at night.

On a certain portion of the beach we took off our clothes and I got to see her in the one-piece she bought at the mall. In the distance I could see the yellow police tape and a sign that read "Do Not Enter."

We left our folded clothes behind and began our walk on the beach. Looking at the slowly moving waters I saw aurora lights in her. They reflected off her body and were only lost inside waves.

"Of all the towns... Of all the apartment buildings... Of all the floors... And let's not forget your door wasn't the first one I knocked on... So of all the doors... I picture myself rolling dice as many times as there are stars in the sky... Or grains of sand on a beach... Or oxygen molecules in a sea..." I started cracking up and she leaned forward with her hands on her knees and started laughing as well. I couldn't stop laughing and smiling and when I turned my face from the sky and looked down I saw her kneeling on the beach almost out of breath.

"Or atoms in the human body," I carried her along laughing. "Or planets in every galaxy," she continued the game. "Or... Or... I can't think of anything off the top of my head," I conceded, but she finished off her statement, "just to get to live the life I get to live, even if it's not something society had planned for me."

I didn't have to ask her what made her say that or think of that, I already knew she had been thinking of Dorene and when she asked us how we met. Either that, or she was trying to comfort me for having to have gone to a therapist many years ago. Or maybe she was just comforting herself with the idea.

We kept walking along the beach and she admitted something to me. "You know in every single romance how there is a scene where the woman leaps into the man's arms? I always wanted to do that." "Well you have forty-eight hours left in your vacation."

She sprinted ahead of me as fast as she could, then turned around and yelled at me to stop walking, so I did. Running at half the speed she sprinted to get to where she was running from, she ran toward me and was screaming "Remember to spin!"

When I caught her I spun her around five times as her body helicoptered in the air until we nearly lost our balance and I let her off slowly, but when she saw that we were finally near the long dock, she jumped back onto me so I could romantically carry her to the end of it.

On the dock she warned me not to throw her over. "Don't you dare, I know how you are. I just want this to be romantic, not funny." "I won't." "Promise me." "I promise."

Between me and you, that never even crossed my mind...

As we progressed through the dock the gentle waves got louder and louder, and finally at the end of the dock I let her down. When I looked at her, she nodded her head sideways, then sighed. "What?," I asked. "You're so naive..." "Naive?" "Don't you know... Promises are meant to be broken." And swiftly she shoved me off of the platform and downward toward the raging sea.

When I made impact with the water, the dream started, and when I opened my eyes underwater, it continued. Just out of arms reach was a purple light I couldn't identify. But I could see myself walking for many miles and many years to have found it all in an instant. And before I could reach for it, the sound of Lynne crashing into the water many meters away from me caused it to disappear.

When we met back at the top of the waters I swam toward her, put my hand on the top of her head and pushed her head underwater until I decided to let her back up. "Okay, I'm sorry!," she gasped for air.

She swam closer to me and hugged my body and I hugged hers as we floated together in the sea face in face surrounded by aurora waters reflected from the aurorian sky. In a soft and delicate voice, she told me and didn't ask me that she was going to legally change her last name to mine.

After an hour of being in the sea, the two protagonists swam back to shore, but Lynnette Jones Parker, only aware of what she was going to gain, was not aware of what she had lost. Being in the waters for so long, when she began the exhibition of swimming back to shore, her fingers had shriveled and shrunk to such a degree it allowed both of her rings to escape into the deepness of the ocean, where they were never to be seen by human eyes ever again.

DAY #29

I was inbetween dreams and wakefulness when I felt a shadow hurrying about the room. Opening my eyes completely I saw Lynne in a panic looking through the entire room. When she saw me staring at her, she showed me her hands. I didn't understand at first, until she said "I never take them off."

Still somewhat tired I helped her look around the room but we were both sure after a little while that they were not here unless they were hiding somewhere clever. And suddenly she took off for the door. I ask her where she is going but she doesn't answer. I ended up following her all the way to the beach that was still closed and we went our separate ways in scanning the beach for her rings. In the end we checked everywhere we went last night until we reached the end of the dock. And when it wasn't on the dock

either, we both looked out into the daylight waters. "I'll get you a new one when we get back home," I tried to comfort her. But in finally looking back at her from the sea, I saw tears streaming down her face. I went to console her but the moment I touched her she pushed me away and walked off. Why the hell is she mad at me? I'm the one who fucking gave her those rings in the first place. And it's not like I'm the one who stole them from her, the damn ocean did.

When I caught up to her I tried to pull her arm to stop her but she yanked it away and kept walking. Between you and me, she is a fucking crybaby. "You're acting like you lost your fingers too," I snapped at her but she ignored me.

The entire way back to the inn I walked after her because she was walking so fast. In almost a decade of loving her I had only bought her two pieces of jewelry, so I began to understand why they were so important to her, but I swear to God all the fucking time I gotta call her a goddess. A queen. Supreme princess of the land. Et fucking cetera. When we got back home, after a while she managed to apologize to me, but for the rest of the day she barely said anything else.

DAY #30

Today is the final day for us in this country. We go back to America in the evening, though by the time we get back I think it will be morning. Suffice it to say we didn't have any plans for the day. Whenever Lynne was visible to me I felt she was different. Not in her disposition or her demeanor but in her appearance. It was indeed her bare fingers. I didn't realize how so a part of her flesh they were until they were gone and I without realizing it, realized it. When she first said she never took them off, I thought how could that be possible. You would have to find yourself in a situation where you have to take them off. But as I thought about it more and more, I began to realize that maybe she was telling the truth. Sometimes her earlobes were bare, sometimes her neck was bare, but now that I think of it, I don't think all of her fingers were ever bare. Not for the past four or five years at least.

The bareness of her fingers made me think of the dream of the wilderness. The purple light I carried, the closer I got back to home the more it slowly shifted from energy into matter and its surface was bare. But though the surface was bare, each step I took toward home brought out something of a design.

Lynne puts so much stock into symbols. Maybe they help her express and understand things she can't put into words. And even though she can feel love, maybe she needs to see it sometimes, too. Without love, there is probably a part of her that makes her feel empty and less than. But she was never a subplot. She was always the story. And whether

she realizes it or not, she always has and always will be the star of my show.

Chapter 69

THE SHENANIGANS

3:2:7:69

Jeffrey and Vivian have a secret and romantic picnic lunch on a warm summer night. (1964)

THE year 1970 saw the Flanagans celebrate their jubilee in a summer plagued by tornado warnings. The exact day in the summer that was chosen to celebrate the jubilee was welcomed with a rainy morning. The rain from the morning carried all the way into the evening and greeted the beginning of the celebration with thunder and lightning.

Rivalry was not a stranger to the Flanagans, if anything not only was it a part of their biology but for some of the family members it fueled their lives. Nearly a decade ago, two such individuals gave birth to separate sons in haughty rivalry; Cassandra brought Leonardo into the world and Brittany brought Leonel. Cassandra's son was born first, but only by a month, and Brittany had immediately initiated conception after hearing of Cassy's coming son so that she might have a superior son to both that of Cassy's and to that of her own, who was Trevor, who was also seen as the only family member with a learning disability and so this fueled Brit to have a capable son.

Nearly a decade later during the 1970 jubilee that was plagued by terrible weather, both Leons stood in a decorated hallway in the large palace and were pitching pennies to see who could land their penny closest to the wall. It was a game that boys played often, but these two boys played with the heavy competitiveness found in their mothers.

Leonel, Brittany's son, won most of the rounds. In his loud celebrations which were observed by his older brother, Trevor, he put down the other Leon and garnered much attention. Trevor got up out of his seat and walked over to his younger brother and pushed him as he celebrated, knocking him over and into the wall. This was not uncommon as Trevor sensed his mother favored Leonel for his mental capabilities, and as such bullying was a common occurrence.

In their regal room King Brian II was having one of his quality arguments with his wife, Queen Leah. The queen, still getting used to now only having ten toes, was barely listening to her king. "Men are only allowed to be happy if their wife is the reason and is the cause. It's not fair. If a man is happy because he's playing his favorite sport or because he got some candy, the woman will feel jealous." This was a generalization but was mostly true to Leah's character. She was often jealous in unreasonable proportions, even becoming angry at Brian II because he showed a moment of glee after the team he followed won a prestigious championship.

And in a vulnerable moment, Queen Leah was vulnerable when she asked him a peculiar question. "What did Fiona have that I don't have?" Brian II answered, "It's what

she didn't have." And the queen immediately took this to be in offense of her extremely luxurious lifestyle.

It had been more than twenty years since Princess Dorothy showed her face at a jubilee, but this time someone accompanied her in missing out on it. Sabrina had been with her since the rainy morning, reading over and over again the suicide letter her late husband left for her. The cruel joke that he had delivered on the final line, saying that they would be "Dougless."

Reading the letter over and over again, Sabrina in her old age could not feel compassion but only frustration, and lost in her thoughts she did not realize that Dottie had prepared for them two drinks of alcohol on this dreadfully sober afternoon. Dottie handed her the glass and she took it, and before taking a drink she said something aloud to the princess. "Some people participate in the marathon of running away from themselves their entire life."

Dottie thought about that, and then replied, "Here's to stamina," and the two clashed their drinks together and drank.

Princess Elaine was no fan of the current weather and she was no less a fan of her current situation. She had walked out of the celebration after her husband, Prince Spencer, told her it was over and that while he was not going to divorce her, he was only going to associate with her publicly for the image of the family.

She walked all the way over to the estate's large lake, a spot that thirty years ago Aubry and Alex shared their hollowness, and removed the wedding band from off her finger. In haste anger, she threw it into the lake where it sank to the deep depths of the lake's floor.

As she stood there, staring into the lake, a sudden wind moved her. And then another sudden wind moved a low branch that smacked her in the back of her head. Seeing that the weather was turning into something violent, she ran back through the trees and into the palace.

Prince Kenneth's voice was like the weather. He had been reading aloud from the newspaper an article concerning the Flanagans to the rest of the family members. Dorothy's secret friend had had his way with their image, calling them "The Shenanigans" because of their rampant mischief.

"Prince Kenneth Flanagan's legacy is as much of a joke as my hairline," Ken read aloud. "The nerve!," he shouted. In his shouts one of the family's friends, Marshall Bradley Jameson, asked who the journalist was. After hearing his name, Jameson, who was one of the most prominent modern directors in film, said that he recognized the name and would have the journalist straightened out.

Jameson was a director who was also a novelist and nearly all of his films except his

first were adapted from his literature. And he had celebrated with the Flanagan's this jubilee because Cassandra and Jeremy's daughter, Victoria, was the spitting image of the young woman he imagined one of his heroines to be. Victoria was not an actress, in fact she was not involved in theater at all, but she was interested in the role as she was like the rest of her family; she had an intense desire for importance.

Jameson, with his high intellect and great ability of foresight, could see that Victoria Flanagan would be perfect for his next project and could see that it would fit perfectly, and perhaps even lead, the upcoming wild degeneracy of the seventies with its unforgettable culture of music and film.

Near the party but also not near the party were winter twins Summer and June. They were about a decade old and their mother, Queen Leah, had come up with the clever given names while drunk one Sunday afternoon, which may or may not be indicative of the fallacy between their names and the time of the year they were born.

By this time of wandering through grand halls, the weather had turned monstrous. Every window the pair of twins passed by was beaten by rain. And despite that they were girls, and despite that they were young, and despite that the weather was like a cryptic villain, they were not afraid of it. They were more afraid of not finding the room they were currently in search of.

Earlier in the day the twins had been reminiscing about their short life and about a room they had not been able to find for more than two years. When you're young, the castle is grand and time is prolonged.

In asking about the room that lived in both of their memories, they found that not another Flanagan could recall it, and it began to feel as if it was actually only a room that lived in their imaginations.

But how could it be? When the twins spoke of the room they spoke of it in great detail and the details mirrored each other which told them that it had to have existed. But as the twins wandered on safe from the raging storm outside, they could not find the room they so desperately remembered.

Inside Queen Minor Brigid Flanagan's room she slept on a bed that was also sealed as to not allow any smells to come through. Her grandson, Prince Brian III, sat on a chair in the same room and had taken the day's duties to accompany her despite the fact that she slept soundly through much of the storm.

One of the reasons the prince volunteered was because he had become addicted to some of her medications. Each time the family nurse came to administer her medicine he was stealth in acquiring a few measurements for his own use. And of the drugs he wanted most were those of the psychedelic variety, a group of drugs that the queen minor had requested to help with her fracturing and disintegrating mental state. These were

becoming more and more popular and in the coming decade it would envelope the youth.

Back downstairs and toward the heart of the party was Prince Spencer who sat speaking with Orlando and Donna. In the distance they could still hear Ken speaking of the injustices done to the Flanagans. “Look, he goes so far as to call Reagan 'The Angel of Death'! Good Lord, have some respect for the dead would ya!,” Ken finished.

“It's annoying,” Spencer cried out about his wife, “each time she asks me to make a decision about something that is related solely to her, I give her my decision. And then if that decision ends up not being optimal or the 'right' decision after all, she blames me!... I think it's because she's afraid of making her own decisions ever since she decided on which house we should live in and realizes now she hates it.”

“Don't make any more decisions for her, then,” said an annoyed Orlando. In his own mind he came to the realization that people loved to argue because they were bored. This realization was confirmed when boredom was eviscerated with just a few words from the television that was near the bar. The broadcast had switched from a MissPlay interview about a woman who was spilling the beans on the pageant industry to the birth of destruction.

“A weak tornado has been spotted in the east valley plains,” the newscaster said. Pictures of the tornado were displayed on the screen as more and more Flanagans grouped before the television.

“Good thing that's not near us,” Jeremy said as he watched from behind Cassandra. “That would be so cool to see a tornado in real life,” Jessica said aloud. Her mother and father looked at her as if she were wild in the head.

Over the course of the next ten minutes they all watched with their eyes glued to the screen and observing the images of the wild tornado in the fields. It was moving fast and getting stronger, and after another ten minutes it was classified as a strong tornado and was moving closer to residential areas.

Princess Aubry had joined the party earlier when it began but had retired due to a mild sickness. In her time alone she thought of Alexander and his passing and the connection it had to his alleged sexual assault of another woman when he was younger. While Aubry denied the allegations to the public, there was never any doubt in her mind that the artist Alexander was capable of such an act. His callousness was in-fact what drew her nearer to him. And Alex, his cause of death being due to one of the rarest diseases known to man, she felt that it was life-long karma returned.

In her return to the party she too became a spectator of the tornado which was now classified as violent and was destroying property in towns. The Flanagans were engrossed in its total destruction and couldn't wait to see what it would conquer next.

By this time everyone who had attended the party, the Flanagans and friends of the

Flanagans, their attention was solely on the disaster. Only two people were missing; Jeffrey and Vivian.

Jeffrey and Vivian's intense relationship over the years remained deceptively platonic. It was secret, unlike the tornado, but it was every bit as destructive. Filled with broken promises and mended hearts, they did many romantic things together in unromantic ways.

Jeffrey's lovetrap was not a mystery; he was attracted to older women because he saw photographs of a nude Sabrina when he was younger and she was always simultaneously kind to him without her knowing of his possession of said photographs. But what was Vivian's obsession with older men? Perhaps it must have stemmed like a thorny rose from the relationship of Sabrina and Douglas, whose relationship was known to be passionate yet at times impersonal. Vivian must have watched them both at times and observed the similarities between Jeffrey and Douglas, the common denominator being the attraction to Sabrina.

Despite the fact that Vivian attempted to emulate Sabrina, Jeffrey saw no likeness in the two. Vivian was not a mother, and she was barely a lady. And worst of all, in the eyes of Jeff, she was looking for a father.

When the other tornado had increased to the strongest violent tornado, all of the news-watchers went up to the highest reach of the castle and out into the balcony. It was pouring rain like madness leads to blindness and it was so windy that to not clutch a part of the castle might throw one over the edge. And all of the Flanagans accepted the danger because it was irresistible like the gossip of the living and the democracy of the dead.

With each passing second all of the members of the party looked out into the view before them for the tornado. Their hearts beat faster and their minds race as they search for it. "There, there!" Princess Brittany shouted. And everyone looked in the direction she was pointing to witness this wild tornado.

Many individuals in waking may find it slightly uncomfortable to truly look at themselves in the mirror. With their own eyes they have a reflection of the past, a sight of the present and a glimpse into the future. Any three of these stages alone is enough to spin someone into madness, but rarely does it affect the narcissist, who to the contrary is excited to see their form in the mirror. First the excitement is weak; it may start as beauty or strength, then it is strong and turns into power, and finally; when the desire becomes violent, it also becomes visually tragic.

King Brian II and Queen Leah, along with their children, complete a family photoshoot. (1969)

Chapter 70

DARK WITHOUT STARS

3:2:7:70

I heard the door to our room shut for the final time and when I saw all the luggage that we carried, that's when it hit me that soon we would be home again.

After we left the inn and said goodbye to Dobbie, we walked out into midnight and waited for our driver. He drove us to the train station where we again waited until we boarded. Because Sara had already been carrying Kirby, when we got to our adjacent rooms Sara kept mothership of the baby who would sleep all throughout the night.

Inside Lynne and I's cabin it was almost identical to the one we came in except even nicer. When I sat down on the resting area, I made a joke. "You're like corporate now, huh?" She laughed but it was kind of an empty or obligatory laugh.

She at current wasn't the usual Lynne, but Lynne isn't always Lynne. And I do wonder if it's because of her bare fingers or if it's because the vacation is over. My guess would be the rings; she's adventurous but there are times when she just wants to sleep.

To try to make her forget about her lost rings I asked her if she would like to go to the open-air car with me, there was one at the end of the train and one in the middle. She said that she would love to and I let her choose which.

We left our cabin and made our way through the dimly lit train, passing cabins of sleeping passengers. When we got to the open-air car that was at the end of the train we saw that there was no one there and that the sky was dark without stars or moon.

The moment we walked into the car we could feel the air rush past us, we could hear and feel the metal grinding against the tracks, we could smell the distinction of the fields and trees we were riding through.

We walked up to the borders of the car and looked out beyond the safety barriers to see a part of the country we had never seen before. Soon Lynne set down her backpack and took out her notebook and a pen. She came closer to me until she passed under my one arm as if it were one of those lifting gates you can drive under. When the gate came back down and she stood with her back to my front, she took my arm, placed the pen in it, and then guided my hand to draw what we saw.

Like the stars before, we saw the same things differently. And when we passed by a dark lake, in it I'm sure she saw some type of failure. For me I remembered Spookieni and his drowning of the Pacific children. One by one he took them each and he drowned them all in the dark lake.

There was a time I overheard someone say they were an anti-natalist, and the person they were talking to called them a nihilist. Just for clarification, an anti-natalist is someone who believes it is wrong to have children and a nihilist is someone who believes

life has no meaning. The person who called the other person a nihilist was wrong to mix the two terms up. A true nihilist wouldn't care if you have children or not, everything is meaningless anyway; and while an anti-natalist believes life is suffering without meaning they actively do not want people to have children. The nihilist simply would not care one way or another.

If an anti-natalist believes humans should not reproduce, I would assume one taken to the extreme would be of the opinion that we should even go so far as to commit mass suicide. I would respect the opinion of a person like that, but I would also offer the idea of being suicidally incorrect. How does one know that one-hundred thousand years from now our descendants didn't actually commit mass suicide and we were born into the same existence in the same cycle of hell for eternity.

My thinking is that since we are already here, we might as well try to make the world a better place and reduce the suffering of everyone. Or maybe I'm wrong and we will live for billions of years in the perpetual state of hell we are trying to avoid and mass suicide would have been a far profitable answer. Isn't it great to be a conscious and intelligent organism?

While Lynne drew with my hand we left nature and entered into a dark and quiet town, so naturally this became part of her art. "Will you come back with me here again in a couple years?" "...Well one of the reasons I went on this vacation with you guys is because you stay inside with me all day, so yeah, it's the least I can do."

With Darlene still on her mind she began telling me that meeting in a plain way wasn't so bad, and that if you actually think about it, having an ordinary first interaction can become extraordinary depending on how your story goes and ends. Looking back on that day can make something so passing so firm.

As we drove through the city we went through many strange places of the town. For a while it was just me, her and whatever scene was before us. And then there was a sudden change. The dark town disappeared and was replaced by tunnel walls. The change of air flow almost took the notebook and the piece of paper we were drawing on along with it but she pressed against my hand firm to keep it down. But without any scenery, she stopped drawing.

I moved our hands to the top center of the drawing just over the nature and town buildings she had drawn and now I took over the piece. I started by drawing one almond. Since I had my reference, I drew the other almond. Inside the almonds I drew twin suns. And finally, on the tops of both I flicked away drawing strong dark eyelashes. I could feel the way I drew the lashes make her slightly laugh with her back pressed against me. And when I was finished, there were a set of eyebrows to the eyes that looked out from the top of the dark town.

I may have been drawing, but as a writer I understand that you have to find that delicate balance between playing tricks on the reader and playing tricks with the reader.

I placed the pen down but pushed my body forward, pressing Lynne's body against the surface before her. When she picked the pen back up she began writing in one of the corners of the drawing. It was the name of the country we were leaving and the date we were leaving it. This drawing, along with the handcuffs and a number of other souvenirs I'm sure were going into her collection.

If someone told me that I had one year left to live, not much would change about me. I wouldn't start traveling because if I wanted to travel I would already be doing that. I wouldn't need to tell the people that I love them because they already know that I do. Most of all I would be okay with it, I think. I wouldn't really know unless it actually happened. The only thing that would really change about me is that I would think more. So I guess I would just do more of what I'm already doing.

I have to say, though, I spent thirty days straight in a foreign land encased in a residential building not my own with two teenagers, a baby and a woman, and I only felt I wanted to die once, maybe twice, of those thirty days. That is more or less a testament to my tolerance of them. Mainly of Lynne. And that strange tolerance of her, weirdly it does not detract but instead heightens my attraction to her.

For a long time now I have known the price of loving her, but after this vacation, I now know her worth. She's not priceless, because my romantic love for her comes with conditions, but her worth is like words to a poem, flowers to a garden, fruits to a picnic. She's worth more than any crown on any head or any crown on any finger. And in going back home tonight, where tomorrow will be yesterday, the passion I feel for her yearns for Casanova love. With her I want that unstable love in the sky that connects dots to form Lytheia. And every night with disordered madness I'll look into those eyes that are always dark without stars.

Volume 3 - Composition 2
(3:2 / 8 / VIII)

Part 8

Chapter 71

“UNTIL DEATH DO US PART”

3:2:8:71

Princess Elaine watches as construction men continue developing the estate's new apartment building. (1976)

THE 1980s ushered in a new era of Flanagan royalty. The family entered new heights in popular culture and had become like celebrities who were celebrated for their large celebrations. With this new status they found themselves featured in every facet of life; mentioned in movies, sung about in songs and talked about in tabloids. And on display today, being filmed and broadcast for the entire world to see, was the wedding ceremony of four such celebrities; the twins Summer and June were having a twin wedding to marry themselves to Marc and Mark, two unrelated men who would soon be related by law.

At about noon on the wedding day some of the royalty who were part of a royal bookclub were up discussing their latest read, *Deep Shades* by G. Matthew McClane. They had done so in Virginia's apartment, which was just one of many apartments in an apartment building located on the Flanagan estate and was erected four years ago. Other tenants in the building included Jessica and Thomas, who were married, and Elaine, who was married to Prince Spencer but lived in the apartment alone.

“The best romance is romantic but not romantic at all,” Virginia suggested. “Elaborate,” Elaine asked. “In order for it to be true romance, it has to have a happy ending. This book does not, which is truly what makes it so romantic.” “I think what V is trying to say is that at the end we as readers are left to enter a fantasy world where we can see the two lovers together,” Thomas interrupted, “In our own minds we can envision what would have been of their lives had they stayed together,” “And it makes us think of our own lives in a romantic way, too,” Jessica added, “I couldn't imagine my life without Thomas,” she finished.

Just before they all left to enter the main castle, Elaine made a final observation of the book, “The best thing about the novel I think is that it depicts the idea that romance always has one person who has an ideal fantasy of the other person, and that it is usually of a man to a woman. We women may be emotional, but men are fantastic.”

Prince Brian III had been holding his son, Matthew Flanagan, when his wife, Princess Sophia, walked into the royal room. The prince had been sober ever since his son was born, but for the first time in a year he was yearning for his psychedelic past. There was nothing in his current life, not even the heightening prestige of royalty, that made him feel high.

“Here,” the prince said handing the one year old baby to his mother. After she had

accepted the baby the princess looked into her husband's eyes and recognized the sight of them. It was the way he used to look more than a year ago when he needed to distort his reality.

“You have no idea what you want, do you?,” she said angrily to him. “You have a healthy son, your own health, a wife who loves you and a kingdom that will be yours, and you still can't appreciate any of it.”

Brian III replied back to his wife angrily, “Who are you to judge me? You were next to nothing before I married you. I don't know what I want? Women never have any idea what they want, you have to show them what they want in order for them to become aware of it.”

The baby began crying from the yelling and Sophia tried to calm him down. Walking out of the room, she shouted at her husband, “Men know exactly what they want, but you all want stupid things!”

Many yards away in another royal room were Shelly and Vivian. It was the first day Shelly had returned to the Flanagan estate after twenty years of absence. Circa 1960, Shelly had developed leprosy, a disease that made her hideous and a human being to be feared because of its contagious nature. Aubry and Alex, along with the Flanagan family, had decided to send her away indefinitely, until the revolutionary treatments of Dr. Guy Faget cured her and she was allowed to return to her home.

On this day and in this room, Vivian was helping reintegrate Shelly into luxurious life. In preparation for the wedding she had her try on many dresses and much jewelry while they listened to the pop music of the year.

“So, any good rumors going around? I haven't had that thrill in twenty years,” Shelly asked Vivian. “I thought you'd never ask,” Vivian laughed, “there's been something brewing in the last couple months about Summer liking K and C liking June.”

Shelly had only a blank expression to give.

“Oh, sorry! K is Mark with a 'k' and C is Marc with a 'c'. So Summer is marrying C, but we think she might like K, and we also think C might actually be in love with June.” Shelly nodded her head in delight, “Good stuff. Good stuff.”

“You need to get out of this room and celebrate another decade with us,” Jeremy shouted at his daughter, Victoria, who for the last few years had become a shut-in. In a moment or two Cassandra would begin shouting as well, wondering why she couldn't be more like her sister, Jessica.

Victoria had an apartment on the estate, but elected to live mostly with her parents in their isolated home on the estate. She had become something of a recluse after completing the traumatic film-work she had done with Marshall Bradley Jameson; she had only ever stared in one film and would never try at another again.

Jameson's latest picture was also heralded as his greatest, titled *Dark Without Stars*, it was the story of a young man who was obsessed with a young woman. But what was shown on-screen was fueled by what occurred off-screen; in Jameson's mind, Victoria Flanagan was the identical image of the young woman he created, and also in his mind he was still that young man. And it went without saying, Jameson crossed many professional boundaries and did things to Victoria that would impact her for many years.

In her trauma she became a horrid person. Reclusive and unpleasant, she was dark without light. Among one of the offenses was the fact that she had intentionally started the rumor between the twins and their mates in an effort to taint their relationships as her own life was tainted itself.

Frederick and Fedora, who was the son and daughter, respectively, of Prince Spencer and Princess Elaine, were in a royal living room with George, who was half their age and the son of Jessica and Thomas. They had been excited to continue watching the third day of the Summer Olympics and to watch their country of origin succeed in attaining gold medals.

After watching the one-hundred meter sprint, the conclusion of the race caused all three to get up and begin sprinting down the many hallways, inspired by the spirit of the event.

Eventually the children would run so far and away that they ended up outside the castle and in the distant field before them were looking at the beginnings of another race. One that was much more competitive, had much more implication and was overall much more childish. Brittany and Cassandra watched as their two sons, Leonel and Leonardo, lined up to compete in their own race to see who was more athletically superior, an idea too inspired by the ongoing Olympic games. Aside from these four, and the three watching, the only other spectator was Jeffrey, as he would be shooting the gun to begin the race, and who watched the event in fascination and laughed at the vicarious rivalry between Brittany and Cassandra.

When Jeff's shot was fired into the air, both Leons began running and their mothers cheered them on. In the beginning, Leonel had gained a strong lead in the bout, but in the end Leonardo had successfully closed the gap and won the race. Seeing this, Cassandra began taunting Brittany, and Leonardo Leonel, because they knew that at least for the rest of the day, they had won this day's efforts of rivalry. But of course, it would be renewed the next.

In the evening, the twin wedding ceremony had finally begun. This ceremony was done within the walls of the castle and in its church, broadcast all over the world for everyone to celebrate this royal and eternal love.

Prince Spencer, sitting next to Jeffrey and Jeremy, began speaking to them in

whispers as King Brian II walked his twin princess daughters down the isle. “When you pick your spouse, you are picking who you are going to let take advantage of you, and who you are comfortable taking advantage of.” The two brothers laughed at the statement, and continued watching the ceremony.

It was an exuberant affair; the type of wedding fantasized and then manifested by young princesses and then congratulated by elder queens. Hanging by the ceilings on either sides of the stage were two large muted televisions to display how the celebration was being viewed to the world at large.

Everything was perfect; all guests were on their best behaviors and manners were well checked. Everything was going so well that there wasn't even a hint that something could go wrong.

And at the climax of the wedding, the twins and their lovers said their vows and their confirmations of union. And these were no ordinary unions, it was royal unity. They were not necessarily bound by God or law, but by status.

The moment the twin brides were announced as wives, everyone clapped. And at the same time, Wayne pointed at the television screen on the right. “Look, they are no longer broadcasting the ceremony,” he pointed and shouted.

Everyone looked up at the screen to find breaking news; there had been a terrorist attack at the Olympic games, an explosion that had claimed twenty-six lives and injured more than fifty. Queen Leah took hold of a remote and began switching through the news stations, finding that every news channel had replaced the wedding ceremony with the now breaking news of the terrorist attack. “My God!,” she said angrily, “The wedding is no longer on any of these channels!”

Leah turned around to look at King Brian II, who had already gotten up to inquire about the situation of the wedding not being broadcast and replaced by the terrorist attacks, but even as king, there was very little he could do to rectify the atrocity.

Under any account, the fact that the wedding was no longer being broadcast also brought about its end. The vows had already been made, the twins and their husbands had already been officially married, and with that everyone was mostly satisfied despite no longer being the center of worldly attention.

As the guests exited the premise, Prince Spencer and Trevor found themselves in a royal kitchen in search for food as they had not eaten prior. From the corner of his eyes, the prince ate a sandwich while simultaneously observing Trevor and his attempt to prepare a frozen food. When the prince saw that Trevor was reading the instructions wrong, he got up and tried to correct the error but suddenly Trevor began shouting at him. The anger ended with Trevor throwing the contents all over the prince, and the prince's response was to directly punch Trevor in his nose. With a broken and bleeding nose,

Trevor ran out of the kitchen crying from the attack. Spencer, angry, knew that he would have the deal with the annoying force that was Brittany.

As the king and queen set themselves for bed, Queen Leah was still upset about the interrupted broadcast of her daughters' wedding. "In the morning I want you to call the local news networks and have whoever made the decision to stop the broadcast of the wedding fired. Maybe we can't control the fates of the people in the networks in America or Canada or Japan or China or Germany or South Africa or Australia, but by God I will have the heads of the news people in this country."

King Brian II looked at his ravenous queen, and while he was not as fired up about the ordeal as she was, while observing his golden scepter which symbolized total sovereign power and authority, he made plans to have said heads.

In the night and back at the apartment grounds, Jessica and Thomas, along with their son, George, were also preparing to sleep. George told them all about the Olympic games and all of the running and swimming and how when he grew older, he wanted to do the same things. Jessica and Thomas paid very little attention to his dreams, as his role in society was already mapped out by the family he was born into. And as they went to lay to sleep, there was a knock at their door. It was Elaine, one of their neighbors on the same floor, who came to speak with Jessica.

Elaine invited Jessica back to her apartment, and despite being more than a decade older than Jessica, Elaine asked her advice concerning marital issues, specifically those concerning Prince Spencer who she felt had absolutely no respect for her. In the end, Elaine told Jessica that she wanted a divorce, but divorce in the royal family seemed to almost be grounds for treason, especially since she was not related to any of them by blood. She was not in love with the prince, but formally separating from him meant going back to her difficult upper-middle class life. She simply did not know what to do, and Jessica had no answers for her just the same.

At midnight, Summer and June were waiting in a car for K and C. Soon they would be boarding a plane for their honeymoon in the United States. While the two of them were in the car alone, they spoke of something delicate. The next phase in their lives was procreation, to have a child or children, and so they had made a pact that night. That if one couldn't or did not have children, nor would the other, and if one could or did have children, so would the other. And clauses in this pact had the inclusion of artificial pregnancies and abortions.

Finishing the discussion they watched as their new husbands exited the palace and began walking toward them. Smiling, the husbands smiled back, and soon the pairs were off to America.

As they drove, the twins seemed to have similar thoughts. "One of the most important

decisions you will ever make in your life is who to marry,” Summer thought to herself. And June in her own thinking finished that thought, “Indeed, it is so important that you can make it more than once.”

Victoria sits alone in the estate's arboretum under nightfall as she contemplates suicide. (1979)

Chapter 72

LYTHEIA PROMISED

3:2:8:72

WHEN I got to my floor and began exiting the elevator with my luggage, I heard Lynne begin to speak. "Text me when you get home so I know you got home safe," she joked. No one laughed but we all understood she was making an effort to not still seem so sad about her rings.

Entering my apartment I can't help but think of all the secrets the ocean keeps; all the treasures and all the bodies. When I got inside I turned on the light and walked into my bedroom, turning on another light and seeing my wonderful bed. I could have kissed it. Home, I like to be here when I can.

I emptied my luggage onto the bed, which was mostly clothes, and when I was done I put the luggage in the closet. I laid down on the bed and stared at the ceiling, wondering where I was going to buy Lynne's new ring from. I think I remember seeing a jewelry store at the mall we went to during Thanksgiving. Still staring at the ceiling, my mind was fixed on the ceiling fan. After staring at it for a complete minute, I suddenly remembered that I had Lisa's souvenirs in my backpack. Lynne wanted to bring her back a few things for allowing us to take Kirby with us to the vacation, and one of the items was a mini-fan. That was strange that I was looking at the fan for a while before it clicked in my mind.

We are all born relatively "unconscious." It is life's joys and life's woes that play a part in helping us develop a conscious nature. They help us develop empathy and even transgression. But something strange occurs when one begins to develop a consciousness; there is a battle between the unconscious brain and the newly forming conscious brain. Conflict between the old and the new is not a new concept by any means and is instead a very old one. And the strangeness of this always begins with recognition. If the unconscious brain and the conscious brain never recognize each other, and never become aware of the other, there will not be battle or conflict. But when they do, spiritual warfare will always ensue. Think of your brain right now and imagine a sum of it that is consciously aware and a sum of it that is not, aren't you already afraid of the sum that is unconscious? It feels like an old useless dusty dirty attic that could get you in trouble and your conscious brain knows it. And because your conscious brain is aware of this, because it has recognized the unconscious brain and the liability it may be, it will seek to eliminate it. The irony is that you will try to eliminate the unconscious brain in unconscious ways. Everything that progressive society has defined as good is what you will pursue. You will pursue an education so you don't seem ignorant on certain subjects. You will pursue wealth so that you may seem valuable. You will pursue a family so that

you may seem normal. You will pursue goodness so that you may seem fit for the society you are trying to integrate into. None of these pursuits are wrong, or bad, but often they are not pursued with a true free will, and this lack of free will is a tale-tell sign of unconsciousness.

But besides, the unconscious brain is not always the enemy to the conscious brain. I am willing to wager that the unconscious brain is also a storage unit for recognized patterns. And when a pattern that is stored in the unconscious brain is recognized by the conscious brain, something is activated for our own well-being. Let me give you an example.

A man and a woman who are married to each other are at a dinner party sitting at the dining table eating dinner. The man is sitting next to his wife, but also sitting across the table from his mistress. The wife is completely unaware of the mistress. She has no clue whatsoever. But indeed like so many wives she is a fervent enjoyer of romance movies that include infidelity. These movies have been stored in her unconscious brain and there are patterns within them that signal unfaithful behavior. And so when the husband or mistress say or do something that triggers her unconscious brain as recognized behavior, it will signal to her conscious brain and she will become aware of the possibility that her husband may be having an affair. This is when even at an evolutionary standpoint that the unconscious brain is more useful than the conscious brain, because it will recognize things that no other part of the brain can.

I messaged Lynne to come downstairs to retrieve Lisa's gifts. She came down quickly and left just as quickly.

For the following three days, something was off about her. I knew why, but I didn't know what. Every night at the inn, being that we slept in the same bed, we made flowers. Sorry I keep using that expression, it's just something she always says and I've come to adopt it. Either way, every night there it was basically expected to happen. As a result, we both got used to just sleeping naked. In the three days back, even when she comes downstairs just to take naps and she is sleeping alone, she sleeps naked. When I take naps, I do the same. I don't know that I could ever go back, I'm just used to it.

For the past three days she has slept down here at night, and keeping in custom with the vacation nights, there is no shortage of passion, but ever since she lost her rings it just hasn't been the same. I'm not sure how to explain it. It is almost like she does it each night solely to satisfy me as if it were her duty, and that's just not something I am especially interested in. Her nipples don't get as hard or as protrudent, I can barely feel her vagina contract on my penis when she orgasms. And while she is every bit as audible, that is also something she can control. It is only in the things that she cannot control that I know I have given her what she wants and what she needs.

On the fourth night enough was enough, and the following day I went to the mall in the afternoon and found that jewelry store.

I browsed around the small store and when the employee asked me if I needed help I gave her a polite no.

I saw many rings that I know Lynne would have loved, then again I think all these rings she would have loved, and I also saw that while they weren't the price of yard sale rings, they were moderately priced.

It wasn't until I came upon a section in the store that was filled with charms was I truly invested. And looking through the lot of them, I instinctively smiled when I saw a charm that was a flat purple rosehead. That had never happened to me before. It was weird. If the lady had sight of my face she may have thought I was gay. I suppose I was gay at that moment, but not in the homosexual sense.

The lady suddenly approached and this time didn't ask if I needed help or had any questions, she simply began speaking, telling me about all of the charms I was looking at.

I learned soon through her that these charms were a new product that had just released in the jewelry industry. The product was named Promises and came with a ring base, a necklace base and earring bases, and you could collect these charms and they attached to the bases. She told me, for example, that the purple rosehead charm could be purchased and it could attach to the ring, necklace or earrings, or all four, and each charm set came with four of the same charms if a person wanted to wear all of them at once.

"How much are the bases and each charm set?" "The bases are \$150 and each set is \$100." "One hundred dollars!," I said to myself in my mind. "What if I just wanted to buy the ring base and that one purple rosehead charm?" The lady began to look at me as if I dared put a price on true love. "They're not sold separately."

I looked back down at the collection of charms, and soon after the lady asked me if I was buying a ring for an engagement. I said no and briefly told her about how Lynne lost her rings to the ocean. I could see that she began to feel bad. "To make matters worse, she's an amputee," I tested her.

The next moments had me taking out my phone to show her a picture of my amputee wife. I also made sure to show her a picture of our son, David, and our daughter, Sarah, and our newborn son, Kirby. "She's my high-school sweetheart, she never took off her wedding band."

"Look, we're having a sale next week-end, but I'll let you in on it today if you spend at least \$1000. The bases will be \$100 and each charm set you buy will be \$75. If you wait until the week-end these might all be gone."

I ended up purchasing a total of nine charm sets. However, the purple rosehead was not currently in stock and it was the one single charm that was a requirement, so she sold

me the one on display and also gave me a free collection board seeing as I'm sure Lynne would buy additional charm sets. I also bought a digital watch for \$119 and two base sets of a ring, necklace and earrings. Man, did I just commit a jewel heist? Somebody stop me.

When I got home I took all of the contents out of the bags and placed them on my table. I took out the collection board and all nine of the charm sets. I placed each charm on the collection board and when I was done there were thirty-three charms attached to it as if in a display. Look, I might be a creepy guy, but I know beauty when I see it.

After all of the charms were on the collection board I went to the products main website, where there I found hundreds of charms. I saw a charm that was a cross, a turtle, a bunch of fruits, some flags of countries; there were hundreds and I couldn't see how Lynne and Sara wouldn't be excited to collect the ones they wanted.

At midnight I was still up and was taking time to think. Man, I need to get a job or something.

Anyway I knew that she would be down here soon and I wanted to be awake when she saw the collection board.

Periodically looking at the collection board, I was reminded of one of my thieves dreams. It had to have taken some place in Europe I think because it was a country that still had a monarchy. My partner and I had taken hostage of a royal family during one of their parties. I remember specifically that we targeted the women for their jewelry.

Seventeen or seventy you'll find that basically all humans of the female variety want to be or feel special in some kind of way. When I was younger I used to think that this was a phase that all girls and women would eventually grow out of, but in all my time living I have seen that this is mostly not the case. Women never grow up. This has led me to believe that there are parts of the brain that never really develop or evolve past adolescence or early childhood. Women might continue to grow intellectually, but I feel like there is an age where at their core they stop growing in terms of romantic love.

Affection from a woman, true affection from a woman, is something I never experienced before Lynne. Not from my mother and definitely not from any romantic partners. So I have a better understanding of why I was the way I was many years ago and why I am the way I am today. If the romantic part of my brain is still a little boy, it makes sense to me why her affection is what helps me grow.

Your sight never really improves I don't think, but even so you can see things better with intuition. And so while there are maybe parts of the brain that never develop or evolve past a certain age, they can be enhanced with intuition. So we know women never grow up, and we know they all want to be special, and I think the way their romantic brain is enhanced is when their intuition tells them it's not what they are wearing, but

instead who has given them what they are wearing. Their vision isn't really getting better, it's not developing or evolving, but their intuition in respect to what they deem a mate both develops and evolves.

I heard my doorknob rotate and speak of the Devil, in walked my therapist. She saw me first and then saw the board. As she walked up to the board she never took her eyes off of it. Standing right in front of it, she simply stared into it, carefully inspecting every charm. She looked at me, and then back at it, and then back at me and I could tell she was confused, so I handed her a pamphlet about the product because I didn't feel like explaining it.

She sat down on my lap and then turned so she was sideways and her legs hovered over the floor, and then she began reading the pamphlet. When she was done she put it down on the table and leaned over to grab the box before her which contained the ring base, the necklace base and the earrings base. She only took out the ring base and soon slid it onto her ring finger. It at present looked like a simple wedding band. She stuck her hand out into the air and stretched her fingers, then looked at me curiously.

I leaned and moved the collection board just in front of her. Then I detached the blue teardrop charm from the board and put it underneath her eye.

“This one has a double meaning. It's for your tears after losing your other rings but also for the water in the ocean that stole your rings.”

She took it from me and fixed it onto her ring. Once fixed, she held her hand out again to admire it. “I shall wear it every time it rains,” she joked. I laughed as she took it off.

The next one I gave her was the purple rosehead. As I went for it, she asked me why there was only one of them while all of the other charms were in sets of four. I put the purple rosehead charm to my heart and then extended it toward her in a very serious manner, “Because they only ever made one.”

After she fixed it onto her ring and held it out to admire it, I began speaking again. “When you first moved into the building, during the move I was watching you. I watched you knock on my neighbor's door, and then turn around to come knock on mine. And to this day I remember how my heart clutched. It felt like it skipped a beat. It was nerves for someone who never gets nervous. You can call it love at first sight, even though I don't really believe in that, but that's as close to it as you can get for a person like me I think.”

She looked at the purple rosehead charm again and I know without a shadow of a doubt that she felt special. “This one is my favorite so far,” she told me.

The next charm was a yellow smiley face at the center of a big red heart. She thought it was cute but I explained that it actually wasn't. “If a man like me smiles at a woman like you, that means I like you, and that is not necessarily a good thing for you. So just

know that when you put it on, if I can't have you, then no one else can." She looked at me strangely, but I knew that her girl-brain was excited at the prospect of both obsession and possession. Of worship and desire. And I knew that she knew that not only did a sociopath love her, but she was in love with one as well.

The next charm she tried on was a charm that was representative of the season of autumn, which we were approaching. It was three leaves together; green, red and yellow. She already knew what it meant even before she put it on, saying the moment she saw it she knew it was representative of our anniversary. She told me she thinks about it every year but never brings it up just in case I forget. "Four years together," she said, "and eight years knowing each other," she finished.

The next charm was a peace lily flower. She adored it and said it was one of the prettiest pieces of jewelry she had ever seen. She said the sight of it was nostalgic and brought her back so many years to the first time she ever tried planting them in a shade garden.

And now she had on a charm that was designed to look like a crown. As she admired it I wondered what it truly was that she would have been preferred to be called. A princess or a queen, a girl or a woman. It's something that I've noticed all my life; assuming the difference between a girl and a woman is the age of 18 or 21, I've seen some girls refer to themselves as women and some women refer to themselves as girls.

"What do you actually prefer? Girl or woman, princess or queen?" She looked at me as if I was stupid. "It changes, dummy." "What do you mean?" "Right now, I'm your girl... But in about fifteen minutes, I'm going to be your woman." I think I knew what that meant, but I didn't want to ask so I didn't further my stupidity.

The next charm was a white star. "It reminds me of the game we played on vacation," she said. But I told her that it was the star I named Lytheia, the only star in the night sky that I could see. "Is she a goddess?" she asked. "The Greek goddess of dreams."

Attached to her ring now was the design of a red flame with a black outline. She instantly began talking about how this matched perfectly with her red shoe and her small red dress and black leggings, and I told her that one of these days she should dress up so I could take pictures of her again.

The final charm left on the collection board that she had not fixed to her new ring was one of an infinity symbol. And when it was fixed to her ring, she admired it the same way she did the others. It was indeed indicative of a vast universe of beauty within one body and mind, but it was in recognition to another thing as well.

"I know you were just joking around when you called me naive and told me that promises were meant to be broken, but I'm not naive, I'm loyal, and I never have and never will break any promise I make to you because I am a man of my word."

I could tell she was ashamed of calling me naive even if it was in kidding, but I just couldn't tell why she hadn't even smiled the whole time she was here.

"I love it all," she said, "I just feel guilty that I love these more than the ones I lost already." I could tell she was telling the truth because through all of this, she had not once asked me how much any of this costed. That was because there was no way in Hell she was going to have these returned. For one night she was going to accept this status of elegance.

"Smile for me, just once," I requested as I squeezed her hip. She looked at me and finally smiled. I would kill to see that smile. When I smiled back I squeezed her hip harder and her smile turned into laughter as she scooted and brought her head down onto my chest. She brought out her hand again one last time to admire the infinity symbol.

"I'm going to buy some for myself, but will you buy me some, too, from time to time, it's prettier that way," she asked. "Sure, once a year." I just have to find out when they have weekend sales.

As she sat on me, I told her that the other bases were for Sara and that the digital watch was for David. "You didn't get anything for Kirby?" "No?," I gave her a confused answer. "I'm just joking," she laughed.

She lifted her head off of me, and then stood up off of me and grabbed my hand. "If I'm your one true star and the only star that you can see in the dark sky," she said as she walked me to the bedroom, "then I'm going to give you infinite dreams."

Chapter 73

GENERATION X

3:2:8:73

Trevor "Slant" Flanagan sits in his room looking over his large collection of music. (1989)

IN 1990, princess twins Summer and June helped popularize the new jewelry sensation known as Forever rings. They were rings that had interchangeable pieces of jewelry that could attach to the ring, and at the present moment in 1990 there were more than twenty available attachments that could be used on the new ring idea.

In the morning of what was supposed to be a day of jubilation celebrated during a Super Blood Moon occurrence, the twins sat, both pregnant and all and wearing matching blue diamond ring attachments, in a palace living room speaking about how the royal family was going to be funding the building of an apartment tower in San Rashida City. Both princesses had already given birth nearly a decade ago, Summer naming a daughter Anastasia and soon to name another daughter Sonya, and June naming a son Kevin and soon to name another son Edward.

Walking past them with a portable cassette player in hand but no headphones on ears was Trevor, who was storming the castle looking for a pair so he could listen to some of his favorite songs. In ten years, from 1980 to 1990, Trevor had grown obese, weighing two-hundred and seventy-three pounds and standing at five foot and nine inches, but cared so little did Trevor about what anyone thought of him, mentally or physically, so much so that for the past year he had begun presenting himself almost exclusively wearing a black ninja ski-mask hood, no upper clothes to expose his large gut, and a pair of brown sweatpants.

"Trevor!," Summer called out to him. He didn't respond. She called him again, "Trevor!" Again, no response. And this time June called out, "Slant!" Trevor turned around as he had declared a year earlier that this would be the only name he would answer to.

"What the fuck do y'all want?," Slant walked up and asked the twin princesses. They giggled at his seriousness. "Please do remember to wear the suit and tie we got you yesterday," the twins said simultaneously. "...Is that it?," Slant asked. When the sisters looked at each other, Slant immediately walked away, passing a room where Erica was speaking with Jessica.

Within the past few years, Erica had wed Leonel. Leonel had married her in response to Leonardo's wedding, who married a woman named Courtney. Leonel's wedding was a calculated move by his mother, Brittany, to relieve a forty year-old grudge she held against Cassandra. She had told her son to wait until after Leonardo's wedding so that

they may plan accordingly to make it superior in every way. And this indeed is what occurred. The union of Erica and Leonel was so immaculate and so prestigious that everyone had forgotten about Courtney's and Leonardo's. Cassandra suspected this would be the case, and she knew Brittany would try to outdo her, but she could not delay the bolstering love that Courtney and Leonardo had for each other.

Though new players in the game, Erica and Courtney already knew the rules; there were none in relation to each other and every thing was fair game. In speaking with Jessica, Erica, who was a few months pregnant, spoke of Courtney's pregnancy. Through rumors not started by herself, Erica spoke to Jessica of the possibility that Courtney's unborn child may not have belonged to Leonardo. There was one problem with this revelation, however, and it was a problem that would theme throughout the day of the Super Blood Moon; Jessica was being deceptively attentive to Erica's words but did not realize Erica was speaking of Courtney and instead thought she spoke of June, who of course was also pregnant.

In Virginia's apartment at the apartment building on the Flanagan estate she was speaking with Cassandra about a sensitive subject, so in her sensitivity she made sure to whisper. "Brian III is on drugs, I found a large supply in his locker," Virginia said. Cassandra was immediately interested, though because her main focus was on what dress she would be wearing to tonight's jubilee, and perhaps because of her psychology toward Brittany, she misheard the subject's name and instead heard Leonel. "What's his combination?," Cassy asked. Virginia wrote down the combination on a piece of paper and handed it to Cassy who took it with plans to see the drugs for herself.

"How well do you know Viv?," Frederick asked Queen Leah. "Well enough to know that a woman without a child or a husband is not to be trusted. She reminds me of Dorothy, honestly." "Have you ever heard of her doing voodoo or black magic?" "No... Why?"

Fred began telling the queen about strange noises he had heard one night when passing by Vivian's room. It was about two in the morning, he walked past the large windows as the curtains blew inward from the wind and he could see the full moon in the sky. And when he passed by Vivian's room, he heard chants and saw strange lights form the frame of her door.

Queen Leah was engrossed in his story, so engrossed her mind remembered a night when the same thing had occurred to her, except instead it had been of Princess Elaine's room. And in speaking of devilish things, Elaine suddenly called out to her son, Fred, needing his help moving somethings outside. The queen stared at Elaine strangely, her mind completely replacing Vivian with Elaine in the conduction of black magic.

Sophia had been helping Wayne move somethings from the indoors to the outdoors

for the coming celebration and they had also been speaking about C, husband to Summer. Princess Sophia, future queen and mother to future king Matthew, was a keen observer of human behavior, and it was in her interest that she suspected C to be a homosexual. Everything that she had ever known of them told her that he was one of them. And Wayne, with his thick ears, did not realize that she had changed the subject from Trevor to C and agreed that his behavior indeed was becoming more and more bizarre by the year.

Jeremy had been visiting the apartment block to speak to his daughter, Jessica, when he suddenly ran into Shelly. Shelly had let him know that currently Jessica was aiding Erica in gathering supplies for tonight's celebration, but that she wouldn't be long. Instead of walking all the way back to his own home, he decided he would stay and for whatever reason Shelly began speaking about Fedora. "She's a strange one, huh?," Shelly said of Fedora, "She behaves more like a boy than a girl." Shelly had said this because she observed Fedora to be something of a tomboy; she loved shooting guns and bows and wearing stylish suits suited solely for men. Jeremy did not pay much attention to the matter, and when he returned to Shelly's words, he made note of the word serial killer. He did not notice that Shelly was no longer speaking of Fedora, but of her father, Prince Spencer, and about how she suspected the prince to be a serial killer because of his unusual behavior the past decade. And so in Jeremy's mind, he began imagining Fedora as a serial killer, and coupled with her strange tendency toward male presentation, his mind became curious.

King Brian II and George had been on the estate's golf course settling a friendly dispute. George, despite his youth, said he was as experienced in the sport as the king, and so the king proposed a wager. Nine holes, nine-hundred in currency. As they drove the golf cart to the sixth hole, George began speaking about Victoria, who died by her own hands in 1982 after several bouts with depression.

"They all seem to think that June could have saved Tori if she had spoken out about it, but instead she kept the conversations between them to herself and never told anyone else," George said of June. The king was tired of thinking of the depressing mess that was of the whole Victoria situation and the chaos it caused the months following it. He was also tired of hearing that his daughter was in part to blame. And so in tune with Flanagan psychology, he subconsciously began blaming someone else, her sister, Jessica, who it would have made more sense to have become Tori's confidant.

Jeffrey and Leonel were tasked with phoning in all of the day's expenses to all of the different departments. Jeff handled mostly the foods and Leonel handled mostly the services. As they called and called different departments, inbetween calls they sometimes made comments to eachother, one such comment being made by Leonel that Leonardo

had been harassing a woman outside of his marriage and outside of the royal family. Jeff inquired as to who this woman was but Leonel could not provide an answer. Having not really paid attention to who Leonel was speaking of and moreso concentrating on dialing a phone number, Jeff was suddenly called by K on another line, telling him they had just ordered crabs and to add it onto the list. A bit annoyed by K, and with K on his mind instead of Leonardo, Jeffrey looked at Leonel and told him that he always thought he was a person who would indeed harass a woman and not know her boundaries.

The final interaction of importance in the afternoon was between Thomas and Princess Brittany. Thomas claimed to Brit that Summer remarked that she thought she was slightly prettier than her twin sister and that it should be her who should be the primary face of the family. Brittany, now suffering through what her predecessor, Aubry, had suffered through, found it amusing the circle of beauty, but in her thinking of one twin, she thought of the other.

“I'm gettin' righteous with my time, fuck. When less is more, my vibe sucks,” Slant said as he walked through the halls in his suit and tie. Eventually he found the main outdoor area where all of the celebration had been taking place. This particular jubilee was held outdoors so that the party-goers could have a full view of the Super Blood Moon.

Playing in the grassy area was a large portion of the children. They were Anastasia and Kevin, Matthew, Monica, Kimberly and Tobias, and of this family they were the final additions to Generation X.

As the children played the popular hide and seek game Kings & Queens, the Super Blood Moon slowly rose above them until one of the children noticed it. “Look! It's the Super Bloody Moon!,” Matthew said excitedly. But the children saw what the parents could not, for already they had began bickering at eachother over confused rumors and misheard gossip.

The first domino to fall was pushed by Princess Brittany, who said to the others aloud that June believed that she was prettier than Summer and that it would be best if she was the primary face of the royal family's affairs. This was untrue, as it was actually Summer who thought this of June.

“I knew you thought you were prettier than me!,” Summer shouted at June, “We were supposed to be on the cover of magazines together!” “I have never thought such things!,” June snapped at Brittany and then at Summer. “Brittany is just jealous that she is old and wrinkly and no longer the prettiest in this family. She's become an old fart just like the old fart Aubry was before her!”

“Hey! Cool it about the dead!,” Jessica interrupted, “And besides, rumor has it the baby you're carrying isn't even K's!” June gasped at the implication that she had had an

affair. K looked at his wife, "Is it true?" June resented the implication, screaming a resounding "No!" But K could not believe it, and he looked through the crowd for C. "Marc, did you have an affair with my wife?," he asked him calmly and coldly. Erica, in seeing this altercation, could only shake her head as she recalled telling Jessica that it was Courtney who may have had the affair, not June.

"No, I didn't have sex with your wife," C answered just as coolly. Jeffrey was puzzled that K was so annoyed. "Aren't you the one harassing a woman outside of your marriage and outside of the royal family?," Jeff said sharply to K. "What?!", K denied the allegation that his wife heard clearly. "What is this about harassing a woman?," June asked. "I haven't the slightest clue what Jeff is speaking of," K answered his wife. When Leonel heard this rumor by Jeff, he put his hand to his forehead, saying under his breath so that no one could hear him that it was Leonardo who was the harasser.

"Okay, okay, fine now," Leonel said to the crowd, "let's just settle down before someone gets hurt." This display of masculinity angered Cassandra, who in her anger said "Wait a minute. You're not blameless in all this. Aren't you the one who's been stealing drugs in shipments?," Cassandra said to a befuddled Leonel. Brian III looked around anxiously.

"I don't even use drugs," Leonel said looking at Brittany. Jeremy, being told of Leonel's alleged drug use earlier in the day chimed in, "Shall we have a look at your locker, then?" "I don't even have a locker!," Leonel finished.

"Would you guys stop it already? If Leonel did drugs I think we would all know," Fedora said. Jeremy looked at Fedora in her expensive navy blue suit and bow-tie. "Says the tomboy serial killer." "Serial what?" "You heard me. All you're missing is a Fedora hat and you would totally pull off the gangster look," Jeremy finished. Though it was meant to be taken as an insult, Fedora had never thought of wearing a Fedora hat, which at the moment was of peak interest to her and she made a mental note to purchase one the following afternoon.

"If we're talking about gender roles, what about Trevor?," Wayne cut in. "What about Trevor?," Slant asked. "Apparently you've never been with a woman because you want a man, isn't that true?," Wayne cut in. Trevor did not reply but only walked toward Wayne to try and strike him in the face. The first punch missed, but the second one did not, and Prince Spencer looked on in horror at the violent maniac he had produced ten years earlier.

When Wayne began to fight back, striking Slant in his nose, others tried to break them apart but were too struck upon. The excitement of all this released two more rumors. Queen Leah began shouting that she feared Princess Elaine was in the process of bringing black magic upon the estate to end the royalty and King Brian II accused Jessica

of failing to help Victoria with her depression and instead allowed her to suppress it which ultimately caused her demise.

By now the entire party was a frenzy under the Super Blood Moon. There was shoving and yelling and repressed emotions became depressed rotations of blame. And throughout all of this, suddenly Summer went into labor. When the others became aware of this, the fighting stopped. “What do we do!?,” George asked. And just like that, Summer's labor induced June's labor and they were both well on their way to giving birth on the night of this Super Blood Moon.

Trevor had run all the way to the apartment block, guts bouncing and all, to wake up the family doctor. When the doctor ran back to the party he saw the twins in twin labor. They were safely moved into a room in the palace, helpers pushing over personal computers and video game consoles.

The labor was intensive and the process of birth excruciating, but by the end of it all were born Sonya and Edward under a Super Blood Moon. The pair would have their births immortalized by the Forever brand that the twins endorsed; two new attachments would be created of two red half-moons to commemorate each child, and they would easily become the fastest selling piece of jewelry the world had ever known.

*Twin princesses Summer and June reading the same novel by the estate's pool under a sunny day.
(1983)*

Chapter 74

HARM BY CHARM

3:2:8:74

PART #1: HARM

LYNNE sat with David, Sara, Kane, Kristi and Pattie. Kane had told her that his father told him to tell her that the publishing company he worked for told him to tell her that her book of poetry was still being looked at and that they might want to meet with her in the following weeks.

Lynne soon got up, passing a sleeping Kirby and asked the children if anyone wanted anything from the kitchen. They all said no.

When she sat back down, Kane asked where the bathroom was. Sara pointed him in the direction and while walking toward it, Kane asked the others if anyone wanted anything from the bathroom. They all looked at him puzzled, and he soon went on his way.

A little past midnight the children were still up and Lynne saw that it was way past the usual time she had made her nightly visits to the narrator's apartment. She looked at the kids, then at Kirby, then said to them all that she was going to go downstairs and to keep an eye on Kirby, though she didn't think he would wake up because he had only just gone to bed.

She left the apartment and began walking toward the large windows that looked out into the city. For a brief moment she stopped and stared out into San Rashida and thought on the intangible map of dreams.

Going down the stairs she ran into a neighbor with a dog and said hello. Soon she was turning the doorknob to the narrator's apartment and when she entered she saw him sitting near his window with a strange board of what looked to be jewelry. "Finally," she thought to herself as she walked toward it.

"If I'm your one true star and the only star that you can see in the dark sky," she said as she walked me to the bedroom, "then I'm going to give you infinite dreams."

As she pulled me toward the bedroom I took my hand out of hers and instead walked over to my door. I pulled on the security chain then locked the door then walked back toward her and motioned her into the room. When we were both inside, I found a chair and used it to barricade the bedroom door and then locked that one, too. When I turned around to look at Lynne she was confused. "Why are you being so paranoid?" she asked as she simultaneously took off her jean-shorts and went to lay on her back on the bed.

"No, get up," I said breaking a blind on my window to look out into the dark city suspiciously, "Go into the shower and take off the showerhead and wash everything from

your hips down,” I told her. She afterward took off her underwear and her shirt and began walking toward the bathroom. “And Lynne, I mean everything,” I told her. She looked at me suspiciously.

After a few seconds I heard the shower run. I walked into the bathroom myself and turned on the faucet. When she heard it, she moved aside the curtains and watched me as I washed my penis and testicles with some of the flavored soap she had put in here. And I looked at her as she had the showerhead aimed at her vagina.

When I was finished I left the bathroom and looked out suspiciously at the dark city once more. It was half-past midnight now and right before she came back out I checked that the chair was at the best angle to keep the door closed and it was.

“Lay down on the bed. On your stomach.” She looked at me confused, almost even a bit worried. “I promise I will make it feel good,” I told her.

After she laid out flat on the bed I walked up to her and put my hand over her fleshed foot. I bent her lower leg toward her body so that it formed in ninety degrees. Smoothly and gently I began massaging her foot, pressing softly against veins and moving my fingers between her toes. When she looked back at me, she looked with royal eyes.

“Who’s the king?,” I asked her. And as I slid my hand down her foot, she answered with confidence, “You are.”

I brought my face forward and then my body forward so I could get onto the bed with her, then I licked a long way down the side of her foot, my tongue leaving behind a trail of saliva that ended where I sucked on a part of her foot and released it to make a wet sound.

I placed her lower leg back down onto the bed and got directly behind her and on all fours. I kissed the ankle of her fleshed foot, then asked her another question. “Who do I rule over?” She took some time, but she eventually answered. “Me.”

I slid my tongue all along her smooth leg up until I reached the backside of her knee because at that point I had run out of saliva and had to wet my mouth. I started again from her knee and went all the way up her thigh and to her left buttock, where when I stopped I took a mouthful of it, sucking it and releasing it to make that wet sound. Before I got to where I was really trying to go, I said one last thing to her. “Say my name.”

She did not take long at all to reply, “King Julien.”

I moved myself so I was hovering over her and slightly pulled her left leg upward and she instinctively and slightly moved her hips so I would have a better view of her vagina. When I saw her flower, my erection came within seconds. I placed both of my hands on her bottom and squeezed them upward gently, then released and moved my hands a little off to the side so I could plant my entire face into said bottom. The moment I was stuffed into her my tongue found wet vagina. Her cheeks against mine I used my hands to smush

her ass against my face as I licked and sucked on a part of her so sensitive. She was silent, but I could feel her move her arms so she could get more comfortable and I could feel her lift her left leg up even higher so I could go deeper in. I was now fully entrenched into her and I played with her cheeks as my tongue went as far into her as it could. I could feel her contract and release on me but I didn't hear her at all and I didn't feel like she was getting the same sensation from oral sex as she got from penetrative sex. And another problem was the fact that I was fully erect but had no way of pleasing myself.

I removed myself out of her and when she looked back she seemed dissatisfied that I had stopped.

“Two things,” I said to her, “I can't get in as far as I want to and it would be nice if I got a handjob while in there.”

Lynne got up onto her knees and turned around toward me and then put her hands on my shoulders and pushed me down onto my back. I stretched out my legs and then she turned back around so I could see her bottom. While on all fours she backed up until I grabbed her bottom and guided it down toward my face. She was now upright while sitting on my face and I had the pleasurable sensation of her cheeks pressed against mine even more firm and my tongue felt like it was trapped inside her vagina. At the same time I could feel her grab hold of my penis.

As she went down a bit more and increased the pressure slightly, I used my hands to massage her buttocks and now I was opening my mouth fully and closing it fully repeatedly as if to swallow whole all of her. Pushing down a little bit more on my face my tongue was as far as it had ever been inside her and I moved it all around her walls and finally she began her delicate moaning.

With every moan more sensual than the last she beat wildly up and down across my penis. And with every moan I could feel small tightenings of her walls on my tongue. With every tightening she was more powerful against my penis until I ejaculated completely all over whatever was in the vicinity. Without warning she sat down forcefully and was crushing my head against the bed and she had orgasmed so hard that her walls completely closed on my tongue and my mouth and I could not breathe. I held my breath for as long as I could as her vagina contracted and released and contracted and released and when I could hold it no longer I tapped on her right buttock as she was suffocating me and finally she let up.

She moved her body a bit toward my chest and had both of her hands on my thighs. She didn't say anything but all she was doing was panting and breathing heavily as I could only do the same. With her body a bit away from me I passed my hand across my mouth to clean off her vaginal fluids.

And then again without a warning she moved her bottom back toward me and

smothered my face with it. She watched as I quickly grew erect again and then began beating wildly again up and down my penis. This time she didn't go down gently in an incremental fashion, she simply pressed down against my face completely so I could be all the way in her, and as I rotated my tongue inside her, her moans were like something out of a blue dream. While these oral moans were not as intense as the penetrative moans, she was moaning in a way that I had never heard before, I think because I was not pounding my body against hers and this was a more vulnerable action and position for her.

Similarly, when I ejaculated for a second time, her orgasm soon followed as well in intense fashion. She had orgasmed so hard that after smothering my cheeks with her cheeks and closing herself and reopening herself and closing herself onto my mouth she moved forward and her entire body seemed to clench within. In her clenching, her hand accidentally slipped from all of the semen on my body and all of the semen on her hand and it landed directly on my testicles. The pressure from this widened my eyes and caused me to shout.

“Lynne!” Before I knew it, I had gotten up and placed my back against the headboard and had been holding my penis and testicles. She was hurried and when she realized what she had done she was immediately fearful.

“I'm sorry I slipped!,” she said coming toward me to see the damage she had done. I closed my eyes and tried to shut out the pain and she kept saying stupid annoying things that weren't helping. Soon she also sat toward the headboard and was trying to move my hand so she could see what had happened. “Don't touch it!,” I said excitedly at her and she immediately retreated.

We sat there for a minute, and it wasn't until two minutes that it began to rescind in pain. “Sorry,” she tried again. I didn't say anything and just looked at her, and then removed my hand when the pain was gone to see a flaccid penis.

After a moment she took my hand and lifted it toward her face, then set it down on the side of her neck. She made her face to look up at the ceiling and with her own hand she used my hand to massage her neck. First she started with tiny exhalations, then barely imperceptible sounds, and soon and slowly she began to delicately moan again as my hand went back and forth on the back and side of her neck. When she began pulling at her right breast and her right nipple, what was soft was becoming hard again.

“I want to worship the scepter,” she said softly through the moans. “The what?,” I asked half knowing what she meant. The soft moans turned briefly to soft laughter and then back to soft moans again as she cupped my testicles and began massaging them. When she saw that I was fully erect again with veins the sight of lightning, she told me to guide her mouth to it by directing her head with my hand. As she went down toward it

she angled her face and then her mouth, and finally she brought out her tongue when she made contact with it, sliding it down the entire length of my penis and to my testicles and leaving behind a trail of her saliva.

She re-positioned her body to lay down on the bed so she was more comfortable about it. Her legs stretched back a little so she could be a little on her side and her stomach, and then she made her way all the way back up from my testicles to the tip of my penis where she nuzzled just the very top of it. She brought around her hand to the base of my penis so she could control, then sucked hard the tip of it and in releasing she made a sudden soft wet pop of a sound.

When she came back toward it she licked it once, then looked at me, then angled it so she could put half of it into her mouth. I could feel her tongue tasting the bottom-side of it, and when she came back up to the tip of it I watched as she moved her tongue in circular motions around the head.

By now my right hand had been squeezing repeatedly her right buttcheek as she played with my penis with her mouth. And soon my right hand slid across her back and toward the back of her head so I could play with her hair as she played with me.

I had produced so much pre-ejaculate fluid and she had produced so much saliva that the first time she went down and nearly deepthroated me and nearly swallowed whole my penis and then came back up to the tip, she bathed my cock with a small white waterfall and then nearly deepthroated me again.

When she came back up there was no bath, she went back down again to nearly deepthroat me whole and she repeated this process over and over again, bathing my cock every few reiterations. The smooth roughness of her repeated sucking had me moving my hand back down her back and toward her pussy where I began rubbing it. She sucked and sucked and I could hear tiny moans as I rubbed her sensitive areas.

On one irregular deepthroat I took my left hand and placed it on the top of her head and stopped her head from coming back up to the tip. She moved slightly from side to side with my penis completely lodged in her throat, and with a soft forcefulness I began pushing down on her head so I could go deeper into her.

“You like hurting me, don't you?,” I said to her. She began gagging as I continued to force her face further toward my body as I rubbed her vagina. “How does that feel?,” I continued to push her head down until not a single inch of my penis was visible to me and it was all inside of her, suffocating her.

It is always about power. The same power you feel when you've ended a life.

I began to rub her more vigorously and when her vagina contracted on my fingers and she began choking, my penis grew larger with her mouth as I orgasmed and ejaculated into her. I felt myself release at least three times but I must have lost count after the third

time, and after the third my left hand must have become useless as she slowly began to overpower me and move her head back upward toward the tip. In doing so, when she was about halfway up my penis some of my semen coursed and rushed out of her mouth and fell onto me, and when she had my penis fully out of her mouth I saw a couple of semen lines connected from my penis to her mouth until she fell back on the bed and they disappeared. Watching her with her eyes closed and her lying on her back on the bed, her mouth was still full of my semen that she very soon gulped and swallowed.

I looked back at my still erect penis and saw how washed it was with her saliva and my semen, and soon I rolled downward the headboard so that my head could land on the pillow. Many years ago Lynne had asked me why it was that I liked her but didn't show it. I never answered her back then, but I did tonight. This was why.

PART #2: CHARM

After last night, we had both been knocked out within five minutes to share dreams. When I awoke late in the morning she was gone. I went to my fridge and saw that I had next to nothing in it. I exited my apartment but instead of going to Publiks, I went up the stairs and into Lynne's apartment. All of the kids were up and they were sitting around the table eating breakfast, Lynne was in the kitchen still cooking some eggs. Kirby was awake and eating with the children as well and was sometimes even saying some intelligible words. He may have even called Lynne "mama" at one point but I wasn't completely paying attention.

I went into their fridge and got some orange juice and later Lynne sat down next to me on the couch and gave me an egg sandwich. When she looked at me there was a sudden uneasiness to her disposition, and when she sat down to eat next to me she said "Hello" as if I was a stranger. Neither of us said a single word to each other after.

When I was done I told her I was going back downstairs and since it was her day off I would have been delighted if she spent it with me. She said "all right" without looking at me, and so I left with a strange feeling in my gut.

She didn't reply to any of my messages the entire day and I also didn't see her for the entire day. I didn't see her until about midnight, which was the usual time she came down here anyway, and when she did come, she came down with her laptop and didn't mind me until I minded her.

"You okay?," I asked her. "What do you mean?," she replied. "Nevermind." I patted her shoulder and then went into the bedroom. I stood there and thought about some things, then went to my own laptop and opened the folder with all of my obsessively organized dreams. I read a few of them and realized that I had a lot of typing mistakes in

some of them. I don't fix any of them, because if I fix one, I'll have to fix them all. After about an hour I found one with an interesting dream. I was driving alongside a cliff on a dark winter night.

Suddenly my door opened and Lynne walked in. She closed the door behind her and never took her eyes off of me. She moved off to the side of the door and put her back against the wall and then began playing with the necklace base I had bought her. Whatever charm she was wearing, if any, I couldn't see it because it was tucked inside her shirt, but she strung her hand all up and down the necklace as she stared into me; some of the feelings I got from her was that she was scared, confident and curious. "Are you going to tell me why you're acting so weird?," I asked her. She only continued to stare at me and play with the necklace with the same looks of being scared, confident and curious.

When I saw that she wasn't going to answer, I sat more back into my chair and looked at her only with unplayful eyes. Then she stopped playing with the necklace.

"You're not the first person to ever give me flowers. Not the first to ever tell me I'm beautiful. Not the first to ever give me a ring. Not the first to ever make flowers with me. Not the first to tell me that you love me." I was waiting for some lame cliché along the lines of "But you will be the last to do all of these things," but no, she surprised me.

"I could say what good is it to get to be called beautiful by someone who doesn't actually see you, what good is it to be given a ring you didn't earn, what good is it to be fucked by someone who will fuck over their kids, what good is it to be told you are loved but you really aren't... What was the last one? You know what, it doesn't matter. I just want to tell you what you are the first to do. And I'm getting a little bit bothered and embarrassed because this is totally embarrassing and I am a grown woman who had never experienced it until you." She paused and it gave me time to anticipate what this experience was, but I couldn't think of anything.

"You are the only person who has ever made me orgasm." She paused again and then started again. "Even when you're gone and I have to masturbate, just thinking of you works." She laughed a bit embarrassed and began again, "I don't think you understand the gravity of that. I can't speak for all women, but I think I can speak for most, if you can make a woman orgasm you're a god. I don't need flowers and I don't need you to call me beautiful if you can make me feel everything all at once. Love, lust, devotion, safety, protection, connection." At this point I started getting bothered and embarrassed myself, but it didn't seem like she had any plans to stop.

"And it's not like it's just one time. Sometimes it's over and over. As soon as you go in I start to get little ones until I'm just cumming all over you in waves. My nipples have been hard only under two circumstances. Breastfeeding and you. And sometimes those

two circumstances occur simultaneously,” she laughed, “I didn't know they could stick out like that and get that hard.” Still laughing a bit, she continued, “The first time we did it I was afraid that when I orgasmed you would have thought it was weird because I did something wrong or something, or just that something would be weird about it in general because it would have been my first time actually cumming, but you didn't say anything. That was why I told you that you made me feel like I was a virgin all those years ago. In my deranged little world I basically was and you started my sexual journey. It's why I got so mad when you made that flower butterfly comment. Because if you left me for someone else and she got to experience what I've experienced, I would kill her. I would actually kill her,” she stressed “actually.” “And I know this might scare you, but when you put a woman onto her sexual quest, liberation, revolution, awakening, whatever you want to call it, you belong to her. If I have to be a manipulative little cunt to get what I want, I will because I am not above that. I don't want to be, but if I have to I will. I will do whatever it takes because your penis and your balls, they belong to me now.”

When she started playing with her necklace again and looked at me with royal eyes, I knew that she was done. “I missed you today,” I said. “I missed you, too.” “Are you tired?” “I've been tired ever since last night.”

I was laying on top of her still thinking about all the things she had just told me when I noticed a strange design on her arm. I pointed to it. “Kirby?” “Indeed.” I laughed. After a while I moved down her arm and pressed with my index finger against her right hand. Though Lynne has no tattoos, I incited a game within her. “What does that tattoo mean?” She looked at me, then at her hand.

“It's a red heart because I love you.” I told her that I loved her too, then began tracing my way up her arm, across the bridge of her shoulders, and then went downward and pressed against her left hand, taking a long time during my travels to give her time to think.

“It's a diamond because our bond is strong.” I went back up to her shoulder but this time instead of crossing the bridge, I fell down into the pit of her stomach, putting my hand underneath her small shirt, and pressed.

“It's a red apple from our picnic.”

I went up just a little bit higher to her heart between her breasts and pressed.

“It's the number four.” I didn't need any explanation for that one.

I took my hand out from underneath her shirt and jumped to the right side of her neck.

“It's a skull and crossbones.” “Why?” “Because last night one of us could have easily suffocated the other.” I laughed, and when she saw this she laughed too, and we both looked at each other knowing we were going to do it again tonight.

I slit her neck and appeared at the other side of it and pressed.

“It's a tornado.” “That you are,” I told her.

I traveled back downward and pressed against her right shoulder.

“It's a unicorn.” ... “Because your strange matches my strange.” I nodded my head, then went across the bridge again and pressed her other shoulder.

“It's a priceless coin from our vacation.” I didn't know if she meant that it didn't cost us anything or if it was just an irreplaceable month of her life, but I soon traveled the way back down toward her abdomen, went under and into her sleeping shorts, and then pressed just above her vagina.

“It's a colorless lotus flower.” “What does a lotus represent?” “Super extreme femininity.” “Super extreme femininity, huh? I like the sound of that.” “Yes,” she began imitating a girly girl as she moved her hands and her face, “Super extreme femininity to the max-e-mum,” she laughed.

I went from the frontside to the backside, where I pressed against her lowerback.

“It's a guitar because I love music.” Something was clicking in my mind, so I went just a bit lower and pressed against her right buttock.

“A pair of lips,” she laughed. I mocked her laugh citing the time I kissed her ass. “You're so funny,” I firmly grabbed the cheek and pushed her toward me. She laughed wildly and reminded me what happened the last time I hurt her there, so I let go and passed her butcrack to the other cheek and pressed.

“It's a pink butterfly because I love butterflies.” I knew it from the guitar that all of these “tattoos” were also on the Promises brand's website, and I soon surmised that she had browsed the catalog in the day and these were all the ones that she liked and planned to buy.

From her left buttock I slid down to the back of her thigh and pressed.

“It's the planets Jupiter and Venus, for storms and beauty.” That one I didn't remember seeing, but soon I jumped to the back of her other thigh and pressed.

“It's a square-cut emerald.” “It's almost as beautiful as you.” She leaned toward my face and kissed me on the lips, then softly brushed her nose back and forth against mine, saying “Thank you” and giggling. I probably saw this on the website, but this is also pretty common.

I went to her right ankle and pressed.

“It's a snake.” “You like snakes?” “I'm terrified of snakes.” “So why do you have a tattoo of a snake then?” “I don't know, man, just go on to my foot.” I pressed her foot.

“It's a heel.” I know I definitely saw a heel charm on the site. I kissed her foot and then got up off the bed to retrieve my phone, and then went to the Promises brand's website and found the heel charm.

“Does your tattoo happen to look like this heel?,” I threw the phone onto the bed.

When she saw it she began laughing, “It looks exactly like that.” I got back on the bed and laid beside her. “So you plan to collect all those tattoos?” “Well, at one hundred dollars a set I hope to collect them over a reasonable amount of time.” “I’ll make sure when I give you one, once a year,” I stressed the “one” and the “once,” “that it’s not any of those so it’s more of a surprise.” She nodded her head.

I turned away from her and laid out flat on my back. After a moment she sat up, came toward me and placed one leg over me so she could sit on top of me. She placed both of her hands on my chest and was touchy feely. Looking straight at me, I took the bottom of her shirt and began to raise it, and eventually when it was raised high enough she took over where I stopped and completely removed her shirt. I watched as her breasts lifted up with the shirt and then dropped back down when it was nearly off. But what I noticed more immediately after was the charm she was wearing with the necklace base.

When she saw that I saw that she was wearing the charm with the red heart and the smiley face at its center, she took notice and said “You should know that a woman like me doesn’t smile at a man unless she’s interested.”

A woman like her... Lynne’s heart doesn’t lie with good boys or bad boys. Or even medium boys. It doesn’t lie with sad boys or pretty boys or gritty boys. No... Lynne’s heart lies with strange boys. And I have always known her psyche because in part my own psyche has female elements, and so I have always known which buttons of hers to push. It’s just that Lynne is the only woman who has ever gotten me to play the game.

Chapter 75

MILLENNIUM CROWN

3:2:8:75

Mark and Marc compete against each other on the estate's golf course. (1994)

THE jubilee of the nineties was celebrated on the final day of that decade. New Year's Eve in 1999 would wrestle in a new millennium of royalty and leave behind a tumultuous decade which included the untimely deaths and murders of Princess Kimberly and Prince Tobias.

In the Summer of 1998, on June fifteenth, Kim was found slain in her lover's apartment which was located in the city. Her lover, Desmond, did not see their attacker but he was able to escape, and while wounded, it was not a mortal wound.

Also at the scene of the attack, in a hallway of the apartment, was Tobias who laid slumped and slain against the wall. Tobias had come to pick up the princess for a community event she was scheduled to attend.

Princess Kimberly, in utter shock and devastation, was later found to be pregnant. News of the pair's murder was confounding to their kingdom and no one in the country could fathom why anyone would want to murder either of them. Despite the enormous output into the investigation and the enormous outcry for justice, the murders, at the time of the millennium jubilee, still had not been solved.

Despite the lack of details surrounding the murder, many in the kingdom formulated their own theories. One such theory which came to rise to the forefront and dominate all others was the "fourth generation" theory.

A man fascinated by the Flanagan legacy and who was as much a scholar and historian of the family had discovered that the late Queen Heather, in her younger years, was chiefly responsible for the death of another young woman.

Many of the details surrounding the young woman's death have disappeared, and all that was known to any historian of the family was that when the young woman's great, great grandmother, old as dust, found out about her death, she was livid, and being a practitioner of black magic, she placed a curse on Queen Heather and a bounty on the unborn; whoever killed the first female-born child four generations removed from the queen, or her first great, great granddaughter, she would, from the afterlife, grant that person eternal life.

And so it goes without saying, the "fourth generation" theory proposed that someone who knew of the bounty was set on collecting it. The deaths of the prince and princess were so devastating to the world that already just one night before the year 2000, in just two years they had already had films and songs made about them and the impact they had

on the world.

To further celebrate their lives, they were posthumously given the title of The Millennium Princess and The Millennium Prince, and for tonight's jubilee two large banners of their photographs hung from the ceilings for all to see.

Almost as shocking as the murders was the first ever royal divorce, which was between Jessica and Thomas in 1994. The separation was nasty and the divorce unsettling, and at one point during it all Thomas proclaimed to the world that he believed the Flanagans were not even capable of crying. In all his time spent living with them, even at funerals, he had not seen one single Flanagan shed a single Flanagan tear. Because of this, he felt that Jessica should not be awarded custody of their second son, Abraham, because she might raise him to be “as royal-blooded as the rest of them.”

And while there was divorce in '94, there was reunion in '96; Prince Spencer and Princess Elaine had rekindled their love for each other after more than thirty years of estrangement. Just as Spencer was the dominating force in their withdrawal from each other, he was also the dominating force in their coming back together, buying her a large diamond ring because in those thirty years of technical infidelity, he had grown tired of women who knew his status but not his heart. And this was not to say that Elaine knew his heart, she did not, but she knew the worth of her marriage to him. This was a pair that, despite being away from each other for three decades, was immeasurably broken. And this was a pair that symbolized the idea that while a woman may know how to love, she did not necessarily know who to love, and that while a man may know who to love, he may not necessarily know how to love.

In 1991, twins Summer and June nearly had a coordinated mental breakdown. During the year 1970, the two were fixated on a room that perhaps only existed in their twin minds, but in 1991, it was no longer a room that occupied their minds but a man. The twins spoke of this man to other royal family members but not one family member could recall him. They spoke of the man coming to every birthday party, to every jubilee up until 1990, to every public family affair concerning the Flanagans. And this was all perplexing, because the twins could draw up intimate details and idiosyncrasies of the man but no one else of the Flanagan line could even recall anything about him or even his existence.

The twins were so baffled by this account of the man and even the lost room that in 1992 they had their brains examined, but as confounding as the mystery man and the mystery room, they found nothing.

In 1999, a rivalry just over half of a century old had finally climaxed. Though Brittany and Cassandra had passed, their egos lived on in their sons who were collectively known as the Leons. Ironically, it was during this year's Halloween party that

the two finally fought each other, just as their mothers did more than fifty Halloweens ago. They fought over the idea of whose wife was prettier, Erica or Courtney. Reminiscent of that fight many years ago, there was no clear winner between the two Leons. The fight went blow for blow and no one tried to stop it as they all felt it was something that needed to happen. Erica and Courtney watched as their husbands did battle, each sitting with their child, Walter and Anna, respectively, and cheering on their beloved. And the sound of these cheers were nothing new to the ears of Leonel or Leonardo, they were the same sounds they had heard all of their life from another set of women.

The king had died in 1997. In the same year, with the rise of the internet and cellular phones, everyone in the world had been made aware of Brian II's passing in a couple days. Queen Minor Leah had taken his death hard, though not because of his actual death but because her status as Queen would be relegated to Queen Minor. King Brian III at first reluctantly took on the role of the new king, but soon and in very Flanagan fashion, he saw the delights that came with the abuse of power. And so too did his partner in royalty, Queen Sophia, and their three children at the time, Prince Matthew, Prince Tobias and Princess Kimberly.

Cousins Anastasia and Kevin were as strange as their twin mothers. When they were born, they were both born with a birthmark that was in the same place on their bodies, but on mirroring sides. And even stranger than the location of the birthmarks was the fact that Anastasia's birthmark resembled the country of Georgia, and Kevin's birthmark resembled the state of Georgia. It took years until Vivian made this discovery and told them both of how cool she thought it was. This knowledge brought the cousins closer, so close that they eventually developed an incestuous relationship and is ongoing even now in their early twenties.

The relationship started in 1995, halfway through the millennium decade, after many times of Anastasia showing Kevin her birthmark and him touching it. And it is a relationship kept so secret that no Flanagan has ever thought twice about it.

The other pair of cousins from the same twin mothers were not attached at the hip, but still there was something peculiar about them both that every Flanagan noticed, and the theory was that because they were both born under a Super Blood Moon, that is Sonya and Edward, they were thought to be inherently evil. Though half the age of their older siblings, the signs were there and showed early on.

In 1993, Sonya was found on the estate after being lost for an hour, playing with a dead squirrel and to this day, it is unknown whether she had killed it or only found it dead. In the same year but many months later during the winter, Edward had been disciplined for throwing one of the family cats into the fireplace. Though the cat was able

to escape with only minor burns, it lived a difficult life until its eventual demise one month ago in November.

These two incidents were not isolated, there were various incidents between the pair that involved some type of animal abuse. And while it seemed to stem from the nature of their own evil being, this was not necessarily the case, as their actions were driven by Trevor, who at the time still went by Slant and showed the two children how to torture animals.

K and C stood just before the large banners of Princess Kimberly and Prince Tobias, drinking their martinis and speaking of the fact that these two were now immortal royalty. Through their deaths and with jealous intent, they spoke about how they themselves will one day be forgotten, but how the prince and princess will be remembered forever.

Coming up next to them with her own alcoholic beverage was Virginia, who was not a Flanagan in her own right but had been taken in by them because they thought they might be able to use her to seem more relatable in the public eye.

“Legendary,” she said to the men as she stared at Kim's banner, “Simply legendary.”

Next to join them in admiring the legacy were Jeffrey and Shelly.

“What do you get when you cross a tragedy with royalty?,” Shelly asked the others. When they didn't answer, she gave them the answer, “Immortality.” They all laughed.

“A prince and a princess walk into a bar. Bartender sees them and puts a handgun right in front of them. Says to them, 'One bullet, whoever commits suicide will be known forever.' They start fighting over it, prince overpowers the princess and then puts the gun to his head. 'Wait!,' the princess shouts. She slowly walks over to him and puts her head next to his, and then he pulls the trigger and they both drop to the ground instantly. Bartender walks over to their dead bodies and looks down at them, then says, 'Gun's gonna be worth a fortune.’” Everyone was roaring with laughter at Jeff's joke, so much so that it brought over Frederick and Fedora.

Followed by Fedora, who was wearing a fedora, was her husband, Brett, who wanted in on the joke. Followed by Frederick was his wife, Elizabeth, who had the distinctive taste of sleep in her eyes from spending over an hour putting their children, John and Sandy, to sleep.

Once the joke was retold, so was the one that preceded it, and what succeeded these jokes were fresh new jokes that concerned the late Millennium Prince and Princess. And no one seemed to stop them or even care of stopping them.

Across the room and away from all the laughter and closer to the dancing was George and Tiffany and their infant son Daniel. Instead of laughter there was crying in this area. Eventually Monica, brother to George, walked by and attempted to help him calm the

crying Daniel down.

When Tiffany could no longer bare the crying of her son, she walked away and told George and Monica that she was going to go outside to smoke.

Monica had never liked Tiffany. Monica didn't like anyone, for that matter, and as a judgment of Tiffany she had told many that she herself lived in a manner that whatever Tiffany did, she did the opposite. "Some people are guides that way," Monica told Fedora in 1998.

An hour later was an hour closer to a new year and a new millennium. With just ten minutes left in the old millennium, all of the Flanagans and their guests met in one of the grandest rooms in the palace, one in which they could watch the ball drop from the ceiling. And with every passing minute King Brian III paid close attention to another party that was currently on-going in another monarchy. It was that of King Anthony's New Year's Eve party, and one of the headlines entering the month of December was which monarchy would have the larger turnout.

The victors, and by a landslide, were the Flanagans. The television broadcasters made sure to make note of this fact as their cameras panned and zoomed throughout the ceremony and you could see the hundreds of people who attended the jubilee.

When there were only ten seconds left in the old millennium every one began counting down to the new one. Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five... Four... Three... Two...

The counting ended at two when suddenly the lights went out and there was only complete darkness. Confused, there was a mild panic in the grandly decorated room. Then there was a pop, and a flash and a sizzle. By the time anyone was aware that an electrical unit had exploded, giant flames attached themselves to Princess Kimberly's banner and set it ablaze.

The sight was bizarre and haunting. For a few more brief moments, in total darkness the only light visible came from the flames that also made the princess's giant face slightly visible as if a specter come to judge them all and the works they had done on Earth. A darkly glowing face above them all adorned with a crown of emeralds.

And then the power was restored. Several people scurried for a fire extinguishing unit and when Fedora found one, she went up toward the banner and took out the flames.

Already they had all forgotten they had just entered a new millennium. But quite frankly, to the Flanagans, they did not understand the concept of time. Royalty was and is eternity. Their destiny was determined before all creation and will remain so after it. In their collected psychosphere, seasons did not change, years did not go by and days were not numbered. And in their fragile minds this, too, they did not understand; that someone must be born a king's son, and someone must be born a peasant's.

Vivian, attempting to flee the scene of the crime, runs into Prince Tobias and shoots him in the forehead. (1998)

MYTHOLOGY COMPLEX

3:2:8:76

Prologue

The division between God and Satan spawned an angel and a demon. What was once united had come apart into two in the form of a man and a woman, and this duality was followed by others; love and hate, light and dark and good and evil. Despite these separations, the two would eventually and briefly be reunited in the human realm where they would experience all of these dualities together. But in his observation, the demon would come to learn that the angel had seven different layers of wings.

Year 1

There is something distinct about the scent of an angel
It is in a way designed for the senses of a demon
So in our period in the human realm it did not take me long to find her
And if the perfume she had on was for me to smell from galaxies away
Then the dress and the make-up she had on was for me to see up close

As I approached her she turned around, as if sensing my soul or presence
And we locked eyes for the very first time in our centuries of existence
"You finally found me," she said, soothing my ears into dominion
She knew the oldest trick in the universe because she was the universe herself
In her biology she held information that was millions of years old
She understood that being sensible is what made her sensual
And she gave the conqueror within me the sensations needed to dominate

Driven by desire I took her to the crescent moon that sits in the west
I threw her face first onto the bed and with force removed her dress
Her one hand clenched the bed sheet and the other the bed post
And in an instant she made sounds as I took what I desired most
But in the aftermath, I heard her laugh, and the meaning of this could be taken broadly
But I came to see that she had dominated my desires as much as I did her body

Year 2

As I sit here in Hell, ruminating on the angel who betrayed me, I understand more clearly
I could have given her the world and the world would not have been enough
Diamond rings and roses were not enough
Stars and moons were not enough
I gave to her my complete heart and still she did not trust me

The irony of the angel was in her paradox
Despite her jewelry and her dresses and her shoes and her cosmetics
She was not by any account a materialistic woman
She had depth
She was creative
She was genuinely beautiful in all the ways that are pure
But she was mad

If I even spoke innocently to a mortal woman she would crush their soul
She would turn and twist their fates before she swallowed them whole
And she'd spit them back out and everything they had would be lost
And I would learn to keep my mouth shut else they'd have to deal with the boss

Year 3

I will admit that in the third year of knowing her
There were times when her third wings showed promise
We climbed to great heights and on the shoulders of mountains
We watched the world turn

She wanted to experience it all; joy, pain, exuberance, exhaustion
And I carefully spent my time watching her carefully
I knew that if I gave her one thing, she would want everything
And I knew that if I gave her nothing, I would become nothing to her

With this revelation I folded, instead of giving her one sun I gave her twin suns

Instead of giving her a little rainfall, I gave her a hurricane
When she asked for one rose, I gave her twelve to see what the angel becomes
And when I gave her the ring from Saturn, I made sure it was only the planet that would
remain

Year 4

Despite her demeanor, my nature to please her is what also kept her submissive
In all the time we spent together I never saw her look at another man nor speak of one
When she was angry there was absolutely no mercy
But when she was lovely she was also loyal

I suppose her submissive nature came from the fact that when we were divided
It was her task to be found and it was my task to find her
And I have observed in mortal men that often they choose
And I have observed in mortal women that often they are chosen

But among angels and demons no one is chosen and no one chooses
It is a soul contract devised by divine creatures
And I have seen this contract broken by a demon who abuses
And I have seen his angel plunge a blade into his heart to leave behind features

Year 5

There were moments when she was as soft as an angel
She'd lay on top of me and for days we did nothing
In caves through sleepless nights I would feel her face on my chest
And with my arms around her I held her close

Laying there I thought about the eventual fate of the world
I thought about the fall of Satan and how he reigned over the Earth
I thought about how we were doing nothing for humankind
Not tempting it into sin or saving it from eternal damnation

The ease of life at this time, I knew it was idle

But I was so content to look into eyes so bridal
To enjoy the small moments such as these to me was so vital
What did it matter that I was a demon and she was an angel, each was only a title

Year 6

She belonged to me, and I reminded her of this fact every day
Every time I would suck firm her soft breasts
Every time I would squeeze hard her soft backside
Every time I would spread her and enter her
She understood that her loyalty was to my reign

But when she learned that like a mortal woman she had conceived a child
Everything changed
And as her belly grew larger so did her conscious thoughts about it
Though I reminded her that no immortal woman had ever had a mortal child
She wanted to hear nothing of it as she watched the mothers go about their day

I should have known by now what she was planning to do
I should have known that the next stage in her evolution was Mother Nature
And I should have known that I would become second to something new
But my foolishness begged me to take on the wager

Year 7

When an immortal breaks the soul contract through committing a sin
They become mortal and must remain in the human realm
But I realized too late that she was willing to violate a commandment
And murder me so that she would become mortal and save her son

For our seventh anniversary, she thought it romantic a dinner in the woods
She prepared every thing and found a location so remote as to be peaceful
But I could not predict that an immortal would want so badly to become mortal
So that like the mothers she saw she could ferry new life into the human realm

I had drank poison and my last sight of her was the final layer of her wings
And when I awoke I saw that I was in the burning flames of Hell
But in knowing that she is now human and has sinned for mortal things
When she perishes I will find her and a great vengeance I will carry out well

What is mythology? What is the point of mythology? I think in the most strict and concise definition, myths are stories that will always be true. The characters may change, the settings may change, even parts of the plots may change, but the moral of the story is eternal. There will always be people who fly too closely to the Sun and there will always be people who admire themselves in the reflections of lakes.

The mythos' purpose is the same as any tale, really; to warn you. They are often cautionary tales that speak of humanity at its lowest or most undesirable. And if a mythos is always about what will always be here, it would make sense that most stories deal with madness, mental illness and the manic state of the human mind.

Last night, I had a nightmare. In the nightmare it was morning and I was in my apartment. It was 1952. I knew because of the newspaper I was reading. I was married because I had a wedding band on my ring finger. Reading the newspaper, I noticed that I had a suit on but without the suit jacket. I was drinking coffee.

Suddenly a woman walked out of the bedroom. I immediately recognized it to be Lynne, who had on an apron as she walked back to the kitchen. When she got to the kitchen, I saw that Kirby had been sitting in a babyseat playing with blocks that featured numbers and letters on them.

Near Kirby was an iron and an ironing table and my suit jacket, which Lynne then proceeded to iron.

I looked at my watch, set down my coffee and began walking toward her as I needed to leave for work. I picked up my briefcase on the way to her and when I got to her I gestured for my suit jacket. She just then remembered a piece of mail that was for me, and in turning around too quickly she suddenly knocked over Kirby's open bottle and it fell down making impact with my shoes. The milk spilled all over my dress shoe and my dress pant and in my mind I thought to myself that I was going to miss the train because of this.

I was annoyed at her clumsiness and as I went to clean up my shoe and my pant, I thought about Kirby and how I had regretted having a child with her.

There is something in me that believes that men never actually choose marriage. They choose either freedom or societal-pleasing. That is they choose their independence or they get married to both please and shut everyone else up. In my estimation, they almost never actually choose their wife or their children. I don't think it's the same for women. I

think women actually choose marriage. I think they actually choose their husband and their children. I think this because even if there was no societal pressure, many of them would still get married and have children. I can almost guarantee you that all men, if not for seeming strange for not being married after a certain age, would never get married. And so who pays the price for the mindsets of men? Especially men who get married mainly for image? The wife and their children, once she realizes that she was not actually chosen.

There are of course exceptions to this. I have no family or friends to create the pressure to seem “normal,” and yet to some capacity I've chosen “marriage” and I've chosen Lynne. I've even chosen her children because while on vacation I told her that if she were to suddenly die I would take care of them and would never have them go back to that pussy ass faggot. Sara is mine. I still don't think Dave completely likes me.

Despite my annoyance with my situation, I finished cleaning my clothes and when I got back up I put on my suit jacket and my fedora and kissed her and Kirby goodbye.

When I returned home that evening I kissed her hello. Dinner had been prepared and the entire apartment had been cleaned and all of my composition notebooks had been arranged the way I liked them. The final act of her obedience was in her wearing my favorite outfit of hers, a sunbright yellow dress that made everything else in the apartment seem dark.

Sitting at the dinner table late at night, I ran my hand underneath her soft thigh, and slowly I was waking. To remember her breasts and her bottom I try hard but the image does not tune. I must have desired her so dearly underneath that midnight moon.

Fully awake and fully alone in my apartment at four a.m., I smelled the scent of Lynne as I went across the bed and to my laptop to record the dream.

There I saw a file titled “MIST FALLING ON CEDARS.” It was a dream I had had years ago, and this couldn't have been the original title because I had the dream before I met Lynne and I stole this title from her poetry book.

After leaving prison, a prison I had spent over a year in with the psychopath Spookieni who spoke every night into my mind and my brain and my psychology, I was so distraught that I went to a random small town that was surrounded on one side by a large body of water. Even in my freedom, I could still hear Spookieni's voice in my head.

Conveniently, the town had a cave alongside the water and for a few days I stayed there, thinking of the things the lunatic said to me.

Even more, I thought of Dice and the chaos he must have been committing in the world now. These two in my mind, I could only think of dark things. And as I laid my head to sleep, I meditated more on the fact that this world truly was no place for heroes and could only harbor villains. That night, in a nightmare, I accepted the fate that Dice

had cast upon me. If I was ever going to defeat him, I would have to become like him. Void of meaning and morality.

When I came to, I heard the sounds of children shouting. Leaving the cave I walked up toward the town and saw that it was covered completely in dense fog.

As I traveled through the thick fog, I saw that I could see nothing. It wasn't until I got deeper into the heart of the town that I saw anything. I saw humans who were filled with fear. I saw the chaos of vehicles smashed into each other. I saw the destruction of property caused by uncertainty. I saw bodies, lifeless, men, women and children, lying in the streets from violent interruption. I saw humanity at its most atavistic. But the most important thing I saw that morning wasn't what was without, but what was within. I saw that lying asleep at night in that cave, thinking the dark thoughts of a fallen world, that it caused the fog around me to spread for miles, covering every yard of this small town. I saw that what was supposed to be my superpower engulfed the town and sent it into madness.

I looked around and was almost pleased at the chaos. I ruminated more on the dark thoughts that brought fear here, and the fog becomes even more dense until it becomes like smoke and the residents cannot breathe. It only took an hour for every resident of this town to succumb to their own fears and suffocate from the smoke. When it was all over, I stopped, and the mist began to lift.

Out of the rising mist I saw a figure walking toward me. It spoke in the same manner as Spookieni did, but was feminine. When I could see clearly, the figure was dressed in the same manner as Spookieni, but again, dressed feminine. It was when she told me that her name was Spookiena that I realized what was happening to me psychologically.

I had spent so much time in that jailcell listening to Spookieni that he must have implanted her into my mind. And just like that, his faint voice died off and was replaced with the nonstop verbal diarrhea of Spookiena's.

When the Sun was rising I was done momentarily with my dreams. I take my phone and find Lynne's contact, and then I sent her “:)” as a text message. This and all others for the lady: If ever I've put a spell on you, it's because she put one on me first.

She must have woken up two hours later because that was when she sent me a smiley face back and told me that we needed to go grocery shopping. My fridge had been empty and I was bumming off of theirs.

I looked for my backpack and before I could find it I heard her enter into my apartment. She walked in with her backpack on and very soon followed Sara with a backpack as well and was told she would be coming along because they needed school supplies. I assumed Dave stayed back to watch Mordecai and soon we left after I found my pack.

Without a word from anyone we walked through the hallway, called the elevator, then stepped in. Going down was silent as well. It was silent until for some reason, the elevator stopped and a red ring appeared around all of the buttons. The three of us looked at each-other confusingly.

Sara walked up and pressed the “G” button again, but nothing happened. “Is it stuck?” Lynne asked the both of us. That was when the elevator light slightly dimmed to a lower output level. Looking up at the light, I said “It's something.”

We ended up calling David and asked him to call for the elevator, but he said as he walked up to the buttons they were red and nothing happened when he pressed them. I told him to go back to Kirby and then told Lynne to phone for the police, and as she did this I found some writing on the panel that indicated that a red buttoning meant there was some kind of power failure with the elevator and to use the emergency contact for assistance.

Lynne had already called the police and she told us that they were on their way. After about five minutes of standing, Sara sat down, then I sat down then Lynne sat down.

Sara took out her phone, and if Lynne had a reason to look at hers she would have done the same.

Just sitting there, I noticed that Sara was wearing the Promises ring and attached to it was a golden crescent moon. When I looked at Lynne's fingers, I saw that she was wearing a golden crescent moon charm as well. They must have ordered it online.

Further observations had me see Lynne wearing the earrings bases with white stars and Sara wearing the crown with the necklace base.

When she saw me obviously looking at their charms, old and new, she told me that Sara found a website online where you can get them for cheaper, and some even used for almost a third of the price. I later learned that along with the twin crescent moons they bought a “white angel wings” said by Lynne and a “blue and black yin and yang thing” said by Sara and a “three red tiny gem spheres with the middle one slightly larger than the outside ones” said by Lynne and “all for ten dollars a piece” said by Sara, but they came as singles and not as a set.

A minute after this revelation, the elevator light dimmed to an even lower output level and their faces were becoming only contour lines in the faded darkness. And a minute after this, the light flickered into a normal output level and less than half of a second later went back to the lower output level. This was followed by, maybe with two seconds, a clicking sound from the button panel. We noticed that after the clicking sound, the red outline of the buttons were gone, but slowly faded back into presence to let us know there were still issues with the elevator.

For myself I was not really that afraid because so far the only issues seemed to be

electrical and not mechanical, but I also don't know much about elevators. They didn't seem to be afraid either, just puzzled.

Sara, of her own volition, put away her phone and joined Lynne and I in having nothing to escape to but our minds. Like before, the light flicked into full power mode and then went back into that low output mode, followed by a click from the button panel and a restoration of the red numbers. Then, Sara asked me a question.

“Do you never work because you have a lot of money saved up?” “Yup, and because I don't spend my money on anything else but you.” “How much do you have saved up?” “Enough to buy you a thousand charm sets.” Sara looked at her mother and then Lynne looked back at her, then at me, saying “Don't tease her like that. There aren't even a thousand different sets... Are there?” We all three began laughing almost seeming to cause the light flicker with the sound of clicking from the buttons.

“Do you ever think about what you want to do for work?,” I asked Sara. Lynne interrupted, saying “Ever since she moved into her own room she's been wanting to be an interior decorator. She moves things around every week.” “Yeah, or a graphic designer,” Sarah finished.

“That would be pretty cool, working for film studios or something,” I said. “I wish. Maybe I could get you guys your own TV show and design your house,” Sara replied. “And the show could be a light romance about how much he adores me,” Lynne said. I nodded my head in a small disagreement. “What? You don't adore me?” “No, I do, but I ain't no Hollywood type.” The way I said it made them both laugh and again went the light flicker and the button clicking.

When there was silence there was none in my mind. When I was a kid, someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I answered “a dinosaur,” which should explain a lot about me.

As Lynne moved over to a gesturing Sara to see what was on her phone, their voices played like the background to my mind as I continued to think about times when I was younger.

Between youth and wisdom we will each of us choose multiple desired professions. Sara wants to be an interior decorator or a graphic designer now, but I will bet all one thousand of her charms that five years from now she will want to be something else. It's why I never understood why we make young adults choose what they want to be for the next forty-seven years. For basically the next half-century. At that age I don't even think the part of their brain that deals with planning is even fully formed yet. I went to college as a business major, and that ended up being a major mistake. I've never used my degree, and instead I learned to be a carpenter. That trade I suppose is past me now, and honestly if I were to ever go back to work, it wouldn't be for anything career related. The only job

I could ever see myself working is a job that was not demanding at all and I would never have to take my work home with me.

The light in the elevator turns on, and this time without any flickering. The button panel clicks, but the red buttons do not come. The elevator begins to shift, jumps, and then starts going down like it should have long ago. The three of us rose to our feet and saw the numbers going down until we finally got to the lobby. Sara had pressed the ground button but in its malfunction it must have defaulted to the lobby. When the door opened, we were surprised to see that there were no police officers or firefighters in sight, so I pressed the ground button and we went down one more level.

We walked through the darkened garage and when we appeared outside, we could see the end of an ambulance sticking out from around the corner. We began walking that way and that was when we saw the firefighters who looked confused and may have perhaps just arrived. I told them that the elevator suddenly started working again, and after asking me a few questions, they reviewed the elevator and they went on their way.

At Publiks we bought food and school supplies and then headed back home. Instead of taking the elevator back the way up, we took the stairs. All twenty-two damn flights with bags in our hands.

Entering Lynne's apartment I saw Dave's room's door was open and Kirby was inside watching him play video games. He had been sitting up on his own on the ground and enjoying the raid of bullets, but when he heard and saw us enter, he became excited and began crawling toward us. After Lynne put down her bags I saw that she was exhausted; she picked up Kirby and sat down on the couch with him and she probably wasn't going to get back up for a while.

Sara and I stocked their fridge with their items and at some sudden moment Lisa entered the apartment, asking us if we had gotten stuck in the elevator. David must have told her.

We later learned that Elway, since 2011, had always complained of the elevator and the fact that he got stuck in it twice. He had constantly told the owner of the building to fix it but it never was.

After she left, I told Sara that I wanted to see her room. She took me to it and I saw the fresh pale purple and white design. I looked around, nodded my head and thought she would make a fine interior decorator someday if the dream lasted.

When I left the crown jewel's room, so did the crown prince leave his own. He looked at his new digital watch and then told us he was going to the park to see some of his friends. I wondered why Sara didn't go as well seeing as they were all part of the same group, but maybe David found new ones.

I left Sara and the resting Lynne and Kirby to their devices and returned to my

apartment where I put my foods away and then went to lay down. I fell asleep and then woke up just like that due to the same tiredness that plagued Lynne. When I awoke, I heard that it was raining outside upon the city and saw that it was night-time.

The dream that I dreamed moments ago was a shootout in New York City. My partner and I had exited the bank with black duffle bags after robbing it. Before we could enter our vehicle, however, law enforcement had been waiting for us outside the bank. What ensued was a long shootout that progressed down a Manhattan street. Almost like soldiers, my partner and I fended off flank attacks and attacks from ahead as we weaved through and in and out of recently abandoned cars on the street. Pedestrians fled every which way which was also good cover for us.

I recognized one of the officers. He had been trying to catch us for more than two years now, and this was going to be as close as he got. But that wasn't the most important thing I recognized. I also recognized that this was the mythos birth of the first time we had ever worn suits.

From the various dreams I knew that my partner and I did not normally target private banks and often robbed retail banks. Knowing they would not let us enter this bank without the proper attire, we made an investment on a pair of suits tailored to rich men.

This is one of the most difficult aspects of dream study. Figuring out things that aren't spoonfed to you, and every time I figure out something like that I put a note in the dream detailing it just incase it may be more pertinent than I know.

Surviving that deadly shootout was something neither of us ever wanted to endure again, and so we made plans never to target another private bank. And besides, after this, there would surely be bounties on our heads.

Lightning flashed into my apartment and it was soon followed by rolling thunder. Checking my watch I saw that it was eight o'clock and that it was beginning to be the time of year where night falls early.

At 8:01 Lynne entered the apartment. Instead of coming to me she walked toward my bedroom. I already knew what she was going to do. I called at her and at the doorway she stopped and then walked toward me. I whispered something in her hear, causing her to say "Oh! So I'm not the only one fantasizing." "Just fucking do it already," I said to her.

And so she came back out with the blanket as a cape around her, which I knew she was going to do already, and with a pillow underneath her shirt, which I wanted to see her as a pregnant woman. If ever you have obsessed over me, it is because I obsessed over her first.

When she got close enough to me she threw the blanket on the top of the couch and then immediately began rubbing her belly. "It's kicking," she said, "do you want to feel it?"

When she sat down next to me I put my hand on her belly and rubbed it. "I don't feel anything," I said. "Just wait..." "Nothing, must've gone to sleep." I waited, and when the flash of lightning entered my apartment, I felt it on the crash of thunder. "I felt it," I said as she smiled a twisted smile. "Tell us you love us," she said aloud. If I am your first true love, it is because she was my first.

"I love you," I kissed her nose, "and I love you," I kissed her belly. With this she pushed me onto my back on the couch and began taking off her shorts and then her underwear. When she got up, she lowered her top so her breasts could hang out over it and made sure to keep the illusion of her being pregnant by keeping the pillow under it. She then removed my shorts. I was not wearing underwear. I thought about calling her "Princess Mommy," or "Queen Mommy," but I figured to keep my mouth shut. All I ever wanted in a wife was to show her how much I loved her. It's always easier to show your feelings to a corpse, but now I have a woman who is actually alive. And even though she had life, it was always more about what she didn't have than what she did. If you see me and understand me, it is because I saw her and understood her first.

She stayed upright as she moved herself about my body, going side to side or back and forth and sometimes up and down. She stayed upright so I could see her pregnant body and her full breasts. Lightning only illuminated once and thunder only rolled once before I was soon to give her another child.

Still on me, I sat up and placed my back against the rest of the couch and she sat on me with her breasts only inches from my face. With her hand she palmed the underside of her left breast and brought it forward into my mouth. When I was firmly latched onto it, she let go and brought her left hand up my bicep and onto my shoulder and brought her right hand up my bicep and around the back of my neck. She moved closer to me to jam her breast even further into my face, and in her movement my penis flung out of her vagina. Quickly it slapped back up against her derriere and rested in between her cheeks. If ever you have fantasized about me in impure ways, it is because I fantasized about her in lustful ways first.

With both of my hands against her lower back I tongued her excited nipple and played with it as I sucked on it for long durations. Sometimes I would pull my head back and watch as her breast lowered and her nipple stretched until I let go of it and it snapped back into form, and then she would place it back into my mouth again until I repeated the process. On one occasion as I sucked firm I began to taste a tiny supply of her milk, and in pulling my head back my mouth still attached to her nipple, when I let it go I saw a small stream of milk fall down her body. I licked up as much of it as I could until I latched onto her nipple again and began sucking on the pap of life; and as I did this I lowered us back onto the couch and she reached back to put me into her so she could

thrust back and forth. I remained latched and as her fluids went into me so did mine into her. If ever I have turned your world upside down, it's because she turned my world upside down first.

When I detached, she took the pillow from underneath her shirt and threw it onto the ground. We removed all of the remaining clothes we had on and she took the blanket from the top of the couch and placed it over us and she laid on top of me. She tucked the blanket underneath me because she wanted to feel the pressure of being so close to me and under the covers. If you have searched for the likeness of me in all men, it is because I had tried to likened all women into her.

She said strangely she didn't feel tired. Neither did I, and it was probably because she came down four hours earlier than she usually did. So instead of sleeping the both of us stayed awake. After a moment lightning and thunder came, and in a very ditsy manner Lynne half-proposed and half-demanded that each time I hear thunder, "You have to kiss mommy."

As her face laid into the side of my neck we waited. When thunder didn't come she with her foot began to play with mine. When thunder still didn't come she pushed her face further into my neck. And when thunder finally did come, she moved her head to hover above mine and waited. I moved up a slight degree and kissed her and then fell back down, and after laughing softly she put her face back in my neck. If I've ever broken your heart, it is because she broke mine first.

"I just remembered that I had one of those picnic dreams," she said into me as she scratched my foot with hers.

"You fell asleep on the blanket and for some reason I got up and started walking through a big field. I got to my bicycle and put in the combination to unlock it, and then I rode all the way to a small town. The first person I talked to I knew who they were and after talking to them I went into my house and knew where everything was. I sat down and looked at the ring on my finger and it was the ring but with a tornado charm, which I don't own. I don't even know if they make a tornado charm. And so when I saw that, I became lucid. I tried not to get too excited so I wouldn't wake myself up, and then I walked back outside and saw the same person I talked to just before entering my house. I was suddenly aware that I didn't know this person at all. And I was becoming more aware that I didn't really know this town or my house. I knew you, so I wanted to get back to you, but when I went to go unlock my bicycle again, I suddenly didn't know what the combination was." Lightning flashed into the room and was soon followed by rolling thunder, and like clockwork she lifted her face to hover above mine so I could kiss her. I lifted my head, kissed her, and laid back down. When she put her face back onto my chest she continued her dream. "I gave up trying to remember the lock combination and

just started walking until I got out of the town and into a big field where I thought a picnic could happen. The problem was I couldn't remember the way back. I walked for a long time until it became dark and I was lost in the woods. And I guess because I was wearing it in real life, I just stared up at a crescent moon hoping you would find me and then I woke up.”

“That's so weird and you also made me realize something.” “What?” It thundered again but this time she only leaned over and kissed me on the lips and then laid back the way she was.

“In the first half of the dream, you went about it normally. You knew the combination, you knew where the town was, you knew who that one person was, you knew where your house was, and then when you saw the tornado charm and became lucid, or became aware and conscious of your reality, you suddenly knew nothing. When you went back to the person, because of your parent consciousness, which is the consciousness from this reality we're in, your mind knew that you didn't really know that person. Your mind knew that it was all a dream and that it was all fictional. You even forgot the locker combination because it was like your minds were swapped out and you know you had your real mind in a dream world.”

“Yeah and it's kind of like when you become aware in this world, that's when you realize you really didn't know anything about it. You were just going through it like the conventional way that we dream,” she said.

I replied saying only that it was all very interesting and then we were silent for a while. The final crash of thunder came and it peacefully rolled away, and we both knew that it would be the last one for the night because it thundered so far away. She rose up one final time and pressed her soft lips against mine and held it there, and when I understood what she really wanted both of our mouths opened marginally and then closed tangled. I had never thought I could know someone's tongue as intimately as I knew hers; its movements, what it would say, lies and truths and fantasies, the way it felt against mine. If you have longed to touch me, it is because I longed to touch her first.

Like she has done almost every other day, she brushed her nose against mine and then laid her head back down on my chest.

I tried to sleep but I couldn't. And repeated movements of her head told me that she probably couldn't as well. I could tell just from instinct that it was still earlier than the time we usually went to bed.

“I can't sleep,” I heard her say softly and she must have known I was still awake. “It's because you came down here too early.” “I came down so early because I slept in the day.” “I did, too, because of those damn twenty-two floors with a backpack and groceries bags.” She laughed.

We stayed shut up for half an hour more, but even then nothing changed. “I'm at the point where I know I can't fall asleep, so now I definitely won't fall asleep.” I laughed and told her I was the same way. For ten more minutes her body pressed against mine under the tight blankets and then we called it quits.

I removed the tightly tucked blanket from underneath me and that loosened her from me, and then she got up off of me and sat on the couch. I sat up and put back on my basketball shorts as she put back on her underwear. She looked at her phone then went into the kitchen and disappeared. Then she left the kitchen and went into the bedroom and disappeared again. If you have managed to love me at my worst, it is because I managed to love her at her worst.

When she came back out she walked over to the pillow and placed it on the couch, then grabbed the blanket and went and sat on the window ledge, her legs laid out before her and staring at the dark city. If I were to guess, I would say she wasn't thinking of the city at all. I'd say she was imagining if all of this were a dream and she only thought she knew me. And if she was thinking of the city, maybe she was thinking about how she didn't really know it. I had only a moment to watch her, but I did, and I had the vivid memory of her in another life. I am never in the lens because I am the lens. And if ever you've thought I was rare, it is because I thought she was rare first.

I went to her and occupied the opposite side of the ledge and took my half of the blanket. Again our feet touched underneath the warmth, and suddenly she began speaking.

“Since we have memory, we are aware of the concept of life. But what if when you pass over to another world through death, there is no memory there and that's why we can't remember it?”

“...Maybe in that world life hasn't evolved yet to the state of having a working memory?”

“So in order to remember a past life, memory has to work in the world you left and the world you are entering?,” she asked.

“Yeah, and maybe those places that currently have no memory, consciousness there will some day evolve to have memory and the way we die here will be transformed.” She asked me what I meant.

“When someone dies outside of our world and enters it through birth, they will be able to have the knowledge of their past life because there will be working memory in the world they left and the world they are entering, which is this one, which we know has working memory.”

She nodded her head in wonder and looked at the city once, then looked at me from the corner of her eyes. She laughed. “What are you laughing at?” “Nothing...” I went

under the blanket and grabbed her by her feet, and then slid her body all the way to me and I'm sure she must have gotten a wedgie. Laughing through it all sometimes amazed I turned her body and forced her onto me, my arms wrapped around her so she couldn't escape. When she gave up she laid the back of her head onto my chest and her eyes wandered through the city once more. This time I'm not sure at all what she may have been thinking about. It could have been anything from the stars above to the oceans below... Come lay your tears on my skin, and call off your dogs for the moment we're in.

Like some kind of twin insomnia, as I grew tired and couldn't keep my eyes open, I felt her fall asleep through her soft breathing. Eventually I too began to dream, but it was cut short by the sounds of a helicopter overhead. Awake again I felt her softly dreaming breaths and wondered which world she went to this time. If she knew any of the people or any of the places. If I have ever made you feel alive, it is because she awakened me first.

The eighth year of knowing her gave me a sense of nostalgia. A feeling of a mythological eternity. And I thought about my own death, I imagined myself laying on my deathbed and how I would feel when I walked through the exit door. I thought about how I would leave any memory of her behind forever. And I thought also about how I would feel if I was reborn into the same life I had now to repeat it. At the thought's end I felt solace because for infinity I was ready to meet her again and I was ready to love her again. If ever you've put me on a pedestal, it's because I put her on one first.

In the reflection of the glass beside us I could see her face dreaming with city lights. There is something distinct about the scent of a nymph. It is in a way designed for the senses of a satyr.

Chapter 77

IN ROYAL BLOOD

3:2:8:77

Erica and Courtney argue over fashion while tanning in the estate's garden. (2002)

A Thankfulness jubilee was a rare occasion, but one occurred in 2010. It nearly coincided with the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States and would seem to imitate it as well; there was to be a large dinner with many family members and friends.

In the early hour of three A.M. Virginia walked through a large hallway in the palace, browsing through photos on an early smartphone, and eventually stopped to gaze at a late crescent Moon. The large cathedral windows gave her this Gothic sight of ethereal beauty, but upon gazing upon it, she became jealous of nature, and she saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

At around the same time, Jessica Flanagan was sitting at her desk working on the finances of the royal tours she had taken charge of since 2008. Working with the television on in the background, she came to note that less and less people were becoming interested in the tours.

With a knock on the door, she wondered who else would have been up so late at the apartments, and when she opened the door she saw that it was her son, Abraham, come to berate her about being overly protective and controlling.

“You embarrass me in public and treat me like I'm a little boy!” he yelled at her, waking up at least one other resident of the apartments.

Angrily, Jessica forced him inside and closed the door behind him. “I treat you like a little boy because you are one,” she said forcefully, “and if I don't protect you from the evil women out there, who will?”

After calming down, Jessica began to tell Abraham about his dead aunt, Victoria, who died young to suicide. She mentioned her because she knew that Victoria was not the only victim between her and her director, and she knew that Victoria was closer to the evil woman than the director was to the predatory man. Abraham eventually forgave his mother, but began drafting his devious plot of revenge on Sissy, who was the “evil woman” Jessica spoke of, and who was the woman who accepted a diamond ring from him only to post a photograph of it online on the popular website Yearbook claiming she bought it with her own wealth.

At six in the morning small streaks of light filled the dark sky. Jeffrey and Vivian had begun the day the way they have been beginning it since 2002. A leisurely stroll throughout all of the estate to keep in balance whatever remaining health they had in their twilight years.

There was a gap in their relationship starting in the eighties where both parties lost interest in one another. Or rather it should be said that Vivian lost interest in Jeff, as Jeff before 2000 was never interested in her. But after the new millennium, Vivian was sixty-two years old. Vivian, in Jeff's eyes, had already long qualified as a sexual mate, but what hindered his full-on attraction to her was always her personality. And besides, Viv was never interested in his penis.

What had changed after the new millennium was the realization that neither of them would ever have anyone else. In their strolls each morning they spoke of being vile and unlovable creatures. They even said to each other's faces in more ways than one that they didn't love each other but only tolerated the other. Company, even royal company, was better than utter loneliness.

As the pair walked through the miniature forest on the Flanagan estate, Jeff suddenly spotted something in a bush. Walking off the concrete path he went to it and began poking at the bush until he was able to reach for the shiny object. In his hand he held an obviously old and rusty gold ring. In walking back to Vivian, he laughed as he showed her what he found.

"Wonder who this belonged to," he said laughing. Holding out her hand Jeffrey gave the ring to Vivian who then inspected the inside of it. Inside was carved the name "Antoinette," but the name did not ring a bell to either of them. There was no one in their family history who went by that name.

Two hours prior to the first rays of morning light, Edward and Sonya, each of whom barely ever slept and who were night-owls, had caught a cat who crossed onto the acre. Using an injection, Edward shot the cat full of a fluid that would sedate it, and Sonya held it in a plastic bag as they walked back into the palace.

The palace at present was dark with only a couple people awake. The two with the cat made their way to the main kitchen which would be a busied place soon on this holiday.

Edward opened the walk-in freezer and Sonya walked inside with the cat, placed it on the ground, kicked it so that it would wake up, and when she saw that it was awake she ran out. A freeze-safe camera inside the walk-in freezer allowed them to see the suffering of the feline.

Edward and Sonya were two young adults who like the rest of their family members sought power. They say that power is often sought by those who do not have it, but this couldn't have been the case for Ed and Sonya. Power was their birthright, it was in their blood and lineage, so for what reason did they seek power over a helpless and defenseless animal? It is because there are two types of power; power given and power taken. Power inherited and power taken by force. Ed and Sonya were given power, but power given is not true power. They will still say what their masters tell them to say. It is the same

power given to celebrities and politicians and so-called individuals with influence. The power that Ed and Sonya sought in claiming the life of the cat was power taken by force. And before they had deleted the footage of the cat dying, they made sure to download it onto their smartphones so they could relive that power every day until they were bored of it.

A lesser evil struggle for power came from the Leons and their wives, Erica and Courtney, whose rivalry now lived on through their children, Walter and Anna. This rivalry was no longer physical as it was not gender-equal, but was now of the mind and of intelligence. Creativity and cleverness.

Both Walter and Anna had graduated from high school in 2007 and both were aware of their mother's inclination that they should do more well in school than the other. But like Edward and Sonya, Walter and Anna bore two faces. To their parents they were scornful foes who with every breath they could muster spoke ill of the other, but in their private quarters they came up with devious ways to make their parents hate each other.

Perhaps the most devious plan, and definitely the final, came to Walter and Anna as they ruminated while studying for finals. "We should write secret love notes to all four of them to make the other think they are cheating," Walter suggested. Anna liked the idea, but added a spin to it. "We should write one, have Erica or Courtney find it in a neutral place, and address it as from a Leon," Anna said. The trickery came immediately to Walter who found it genius. The brilliance of this letter was not to whom it was addressed from, but the ambiguous nature of whom it was addressed to.

In the following year of 2011, only four months after Erica would find the letter, she would show it to Courtney and the two would spend months trying to figure it out. Was it Leonel or Leonardo who was the cheat? And following that soon the wives would confront the husbands, and the husbands would say they knew nothing whatsoever of the letter's origin.

In the summer, specifically in June, seven months after today, Erica and Courtney would file for divorce, and it would be only the second and third divorces in the Flanagan's royal history.

At noon when everyone was awake, Frederick and his son, John, along with Shelly, left the estate in van to attend a public affair concerning the Flanagan's plans to combat homelessness in the country's most major city.

Too leaving the estate at the same time but not for the same reasons were married couples Jay and Anastasia, Bernice and Kevin, and Elizabeth, who was married to Frederick.

Along the drive was the feverish discourse of telephone companies, namely wireless telephone companies who developed smartphones, and the fact that each of them

subscribed to a unique company for their telecommunication services. Despite the fact that it would have been cheaper for them to all subscribe to the same company under a family plan, they were each of them content to go their own way. Jay from Anastasia, Bernice from Kevin, and Elizabeth from Frederick. They wanted to be so different from each other that instead of thinking with common sense, they began thinking with uncommon sense in an effort to be uncommon.

In their argument, however, was an impending commonality. Jay, who was driving, suddenly became annoyed with Kevin and took his eyes off the road to look back at him. Only seconds later did Jay lose control of the vehicle and land them in a ditch after swiping a telephone pole and causing it to now lean.

Back at the castle and in hiding was Monica. Her husband, Richard, while not in hiding did accompany her in hiding. Every five years a meeting is held by the government to discuss the new salary cap for the monarchy, and in 2005, it marked the first time in eighty years that the limitation might instead decrease instead of increase. For this, in 2004, the Flanagans sent Monica to bribe one of the politicians on the council that would decide their total salary compensation. Monica had had prior sexual encounters with Theo Buchanan, but in this time the sexual bribery did not work and instead backfired on the royal family as Theo had plans to make the bribery public. Such an accusation, if convicted, could be an offense that caused the royal family tens of millions in penalties.

And so in late 2004, the Flanagan's faked Monica's death. The story was that she was trying to save her five year-old daughter, Arlene, after she had been on the balcony and escaped onto a ledge. In her attempt, she was able to seize the child and bring her back onto the balcony, but in trying to get back onto the balcony herself, she slipped and fell several stories to her untimely and shocking death.

Now Monica spends much of her day and many of her days secluded in the well-hidden room that twins Summer and June thought only existed in their minds.

While this tragedy was fabricated, there was one tragedy that was true. The very real death of Summer Flanagan in 2006 held worldwide news attention for almost a month.

On the final day of summer, Summer would fall suddenly and violently ill. To her friends and family, there was no reason or rhyme for her sudden sickness and departure from life, until one examined a novel she had been reading and could surmise her violent and ill reaction to it. This was not to be the case, however, as no one would ever examine the final book she ever read.

The novel in question was titled "Dark without Stars" and graphically depicted the cruel reality of arranged marriages. For the first time in her five decades of living, she felt the slightest guilt, and this feeling of a conscious was so acute to her that it ended her life

in an abrupt and vicious way. The concept of ethics were so foreign to the Flanagans that any intrusion of it into their mind of the matter was not unlike a virus that sought to do irreparable damage.

The damage that had been done to Summer was an opportunity for her sister, June, who on this day of giving thanks sat in seclusion with Marc near the lake on the grand estate. June was married Mark, but had slowly developed feelings for Marc, and when Summer died she did not take long to indulge in infidelity.

While June's psychology was indefensible, Marc's psychology to some may have been reasonable. He had lost his wife for a reason unknown to him, and in his grief he could not look at June and not see Summer. In the same context, he could not be in June and not feel the warmth of Summer. To his mind there was very little difference, if any at all, and he had reanimated his deceased wife.

As they sat before the lake, Marc suddenly caught glimpse of something shining near the beginning of the lake. He went to pick it up, and then returned to June, showing her what he had found. It was an old, beaten up and rusty ring that must have been at the bottom of the lake for decades.

June accepted the ring from Marc, the same ring that Elaine had thrown into the lake four decades earlier, and then went back into the castle separately as to not invite suspicious eyes.

And yet, suspicious eyes found them. Elaine, in walking with Ivy, daughter to Prince Matthew and Princess Janet, saw the pair split as they walked toward the palace. She thought of it, but not much of it, and soon her and eight year-old Ivy were walking through the estates large garden.

“Now before you eat, we are going to weigh you, and then when we are done eating, we're going to weigh you again to make sure you ate a lot,” Elaine said to Ivy as they passed by plants. “So it's better if I eat all that I can?,” Ivy asked. “Of course. And then on Christmas we will do the same, and we want you to eat ever more!,” Elaine finished.

On the other side of the estate is an actual drive-in theater. The weather this time of year is usually marked by degrees too low to enjoy activities not required to move, but today the temperature was exactly perfect for the outdoors. It maintained that perfect equilibrical temperature and warm windy air so enjoyed by many in autumn. Watching a movie titled “4640” were Daniel, Sandy, River, Crystal and Arlene. The only thing missing was an actual car, and instead they sat or laid on blankets and ate fruits and snacks and sandwiches.

A few yards behind them and sitting on picnic tables were couples George and Tiffany, and Fedora and Brett. On the table that they sat was a ring that Tiffany had found wedged deep between the theater screen and the ground. It's defining characteristic

was a shimmering lavender diamond. But already the pairs were bored the mystery of the origin of the diamond and instead spoke of the fact that novelty would always trump physical attraction.

Such rise gave way to such conversation because Brett and George both agreed that despite men being visual creatures, they were not as simple as their wives made them out to be and felt that men held in high esteem, in the same way as women, new relationships and new encounters that brought about shimmering possibilities.

At the beginning of King Brian III and Queen Sophia's relationship could be found the same shimmering possibilities given to the lost lavender diamond, but unlike the piece of jewelry, their shimmers had long been lost.

The king and the queen had found themselves sitting in the estate's courtyard, speaking of their past and their future, sitting just before the statues of King Albert and Queen Meredith. Every which way the statues were plants and flowers that gathered around them. In the wake of their discussion they landed on the fact that this was going to be their thirty-seventh Thankfulness celebrated together, though if they were both being honest, they were more indifferent about it than thankful.

The pair eventually got up and began walking toward the palace in the cooling evening. Only a half hour later all of the adults were seated at the multiple adult's tables and all of the children were seated at the multiple children's tables.

There were so many people there, family and guests, that it was slightly difficult to tell who was missing. But as the large dinner went on, it also didn't seem to matter.

Barging into the dinner as loudly as he could was Slant who began screaming at the top of his lungs about something peculiar, and soon followed Prince Matthew and Princess Janet, who wore a red dress riddled in raspberry diamonds.

"Bitch ass motherfuckers got 'em, they snatched 'em up off the street!," Slant yelled. Finally it was Prince Matthew who explained the situation.

About four hours ago, Frederick, Shelly and John were kidnapped and were currently being held for ransom. The first thought which ran through the mind of King Brian III was that this was a ploy by King Anthony, who for the past decade had initiated several tactics against Brian III's monarchy in an attempt to hamstring it. It became something of a cold war, inciting various strategies such as embargoes and yellow journalism.

With a smoking cigarette in her mouth and a rifle in her hands, Fedora shouted that she would bring them all back, and in this moment on the television screen the hostage situation was front and center news.

Several criminals had rounded up dozens of people, including their three family members, and were holding them hostage for an historic payout. Suffice it to say, the dinner was over and all attention was on the negotiations.

For more than an hour the criminals went back and forth with negotiators. And then for an hour after that the negotiations continued. During the third hour, an impatient hostage had decided enough was enough and attempted to disarm one of the criminals. In his fury he was shot and killed and this set off a frenzy that resulted in the deaths of multiple innocents.

Authorities stormed the location, killing almost all of the criminals and helping multiple hostages to flee into survival.

The bloodbath was now being reported on all new-stations, and the inclusion of three royal family members made this international breaking news. It would be thirty minutes of anticipation from the Flanagans until they heard from Frederick that he himself, along with his son, John, and Shelly were unharmed in the incident.

“It's a good thing they're still alive, I hate addressing this nation,” the king said of the familial survivors. “You're still going to have to address them about all the people killed,” the queen reminded him. Sighing, Brian III sat back down at the dinner table and looked at all of the food uneaten. Then he looked at his intricately designed palace. His highness, for the first time in his life, did not fall on blind eyes. This forced him to think about all of the family and friends of the victims of the hostage situation. The sorrow they would endure and the lives impacted negatively. King Brian III, from these thoughts, began to feel something in the pit of his stomach and in the narrows of his mind. And from these feelings, he began to feel sick. He suddenly stood up, placed both hands on the table before him, and it wasn't too long before he vomited all over some of the remaining food. Onlookers, including his wife, Sophia, quickly ran over to him asking him questions he couldn't understand because his vomiting was so violent. In fact, the hurling was so intense, all the king could do amidst the questions was stare at the vomit that was lined in trace amounts of blood.

Fedora Flanagan outshoots all of the other men at the gun range during a targeting exhibition. (2008)

Chapter 78

GONE FISHING

3:2:8:78

HALLOWEEN

IN the morning I needed to go to Publiks because I ran out of Lucey Goosies. I figured since I was going there I might as well get some diapers and baby food. As I walked up to the elevator I saw that it was out of service and remembered that people were working on fixing the elevator.

I went down by way of stairs all the way down to the garage and as I walked through the garage I saw a man on a motorcycle. I didn't expect him to say anything but as I approached he suddenly called to me. "Hey, your girl like motorcycles?," he asked. I never saw him before now but he must have seen me.

"I don't know. Why?" "She like riding bitch?" I squinted my eyes at him. "No, no," he laughs, "sorry, my mistake, I didn't mean it like that. I mean, do you think she would find a motorcycle ride romantic?"

After five minutes of talking, I ended up giving him a hundred and fifty dollars.

"Bike's not registered. You crash it or get pulled over it's on you and you don't know me. I'll deny everything. Any costs, that's on you, I get motorcycles every other month. Cops don't like the paperwork. Nine times out of ten they'll just tell you to get legal. You see cops around here late at night don't usually pull people over so just drive the speed limit and stop at reds. If they do, they're all lazy as fuck and will just give you a ticket. I'll tell you what every thing does but it's not any more difficult than riding a bike. You know how to ride a bike don't you?" "Yes I know how to ride a bike." "Okay, I live on the second floor, 213."

I then left for Publiks and returned. Going up to the twenty-second floor, I ran into Lisa who seemed a bit afraid to tell me something. And finally she came out with it, telling me that in January, she was moving to another state for a job opportunity.

Obviously at the center of this discussion was Lynne and Kirby, and Lisa made it clear that she was going to be taking him and wouldn't be coming back. I thought it was weird that she had to tell me that, as if the baby was only half hers, but Kirby had spent so much time with us that Lisa was probably as good as a stranger to him.

Nevertheless, I asked Lisa not to tell Lynne until a week before she was leaving and she agreed.

When I got into Lynne's apartment I saw that she was working and Kirby was asleep on her bed. I dropped the baby supplies near the bed and walked over to her, seeing that her television was on a nature channel. "Is that from the trip?," I asked about the flower

bandanna on her head. She nodded her head. "Are the kids in their rooms?" "Sara is, David is out with some friends." Probably out doing drugs. I told him not to do that shit. And then when she finds out I'm the one who's going to have to talk to him.

On her computer screen I saw something pop up that she was reading before. It looked to be about the blossoming romance between a prince and a princess. She thought it was cute. "Never believe anything anyone does or says in the public eye. It's a stage for shenanigans," I told her. She looked up at me and made sure that I saw her rolling her eyes.

"Roll your eyes at me again and I'll spoon them out of your skull." "Just make sure they're the cherries on top of whatever fucked up desert you're eating." "...And I used to think that you were a real lady. Now all you do is curse. It's disgusting." She thought it funny to mimic me in my deep voice, "And I used to think that you were a real lady. Now all you do is curse. It's disgusting."

"You know what, I'm leaving," I said laughing. I walked away as she laughed as well and left for my apartment. As I closed her door behind me, I suddenly remembered the motorcycle deposit and went back in.

"Back already?" "I just remembered, do you want to go on a motorcycle ride?" "Like right now?" "No, probably tomorrow night." "Sure but where did you get a motorcycle? You don't even have a license." After I told her about the criminal in our building she became excited to go on the motorcycle ride, and then soon after that I finally left for my apartment.

Once inside I went to my laptop and began writing a few notes. The nature channel that Lynne had been watching was on my mind as it spoke of genetic mutations. And I recall reading a year or two ago that the average number of mutations an organism goes through until it begins to fail was around three thousand.

In my notes I wanted to write down a question. Using the same line of thought, is it possible that the same could be said that an entire species has a certain number of generations until it begins to fail? So a generation is the split between you and your parents, or if you have children, you and your children, and there are only so many more generations humans can have as a species until it is difficult to survive. If true, then we must be slowly defecting as a species.

I get back up to look through the grocery bags for the Lucey Goosies when I realize some of the baby supplies were in the same bag. I opened my door, walked to the stairs and began walking up them when I caught a glimpse of something that looked like a rodent up the next flight of stairs. I went up the flight of stairs to see if I did in fact see something, but there was nothing. Then it occurred to me. I had never been this far up in the building. That thought led to the thought of wondering what was on the very top

floor.

I walked up the next seven stories thinking the thirtieth floor would be the last, but it wasn't. There seemed to be a hidden extra thirty-first floor.

When I opened the door to the thirty-first floor, the arrangement of the floor was unique to the others; there were only doors on the left, and to the right were window panes that looked out into the city. Each door that I passed had no number, so these weren't apartments, probably they were utility rooms or storage rooms for the owner of the building. Each one, too, was locked.

Turning around I looked out of the window and into the city. Already it was fading into evening. I understand the days are shorter around this time of year, but my goodness where has the day gone. Still staring, my phone began ringing. It was Lynne, and after I said "Hello" she asked me when I was going to come back up to scoop out her eyes. "In a few minutes, I forgot to give you the rest of Kirby's stuff."

"Okay. Do you remember those strange flowers I drew a few months ago?" "What about them?" "I turned Mideena into a full painting, when I come down at midnight do you want to see it?" "Yes, I would love to, but there is just one thing I don't really understand." "What?" "How are you going to find your way down here if you have no eyes?" She was thinking. Thinking. Thinking.

"I'll follow my nose since I know your smell." "I don't smell that bad, do I?" "I never said you smell bad, I just said I know your smell. I have to go, Junior is calling. Smell you later." She suddenly hung up so I put my phone in my pocket. Still looking out of the window I saw a full Moon coming into view.

The mention of her painting alongside the full Moon reminded me of a dream I had years ago that concerned the archangel Michaela. Like Michael, she was one of God's designers, but she didn't work on DNA, she was the designer of beauty, the designer of the female form and the designer of the parts of man that could love a woman. One of her most famed creations was Eve in her garden.

In a twin dream, that is a dream that mirrors another dream, the artist is Lynne. As much a creation of hers as she is mine, she created, designed and developed the parts of me that would grow to love her.

Always I had been capable of a general love, but never a specific love so romantic. I fell in love with her the way a woman falls in love with a man, dotting, and sometimes frantic. In my dreams I would create and then recreate her like a being so intellectual. But never before had I ever experienced such a specific love so sexual.

On the first morning she created Mimas, the moon in the head which thinks. And every time I thought about her the memory was faded like a lost dream. On the second dusk she created Enceladus, the moon in the groin with kinks. And every time I saw her I

became excited by her existence to an extreme.

On the third night she created Tethys, the moon in the right hand that is gentle. And every time I brushed her soft body, her skin was as gentle as my touch. On the fourth dawn she created Dione, the moon in the right foot that stands fundamental. And every time we walked together we journeyed through love and I adored her so much.

On the fifth afternoon she created Rhea, the moon in the left hand that is force. And every time I seized her it was with the same unmistakable vitality she designed. On the sixth twilight she created Titan, the moon in the left foot that stands the course. And every time we ran through the wild there was no confusion that our fates intertwined.

On the seventh evening she created Iapetus, the moon in the chest that beats. With it the man would know love when he saw her sitting upon many women upon many seats. And it was the final moon in her grand creation of a mortal man greater than dunes. And he would be drawn only to her, a Goddess dressed as a woman, the maker of moons.

THANKSGIVING

It's been nearly a month and every time I make contact with the second-floor man about the motorcycle ride, he gives me a damn excuse. Lynne is starting to think that it's not going to happen and she is starting to blame me for getting her excited about it.

I'm in my goddamn bathroom right now because she's making me wash Kirby's balls. It's fucking weird because this little guy is just staring at me as I do it like I'm some kind of strange man he's never seen before.

After I dry him I place him on the bed and put a fresh diaper on him. Lynne had dumped some of his shirts on the bed. I grabbed a green one but as I went to put it on him he suddenly grabbed it out of my hands and threw it away. Then while on his side, he took hold of a white one and tried to put it on himself. I had to help him, but I couldn't help but think if he was showing a sign of consciousness.

In the corner of my eye I saw a shadow, and when I looked behind me, I saw Lynne standing in the doorway staring at me. When she became aware she was staring at me, she smiled, turned around, and then went back to her cooking.

When dinner was ready, she sent a message to Sara and David to come get their plates. Sara came first, got her plate, and then went back upstairs. Then came David, I assume from below since he came with mail, got his plate, and then went upstairs.

Lynne put my plate on the table and then hers and Kirby's. Then she got the final plate and brought it up to Lisa, then came back down.

As we ate, each time Kirby wanted food he clearly spoke out "mama" and Lynne fed him. And each time I took note of the charm she wore on her ring, autumn leaves that

matched the color scheme outside.

After a while, Kirby had fallen asleep and she placed him in his crib. Then going through the mail that Dave had bought, I heard her gasp. I wondered what it was until she dropped a piece of paper on the table next to me. I read it and the notice detailed that she was now legally known as “Lynnette Julien.”

I took my eyes from off the piece of paper and led it to hers. I stared at her for a small while until finally I said something after three blinks. “They spelled it with an 'a',” I told her.

The heavy weight of months spent waiting weighed heavy in her eyes as she looked from me to the paper. When she saw that I had lied to her, she looked back at me and that weight transferred, traveling from her eyes down her neck through her shoulders and into her hands. She smacked the back of my head, moving me slightly forward. Then she smacked it again, harder. On the third smack she rhythmized it into a combination as she used her other hand to smack my forehead, alternatively moving me back and forth with all the smacking.

When I was able to catch myself I grabbed both of her arms and held them, laughing at her dismay which turned to joy when I got up and moved closer to her. Letting go of her arms my arms were around her body now in the forceful way she designed, and knowing of her crescent blooms she climbed upward placing her arms on my shoulders and around my neck and her legs around my waist.

As I carried her into the bedroom, she whispered things into my ear. “I want it to be soft and slow. Romantic and gentle. And I want you to wear your wedding band...” I looked at her, “I didn't know Mrs. Julien was so bossy...” “You haven't seen nothin' yet little man.”

Bedside, she slowly dropped off of my body. We undressed each other to nakedness and she took the ring from the drawer and I put it on. Grabbing my arms she laid me onto the bed and was soon on top of me.

As she thrusts softly and slowly I put my hands on her hips and slid them around to rest on her butt. Then I reverted them back onto her hips to hold her more firmly in her deliberate and steady movements. As she went up and down it was the most composed we had ever been and I could tell that a gentleness gave her the same pleasure as roughness but in a blossoming way.

In the process she put her hands on mine and placed them onto the bed so they would be outstretched so she could see them. Then she placed her hands on my chest as she stared at the wedding ring. Something possessed her eyes and she looked the way that I must have looked when I used to watch her years ago. A fantasy like dreams and a fixation repressed.

I rose my hands to her chest to touch her breasts, but she quickly slammed them back onto the bed where she could continue staring at the wedding ring. I knew now that any replacement of my left hand out of her sight would cause her to force it back into its previous positioning, so I left it there.

As she continued to thrust in a relaxing state, she slid her hands from off my chest, down my outstretched arms to where her hands would meet mine and she would interlock them. Though she could no longer see the wedding ring, she could feel it as she plunged her tongue into my mouth. The kissing was as sedative as her pelvic movements. Slow, sensual, secretive.

Then she unlocked our fingers and brought her hands to caress my face so she could hold it firm as she plunged her tongue deeper in my mouth. With her face slightly tilted at an angle, I was at her complete mercy and her serene lips revved my idle life.

After she removed her tongue from mine, she lifted her head slightly to hover it over mine and her new silver paintbrush necklace charm hung loose as she continued her slow, warm and calming thrusts.

A block of marble is every thing until you decide its sculpt. It is every dream imaginable until you force out of it one reality. It is every story until it unfolds into one. And it is every woman until, chisel by chisel, she begins to take form.

Every strike is a day in her life that molded her outside the norm. Her eyes and her eyelashes perfect by reform. To describe the sensations of looking at her, I cannot even start. I can only look over her naked body, this work of art.

CHRISTMAS

Spook: Yeah, but they still taking pictures?

David: No. I ain't feel nothing in a while.

Sara: We took care that thing over the eastside. They ain't on me.

David: She been rolling around all week.

Sara: Nothing, no cars, no vans, no helicopters.

Lynne: Emily, she checked after the re-up, no problem.

Sara: We wore 'em down.

Spook: Well, what about cameras?

Dave: Nothing since the camera we took out the wall back at the place.

Lynne: My overnight guy, he been watchin', he ain't seen nothing either.

Dave: 'Sides, I think we good as long as we movin' around like this.

Sara: Back to business, I say.

[DAVE LAUGHS]

Dave: She ain't had no work in a few months. She somewhat eager.

Sara: Goddamn, right. Too much fuckin' talkin' around here lately, man. Niggas need to shut the fuck up. For real.

Spook: A'ight, first thing. We go hard at Kirby's crew. Gave 'em the chance to get on the tit, he passed. Now we bang on his corners a couple of times till he fold.

Sara: Now you talkin'.

Spook: Yeah. Next, we step to Trevor for talkin' that shit. He was a dead man when he opened his mouth. He just walkin' around not knowing it. An' I want that dicksucker. Took my money and the whole world know? Nah. He got to fall.

Lynne: Eddy rolled out in retirement and shit.

Dave: I'm hearin' somewheres south.

Spook: Bring his ass back out of retirement.

[SARA LAUGHS]

Lynne: A'ight. Yeah, a'ight. We can step that shit up, but he's goin' to be comin' at us like we comin' at him. I mean, Mordecai and them, they said let that be.

Spook: You know, the crown ain't worth much if the nigga wearin' it always gettin' his shit took, and Mordecai oughta know that. Let him come. Yeah.

Last night, I had a dream. I was given an aerial shot of the dream which was of a funeral that took place during the rain. It was a military funeral and it was mine, which in my mind would answer why I was given an inhuman shot of it.

Lynne, Sara and Dave were all there, all dressed in black. Lynne was a bit off to the side of them, and I noticed that she wasn't crying. In fact, she had no expression at all. Dave and Sara were taken by someone to a black car, but Lynne followed the pallbearers as they carried my casket to my grave, and as she walked by each of the soldiers, each one saluted her.

When I woke up, I couldn't help but think of the future and when it would be that it would be the last time I ever see Lynne.

The final time a common event occurs is often mistakenly attributed as being the most important occurrence of that common event in its history. That was probably a confusing way to put it, so let me re-illustrate. The Ice Mantis was a class of mantis that was approximated to have lived about 200,000 years ago. They are now extinct, but to illustrate that prior confusing sentence; the death of the final Ice Mantis would have more importance than the deaths of any Ice Mantis before it, even though that singular death was no different and just as common as the deaths of all the other Ice Mantis before it.

So again, the idea is that you can have a large number of common events, but the final time that event occurs, it will often mistakenly be attributed as being the most

important occurrence of that common event in its history. This doesn't just apply to insects, either; imagine an election where the final vote is a tie-breaker. Each vote cast has the same importance, and yet one could argue that the final vote was the most important vote in this specific circumstance because it chose the winner. Yes, of course every vote before it mattered, and yet somehow they seem as if they didn't even though they did.

If you lose a football game 23 to 20, it is such a small margin that in going back to review the tape of the game, you can't really blame one play. It's going to be a number of plays. But at the same time, say at the very end of the game a player on the losing team committed a foul that resulted in a penalty and allows the other team a greater chance at scoring, and they do score, and they win the game because of it. One could say it was because of that play and it wouldn't be false, and yet we cannot discount all of the plays that occurred before it. They are equal factors in the loss even if they seem less so. An important metric in this idea is the fact that time plays a big role in importance, with later sequences seeming to be more important than earlier sequences.

We close the door to our home thousands of times, but it's the final time that we close it that seems to matter to us most. Imagine being shot and dying on the street, and it's a total stranger who tries to help you and they are the last person you ever see in your life. You may have only ever seen that person for ten total seconds, but they will have been some of the most important seconds in your life and that total stranger will have had an undeniable metric in your life, whatever that metric may be. But that doesn't and shouldn't make that stranger more important than any other stranger. I feel we should be more grateful every time we are allowed to open or close a door even if it's within the median, but we just aren't built that way. Humans aren't designed to have that level of gratitude.

Also, ice mantis don't really exist. They never have and they probably never will.

With early dawn still throwing its blue shade into the bedroom my first thought was of the motorcycle thief and the fact that he was still holding my money and I still had not given Lynne her motorcycle ride. By now she's probably forgotten about it, honestly.

Every time I go to the second floor and knock on his door with that stupid "Gone Fishing" sign on it, he never answers, and I know for a fact that a guy like him definitely doesn't fish.

My second thought was the fact that it was Christmas and that we would be giving Kirby and Lisa their gifts today. I didn't have anything to do with it, you know whose idea it was. And it's a shame, too, because in a couple weeks she will never see either of them ever again. At least I don't think she will.

My third thought was of Lynne and of the dream I just had that I will be writing down

soon. Looking to my side I saw her sleeping with her back toward me, and I rolled over and pressed my arm through her arm and her side and wrapped my arm around her to place it on her belly. I moved my leg so that it would rest against her stump, and when she felt me holding her she moved her bum back toward into me and rested her hand on top of mine. Feeling her stump, I rubbed my leg against it and began thinking. Duty and devotion is the only way I could ever love a woman without limits. And from that dream, at least in that life and in that version of her, the same was true of her toward me.

Six hours later the Sun was high in the air and we were one floor higher in the building. I sat on Lynne's couch as she fed Kirby food, and when Sara walked out of her room I called her over. Reaching into my pockets I took out a one-hundred dollar bill and gave it to her, then told her to get her brother. When he walked out he came over to me and I handed him a one-hundred dollar bill.

“Don't spend it on drugs,” I told him. He laughed, and when Sarah asked him what he was laughing about he said aloud while walking back to his room, “Remember sis, don't just say no to drugs, say no thank you.”

Back at the table in the kitchen, Sarah was sitting on it using her phone and I went into their freezer and took out some ice cream. I found a bowl and a spoon and went to the table. Then I looked at Lynne as she looked at me and slowly I began to scoop out some of the ice cream into the bowl. Every scoop, every spoonful, her eyes became more and more suspicious until finally I asked, “Sara, do you think your mom's eyes taste good?” “I've only had eyes once in my life and it was awful, I imagine they all taste awful.”

Lynne laughed a little as I went to place the ice cream back into the freezer. A few minutes later Sara was back in her room and Lynne had to grab something from downstairs, so it was only Kirby and I. After a few minutes of staring, I told him something I wish someone would have told me when I was younger.

“Listen, kid, no matter what they tell you, Santa Claus isn't real.” He looked at me, and then at the small Christmas tree design on the fridge, and then back at me, and I think it stuck.

When a few more minutes rolled by Lynne was still not back and I wondered what was taking her so long. I hope she didn't find something in my apartment that I'm going to need to explain.

She ended up taking so long that by the time she got back Kirby had begun his afternoon nap and I laid him to rest.

I was sitting on the couch when she sat down next to me and placed a bunch of things on the coffee table before us. A pair of broken handcuffs, five royal cards, the drawing we made on the train ride back to the airport. And followed by these souvenirs were

various photos David had taken the entire time. There was a picture of Kirby who while in their room at the inn was holding one of Dave's controllers. When I saw it I thought about how in a few weeks his joker card and this picture were going to bring a sense of nostalgia.

The next picture was one taken while we were on the royal Flanagan tour. It was a picture of a room with a piano in it, said to be the room that Boden Valade composed his masterpieces in. And then there was a random picture of Sara, who took a picture of herself while staring at the mirror with a horror mask on. This was most likely a picture to make David laugh while going through his camera roll.

Then there was the picture of Lynne and I sitting down together at the fair to ride a ride called the "Tunnel of Love." The final three pictures was of Lynne alone, and they must have been at her request because she clearly posed for them; one in a blue dress, one in a red dress and one in a white dress.

I took the one in a white dress and looked at it more closely and was suddenly reminded of a dream I had of her where we walked down a dark street, but she was a ghostly woman in a white dress.

Possessed with a darkness around her eyes and with the spirit of a child, I take my lashes black and my sugar wild. Her divinity drives me to obsession with her lovely shining hair, I take my goddess insane and my diamond rare. Each day I uncover a new layer that reveals something drastic, I take my beauty real and my lady classic. Sometimes I wake up from nightmares of her and she is a force unbreakable, I take my dream bad and my desire insatiable. Never alluring without purpose yet she is destructive, I take my skirt modest and my lingerie seductive. All through the lonely night I long to see her expressions of light, I take my smile kind and my sunrise bright. We play mind games with each other and her control I am under, I take my love lightning and my romance thunder. She lifts my spirits and comfort she gives oft, I take my woman strong and my flower soft. Every year is a new book of adventures fun serious or curious, I take my ocean deep and my queen mysterious. Like an elegant natural disaster whose power is tragic, I take my tornado royal and my wife fantastic.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Two months now, and the motorcycle bandit still has yet to tell me anything of real worth. He says he will have a new bike within two weeks at the most, but I think he said something like that two weeks ago.

Already it was deep evening on the day before the new year, and against all odds I woke up from a dream that perhaps would begin the evening of a certain dreamline. Prior to this dream, which concerned myself being incarcerated on an island with other serial

killers, I had only the dreams of my incarceration and court proceedings, in which I learned I was imprisoned for the murders of a poor immigrant refugee family. I noted that this was not the same life as the other one where I was a prisoner because there was no indication of a death row or solitary confinement here.

The evening came as I lived the dream where I murdered the family. One by one I watched each of them as they went about their day; a father, a mother and infant son, a daughter and a son. Knowing their schedules so well, I was able to kidnap each one throughout the day before any of the other family members realized, and by night fall they were all hanging in my basement on meat-hooks.

The father is the only one who wasn't already dead as I dragged him to my home. I pick up his body, and even after I have set him on the meat-hook, he is still conscious. His eyes are white with death, and examining his suffering lead me to curious thoughts. I had spent so much time watching him that I knew his every move, and sometimes I knew what he was going to do before he even did it.

Through the theorized atomic radiation, all atoms in the network will share positional data. And each atom having knowledge of the laws of physics and historical data about all of the other atoms in their network, such as their last known speed or velocity, will be able to calculate where the atom in question will end up. So because it knows the positional information of other atoms, and because it's aware of the physical laws of the universe, it also knows where another atom in the network will be next based on recent data such as speed or velocity.

Does this mean the universe knows the future? If it's able to calculate where every atom will go next, I don't see why not. And if the universe is able to calculate even just a few seconds of the future, with this ability, why wouldn't it be able to also calculate the next minute, the next hour, the next millennium or eternity?

By the time I was done ruminating the father's eyes had closed and he had deceased, and I went about my way to watch mother and infant. Have you ever wondered if I was a serial killer? One of the more stranger things you have read in my compositions is probably finding out that I am not. But doesn't that make it all the more eerie? To know that on any given day, someone like you could walk past someone like me.

When night settled so did Lynne when she came down to my apartment with a sleeping Kirby. Going through a drawer in the kitchen which housed silverware, I told Lynne to come into the kitchen. She must have heard the metallic shuffling, for she soon asked me in a concerned way, "Are you going to scoop out my eyes?"

As she walked into the kitchen I thought of my mind and its bizarre thinking of putting her on a meat-hook. When she got to me the silverware were all in order and I asked her if she has ever had a dream or nightmare about me that she would never want

to tell me about. She thought about it and then told me about a recurring dream she has had of me for probably the last four years. In the dream I am always disabled or handicapped in some way; I have a prosthetic leg, or I'm paralyzed and wheelchair-bound, or I'm blind, et cetera and so forth.

The next moment found Lynne laying on my couch and me sitting on a chair across from her with my legs crossed.

"Are you still an amputee in these dream?," I inquired. "Yes, but I am always more capable than you." There was a silence.

"So do you think this is an indication of guilt? That you feel that you are not enough because I am not crippled but you are? Or do you think this is a nurturer's mentality, where you pity me and want to take care of me so you can feel useful?"

"...Actually if I'm being honest here, which I am, I think it's more about control. If you are crippled, you will need me. You will be less likely to cheat on me, and you would be grateful that I even see you. You'll stay home all day and I won't have to worry about you really having a life outside of mine. And I know that last part is true because it kind of already is, you barely ever leave the apartment and that's something that I like because I will always know where you are."

I knew she was being honest, which is why I was suspicious of the possibility that this was the worst dream she has ever had of me. "This isn't the worst dream you have ever had of me, though, is it?" "It's not and I will never tell you the worst dream." I bowed my head, "Fair enough." I'm sure this was only the second worst, and there was one far worse.

"Well, I'm not physically disabled. I might be mentally handicap, but I am ridiculously abled," I grabbed her from off the couch and picked her up. In picking her up her pink shoecasing became loose and fell off. I let her down to put it back on, and in doing so she said "You're my strong little boy."

She got back up with a smirk on her face and I stared at her. Then slowly, I raised my right hand. There was a commotion as she began running after my hand went up and I chased her until she found refuge in my bedroom and locked the door behind her.

"You might not be afraid of me, but your ass still is," I told her. "That's why my ass is staying in here until your hand goes down," she replied.

My toolbox was in that room, but I went back into the kitchen and found something that would help me to unlock the bedroom door. With it, I began to work on the doorknob and I could hear her yelling at me to stop, but those words would fall on deaf ears.

After school, every class is over and you've been walking home. Your books held up to your chest wearing your yellow dress, you know that soon you won't be alone. Colorful leaves falling, that's when you see his car drive near. Smiles traded as you open

the door. Get inside. Give him a kiss. And firmly he grabs your rear. At the drive-in tonight's a movie playing but you can't follow the plot. You've been messin' around with your boyfriend; the top pulled down, sitting in the back seat, his hands traveling all along you has got you feeling hot. Every day you're a good girl but come sundown suddenly you're not. He's not that much of a bad boy but when you're in his world, he makes you feel like a bad girl divine. And when the full moon rises and darkness permeates time, you're trapped in his reality where your eyes glow, soft and psycho, and yellow magic reflects off the river in moonshine. High-school sweetheart's blood pumps fast in a scene meant for two, and in a jubilee you'll still be coming here, in this lovely and lonely spot he only shares with you.

JANUARY

While I was in my kitchen someone knocked on my door. I answer it and find that it is David. This was most unusual because Dave never came down here. If my memory serves me correctly, the last time he was here was when Elway was here and they had that partial power outage.

“You should come upstairs,” Dave told me. I asked why and he told me that after Lisa came to their house to get Kirby, she told Lynne that she was moving away. “Then mom started asking her a bunch of questions and Lisa snapped at her and left.”

Walking up the stairs and past Lisa's apartment I could hear Kirby crying and I could also hear the faint sounds of a man speaking.

When I got in their apartment I learned that the man was Kirby's father, Lisa's boyfriend.

Lynne had been sitting on her couch, slumped with her cheek resting on the palm of her tired hand. We could hear Kirby crying hysterically through the walls. Lynne herself had no emotion at all. When Lynne is emotional, that is something that I understand. When she isn't, I leave it alone. I feel bad for people who are overly emotional about things, and part of that guilt is because I usually don't have to suffer in that same way.

I was in my thoughts for a while until I came back to reality and I found Lynne the same way I had left her. Without a soul, without a spirit, wretched with a veil of vanity. Every one has the ability to self-reflect. It is a privilege that our ancestors fought for. But sometimes that ability is best left avoided.

I spent another hour there and the whole time we could all hear him crying. And then their door slammed shut and Kirby's cries followed a straight line past our door, through the hallway, and dissipated near the elevator. His cry was faint until it was gone altogether, but for Lynne I'm sure it would persist well beyond the week like phantom

limbs do to the mind.

Her eyes were like suns but now each one like the moon. Life within her was like spring but soon winter will kill her bloom. She flowed like a clean river until pollution ran her river a dirty white. She was as warm as the day but soon will turn as cold as night. In a blue dress she was a blue sky until a storm came and turned it gray. A flourishing flower she was, a promise in bloom, until she began to wilt today.

Chapter 79

FADE TO BLACK

3:2:8:79

Princess Ivy watches as military operations prepare to defend the royal palace. (2019)

FEDORA took hold of her riot shotgun after putting on her bullet-proof vest and had every intention of using the weapon, but in walking down the hallway which had been buried in broken rubble, King Matthew told her to put down her weapon. “It’s over, Dora,” he said looking up at the caved-in roof.

With anger, Dora handed the shotgun over to him, and then followed him as he walked back over to some of the others in the family.

Queen Janet had been holding their young son, Prince Lucas, and was speaking to their teenage daughter, Princess Ivy, when he and Fedora appeared back in the room.

“What’s going to happen to us?” Ivy asked. “They’re going to fucking hang us, that’s what,” Slant said emotionally. “Whoa, hold on,” said Brett, “we don’t need that kind of talk in here. If we just settle down, do as they say, we will make it out of this in one piece.”

And suddenly all of the royal family heard something thud onto the ground below them. Sonya, who was sitting next to her husband, Robert, and who had her daughter, Diane, in her lap, was the first and only person who saw the stun grenade roll toward them before it went off.

Everyone was blinded from the flash and there was an incessant ringing in their ears. Various members of the family were knocked to the ground by military and others were shouted at to not move. And for a moment, Edward’s clothes had been lit on fire from the grenade until it was taken out by a soldier.

“I can’t see!,” Crystal cried as she tripped and fell over a foreign object on the ground. Ten minutes later, all of the family was positioned in a row, their sights and sounds restored as the soldiers cleared what was left of their warn-torn palace. When the commanding officer was sure the property was safe, he allowed King Anthony and his queen, Queen Alexandra, to enter the property to address the monarchy he had conquered.

They both walked over immediately to King Matthew, and the king moved forward to speak to him. Anthony, who was wearing a white disposable face mask, lowered the mask so he could speak more clearly.

“Tell me, Matt, do you like celebrations?,” the king asked. Feeling that he was being disrespected in some way, King Matthew did not respond. After King Anthony saw that Matthew was not going to answer his question, he smiled, almost laughed, and then

turned away to walk out of the destroyed castle. In walking away, his queen followed him, and when Alexandra noticed Monica looking at her, she brushed by her saying “I thought you were supposed to be dead.” Like her king before her, she did not respond to the statement.

Once Anthony and Alexandra were gone, the highest ranking soldier ordered his other soldiers to escort the Flanagans into private rooms where they could change into black attire.

One soldier escorted an elderly Jeffrey into a room where because he was so old the soldier had to help him into a black suit. Another soldier followed June into her own room, where she switched into the same long black dress she had worn to her twin sister's funeral. Another soldier followed Queen Minor Sophia, who too was aged but was not so aged that she needed help switching into a black dress that was tied by a ribbon at the waist. Another soldier escorted Edward and his wife of eight years, Jasminne, along with their son, Kyle, into a private room where each of them switched into the mandatory black attire.

After every one had dressed into black, they were all brought to where they were before and lined up. One by one, they were to walk up to a soldier who was carrying a bag and drop their cellphones in it.

Frederick was the first to do so, then followed his wife, Elizabeth. Together they had lost very private photos which were not stored anywhere else. Then came their son, John, and his own wife, Carla, who was pregnant, and together they lost many intimate conversations; audio, text and otherwise. Then came John's sister, Sandy, and her husband, Xavier, and their child, Paul, who they thought was much too young to have a phone of his own otherwise.

After the depositing of the communication devices, they were then directed to another soldier who in a bag and in his hand held black disposable face masks. George and Tiffany, along with their son, Daniel, were the first to obtain these masks. Then came the Leons and their ex-wives, Courtney and Erica, of whom the wives only ever saw their husbands because of their children, Walter and Anna, who too succeeded them in obtaining these black disposable masks. Then came Marc and Mark, one not knowing the secret of the other even still.

The final task before transport was to brand the Flanagans as prisoners of war. The method was quick and painless, a simple device was pointed at the back of their hands and while they were marked as prisoners nothing physical was left on their hand. The first to receive this mark was Anastasia, then her husband, Jay, then their son, River, and his wife, Susan. Followed was Kevin and his wife, Bernice. And the final two were Arlene and Jessica, and with this, the royal Flanagans were going to exit their palace as

royalty forever and enter into the unforgiving world as plebeians.

Seated in their coach outside, King Anthony and Queen Alexandra watched as their army directed the Flanagans out of the palace. Some of the environment was decimated by war, but even-so, along the royal street there were crowds of spectators, much of whom were residents of the country and were the commoners who were part of the Flanagan's kingdom which they ruled over. There waited men, women and children to watch the black parade.

There were tanks all along the street, and as the Flanagans made it to the street one by one, they were divided. The elderly, the women and the children were to all be carried by the numerous tanks while the able-bodied men would walk. "Don't worry," Queen Janet said to her five year-old son, Prince Lucas, "this is just one of our parties." Through the young boy's mind was confusion, because he did not remember any such parties being so drab. He always remembered being happy during parties, and was always told to wave at the people to show them that he liked them.

Finally, the queen and the young prince were helped onto the top of a tank, and once they were situated, the tank accelerated.

As the able-bodied men began their march, other elderly and women and children were placed on the tops of other tanks, and they too, once situated, accelerated, and so began the long procession before them.

This ceremony of sorts was being recorded by camera-men, photographed by photographers and broadcast by networks for the world to see. Two such men who were once part of royalty but now removed were Abraham Flanagan, who at age twenty-nine left the family and moved to Canada after a dispute, and Richard, who could no longer tolerate Monica and the persistent rumors that she had faked her death.

Along with these two individuals so did the world watch, too, and so many people in the crowds, wearing their disposable face masks to protect themselves from a deadly disease, held out their cellular telephones to record the procession.

Prince Lucas, still confused by the ordeal, observed all of the spectators as he rode past them. In the wake of his observation, he noticed a girl similar to his age staring at him. When the girl became aware that the prince was looking at her, too, she suddenly became shy. In detecting her shyness, Lucas slowly rose his hand and gestured to her, saying hello without actually saying hello. The girl gestured back, waving at him, and soon he smiled. Other children around the girl noticed her, and in seeing that she was waving at the prince, some of the children waved back at him.

When Queen Janet saw her son's raised hand, she looked out into the crowd to see who or what he was waving at, and she saw the pack of the children waving at the prince. Almost instinctively, she too began waving, and she was met with reply from the gentle

waving of a woman in the crowd. And then another woman, and another woman.

Some of the Flanagans who were on a tank behind the queen and the prince noticed the waving, and some of the spectators near the other spectators who were gesturing noticed these gestures, and very soon the gestures had spread from tank to tank and from packs of crowds to packs of crowds until the identity of the black parade slowly took on a brightening color.

King Anthony and Queen Alexandra, sitting in their coach behind all of the tanks, noticed the gesturing of the Flanagans, but were confused. They were perplexed by the bizarre nature of the Flanagans and of their waving to the crowds as if they were still royalty and were not prisoners of war. Nevertheless, in their own mind, the Flanagans always were, are, and always will be the masters of their namesake.

As the crowds waved back at the Flanagans, some of the packs actually began cheering and whistling and celebrating their arrival. By now, the Flanagan men who were walking were also waving to the crowds just as their tank-riding counterparts were.

As the parade grew in brightness and in color, so were revived the ghosts of the Flanagan legacy. Sitting next to June on a tank was Summer, who smiled and waved at those who loved her. Walking behind King Matthew were the kings who came before him; King Brian III, King Brian II and King Brian. They had all waved in approval of the people in their kingdoms.

Just in front of Leonel and Leonardo walked Prince Kenneth and one of his sons, Jeremy, as they greeted wholeheartedly those who adored them in the crowds. And from the tank which rolled just beside them, sat atop it, was Jeffrey, who just like his father and brother waved agreeably.

Near one of the tanks in the front were Sabrina and Douglas. Doug marched while Sabrina sat on a tank, both waving at the crowds who were obsessed not just with them, but even of their storied romance.

In the middle of the procession walked Cassandra and Brittany. Neither one to be outdone by the other, they seemed to be most attention-seeking of the Flanagans and made sure their presence was known as they both sat on the top of the same tank. Watching them was Princess Aubry, and although she did not flail around like the two women she was watching, she felt as if she didn't need to because in her own world and in her own mind she was more beautiful than the both of them.

Near the end was Queen Brigid and her mother and father, Oliver and Reagan. All on tanks, they waved to the crowd who chanted their names. Only Vivian's name was chanted more loudly, who sat on the tank behind them and threw the great crowd of spectators invisible kisses as they roared.

Princess Ivy stayed on a tank that was close to her father, King Matthew, and he

executed his own gestures as he walked next to his great, great grandfather, King Matthew, who adored Princess Ivy and watched his wife, Queen Heather, as she smiled immensely to the spirited crowds.

Walking slowly because of his great weight was Slant, his black suit barely fitting him, and while he did not wave or smile at the crowds, he nodded consistently in recognition of the crowds admiration for the Flanagans.

And finally, walking in the very front of the first tank was Princess Dorothy and Fedora, who was dressed in her own black suit and wearing her black fedora hat and smoking a cigarette with her face mask pressed underneath her chin. She knew the crowds were there, cheering and applauding the Flanagans, but she barely paid them any attention. The only person who she intentionally noticed was a small girl who looked at her intensely. Stopping, because she was so far ahead of everyone else, she dropped her cigarette and put it out with her dress shoe, and then winked at the little spectator, and then turned to watch the oncoming tank and the rest of the procession.

In final terms this was indeed the end of the Flanagan saga, monarchy, rule; but like all great family lines, they did not just wrestle with their own biology, but too with their own inheritance itself.

King Albert and Queen Meredith ride on a horse in parade after the Island War. (1871)

Chapter 80

CRAZY EIGHTS

3:2:8:80

“I don't know, but Sarah said she saw her looking at one of the pictures I took of Kirby.” “What happened with Lisa?” “She was asking her questions. Like where is she moving to, if she could visit him.” “What did Lisa say?” “She got mad and yelled at her and then left.” “But what did she say?” David hesitated. “She said if she wants a baby she should just have her own.”

I didn't reply after that and continued painting my side of the wall. David and I were in a residential area in New Paris and painting the inside of a new home. I wasn't going to take the job because I didn't need the money, but I knew Dave would have wanted the opportunity at making some money since he wasn't legal working age. I told him we could split it, but I will probably in all likelihood give him all of it. I'm pretty sure he's still talking to the girl he met on vacation and if he is he's going to need it. If not, then I guess he can just buy drugs.

When we were done for the day, we put all of the items where they were before and headed out of the house to find that it was snowing. We found the subway and waited for it in a cold that wasn't particularly harsh.

By the time we got back to San Rashida it was dark out, and in walking off the train, onto the platform and down the stairs, I saw a homeless veteran sitting on a bench. Before I could say anything to him, David walked nearer to him and gave him a bill, then we exited through the doors.

Sometimes I feel guilty being in this family. I feel guilty because I know that their behaviors are in part because they know me, but I don't want David to some day help someone because he got a part of his nature from me and that same day he pays dearly for helping another person. If helping someone costed him his life, like it did my partner, I don't know how I would live with that. And the same of course rings true for Sara.

For Lynne, I took away her house and her car, and because I am not a social person I have turned her into somewhat of a recluse. The house wasn't her house but it was. She was disappointed about me selling it and was upset because she had always wanted a home, especially for her children. Her vehicle may perhaps not be as big of a deal but it was still basically an ultimatum that I gave her. And while she was always basically an ambivert, she has no friends now except for me. But I reconcile with myself in knowing no one else loves her as deeply as I do.

As we walked through snowing San Rashida I thought about how I've barely spoken to her since Kirby left. It's taken me back to the years when I slept alone, and while I do miss her, I forgot how comfortable it is to sleep alone. Not that I don't like her saliva, but

sometimes she drools on my chest.

“When you get home, text me and let me know how your mom seems,” I said to Dave as I got off the elevator. But there was no need for that for when I entered my apartment she was sitting on the couch watching television. A moment later David texted me telling me she wasn't home.

“How did it go?,” she asked. “Good, should finish the entire house in six or seven days.” She didn't say anything after and I went into the bedroom. After I get in the bedroom I immediately noticed a canvas near the window. It has been a considerable amount of time since she's painted anything. Not too long ago she showed me a painting of a strange flower that was converted from a drawing, but that must have been the first time in a long time that she showed me anything new. And seeing this, maybe she is back to it.

The painting itself looked to be complete and was of the two of us having a picnic, but we were aged near death. I took it off the stand to get a better visual of it and in inspecting it I wondered why this was the idea she chose to bring to life. Of course it was Kirby's going away that made her sad, so sad she felt the need to occupy herself with perhaps her favorite hobby, and in that I wonder why she painted the scene of our picnic many decades into the future.

When I put the painting back on the stand, I felt something on the tip of my finger. When I look at my finger, I see a bit of blue paint on it. I look back at the painting and then I take it from off the stand again, and it was just as I suspected; flipping it in reverse I saw that there was another painting on the back.

I only noticed the dualities when I saw the painting on the back. In the picnic painting, it was day and we were sitting on a white blanket, but in the painting on the back it was night and we were on a red blanket. The day picnic was pure and innocent, but the night picnic was impure; we were close to the ages we are now and both nude, both vertical and her sitting on me with the strong suggestion we were engaged not just emotionally but physically. The physical engagement was uncomplicated, but the emotional engagement was tangled like eight.

At this thought the door opened and she stepped inside, looking at the painting I was holding and then looking at me. “Dream?,” I asked. “Nope, good-old fashioned imagination,” she answered. The masking ambience of green success.

I put the painting back on the stand and then looked at her again, and she stared back at me. It was strange, awkward, the most uncomfortable we both have probably been in a long time in each other's presence, and then she disappeared. I then wandered into my kitchen and thought to myself that this must have been how she felt when I disappeared.

This will be another night when she sleeps upstairs instead of down here, and it has

really given me pause. It makes me wonder if any type of sexual activity will remind her that sexual intercourse has the possibility of leading to pregnancy, and a pregnancy has the possibility of a newborn baby, and a newborn baby will remind her of Kirby.

A few minutes later I went into my bedroom, turned off the light, took off all of my clothes and laid down to sleep. When I fell into a dream I saw that I was in a palace, a grandly decorated hallway with arched windows and drapes that blew in from the dark wind outside. All of the lights were off but the hallway was dimly lit by the blue moonlight, otherwise this was a place that was dark without moons.

When one has a position of authority, or when one has wealth, power and fame, they need to be better than the average person, but that is almost never the case, and it makes sense that it isn't because often the person did immoral things to gain that status. These are the people who put all of their validation in the external world; their possessions, their physical appearance, their status. There is nothing wrong with validation, even a person like me seeks some form of validation, but I take pride in knowing that my validation comes from within, from my mind and my dreams and the way I treat others.

I will always write about poverty. I will write about it until I die or it dies before me. And I will write about how power isn't locking someone up or winning a war, it's about being able to talk to someone and being so persuasive and so wise that they have no choice but to listen to you. And I will write about the destruction of classes and monarchies and the elite, because growing up, communism was a dirty word, and I have to say, it's getting cleaner by the day.

I promise you, the word poverty will show up in every composition, and if one day poverty is finally abolished, then I will write about it as history.

Waking up in the morning I heard someone knocking on the door. When I answered it I saw that it was the motorcycle thief carrying two helmets and wearing stupid sunglasses. He tried to hand me the helmets but I only looked at him until he said "What?"

"First you made her wait three months for this, and now you got me taking her out for the ride in the dead of winter when it's freezing outside. I want a discount or a refund," I said to him. After a moment he agreed to give me back twenty dollars, but I said forty. He countered with twenty-five and the pair of sunglasses he was wearing, and even though I don't wear sunglasses I took them and the discount. After he handed me the sunglasses, I nearly called him a buffoon but instead said "Thank you," and he handed me the keys to the motorcycle in the garage. Before he left, I asked him, just out of curiosity, how much it would cost to "rent" the bike for three nights, and he told me it would cost one-fifty a night.

An hour later after Sara and Dave would have already left for school, I left my

apartment and went upstairs to Lynne's. I left with a meter-stick and put on the glasses that I had recently acquired.

I knock on her door and wait for her answer. I hear her moving through the apartment and finally the knob turns and the door opens. She looks at me confused for a moment and soon I begin speaking in an elderly man's voice who was lost and that was carefully orchestrated to be adorable.

"Hello, miss, I can't seem to find my home, could you help me?," I walked inside and she moved out of my way as I began waving the meter-stick around. One sudden wave knocked a book off of a stand. "Oh dear, I'm so sorry," I said. After she saw that the book had been knocked down, she bent over to pick it up and restore its placement. Another such wave caught a resting towel and it was now hanging on the end of the meter stick. Quickly when she saw this she went to the end of the meter stick and took the towel off, then grabbed my shoulder to direct me. "Sir, please, let me help you," she said, and she guided me to a seat on the couch.

Sitting with me, she asked me where I lived. I told her. "That's miles from here!," she exclaimed, "how'd you get stuck so far all the way out here in San Rashida?," she asked. "Well, you see," I took off my sunglasses and looked around the room wildly with no aim in my expression, "I'm completely blind, can't see a damn thing," I told her. "Don't worry, I'll get you home," she said, and before she could get up from off the couch I pulled her back down, saying "Before you do that, let me get a good look at you. I always like to know who I'm talking to."

I put the meter-stick aside and used my hands to examine her face. I began at her cheeks, then her forehead, then her nose, then the contour of her jaw and finally I could feel her smiling as I touched her lips. I could see it, too, but that was beside the point.

While I had gotten her to smile with this ruse, she did not laugh until I told her that she had the prettiest face I had ever had the privilege of touching.

It wasn't much but she was slowly coming back to form, and at one point she told me that after Kirby left, she didn't cry once. "You didn't cry? Really?," I asked her. I also later learned that not that long ago, Kirby said "Spook." At the end, the conversation shifted and it felt like she had an energy that was going to put her sadness to bed for good. "I did my mourning, and I understand that as much as I loved Kirby, I don't want another child. And I know that I will always have one baby to take care of anyway," she took the sunglasses off of me and put them on herself. "Where did you get these, anyway, you don't ever wear sunglasses." "Motorcycle guy finally got another bike, so Madame Julien will be finally going for the ride tonight." "Well it's freezing outside but Madame Julien will make due," she finished.

At two in the morning with a darkness pervading the city I was in my apartment

searching for the motorcycle keys. After finding them I sent a message to Lynne telling her to meet me in the garage when she was ready.

When I get to the motorcycle I find that its colors are silver and gold. Standing there, I placed the motorcycle helmet on my head but it felt strange and I felt like it would be difficult driving with it on, so I took it off and put on the sunglasses.

When I heard the elevator open, I looked up at the convex mirror and briefly saw Lynne look around in search of me, and soon I called out “Lashes” so she would find me. When she got to me I explained to her some things.

“Bike's not registered. We crash it or get pulled over it's on us and we don't know him. He'll deny everything. Any costs, that's on us, he gets motorcycles every other month. Cops don't like the paperwork. Nine times out of ten they'll just tell us to get legal. You see cops around here late at night don't usually pull people over so we just drive the speed limit and stop at reds. If they do, they're all lazy as fuck and will just give us a ticket.” “...Got it.”

I took the helmet and placed it on her head and brought it down until it was secure. A woman ultimately just wants to feel like she is worth something and be allowed to live with dignity. I don't know that a woman really cares too much about being respected by a partner, respect seems to be more important in the dynamic between men to men, but in the dynamic between men and women, especially if it is a romantic dynamic, I believe women are far more concerned with being honored.

“Where's your helmet?,” she asked from underneath the mask. “I'm too dangerous for a helmet,” I told her. She looked at me, knelt down to grab the other helmet, then took the sunglasses off of my face and placed the helmet on my head and brought it down until it was secure.

I got on the motorcycle first, then she got on after me and hugged my body. “You want to see something cool?,” I asked her. I had looked up online how to do a burnout, and in the moments following, for the first time in my life I was a public disturbance. The rear tire cycled against the pavement as I revved the engine and the motorcycle vibrated until smoke began to slowly rise from it.

After a few seconds, I heard some kind of sound coming out of Lynne's helmet. I stopped the engine, turned my head half around, then asked, “Did you say something?” She only quickly nodded her head sideways. I looked forward again and started the process of the burnout again, but again I heard something from her only a few seconds after. I looked back, but I didn't ask anything this time because probably I was just hearing things.

After enough time, the burnout had us completely covered in a cloud of smoke. I eventually released and then accelerated, leaving the fog dancing behind us, and exited

through the entry of the parking garage. Turning right, and then right again, we rode through the midnight street that would lead to the Paradise Port bridge. The streetlights lit up the road with pale orange lights like the moonlight lit up that enchanted hallway with royal blue. In that dream, watching the drapes flow inward, I could feel the ghosts that once lived there and the rich history of that place. And what I couldn't feel in the palace I saw with my eyes, intricate designs as deliberate as her dresses. Love and romance, it is truly the queen's domain, and a king, he is only allowed to play in it.