

RELAPSE

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To my Pooker,
You were proud of me when I should have been ashamed.
Believed in me when I gave up hope.
Loved me when I didn't love myself.

The world doesn't give you enough credit for all the good you do,
Which is why I always try to give you extra.

-JB

And to Casey,
I remember empty summer days in limbo with nothing to do.
And the only thing I wanted was to spend them beside you.

PART ONE

OXY: YOUTH AND BEGINNINGS

Heroin First Time

I remember the first time I did heroin through rose colored lenses. This was before I ever faced felonies, incarceration, disease, or violence. To tell the truth, I don't look back on this experience as a bad time or the beginning of a nightmare. Drugs, dope specifically, is a zero sum game. For the beautiful highs you pay an equal amount of pain in withdrawals, loss of sex drive, loss of muscle, so on and so forth. But when it all balances out I can hardly complain and if being a dope fiend was just that I would never quit. The worst things about dope that make it not worth it are all outside factors from society, specifically the criminalization of addiction and the high retail cost of heroin due to the black market. But let me get off my soap box and get back to the story.

I was 16 years old and selling Oxycontin on the internet for \$1 a mg when I purchased it for under 50 cents a milligram. I lived in mid-Michigan which happens to be one of the cheapest markets for pharmaceuticals in America. While the rest of America was paying \$40-\$80 for an 80 milligram Oxycodone Continuous release pill (OXYcodone Continuous) I was getting them for \$30. Combine this with the fact Oxy sold on the internet for the Appalachian Mountain price of a dollar a milligram it meant I was more than doubling my money. The main problem became securing enough pills to meet the demand. People only get prescribed so many pills a month, and those who cut decent deals typically have a lot of customers buying up the monthly allotment quickly.

I had one lady who legitimately had Lupus but went to a known quack doctor, an over prescriber basically. She sold her 80s for \$30 and they went quick. Through a friend's friend's girlfriend I met another supposed source for 80s who was supposedly a heroin addict. Although I wasn't really scared of heroin as I was already basically an opiate addict I had never met an actual heroin user though. Back in the mid-2000s heroin hadn't really hit the suburbs hard yet in mid-Michigan and to be a heroin user was looked at as lower than crack smoking. The connection's connections name was "Buddha"... classic.

I picked up Buddha in a decent part of Saginaw that wasn't known for drug activity. Looking at him you couldn't immediately tell he was a user. He was decently plump and had color to his face that was visible through skin that was dark for a half Latino. He spoke with energy and enthusiasm and didn't make a solid impression as being in a whole lot of despair for being an addict. In retrospect I can see he was just in the early days of addiction, before you see a lot of "The Darkside". I had a true enthusiasm towards opiates and drugs in general for many years as well. At first I loved the experience in its entirety, then I loved it despite the consequences.

We were to pick up the 80mg Oxies for \$35 apiece through his mother. This was another point of difference between me and many involved in the heroin scene back then. Never in my life could I imagine trafficking in Oxycodone

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with my mother. I just didn't grow up in a family like that. I've used the phrase "charmed" to describe my upbringing to numerous therapists and probationary parties. I was lucky enough to grow up in a family that was so good anyone but a Mormon would have to say I had very little social disposition towards addiction. My father and grandfather both like alcohol a little too much if you ask me, but I never cared for drinking in the slightest and my substance abuse problem so totally eclipses their drinking I don't even consider it a factor.

The pill buy went off in a bank parking lot without any problems. After handing me the pills Buddha asked if I could take him to meet his heroin dealer. Obviously he had made a few dollars of the deal. I was snorting Oxycodone at the time and never really considered heroin that scary. One justification I told myself was that I was selling the Oxycodone, right? But I'm going to snort -something-, so instead of wasting a whole pill I'm supposed to be selling I just buy a little \$15 pack of heroin? Buddha was more than happy to oblige. He rang his dealer and we set the meet for Kroger parking lot.

As we traversed towards the Southwest part of Saginaw Township we passed the edge of the west side, when it was significantly nicer than it is now. Poverty had yet to creep this far into the west side back in the mid 2000s.

"Ah, see that guy there" Buddha jumped in his seat and pointed his finger towards a dusty looking white guy walking into a dustier looking house in a busy corner.

"I used to shoot 80s with that dude all the time"

Dopefiends and felons are like construction workers when it comes to pointing out local landmarks they have a particular history with. I'm guilty of this as well, referring to the Steak and Shake on 14 Mile as "A bathroom I've thrown up in 100 times inside a business I haven't spent a cent in".

"...and buy valium at that house," Buddha continued.

We arrived at the Kroger in an extremely white and moderately affluent neighborhood. It did not seem like the spot heroin deals would take place. A creepy white van, that you could just tell was not street legal, pulled in the parking lot and towards us. I could see it was driven but a tall lanky white guy in his mid-twenties who resembled Shaggy from "Scooby Doo". White dealers are always users themselves, something like the Hairclub for men where they are both the CEO and client.

The dealer exited his vehicle and lumbered into ours which is something I've never seen a black dealer do. He brought eagerness, pep, and friendliness into dealing schedule 1 narcotics the way only a white addicted kid from the suburbs can. When you do something you truly love you never work a day in your life and by that standard this guy was living a life of leisure. As he opened the rear passenger door the bells of the car door dinged away in the summer afternoon. My plump sixteen year old face gave a thousand yard stare out of the windshield. I couldn't make eye contact, this guy was a heroin dealer! Who knows what might set him off!

"What's up, man, I'm Travis!" the dealer said in a voice that was both raspy and artificially energetic.

"John...man, Johnboy" stammered out. I had tried to say "John, man" but

also decided to say "Johnboy" at the same time, causing a response similar to the undiagnosed autistic 4th grader who gets called on to popcorn read Huckleberry Finn. Thankfully this guy didn't seem too hung up on social norms and clear articulation.

I noticed for the first time the dealer's trackmarks, dark lines on the inner crooks of his elbows denoting needle damage. The tracks stood in strong contrast to skin so pale it can only come from both lack of sun and lack of nutrition. Buddha was an IV user as well but you couldn't really see too much damage with his dark skin. Despite this neither of these two addicts looked all that bad. They certainly did not look like what school programs and movies had told me a heroin addict would look like. These guys looked like any other min-wage working twenty-somethings who lived on the west side. What I'm trying to say is that my first views of addiction weren't all that forbidding. These two didn't seem to be any worse off than other directionless people their age working dead end jobs and drinking on the weekends.

The dealer's voice snapped me out of my thoughts.

"How much did you want, man?" he asked me.

"Umm, just like fifteen dollars' worth," I answered, not understanding how peculiar it is to buy \$15 worth of narcotics.

Dope is sold in \$10 and \$20 increments, the only place you'll find \$5 packs is deep inner city Detroit. Hell some places even have \$3 folds for the true homeless panhandling junkies. A \$1,000 deal isn't worth the risk of selling heroin to me so imagine how cheap life must be to take that risk for \$3? Most serious dealers don't even meet for less than \$40 and for anything under \$100 they sure don't move very quick. I've never met a true white heroin dealer though. At the end of the day they're all glorified middle men that risk their freedom and safety to get their girlfriend and themselves high for free.

So many of my friends have been smeared by the newspaper as "heroin dealers" when they were at most middlemen. There's a certain class of addicts who don't know real dealers, either through fear or social ineptitude, and are forced to cop their dope through other users. You can get a gram for \$100, use half, and sell the remaining 5 one-tenth-grams for \$20 each to make your money back. It's a bleak groundhog-day like existence where every day is the same... until it isn't. Because when it comes to dope it always ends bad all the delusional opiate haze in the world can't blur the writing on the wall. You know you're living wrong and you're just waiting on the other shoe to drop.

I didn't know any of this at the time though, I was 16 years old and Opiates had nothing but positive connotations in my mind. I hadn't seen the darkside, let alone lived there yet. I don't think my two drug companions had seen much of the darkside either yet. Although they were much farther graduated in their addiction than me neither of them done any real jail time or faced any real loss. They had a true enthusiasm towards the drug still.

The dealer handed me a square of standard lined paper folded into a paper envelope. Little did I know these origami paper folds would come to dominate my life. The feeling of the crisp paper and folded corners inside my hand is a feeling like none other. There's a strange sense of calm that comes once you have the drug in your hands. I can be in full blown withdrawal, throwing up

and shaking, but once I get the bag in my hand the darkness flees my soul and the walk to the nearest bathroom or alleyway to shoot up is brisk and easy. I hadn't developed this pavlovian response to drugs yet though. I was so normal back then I didn't even check the size of the package.

The dealer thanked us for our patronage and returned to his felonious looking van to depart to a life I couldn't and didn't want to imagine.

"That kid needs to ease up on the dope," Buddha muttered without a hint of irony. "You mind driving somewhere reclusive to do some of this?"

I drove to an apartment complex near by and parked in the car port. Coincidentally this would be the same parking lot I shot up for in the first in. The complex wasn't particularly ghetto but it wasn't nice enough where two strangers sitting in a car would warrant an immediate response.

"You wanna shoot up, man? I got some cleans," rummaging through a backpack Buddha pulled out a ten pack of BD brand syringes. Use once and destroy. Most people would be abhorred at this question but it hardly offended me. I didn't want to use a needle but it didn't really seem that far outside the realm of reality. I could see myself with a needle in my arm before I could see myself in the Oval Office or working on the space station. I never wanted to be an addict... but I never really wanted to be much of anything.

"No thanks," I replied as I unfolded the paper bundle of heroin and eyeballed the penny sized pile of tan powder. The powder was fine and a color tan so deep it could almost be called yellow. I scooped about a quarter of the powder out and lined it up on a CD case as the man in my passenger seat fumbled around with a spoon in his lap. The line of heroin on my CD case was tiny, truly the size of a toothpick. There was no way a tiny pile of powder could kill me, I was used to snorting piles of pill powder ten times that size. I raised the rolled up dollar bill to my nose and leaned over to snort the tiny line of heroin.

The first thing I noticed was the taste. I learned later that what you're really tasting is the cut. Heroin is at most 20-30% pure by the time it hit the streets so what you taste is the vitamin powder it's stomped on with. The strange medical taste of vitamin b12 hit the back of my throat along with the smell. I would later become so habituated to this taste that the sensation alone would get me high before the drugs could even kick in.

I leaned back and snorted, attempting to clear my throat as Buddha tied a belt around his arm and searched for a vein. It's impossible to look anything but pathetic when injecting drugs so I decided against watching Buddha inject to save him this shame. I knew he was done when he breathed a sigh of relief and his entire posture relaxed as the warmth kept up his arm and through his body. We both sat in silence for a moment as we waited for the drug to take over. Once it kicked in life would be like a roller coaster, a life-on-rails, where I can look around, maybe even interact with my environment, but my overall path is predetermined. An addict like me doesn't stop until finally runs into a wall he can't break through or crawl over.

The first thing I noticed was the change in colors. The summer day slowly took on a instagram-filter type haze where all the colors just seemed... warmer and the edges were soft yet more defined than normal. A

sense of safety, wellbeing, and motivation crawled from the meaty part of my legs up towards my brain. I suddenly felt the strongest sense of appreciation for my traveling companion. I eagerly thanked him for hooking up both deals and insisted we shake hands. Thankfully he had the same delusional enthusiasm of friendship for a man he just met in a parking lot that only opiates can bring. I suddenly wondered what other experiences this man might introduce me to.

“What do you have up for tonight?” I asked shyly.

“I was gonna meet up with my girl if you could give me a ride”

I quickly agreed and put my '98 Durango in gear and drove out of the complex. The sky was orange and the sun was suddenly beating down harder than it was previously. Despite the moderate temperature I felt a thin film of sweat growing on my face. My shoulders and arms itch and nothing felt more divine than giving in and scratching. The scratching of the itch would sum up the hedonism of opiate addiction well. Still everything was filtered through a lense of positivity and even the side effects of the opiate felt amazing.

The biggest part of heroin, the part you can't put into words, is simply the euphoria. Euphoria isn't the right word because unless you've truly abused opiates you don't understand what pure pleasure is. The flooding of dopamine in the brain cannot be replicated in regular life cannot be represented accurately in film or writing. No longer did I stutter my words or second guess what I just said. For once in my life I spoke and felt confident. If perception is reality then was it really fake?

I held nothing but love for every subject of God's earth. As I drove down Bay Rd I looked at my fellow drivers, people on the sidewalk and Buddha and felt only appreciation and love. I couldn't believe how lucky I was to live in Saginaw, what an authentic place to grow up. To live in a place with both affluence and a ghetto, truly the best of both worlds. I wanted to call my family and thank them for raising me. I considered the possibility of volunteer work in the future as thoughts of altruism and love of my fellow man pulsed through my brain. I was god's own creature and could do no wrong and neither could anyone else.

I really hate drug cliches but the idea of chasing your first high is pretty true. Although the first time was particularly amazing and overwhelming the second and third were just as good. The first year of truly abusing opiates I got a knee-buckling euphoria from them without much of the side effects. I didn't nod out or slur my speech much. The biggest tells were the rasp in my voice and the tell tale itching. My family wouldn't be able to tell when I was high until years later.

I'm not sure when or what exactly changed with using Opiates but I have a theory. I believe my mental tolerance to the euphoria increased more rapidly than my tolerance to the depressant effects of the heroin. My brain grew numb and it required more and more heroin to release dopamine, but my body wasn't developing this tolerance as fast and as a result the downer effects of the heroin became more pronounced. Now a days I have to be basically dead just to get one tenth of the euphoria I used to get in the early days.

I was unaware of my surroundings yet totally focused on driving. Yet I was

also having a meaningful conversation, or so I thought. Who knows how I really sounded, how I was really driving. Through the lense of heroin everything seemed fine though and I was truly excited to meet Buddha's girlfriend and learn more about him.

"Yeah, man, that guy, uh, Travis, he drives down to Flint to re-up. Him and his girlfriend are totally strung out," Buddha claimed as he leaned back in his seat and scratched the side of his neck. His beady dark eyes were visible through thin slits, obviously the heroin was affecting him stronger. "You know Saginaw used to be a big heroin town in the eighties, and it's definitely coming back. The Oxy, man, there's only so many and people want too much for 'em. You know in Bay City an 80 goes for fuckin' fifty bucks! Sometimes more! A fuckin' twenty pack of dope is stronger than that."

"How many people do you know with Oxy scripts? I need as many as I can get."

"Not as many as I used to. My mom, she knows a lady that gets bottles of them. Here, turn right on this this road," Buddha jabbed his finger towards the window.

I turned onto a residential street in the township where the houses were significantly smaller and cheaper than all those surrounding them. It almost seemed like an enclave of mild poverty in the middle of an affluent neighborhood. Towards the end of the street Buddha gestured for me to park in front of a white house with a fucked up cheap looking screen door. He picked up his flip phone to call his girlfriend but before he could the screen door creaked open and out she came.

I was surprised at how attractive she was, Buddha wasn't exactly God's gift to women. It was impossible not to notice that she had a slight aire of being strung out. Despite the make up her eyes looked just slightly sunken, a lack of color shone through her foundation. She was just a little too skinny and her skin had that slight lack of tautness that suggested it was recent weight loss. Despite all of this she was still beautiful with an angular face like a model and healthy dishwater blonde hair.

"She lets me put my finger in her butt," Buddha quickly whispered right before she opened the rear passenger door to hop in. He clearly found it very important to let me know this. She climbed into the back seat of the Durango and leaned forward to give Buddha a kiss.

"I was in there with Mark and them and they just got an eightball and they were like 'you gotta do a line' so I did," the girl said as she turned towards me and I saw her saucer like pupils expanded from the cocaine. Her eyes held a welcoming and warm look. Looking back these were the eyes of a predator, a girl who eats men alive in terms of dope consumption.

"And who are you? I'm Amber," she asked.

"John, nice to meet you," I replied as I raised my hand up to shake it but she lurched forward and gave me a quick hug before I could.

"I've got a spot we can go not far from here and get high. Real secluded and private," Buddha quickly interjected, breaking up our hug party. "Go back that way and head left on Center."

As Buddha and his girlfriend caught up I quickly came to the realization

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that this wasn't a real relationship as much as a using relationship. This girl would give Buddha sex and affection but dope was always part of the equation. There was no set amount of price discussed but it was unspoken that he should only show up if he has a significant amount of drugs to share with her. I would learn about this unspoken arrangement myself years later and the paradigm of supporting women with drugs would dominate my future relationships.

They led me to a secluded dirt road on the outskirts of the suburbs that appeared to be some sort of service drive for the county. I listened to the soft crunch the Durango made against the dirt and it was intensely pleasurable. It felt as if it was scratching an itch in my ear, hearing that strangely satisfying sound. The truth is everything and everyone felt good to me from the strong effects of the heroin. I felt like I couldn't have better traveling companions for the night.

PART TWO

PRISON: RACONTEUR REFLECTIONS

Retarded Inmates

Mentally challenged offenders are supposed to be housed in a special facility known as "The Puzzle Factory", but sometimes they slip through the cracks. When originally arrested they will have to be booked into jail at some point and have face to face interaction and interview with the police. One would assume the vast majority of handicapped persons should be identified at this stage and flagged for special housing, but it doesn't always happen. It's difficult to imagine a retarded man sneaking through the trial process without the prosecutor and judge noticing but apparently it happens. Finally when sent to prison all inmates must go through an entry facility called "Quarantine" where you are given blood tests, psych evaluations, a security level and sent to a regular prison. Even this third checkpoint manages to get breached by these felonious Rainmen somehow.

As you can guess a retarded man sometimes has a rough time in the penitentiary, where highschool locker room antics permeate the culture. Crump the old predator used peanutbutter to sexually assault Roger the retard. For the most part it was simple teasing though. Don't be too quick to judge! I found this behavior disgusting at first... before I found out Roger was a hanus baby raper. It didn't bring me delight like the harassment of a mentally competent pedophile, but I no longer objected it... it wasn't my problem. I just can't feel bad for a monster and more often than not the mentally challenged had sex offenses against children.

Let me tell you about Jordan, a quintessential young autistic with a twist of fetal alcohol syndrome, thrown into a 150 man dorm of parole and probation violators. The program was made up entirely of felons and probably 20% had been to the state prison. The program was called Tri-Cap, the Tri representing the three counties of Mid-Michigan most inmates hailed from: Bay City, Saginaw, Midland.

I've done 3 separate bids in Tri-Cap in three separate programs. The first was in the prison parole violator program for 60 days, then 4 months in OSP aka "Opiate Specific Program" aka "White kids in their 20s that still wear skateboard shoes". Finally I did 135 days in the intensive program. I've met some of the biggest dumb fucks of the michigan department of corrections. I've also met some solid honkeys and decent plugs, a few intelligent genuinely good friends, and an army of funny guys I like but wouldn't hang out with in the street. Tri-Cap has delivered me some of the greatest stories, it has been a authoritarian muse for me... but this chapter is about autism awareness.

The first thing that pops into my mind about Jordan was his autistic love and focus of dinosaurs and the PC game "Ark: Survival Evolved". Whenever he met someone he assured them he would grant them admin privileges on his Ark server and even spawn them a fuckin' dinosaur. The second thing that defines him was his tiny frame and general personification of a young incel. His autism was far enough on the spectrum that sex didn't seem an interest to

him. He was also quick to inform people that he had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and was adopted. I don't mean to sound crude but Jordan had a rat-like face common among Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

His crime was unbelievably petty and even among scumbag inmates it seemed unbelievably immoral to throw a kid like that into the wolves den. His foster mother had attempted to take his laptop away during a mean round of Ark: Survival Evolved. Jordan retaliated with a true classic: the "REEE!" temper tantrum. His family had to call the police who arrived swiftly and treated it as a domestic disturbance. When police man, a grown man you can imagine was at least 200lbs, tried to handcuff Jordan, an 80lb 5'2" FAS suffering autistic who was having a mental breakdown, he resisted. Now I was not there so who can say what happened? Maybe 80lb Jordan gave this grown officer of the law a true run for his money! The police must have thought he gave him quite a whooping because they charged him with Resisting and Obstructing an Officer (Felony) on top of Domestic Violence (Misdemeanor). Sarcasm aside, how much of a pussy do you have to be to charge a retarded child with a felony because he tensed up when you manhandled him in the middle of an autistic panic attack.

It baffles me that they actually housed this kid in real jail and that the court system didn't take one look at him and spit him back out or get him help. He sat in his local county jail for 4 months before arriving at Tri-Cap sentenced to a 150 day program (the longest program available). He couldn't help himself when he made the classic mistake of coming into a new facility hot. Instead of laying low and surveying the rock he jumped right in and tried to make friends with everything, mainly through Ark: Survival Evolved server admin privileges.

Contrary to what you might think people in prison aren't totally predatory towards people like this. It probably helped that he didn't have any money coming in to give him something worth stealing or extorting. A large majority of offenders are normal decent people with a certain flaw, weakness, shortcoming. I like to think of myself as a fairly normal person, an "internet guy" for sure, but not a thief or true criminal, just a honkey with a fuckin' habit. Most of the people I associate with in the corrections system could be summed up similarly, sans the lack of thievery. Some people are normal hard working 12 hour shift guys that just have a nasty temper. All it takes is losing that temper once to hit someone and end up in the MDOC's hands for years.

When Jordan arrived and put forth instant enthusiasm towards his new bunkies most people returned equal enthusiasm. When he wasn't around people spoke of how atrocious it was to send someone like that into a place like this, but in front of him people acted friendly and feigned interest in Ark: Survival Evolved until his ADHD took him to another victim of attention robbery. You can't just blow off a 5 foot goblin-esque child begging you to listen about his ability to spawn raptors in the video game world. In a sense he would hold you emotionally hostage.

The problem with communal living is abrasive personalities like him wear you down quickly. Remember spending weekends with your middle school friends? How estatic you were on Friday, but by Sunday you were sick of

them. The same things happens with moving in with a girlfriend. Jordan's autistic dinosaur ramblings soon took a toll on the general patience of the inmates.

One of the smartest people I've ever met in corrections was Jake "Stainless" Steele, who was surely slightly on the autism spectrum as well with his obsession being fish. Despite his general nerd demeanor and high intelligence his massive heroin addiction seemed to have forced him to be a weird social butterfly. He as an absolute goof but could command a rooms attention in a special way. He could debate like none other and could do a bit of a party trick where he would seem to filter his words through a thesaurus use exotic words non stop. He could basically do spontaneous prose of a lesser David Foster Wallace.

Jake, a man I truly call my friend, was going through tough times. His girlfriend had left the state with his daughter. The last time he saw them was on a institutional visit where she came still high on meth with period blood staining her jeans. She was supposedly going to Kentucky to waitress but took the daughter and explained she was moving them stopped answering the phone. Jail is a miserable place to be in a relationship, you're not in a position of power and there's nothing you can do.

"Man, my girl left me... and I don't know if I even care about that, fuck her, right? But my daughter, man, that's all I got. She took her to fuckin' Kentucky! I can get a lawyer and all that but at the end of the day my daughter is gone!", Jake vented on the sidelines of a Volleyball game during rec. You could see the emotion he was trying to hold back and it was rare for people to even show this much vulnerability. In his moment of need Jordan comforted him: "Yeeeh, I know what ya' mean. My mom took away my Xbox once, bitch!", Jordan exclaimed towards Jake, honestly thinking he was relating on the same level of emotional trauma. Jake paused for a moment and a look of disgust rose in his face.

"Are you fuckin' kidding me? An Xbox? Dude, just get the fuck out of here! Not now!" Jake's voice raised towards the end as his frustration with the autistic staring at him blankly grew.

I do admit people used Jordan for their own amusement and sometimes I was guilty. Despite expressing no sexual desire I could just tell he was a deviant. When were were all huddled up outside for a smoke break (Jordan was the only person out of 150 that didn't smoke) I beckoned him over and asked what his favorite category of porn was. His edges of his lips rose into a stupid grin and he came closer to whisper his dirty secret. You already know Hentai was his -exclusive- favorite category.

Jordan never really understood where he was and who he was surrounded by. I wish, for the sake of the written word, that the end of his story was more exciting. That there was a plot and build up. But it was just an ordinary benign autistic breach of social norms to the wrong offender who snapped. It was Ming, a muscular Asian heroin addict from Flint who heard about Ark: Survival Evolved one too many times and snapped. The 5'11" 190lb crossfit build asian put the tiny guy in a headlock and nearly choked him out before other inmates broke it off.

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I have to note that TriCap was an open facility. You are sentenced there from the court system and are technically serving time but the door is not locked. You go outside to smoke and can AWOL at any time. You are guaranteed going back to jail and probably prison if you do though. Despite this it happens fairly often. Ming saw the writing on the wall and fled before stealing multiple cars and leading the police on a chase. I believe he got nearly 10 years. Jordan was given clearance to leave the program early, but had already suffered through over 100 days of his 150 day sentence. I have no idea if he went back to his foster family considering the previous violence and lack of communication with them during his bid.

Duhmarcus

Demarcus holds the title for most mentally incapacitated person I ever did time with. He legitimately had that extra chromosome, the funny nose, almond shaped eyes and speech impediment. Like most of his kind he absolutely loved soda and lack of Pepsi seemed to bother him more than lack of freedom. He was never truly sentenced to TriCap but rather housed there instead of the county jail. Due to his handicaps I could never really get the full story out of him. One of my main weed connections was a girl with a slight case of down syndrome (10% she said) but still functioned and hustled better than most of the bums in my neighborhood. He was not high functioning like this. The only time his brain truly seemed to be firing at his full, diminished, capacity was when the conversation involved gas station snacks.

He was a big boy standing a few inches short of six feet but making up for it with tremendous weight. He had that true round fatness only black guys seemed to be able to achieve. I would guess he probably weighed 270lbs at 5'10". He wore dirty basketball shorts and a heather blue T Shirt with a picture of Pikachu and Japanese writing. This was the only outfit he wore.

When our dorm came back from class to see him sitting at our picnic table, almond shaped eyes giving us the thousand yard stare, we couldn't believe it. The first thing we did was interrogate him and the available CO's as to why he was here and what he did. We didn't even need to ask to tell he was legitimately retarded. All the COs could tell us was that Saginaw county sent him to TriCap for housing. He was not a probation or parole violator. Sometimes sex offenders coming out of prison are housed in TriCap until other housing becomes available so we were suspicious.

Demarcus, or as he said it "Duhmarcus", did not give us a straight answer on his original criminal charges. It was impossible to tell if he was trying to minimize his crime by talking us in circles or if it was just the downs at play. He definitely played the downs card heavy. When asked about his charges he would stare blankly and often respond with "huh" or a non-sequitur. Once a bag of flaming hot cheetos got pulled out all 22 chromosomes went to work and suddenly he was speaking quickly in full sentences. After rounds of "good inmate bad inmate" he seemed to admit with some sort of violent altercation with his mother. We reluctantly believed it even though a sexual crime seemed more likely.

This kid had no support from the outside. TriCap and MDOC claim to feed

you at least 2,000 calories a day but that is generous. Couple that with Duhmarcus being a classic picky who would throw his entire tray of food away after taking a bite. The large manchild was constantly hungry and on the hunt for snacks. Most people had some sort of financial support coming in and could afford Commissary aka Store, the food sold by the institution. Think of stuff available in a gas station for four times the price (Single packs of Ramen for \$1). The self starvation caused Demarcus to spot bags of chips like I spot rocks of dope.

AV opened a bag of chips by his bunk. AV aka Aaron Northern was a heavily tattooed friend of mine who is unique in the aspect he is a young black heroin addict ("What nigga? Because I'm black I gotta smoke crack? Naw fuck that being all paranoid and I'mma shoot this DOGFOOD and lay back with my girl"). AV was deep in conversation with Young Brad, a heroin dealer whose local news article quoted him as saying "I do heroin every day". As the bag of cheetos crinkled and snapped open Duhmarcus's head shot around and focused on the bag.

"Ay... Nigga," Demarcus said a regular speaking volume towards AV's bunk.

"Nigga!" a little louder this time, but the noise was obscured through conversations, domino games, and the TV.

"AYE, NIGGA!" he screamed this time, AV finally taking notice.

AV turned his head and looked at Duhmarcus, dumbfounded.

"Nigga lemme get some chiiiiips," his voice had changed to a puppy like pleading. He was playing his card and didn't understand subtlety.

"The fuck? No! Every time I open chips I aint gonna have you coming over here. My kids are at home, the fuck I look like? We're gonna set a tone right now. No asking me for shit", AV asserted. He stood his ground and really didn't cut into the kid too deep.

"Yeah... OK, I'm sorry. But uh... PLEASE," his voice grew to a cackle, "just PLEASE lemme get some chips, nigga"

All day everyday this persisted and we tried to stay as polite as possible. You had to eat your snacks with stealth or deal with his begging. Despite his ravenous hunger he refused to eat the chow hall food. The down child was literally starving himself. After two days of not eating he sat down in the chow hall with his turkey pot pie tray and loudly declared he wasn't going to eat it. I quickly jumped on the offer and darted towards him to claim my second serving. The chow hall erupted in a chorus of inmates making vulture noises, implying I was taking advantage of this starving child. Waste not, want not... I stand by my actions.

Demarcus did not seem to grasp the guard/inmate relationship. All day he would approach the officers station, gigantic belly distorting the pikachu figure on his T-shirt. He would bother them for hours with the same inane questions and statements: "When am I going home?", "I'm hungry", "Can I have a bite of that?", "Can I use your phone?". Demarcus was impossible to dislike but he did have a bad trait of being a constant malcontent. I recall trying to do a good deed and letting him make a \$2 phone call on my dime

only to have him fuck it up twice racking up a \$6 bill to basically say nothing. In the early days a nicer CO brought him a hamburger tray at night after hours of begging. He inspected the burger for a few seconds before dumping it directly in the trash.

Now, I'm going to address this here and now. I do have a reputation for eating anything and everything in the MDOC. I've been called "The Garbage Man" and "Young Garbino". I have never ate anything directly out of the trash. If a whole piece of food is laying there on top of a napkin that's different. Keep in mind there's 150 people throwing away things so statistically you see some good pieces of food that clearly haven't touched anything gross. So when I went to the trash can I saw that the tray was still face up and half the cling wrap was steal covering the beans and veggies. Yeah I get that it's funny, the image of me pulling a tray of state food out of a big garbage can and eating it, but I have never "Eaten out of the trash".

Derrick Florey was one of the funniest people I ever met and the giant Swastika tattoo on his chest caused a moral quandary with me. He was quick to explain he regretted the tattoo and that it was done in prison. People that haven't been can't quite understand the ideology of prison that separate races even at lower security levels. I didn't know what to make of him, he didn't make anymore racist jokes than other white guys and did not seem like a true nazi but rather white trash who made a dumb decision while drunk in prison with a homemade tattoo gun. He was still about his race though, a "Solid Honkey" for sure.

It was Derrick Florey eating a bag of skittles that caught Duhmarcus's attention. Florey was wearing a tank top and the thick lines of the swastika tattoo where visible under the fabric.

"Aye Nigga!" Duhmarcus shouted with a higher level of assertion and confidence than I had seen.

Derrick turned around, there were only him and two other white men in the area. He looked left and right just to make sure he was hearing this correctly. Before he could respond:

"Lemme get some skittles, nigga," Demarcus drilled in with the begging routine.

Everyone in earshot erupted with laughter. An obese black manchild with an extra chromosome calling a Swastika tattooed ripped aryan "Nigga" was one of those golden moments you only get to experience in the system. I'm glad to tell you Derrick didnt take offense to it.

"The fuck did you call me?" Derrick said without anger, laughter still spilling around his words, "Man you call me 'Meth n Moonshine' that's hillbilly heroin baby!" followed by a rebel yell of a whoop that caught the CO's attention as they yelled at us to quiet down.

"Moomshine? Moomshime can I have some skittles?"

And that's how Florey became "Moomshine"

As I mentioned before the doors were never locked at TriCap. Somehow Demarcus got the idea of escaping. We tried explaining to him that it would be "all bad". He would go back to jail or worse. He didn't even know where he

was or how to get home. We did everything short of physically restrain him. I asked the CO's how they could, in good conscious, let this kid wander out onto the fuckin' highway. They gave me limp-dicked non-committal responses. At the end of the day the kid wandered off and we never saw him again.

RETARDED PEOPLE I MET IN PRISON

The first kid was Robert Rabbi. He looked exactly like the son, Steve, from American Dad. This was like 2009 when autism wasn't such a big topic. He definitely had aspergers or some shit.

Every single time a CO would present themselves in the cell Robert Rabbi would ask for his Hat, Mountain Dew, and Pringles he was arrested with. Even after months being in jail. Robert Rabbi had walked to the store and purchased a can of Pringles and a 2 Liter of Mt. Dew while wearing his favorite hat. On the way home he saw the house of a girl he used to ride the bus with. Cut to a little bit later when the girl comes home and goes to her room and sees a pair of boots sticking out from under her blanket. She alerts her father who takes the covers off while pointing a shotgun. Robert Rabbi was jacking off with the girls panties of his face while under the covers.

When confronted with his crime he would do this weird thing where he'd act like a robot shutting down. He'd just drop his his head and stop speaking. He was half a fucking tard but for some reason he was only in the Med-Cell a little bit. He would constantly be transferred for causing problems. He didn't understand math and would fill out his commissary orders with the "amounts" for every item being the max, 99. So whatever item was processed first he'd just get as many as he could afford. He'd fill out a list for 99 of all these different items and just get 17 bags of skittles. I remember him jumping from top bunk to top bunk acting like a gargoyle and eventually falling and smashing his head. Never knew what happened to him after that.

Roger was a legit tard in prison. There's seriously like multiple levels of filtering people to med-cells and tard-prisons. For whatever reason some slip through the cracks. I noticed the ones that slip through ALL have sex cases. I sometimes think the case managers just want to fuck them over. I was in Michigan prison in 2012-2014 and you could completely harass sex offenders and no one cared. From what I understand now they prosecute you for harassing them.

Roger would "do the pony" on command and pretend to ride a house like people do with a broom stick. Speaking of broomsticks... Roger had no money but loved peanut butter. They put some peanut butter on the end of a broomstick and had him lick it off. Little did anyone know "Crump" was in the background peeping game...

Crump is dead now, His MDOC page used to still be active but it's gone now. MDOC ran out of numbers (I was 705524 in 2008, so they eventually reached 999999 and had to use dead peoples numbers). He was an OLD school predator. Dudes who had done lots of time told me stories about him. He was probably 70 something years old and decrepit has hell, so he wasn't really threatening.

I remember going to breakfast one time to get orange juice so my friend

could make hooch (I never went to breakfast otherwise, it's always ridiculously early). I get to the guy serving the cakes and lo and behold it's Crump. He serves a young black kid a shitty corner piece of cake (knowing they're going to throw away whole trays). "Lemme get a better piece of cake, oldschool," the young guy said.

"Keep it movin', dicksuckah"

The young kid didn't know what to say with this 75 year old man talking shit. "The fuck did you say?"

"Take it up with the administration, dicksuckah," the young kid didn't know what to say and just kept walking.

After seeing the peanut butter incident Crump put peanut butter on his dick and had Roger lick it off. The actual police came in and investigated. Crump got transferred somewhere else. This was early in my 2 year sentence.

Towards the end of my sentence we get a half-retarded kid who can't read and had a minor sex case in his past (he was 18/19 and the girl was 15). He was there for meth but the sex case still follows you and you have to do classes.

I couldn't believe it when Crump came back to the prison. I assume the charges never stuck or else he would be in a higher level and STG'd as a predator most likely. He started taking up with my half-retarded cell mate. Lets call him Ralph. I warned Ralph about Crump but he didn't really understand the situation and the culture of predator behavior in prison. Eventually he came back to me and told me Crump had offered him Duplex cookies to watch him piss and shit. He finally understood what was happened and told Crump to stop harassing him. Crump's old ass threw a weak 75 year old punch that barely grazed Ralph. Coming back from chow one day I see Crump layed out on the snow. Someone finally took him out.

The last time I was I was in Saginaw County Jail I was one of two white people on the whole rock. One of the old black dudes named Frog was a trip. Watching TV a commercial for "The General" auto insurance came on. "Why he mustache so big, why don't he trim that shit," Frog commented.

At first I didn't know if he was serious or fucking around. "Who? The General?" I asked.

"Yeah...he must of been growing that shit for years!"

Frog was in for an arson case. Apparently he was trying (and failing) to burn abandoned houses down. I asked him what his motive was for this and he replied, "To save the kids." Perhaps it was pizza gate related. I guess the police did a stake out and caught him with a lighter and a cup full of gas stalking an abandoned house.

I asked if he got high. Usually he had a squeaky high pitched voice, a true bug. His voice got low and serious when he said, "I fucks with the meth HEAVY, Crystal...Shake and Bake, all dat...and I smokes crack." Now things made more sense.

Almost Caught

You can take a criminal out of his neighborhood, but you can't take his neighborhood out of him. People bring their bad habits with them to prison whether it be drug use or drug dealing the same way gangs from the streets make their way into the corrections system and vice versa. When I went to prison at age 22 I had no desire or thought of reforming my drug habit. I arrived in real prison in early January and got high for my first time while their was still winter.

I remember my nerves blaring as I sat on a picnic bench with Stump, watching him huddled up into his coat hood with his arms pulled back through the sleeve holes trying to manipulate the homemade lighter inside his jacket, and thought it looked comical but couldn't laugh. This was the first time I had ever had the nerve to smoke anything in prison, I smelled tobacco and marijuana almost every day and could not believe it. Every time I smelled the sweet sickly aroma I would giggle with delight because I'm still a highschool boy at heart that loves smoking weed where you're not supposed to. Such a flagrant breach of the rules inside a corrections institute blew my mind... but within 6 months I would be smoking joints behind the softball fence with Gay Mike like it wasn't against the rules. Things becomes easier like that in addiction.

Drug use in prison eventually got as normal to me as drug use in the streets. Drugs are a major factor in prison, they produce an unbelievable amount of profit but with drama and violence to match. Drugs are usually ten times the price they would be worth on the street and they still sell out quicker than they can be smuggled in.

People don't really get raped in prison anymore but drug debts often lead to a sort of gray area rape. One of the biggest and most powerful subcultures in prison are the Black Muslims. These guys range from Louis Farrakhan like political beliefs to just normal gang bangers that don't even know the first thing about Islam. In many joints they control the heroin trade through sheer numbers. In MDOC over half the inmates are black and it seems like damn near all the black guys over 35 were in some sort of Muslim group. Every one of the muslim groups does not condone homosexuality but Black Muslim men are notorious for gay sex in the joint. It's just a known thing that they are "on the down low" more than any other group or subculture. It's a common prison move, since they often control the heroin, to lure young white guys into heavy drug debts in an attempt to turn them out ("press them for sex"). Basically the alternative offered is either violence or being forced to leave The Yard (Locking Up) and potentially face problems at the next prison.

For the most part though I didn't have a bad time in the drug trade. I got into typical shouting matches with friends, argued with black men over my line of credit, was threatened over said line of credit, used dirty needles, and all the same antics I did on the street but never had a violent incident. I did

have one close call though, a call so close I almost earned myself a few more years in prison.

I was fiending hard after watching a re-run of "Drugs Inc" on NattyG in the middle of the afternoon. It was only 2pm and I was already fiending for drugs, it wasn't looking like today was gonna be one of those "good days". Someone more experienced with recovery might have noticed the trend of watching "Drugs Inc" then getting high and cut out that specific show out of the schedule, but it was one of my favorites. It doesn't take much to set off my addiction. Getting a brand new, fresh syringe would set me off like no other... as if a only having a dirty one would stop me!

I remember it was the Portland episode of Drugs Inc. I remember thinking Portland seemed like junky heaven. I wanted to live in Portland for this. I dreamed of a culture that accepted me for what I was. A burden on society, sure, a stain on the napkin of an otherwise beautiful cityscape, me nodded out on a bench. Not a menace, not a villain, just a guy with problems but no nefarious intent. All my life I dreamed of a place where they would just let a junky be a junky. I can take being dopesick, I can take spending all my money, I can take being alone, I just can't take getting locked up. Portland and those pacific northwest cities seem like they don't put you down just for being a fiend. I came down with 2 years for failing a drug test in Michigan. But I wasn't in Portland, I was in Jackson, MI, but I could get heroin on credit.

Jackson, MI is known for the MDOC with multiple prisons in the city along with quarantine. It's also a city with a hood that doesn't get the publicity of Saginaw or Flint but still bangs hard as fuck. Some of the craziest white guys I've met in my life were meth cooks from Jackson County. Some of the hardest GD's (Gangster Disciples) I ever met were from Jackson City. Jackson also produced a strange amount of white GD's which is something I can't much comment on. In the parole violator camp the Jackson boys always clique up heavy. It wasn't much of a surprise that the Jackson clique in prison were major players in the drug game due to their geographic proximity.

Tank was a black kid in his mid 20's. It's easy to describe him as a kid because of his smaller build compared to all the other black guys in prison but he commanded as much respect as anyone. I thought that even without the drug connection he might have held just as much power in some way or another. I had many dealers in prison I got friendly with who would give me long grace periods before I had to pay my debts and never gave me terse words over big debts. Tank wasn't like that. With him you paid your debt when it was expected and he never warmed up to me even after multiple successful deals. He had the least problems with debt collection of any dealer I ever saw because of this stone demeanor though.

The fact that Tank and his crew were operating this criminal organization from the fuckin' honor dorm tells you all you need to know about how "on the ball" MDOC is. I swear that more dope came out of the "Change for Life" (aka "Cons for life") honor dorm. Not to mention the guy that got caught with 34 knives there. I spent many hours of my life sitting on the picnic tables outside the honor unit waiting for Pooky to get the drugs from Ray Ray and have Junebug run them out to me. You would think since we are fenced inside a

small area a prison drug deal would be at least fast but leave it to black ingenuity to find a way to make the white man suffer even more in his chemical and physical bondage.

My sewn-up dirty New Balances pitter pattered across the basketball courts as I made my way towards C-Unit. "Makin' my way downtown..." my body bounced and swayed ipso-pispy as my enthusiasm for life bloomed and my outlook rose more and more positive. In the back of my mind the rotten idea bloomed, "What if I can't get the drugs?", I blocked the negative vibes out and focused on the positive, the syringe is always half full. The drugs were on The Yard the day before yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that. But they weren't here so long that the stash would have been ran through. The dealers never fucking let you know when the stash is getting low though.

I side stepped a few pick up basketball games and walked by Faggot Beach (the volleyball court) and C unit came into my view. I made a quick scan of the crowd in front of the unit trying to spot someone I knew or Tank himself. I needed someone from C unit to go in and get Tank for me. I saw Bike Chain Mike Augustinus but that would be my last resort, I didn't need Bike Chain knowing I had money or dope. I slowed down my step and considered asking a stranger to go inside and get Tank.

Just when the chips were down Kyle Brewer emerged from the door with his thick black jazz musician MDOC sunglasses scanning the compound. Luck! Nothing better than a friend to shoot a move with. Kyle walked towards me muscles pushing out of his mint fresh white tank top. His arms and neck were covered in crude tattoos with "FUCK" running down one bicep and "OFF" down the other. He was often referred to as a "Solid Honkey" because of his adherence to his word and speed of paying debts. Kyle wasn't my closest friend but I liked him more than just about anybody on The Yard. I asked Kyle to run back into his unit and give Tank a doorcall (This is sending someone into a housing unit you do not lock in to get someone). As soon as he heard my question his face turned to frustration, right away I could see he'd been getting sent in and out for people.

"Good luck, mothafucka we've been door callin' this nigga for half an hour," a voice called from a picnic table.

It was Trenton Palmer and Pooh-Bear, the rest of the Jackson drug ring. They had three homemade prison calzones made with dough stolen from the chow hall. One was in front of each of them with the other in front of the empty seat, obviously waiting for Tank. My heart sank with the realization there was obviously a difficulty in locating Tank.

"Is he in the unit? Is he in a class or something? Or someone else on The Yard?"

"He's gotta be in there. He don't have class today and we checked everywhere else," answered Pooh Bear. I didn't know Pooh as well and it was clear he was taking some pleasure in my obvious fiending.

"I called fucking everywhere, his cube, both bathrooms, the day room. He's not in there," said Kyle

Just then Tank emerged through the double doors in button down MDOC blues. Why anyone wears state blues ("I'm here now! In state blues. Tub of

chow hall butter and some sewn-up shoes!") when you can just wear a white t-shirt or tank top is beyond me. I suppose Tank was probably institutionalized having been in prison half a decade but appearing to be only in his mid 20s. He was doing a 7 year sentenced for Armed Robbery after hitting a 7-11 for 70 dollars. It was an odd contrast that a guy running such a lucrative drug ring in prison was committing such desperate and petty crimes in the streets. I tried to flag down Tank first but Trent and Pooh Bear were louder and more boisterous than me and gained his attention first. Before they could finish asking where he had been Tank roared over both of them.

"I was beatin' my fuckin' meat, nigga!"

Tank had been jacking off in the bathroom to porn, which he was returning to Trent (who had a serious collection), and had ignored Kyle's calls for him (understandable). Trent glanced at me and locked eyes for a minute with a look that told me he was still holding. I instantly felt relieved but glanced at the calzone laid out on cardboard and knew he would most likely want to eat before getting the dope out of hiding. "The first thing that you learn is that you always gotta wait". The Dopeman always has a way of hassling you around, even the good ones turn like this. Even in a place where we are literally confirmed they found ways to make me anxiously wait. Prison, home of the 2 hour drug deal.

Calzones were eaten, steps were paced, watches were glanced at, prices were talked and we settled on 8 packs for \$400 to be paid no later than a week. Tank went in for the dope, came back out, and things felt really right for the first time since the last time I knew I was about to get dope. Tank motioned for me to follow him away from C unit, showing respect for the unit's "Honor Dorm" status. Kyle followed with me to make sure everything went OK. He was a solid guy like that and was one of the few people that wouldn't just stick around in hopes of getting free dope. His tolerance was nothing and I considered giving him a shot. The day had darkened and the sun looked like shaded colored pencil. It was beautiful and a great time of day to get high but I wished it was earlier in the day so I could fully experience my high outside. I would most likely stay up all night reading, writing, and compulsively doing push ups. People knew there was dope on the compound when I was frantically running sprint/pushup circuits.

For some reason that to this day baffles me Tank led us all to the Big Weight Pit. This was nearly in the center of the yard and not obfuscated from view in any way. To make things worse it was 8:30pm, which meant The Pit was closing, which meant there was a CO present to lock up the weights. Before I could voice my concerns Tank shoved an egg sized ball into my hand.

I interlude to tell you that \$400 worth of heroin prison is NOT an egg-sized chunk. \$400 worth of heroin in the world isn't even close to being that big. Tank in true black-drug-dealer fashion had managed to inconvenience everyone involved in the transport of said narcotics by packaging a small amount of drugs in a large amount of paper. This egg sized bundle contained about half a marble worth of heroin all together. There were 8 separate \$50 folds of magazine paper with dope all packaged inside an entire sandwich baggie. "What a fucking waste of time and space," this is what was on my

mind when I heard CO Fuqua shout at me.

"You two! Shakedown, right now," CO Fuqua was tall, black, muscular, and striding towards us at an authoritarian pace. The dope was in my fist, he was maybe 15-20 feet away and approaching quick. I've never been a good criminal, I freeze up way too easy but prison had conditioned me to act without thinking. I brought my fist to my face and put the package into my mouth. I'll let him tackle me and take whatever ticket that is, plus the Substance Abuse ticket I get when they inevitably drug test me later. I will not just allow myself to catch a possession from inside the joint.

The package passed my lips and felt large in my mouth. I braced for impact but nothing happened. Maybe it was God, maybe CO Fuqua had just glanced away, but as he closed in at about 5 feet he didn't let on that he saw anything. Now I had to do something with this egg in my mouth. I prepared to choke and swallowed hard. The packaging compacted a lot, thankfully it was a thin sandwich baggie. I felt the packaging slide down my throat and felt sad knowing it wasn't sealed so there'd be no point in trying to puke it up. Before it reached the bottom of my throat movement stopped. I checked if I could breathe and only a tiny wisp of air came through.

Suddenly I panicked and became very aware of my surroundings. Fuqua hadn't saw me shoot the move, but every other person around The Pit did. The white noise of voices quieted down slightly as conversations cut off to watch and others became hushed. I could see everyone's eyes were on me and you could even see the groups movement slowed a little bit and body language tensed up. Fuck! Why are they making it hot like this!

"IDs, now," Fuqua's voice demanded respect and he was more aggressive than most black COs. I only now realized that Tank was nowhere to be seen and Fuqua was not also demanding Tank's prison ID but rather Kyle's. I was struck with hope that maybe he hadn't witnessed the actual drug deal after all. I reached into my pocket and handed him my ID. Time slowed down and I tried to keep my breathing normal as I struggled to get air through the miniscule opening. A paranoid daydream played in my head of me holding my breath for as long as I can before breathing in deeply through the small opening, causing a sharp whistling that pierces the silent nightmare and alerts Fuqua to my contraband. Maria, Full of Grace, Johnboy, Full of Dope.

"What's your name?" Fuck!

"Kyle Brewer," Kyle answered first giving me a minute to think. Why the fuck does he need me to speak? My name is on the fuckin' card! Fuqua handed Kyle back his ID and his gaze shifted to me. I waited for him to speak hoping for another miracle.

"What about you, son?" He spoke in such an alpha confident way my hopes of getting one over on this man diminished. I did the only thing I could do and tried to speak my name.

"uhOhn, uHoonEe..." someone the lack of confidence in my answer was somehow clear in what came out as gibberish. It sounded like I either had marbles in my mouth... or something in my throat.

"What? What the fuck did you say?" Fuqua was terse before but now he was bonafide upset.

“uhOhn...uHoonEe!” I tried to form words but it came out the same as before just louder.

“Open your fuckin’ mouth. Right now,” these words were actually said quieter than any previous exchange but they bit way harder. Now I was really fucked, and after making it this far. I opened wide and didn’t try any tongue tricks lest he examine even closer. Once again, I braced for impact.

Nothing came. I guess the package was actually lodged too far down my throat for him to see. One more bullet dodged, the only problem was Fuqua wasn’t letting up about my suspicious dialect.

“Why the fuck do you sound like that?” He demanded. I tried to think of answer and realized I wouldn’t be able to vocalize it anyways. I didn’t get a miracle, I didn’t have a guardian angel or God either. You don’t need those when you have a Sold Honkey watching your back.

“Hey, man! Leave him alone! He’s got a fuckin’ speech impediment!” Kyle shouted back, matching Fuqua’s previous intensity. He said it with righteousness, he said it with confidence that assured everyone -he- was in the right. A hail mary play by the Master of Improv! Fuqua’s body language relaxed and he shrank back, it was working!

“Oh, yeah, sorry...” Fuqua muttered. A few black faces watching from the crowd snickered but for the most part played it cool. He had actually fucking apologized on top of everything. He didn’t stay meek for long and proceeded to search the both of us with another CO coming to assist him. I hadn’t had a decent breath in over a minute and the tiny wisps I was getting weren’t enough. I could feel the shortness of breath gaining quicker and quicker.

I moved my feet apart widening my stance as the large black man’s hand reached up my inner thigh. I had already resigned that a GI Joe motherfucker like this was most definitely a ball-grabber and for a third time I braced for impact. Thankfully black homophobia prevailed and his hand stopped only slightly above the back of my knee. He reached into my front pocket and pulled out the bottle cap I used to mix my dope in. I prayed that he wasn’t that street smart and that there wasn’t a dried up cotton filter stuck to the inside of it. Less breath than ever now as I tried to keep my breathing slow with a post-speedball heartrate.

“The fuck is this?”

I looked at him with eyes that pleaded not to be embarrassed again by speaking in my retard accent and it worked. He handed me back my ID and walked away. I didn’t feel a rush of relief yet. The entire situation had given me a rush of adrenaline from the fight or flight response. My vision was starting to cave in at the edges as the lack of oxygen really got to me. I turned the opposite way as Fuqua and made sure no CO was approaching before I tried to get the dope back up. “Whiteboy got away!” I hear someone call out.

I push as hard as I can with my throat trying to push the dope out. I knew it was beyond swallowing. I notice Kyle isn’t by my side and I’m alone. I tense my stomach and push harder and the package, moving slowly from my mouth having run dry, comes up my throat and into my mouth.

Relief and euphoria break through the adrenaline and I realize I’m already facing my unit and I’m thankful for this as I move at a brisk clip across field

and concrete. This was what normal people can't understand, the rush associated with the lifestyle. Some people preferred to have dope delivered or send someone, but I always liked driving to the set to pick up myself. There was no better feeling than cruising back down I-75 knowing you were out of the risky party and almost home free.

None of the people standing in front of the unit or on the basketball court registered to me as I walked on autopilot through double doors. I turned sharply in the lobby and made my way down the front hallway. The unit was basically a pool barn divided up into 8 man cubicles with walls that went about 8 feet high. People on top bunks were exposed to people walking through the hallway and people laying down for the night to watch TV washed past my peripherals.

I needed to find Paul Vella (RIP) aka Pauly D. He was also jokingly called "The Dirty Hamster" for his habit of sleeping with snack food wrappers strewn about him (and it was a habit, despite his claims of it happening only a few times). He loved prison food more than anyone I ever met and had the Diabetes to prove it, which leads me to another nickname. He was also known, by all the IV drug users on the compound, as "The Needle Man". The insulin "required" by his lazy pancreas gave him access to syringes, and his giant balls gave him access to steal them. From what he said there was a certain nurse was less on-the-ball about watching their Diabetics administer their insulin and the rest and when she worked he had about a 50% success rate of stealing a syringe. The rest of the nurses would make sure they saw you dispose of the syringe into the sharps container, but she didn't watch it particularly close and would sometimes turn her back allowing for an opportunity. He would drop the cap of a pen down into the box to create a convincible sound.

I knew where Paul would be because the last place I saw him was laying in my bunk watching my TV. Paul didn't really have money and he was one of my best friends even before he started stealing syringes so I genuinely liked to share my food and television with him and he was always the most appreciative out of anyone I did time with. My family ended up driving Paul home from prison so he wouldn't have to take the bus and gave him a Costco sized tub of peanut butter, which was his prison favorite.

I turned into my cube and saw from the face of one of my Cubies they weren't happy about an outsider being in the cube. I didn't care and walked past him to my bunk and tapped Paul's shoulder to get his attention from the TV. He pulled out his, well, my headphones and turned to me without speaking. He did that a lot, probably because he had a slight speech impediment... and Hep C, and fucked up watery calves plus swollen feet on top of the 'beetus. The prison actually issued guys with feet like him special shoes that are infinitely more comfortable than the regular state issues. I deemed them the "Air Force (Type) Ones".

"I need to use the loaner," I said in shame. Paul, also being a Solid Honkey, had given me dibs on the first syringe he ever stole, plus he would let me trade out my used ones for new ones he'd steal. My old syringes became the loaners. I used rigs until the wheels fell off, until you had to use your ear wax to lubricate the plunger. I traded rigs to Pauly D at about a 2/10 and within a

week they would be a -7. It would amaze you that the needle could even puncture skin.

In a bout of self improvement fueled by intravenous drugs I had destroyed my last clean rig one night in the bathroom the last time I used two days prior. Paul had told me I would regret this and I knew then he was right but half ass resolved to prove him wrong. I made it one whole day before I was coming back to him, state orange hat in hand.

Paul smiled, acknowledging he had been right along but didn't rub it in thankfully. Paul hopped down from my bunk and led me out of the cube. I walked two cubes down and turned into his cube as I saw him tilt his locker backwards and grab a package wrapped in napkin from between the wall. He walked back towards the doorway of the cube and made sure no police were making rounds. He unwrapped the napkin and I saw two syringes with the numbering completely rubbed off and with numbering that still looked fairly crisp and clean.

"Now these two are \$2 to use and they're the same, they're fine. But this one, this one is \$5 to use, but when you shoot it you will feel where they money goes" Pulp Fiction. He hadn't quoted the right, or even very close, and it sounded silly with his lispy speech impediment but I appreciated the references none the less.

"So this one's clean?" I asked.

"No, but it's better than the others", He let on that he had been joking and wouldn't charge me just to use it and just wanted to quote the film.

I grabbed the half decent looking syringe and hoped maybe the cosmetic damages I was now noticing were from being hidden and not from multiple HIV infected prisoners sweaty palms. I found Fat Josh by the washing machines doing his State Job of laundry porter. I asked him for a cup of bleach and he smiled realizing what I was doing. Fat Josh was the first person to introduce me to drugs in prison and I could tell by his pinned eyes he has been using the loaner too.

I assembled my shower bag with plastic spoon, cotton swabs, and bottle of hot water all inside and stuck the syringe in my waistband as I floated like a serene zombie with my cup of bleach towards the bathrooms. In security level 1 bathrooms have stalls with doors but they only go up to lower chest level. It's enough coverage that someone would really have to be leaning over and specifically looking to see below your chest. You could hear the CO's coming from the jingle of their keys plus they didn't ever check the stalls anyways.

I sat down in the stall closet the wall and finally spit the plastic bag out of my mouth. The bindles were all still safe inside. I broke apart each \$50 fold of paper each with more disappointment than the last with regards to their size. The 8th fold I sat aside untouched for Kyle and smiled at his quick thinking. A speech Impediment! Ha! CO Fuqua (pronounced: Foo-kwaa) more like "Fuckwad"! I thought as I rinsed the syringe with shitty watered-down prison bleach 5 times. I tried to hold each rinse for a ten count but my pace increased. Finally I mixed \$350 dollars worth of heroin with 90 units of hot water. The dope dissolved fine and I noticed for the first time the little rice grains in the bag and some of the dope folds. Tank must have had the dope hidden inside a

Relapse

bag of rice.

I balled up a Q-tip cotton and dropped it in the mixture. The needle jabbed into the cotton as I pulled back on the plunger and tried to gauge how sharp the needle still was without luck. The dope drew back quickly and easily since the prison used larger 27 gauge size needles for insulin. I rung out the cotton with my finger as if the minuscule amount of dope I was getting out of it would do anything.

I sat everything down and pressed the needle against my inner arm which gave resistance for a moment before succumbing to the needle which wasn't terribly dull. I didn't have to dig long to find the large vein of my inner arm and a thick plume of blood came up in the way blood comes up a large gauge syringe. I pressed all the way down and then some as I release the cord of the shower bag from around my arm. My fist opened and closed as I attempted to pump the blood and after a few seconds the rest of the night was good.

The Joint

"We don't say 'prison', bro, it's 'the Joint' or 'the penitentiary'"

- Random Inmate

I walked through the swinging doors of the prison block known as three west. The first thing that hit me was the noise. A deafening roar of primal screams all merged together and created a static like sound. Occasionally a lone unique voice would break through the herd of voices but never enough to actually understand a word. Everything looked old and unwelcoming. Handrails and walls were painted in the most institutional green imaginable and there wasn't enough light. The floor and air was damp and I peeked lots of exposed plumbing. This was very different from the sterile, if not bland, environments of county jails.

I was in the prison you go to before prison, Quarantine, where they sort you out and check your health before the trip to real prison. You're locked in a tiny cell for the vast majority of your time and boredom runs so strong you cannot wait to be sent to real prison. I knew to expect the boredom and that alone scared me. Until you've sat in a tiny concrete room for hours, for days, with no let up in site you don't really know the psychic torture of true confinement. There is no greater feeling of helplessness that I have ever experience. You quickly come to the realization that absolutely nothing you could do can change or improve your situation.

I had woke up this morning in Tuscola County Jail, but right away I knew this day was going to be different. I awoke to the sound of the breakfast cart trudging farther down the hallway. One of my cellmates, Cycle, was already up and checking the phone which he promptly hung up a split second after he put it to his ear.

"Phones are off," he said with a face fresh with sleep, creases ran along his face from the jail mattress. That meant I was going to prison today. They always shut the phones off when the jails do prison ride-outs to ensure no one can communicate this fact to the outside world and set up some sort of ambush or escape plan on the prison transport.

"Wake up Cody then," I replied. Cody was the third cellmate who was also going to prison for the incredibly petty charge of Resisting and Obstructing. Cody was sentenced to 18 months with credit for 14 months, effectively sentencing him to only a few months in prison. He had a max of 24 months which meant even if he went to prison and decided to act ignorant they could only keep him less than a year at most. I on the other hand was sentenced to 24 months with 13 credit, with a 20 year max.

Cody, Cyle, and I had all done time together before and were doing time in a segregated discipline cell due to multiple rule infractions. We were originally in a larger cell that the institution kept housing sex offenders in. The majority

of the cell were young guys that very much subscribed to the penitentiary ideology of "kill all pedophiles". I'm not a very hateful person but I find myself agreeing with this. Although I'm hesitant to perform violence on a sex offender inmate I do not like housing with them at all. Some blame lies with the institution for even putting sex offenders in a cell like that in the first place.

In the Michigan Department of Corrections sex offenders are referred to as "Chomos" and it's unclear on whether this is a play on "homo" or a portmanteau of the words "child" and "molester". I am quick point out it's more likely a portmanteau since other states call them "Chimos". I like to think my state changed it to "chomo" as it rolls off the tongue easier rather than being a play on a negative slur. Other colloquialisms include "Tree Jumper", "Monster", "Jolly Rancher Bandit", and "Uncle No No".

We never actually used violence, nor did we ever actually threaten. We more so just made the pedophiles and sex offenders uncomfortable by voicing our extreme displeasure and hate of sexual deviants. Cyle would often sing a parody rendition of AC/DC's "TnT" where TnT was replaced with "CSC" (CSC being an abbreviation of "Criminal Sexual Conduct" which is Michigan Legislatures catch all term for sex offenses) and "Oi! Oi! Oi!" replaced with "Boys! Boys! Boys!". Song parody was one way we would deal with the boredom of county jail. This parody was so genius and popular that one of the guards overheard us singing it and had our cells intercom activated so we could sing it to the guards in the control center.

Songs like these as well as random outbursts of Cyle ratteling the bars and screaming "Fuckin' Chomos!" was enough to make the first sex offender kite out of the cell. "Kiting Out" is when you slip a note through the bars letting the guards know you need moved out of the cell. This was seen as a victory to us, our pride swelling but soon deflated when the administration of the jail sanctioned us by taking away our TV. Nonetheless we did not regret our actions and vowed to do the sanction "standing on our heads".

A day and five hundreds games of cards later the lack of television was starting to really take its toll on our minds. I felt an energy and discontent forming inside the cell as morale dropped. Almost as if on cue the door cranked open and a dirty old man in an orange jumpsuit walked through. He was carrying bedroll and few belongings wrapped up inside his flimsy jail mattress. The door closed behind him without him or the guard saying a word. All of us young guys in the cell eyed him as he wandered towards the only open bunk, a cot on the floor referred to as "The Cadillac".

I knew what everyone was thinking right away. Anyone that's done at least a county jail year gains a third eye for sensing sex offenders. I suppose they just give off a certain aire that you eventually begin to pick up on. This man was both old and white, two strikes already. I also noticed a Bible in his possessions. Jailhouse religion is another red flag. Cody spoke up before I could communicate the Bible I had seen.

"What are you in here for? Lemme guess 'Drinkin' and Drivin'""

When asked what their charges are sex offenders, if they chose to deny, most often say they were drinking and driving on account of the fact there's also a lot of old white males in the corrections system for drinking and

driving. The man looked at Cody with eyes full of shame with an undertone of fear.

"No... but I was drunk when I did it," the old man replied to a roar of laughter from the cell.

"Oh fuck no dude, you gotta get out of here with that shit!"

"Was it a little boy or little girl you diddled when you were drunk," Cycle joked, mocking his voice with the word "drunk"

Never in my life had I seen a child molester admit to his charges so freely. Hate grew within us but at the same time this man was easily over 60 and didn't appear to be in the greatest of health. Jeers and slurs flew for a few minutes and little jabs punctuated the next hour like the remains of a thunderstorm. Later that night when things died down I made my way over towards the old man's cot. I felt hatred towards this man but also felt somewhat sympathetic towards the hostile situation. No matter what I really don't like to see people backed into a corner and frightened. At the same time the knowledge that this man was a child fucking monster created a moral dilemma in my head.

"Listen, man, I'm not telling you what to do. I'm not, like, threatening you either, alright? But I'm just saying you should try to get out of this cell. You're not going to have a good time here, they have cells that are filled with older guys like you"

I maintained eye contact as the last words hung in the air. The old man didn't reply with words but he nodded his head. I went to bed that night happy with what I did.

The old man kited out the next day but to my dismay he informed on the cell and said Cyle, Cody, and I had all threatened and intimidated him. Taking the high road with the man had taken me nowhere and I was snitched on all the same. Having already been sanctioned with losing the television the administration decided to move us three into a small four man cell without any TV, Fan, or phone privileges. It was there we remained, playing three person card games and passing around a copy of Pet Cemetery, until the morning Cody and I were called to prison.

Cody woke up and all three of us took turns washing our faces in the metal jail sink. The sounds of the adjacent cell door opening and the breakfast cart rolling closer told me our cell was next for chow. The neighboring cell door closed with a thud and a few moments later the sound of the key turning rang out in our cell. We lined up to grab our trays as the door swung open and we were met with cold eyes from a female guard whose long shift was clearly visible at 5am. Women in corrections often keep an emotionless gaze to prevent any unwanted advances from men.

Drugs in Prison

I had never really seen true drugs in county jail. Sometimes people will cheek their garbage psych meds, which I have bought before. There was one guy, a former prison guard ironically, who got Vicodin and Xanax and cheeked a 1mg football for me once.

Once I got to prison I was in a handicap unit, but there was still plenty of healthy young dogs in there. One of my first friends, Trevor chagnon, was in my cube. He told me about all the heroin he had done over his couple of years. At this point I was kind of iffy about doing drugs in prison. I was new and didn't yet understand how little supervision and drug testing there was.

I would smell tobacco occasionally at night after count. I didn't smell weed until maybe a month or two into my sentence.

I've talked about this before, but I broke into a chomos locker (Earl Thompson, google OTIS and look him up if you want. I don't think he's an "active offender" anymore) and found his paper work and posted it in the day room, fuck em.

I presume he told on me because I was transferred to A unit so after and I stayed there until I paroled 2 years later. I remember the first night I was in A unit. People were smoking weed, running tattoos, fighting and drinking. "My kind of unit," I thought.

My cube mate, Christopher Raymond, was brewing big time hooch for about 3 or 4 months before he got popped. I would wake up with him every morning at 5am to go to the chow hall to procure the orange juice needed to make hooch. Most breakfast trays give you oatmeal/grits/ralston, a cake, butter, orange juice and sometimes peanut butter. We would trade everything on the tray for orange juice and dump it in an empty whey protein powder bag and smuggle it out. It was pretty obvious what we were doing, two dumbass honkeys with a dozen of empty orange juice cups in front of us. Nevertheless, we never got caught doing it.

Once you get a batch of hooch going you can make "starter bottles". Instead of fucking with yeast you just put a tiny bit of hooch in a bottle full of fresh orange juice and it will start cooking right away instead of taking 3 or more days with yeast. You have to dump sugar in the hooch every day to keep it going. MDOC limits inmates to buying 2 bags of sugar every 2 weeks but this is easily circumvented by trading to other inmates. Also we had another dude in our cube, Chris Moomy, who worked in the chow hall. He would steal bricks of sugar like it wasn't against the rules.

One time he stole an entire bag of the orange juice they serve in the chow hall. This was the BIG BATCH. Chris Raymond stole a trash can and lined it with a trash bag and put all the orange juice in it. The vessel had to be sealed so he tied it off at the top. Twice a day you have to burp your hooch or else the vessel will explode. Some people will hide their bottles under their locker and in a vent, and due to the difficulty of reaching the bottles they will often

explode.

I remember that batch ended up filling over 30 bottles, which sell for \$3 each. Depending on the quality one bottle can get you pretty buzzed. Chugging 2 good bottles would get me to the point where I would just lay down, press my rack and watch movies so I didn't get in trouble. One night I got hammered and started crying during "Pretty in Pink". That's three things you don't wanna get caught doing in the joint: being drunk, crying, and watching a John Hughes movie.

Eventually through helping my friend with hooch I met some people who were higher ranking in the gangs running the yard. TimTim was finishing a 15~ year sentence for a murder he committed when he was a teen. He's a Latin count member with juice on the street in prison, every Latin Count I've met has known him. Most people I've ever met from south west Detroit have known him. I'm not going to use his real name because he's under federal indictment right now with the rest of his gang.

TimTim and his gang was in control of the heroin trade at the time. I don't think he was smuggling it in, but he was controlling the sale. The smuggler almost always uses an organization to sell for him to distance himself from the heat. At this point in prison I didn't really want to be a dope fiend again, nor did I have the ability to have money sent on the streets (or so I thought).

Usually you pay for expensive drugs (heroin, meth, bulk tobacco or suboxone) "on the wire" which means western union. Green dot cards came into prominence when I was there. The dealer has baby momma or fat bitch get a personal green dot card in the free world. Then the buyer calls their girlfriend/mom/whoever and has them buy a reload card for green dot. Then you exchange the numbers to the dealer and they have their person load their personal card with your reload numbers. I haven't been to prison in years but from what I understand it's all cashapp now. When I got out prison I was going through a junk drawer at my grandparents house and found a stack of green dot cards the size of a fucking pinochle deck.

I came into prison right after New Year's Eve 2012/2013. I didn't do anything other than drink at first. I smoked weed for the first time during a snow storm, so it just have been maybe February or March. Stump and I threw down \$5 on a dime. The amount of weed you get for \$10 is embarrassing. Think of what you wipe off your shirt after rolling a joint. We rolled up a pinner using the packaging from a roll of toilet paper, which actually closely resembles zig zag paper. We sat on a bench leading up to G unit because there were no police in the area. I remember it was so fucking cold that the tiny bit of smoke we blew out came out thick as milk in the cold air and seems to refuse to dissipate in the freezing cold. Despite being so obvious we didn't get caught. After this I just tended to smoke in the unit. There's 159 other people in there so they can't really pin it on you. I probably smoked over 100 joints and cigs and never got caught, others did though.

The first time I did suboxone in prison was summer 2013. I got it from a Latin count manlet name "Little Man". This is already long so I'll save part 2 for when I get my laptop back tomorrow. I ended up getting strung out over and over and intertwined in "the bullshit" from involvement in the drug trade.

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Sex Offenders

Before I rode out to prison I was stuck in county for a month or two. They put me in an 8 man cell with Cody Booth, Cyle Eddie and Justin Withers all of whom I had been doing time with for awhile at this point. The 8 man cell had us, a couple squares and a rotating cast of sex offenders. This was a county jail where they would prosecute you for fighting (Tuscola County) so we never took it too far. We would just scream "FUCKING CHOMOS," and make idle threats until they kited out. They would just move them into the cell next to us, so we'd just kick the wall and yell through the connecting door all fucking day. Finally they put a chomo in who had a bit of grit, Delgato, so we had to up the ante. We'd sing songs like "Chomo Aregato, Mr Delgato," to the tune of that "Mr. Roboto" song. Once when he was sleeping on a cot Justin Withers Spiderman crawled along the bars with his pants down and perched himself above Delgato's sleeping head and farted on him. The final straw was when we set a Home Alone style trap of shampoo on the floor next to his bed in an attempt to get him to slip.

At this point they moved Withers to max security and the rest of us to a 4 man cell with no TV, no fan and no phone. From there Cody Booth and I rode out to prison. I remember one of my last memories was waiting for MDOC in the holding cell and hearing someone power-kick the door and scream "YEEEEHAWWW". It was Cyle Eddie, all alone, just fucking around. Literally just for the fun of it, no one else was in the cell with him.

They rode us out to prison with a dude name Palmoroy (I can't remember exactly how to spell it or I'd link his MDOC page, he's still in there) who got 20 years for installing a camera in his girlfriend's daughter's shower. I told everyone in quarantine what he was in for.

When I finally got to prison my bunky was this dude (<https://mdocweb.state.mi.us/otis2/otis2profile.aspx?mdocNumber=507184>) Earl Thompson. This was the type of guy you could just instantly tell was a sex offender. I mean he obviously wasn't a dope fiend and the guy wasn't robbing banks...

At this point I was very new to prison and didn't fuck with him. One of the first friends I made was Trevor Chagnon who was just finishing up his sentence. Trevor would play cards with Earl Thompson during count. One day I asked him why he would associate with a chomo in any sort of way. "Well...I don't KNOW he's a sex offender for sure," he said.

Earl Thompson had literally no money coming in from the outside. He had a padlock on his locker but I think it was a hand-me-down of which he didn't know the combination for because he never locked it. One day when Earl was at work we decided to break into his locker and try to find his paperwork. The dude had literally nothing so it didn't take long to find it. It said he was in prison for 4 parole violations awaiting sentencing:

Sexually assaulted (girls name) Thompson.

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Sexually assaulted (another girls name Thompson).

Failed to register as sex offender.

Failed to register vehicle as sex offender.

1-2 was saying he sexually assaulted a relative of his and was awaiting sentencing. 3-4 said he failed to register...meaning he had already been to prison for previous sex cases.

At this point I took the paper work and walked it into the day room and pinned it to the board for everyone to see.

I think Earl must have suspected me and told on me. A few days later I was transferred to A unit. I was previous in B unit which was a handicap unit. There were a few dudes in wheelchairs, a few with fake legs and a bunch of geezers but there was still a lot of regular people in it. I smelled tobacco sometimes in B unit but not much else. Going to A unit was like seeing the light. People were smoking weed, doing dope, tattooing and fighting. My kind of unit, I thought.

They ended up transferring Earl Thompson into observation cube in A unit and I told everyone what he was in for. We would literally break anything he had. If he bought a coffee cup we would smash it while he was at work. His bunko ran a gambling ring and would spray him in the face with the bleach bottle.

There was a chomo in the back hallway who did something to a girl that was sleeping over with his daughter. A few dopefiends I knew tricked him into trying to buy a boge TV (A TV that belonged to someone else. If you guys someone else's TV it's not going to be on your property sheet and is subject to being took by police). He gathered \$35 dollars in commissary and gave it to the guys. As soon as he handed it over they sucker punched him and started stomping him out. People all around ran up and started kicking him, it was like the skateboard scene in Kids.

We had a sex offender in my 8 man cube, Matt Lind (<https://mdocweb.state.mi.us/otis2/otis2profile.aspx?mdocNumber=239573>). This dude has some weird fetish where he would whip his dick out at childrens parties and shit. From what I understand he was in prison for indecent exposure for his 2nd time. This dude was such a fucking dork...he had a footlocker full of Wiccan books with names like, "To Stir a Cauldron," and would play Vampire The Masquerade on the yard with homemade spinners instead of dice with all the other chomo faggots. We would make fun of him CONSTANTLY.

"Man I woke up in the middle of the night last night and saw Matt throwing chicken bones into a pentagram made of ramen noodle seasoning tryna' cast a spell"

"ALLIGATOR TOOF SNAKE SKIN," (from It's Always Sunny).

We'd also quote the Voodoo guy from Predator 2, "He is not of dis werld," we had pretty much run out of references and had to dig deep.

Finally one day when I was feeling squirrely I put his ear plugs in my ass crack, dunked my nuts in his coffee cup and farted on his pillow. Someone apparently told on me for this because Lind confronted me on the yard trying to fight. If you fight on the yard it's pretty much guaranteed you're gonna get

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caught. Not to mention he wasn't even trying to go into the blind spot. He wanted to fight right there in front of the police. This struck me as strange because we both had paroles and he was scheduled to go home in a matter of weeks. More on this later.

I told him we can fight, but that we'd do it in the unit with lookouts so we didn't get caught. I remember he told people to be ready to pull him off, "I have a hard time stopping," he claimed. When it came time to fight we had a "hard time" getting this faggot to start. He had to be pushed into the cube with me. It was like the fucking Thunderdome. Probably 20-30 people watching, people hanging over the top of the adjacent cubicle walls. This dude really had no chance. I'm hardly a tough guy but I was pretty big at this point and he was a little old dude. Even if he would have got the better of me the people watching would have just stomped him out. We scrapped for a little bit before I lifted him up and body slammed him. I tee'd off on him a few times and then called it quits. I didn't want this to be more than it had to be.

So I ended up paroling maybe 3 weeks after him. I went on OTIS to get his picture to show my friend and saw he was already locked back up. The dude didn't even make it 2 weeks. That's when I realized he probably wanted to jack his parole off by fighting on the yard because he didn't want to go home.

PART THREE
FENTANYL: DEAD ENDS

Overdoses

"You realize you have been hospitalized due to drugs," the nurse looked at some sort of log, "seven times? And that's just this hospital".

To say I remembered more than this rough quote would be a lie. The Narcan had faded enough so that I was high, like VERY high, but still awake. I don't know if the person I was talking to was a nurse or doctor, I don't know if she was looking at a tablet or hardcopy of my history. I just know I was at Covenant Hospital in Saginaw and apparently I had been there 7 times for overdoses. I have done a rough census of my memory and if 7 is the exact number for Covenant specifically I would wager there was just as many at other Hospitals. I can specifically remember two times in Detroit, a few times in Bay City, and a few at St. Mary's of Saginaw. Almost every time I've overdosed at a home I've been given a choice of Hospital to be taken to, which surprised me. I have purposely rotated my hospitals when OD's ran close together to prevent judge-y exchanges with nurses like the one above.

This overdose wasn't a very interesting one, just a true dope fiend move. I fell out in the bathroom of a Drug Treatment center while waiting for an appointment with a Vivitrol doctor. This was a clinic I had an extensive history with so this was incredibly embarrassing. The dope I had gotten was just unbelievably potent... and by that I mean it was fentanyl. I knew when I unwrapped the receipt in the bathroom and saw what looked like greasy gunpowder that it wasn't heroin. E-Dog had dropped it off to me in the parking lot moments earlier and he had never done me wrong.

I was also on a research chemical benzodiazepine called clonazepam which is something like Klonopin on steroids. This most definitely contributed to my overdose but after using (and overdosing on) the black fentadope in the later weeks I realized there was just almost no way to do it without falling out. It was just so unbelievably potent that match head smears were making me wake up an hour later with rug burn on my face.

An overdose is a funny feeling, I don't think the movies really get it right. For one, I almost never realized I was going to OD when the initial rush of the dope hit me. Sometimes I don't remember anything while other times I remember re-capping the syringe, putting back on my belt, feeling the rush, waiting, then walking out of a bathroom only to fall on the floor later. I've never seen any tunnel of light, any god, any DMT aliens, just a whole big nothing. Then I awake, suddenly but smoothly, with a ringing in my ears and a feeling of absolute confusion. For the first few minutes I cannot reply with anything but "What?" as I try to grasp my bearings. The first thing that comes is a slow understanding that I have fucked up somehow, a primal fear of future consequences. I then start to question the reality and identity of the EMTs. I know they are not my family, I try to determine if they are friend or foe. I finally figure out they are some sort of authority figure.

For some reason I always vehemently deny any drug use despite how

plainly obvious it is. Something about brain operating at 20% causes me to attempt self-preservation despite how futile it is. When I'm completely strung out I become a real coward, I think most anyone does. It's why the police lean on junkies so hard. The only thing I'm thinking about is being forced with withdraw in a concrete cell.

I'm rambling, the point I'm trying to make is that I've had a whole lot of overdoses. Some of them are boring, some of them are decent stories. These are the best three:

Overdosing on Dick Pills/Polysubstance Abuse Is Real

Overdosing on Methoxetamine and pulling out a catheter

Overdosing in Detroit after getting Raided in the Bando

This is the classic, the one I bust out when spirits are low in the cell, it resonates to all races and always gets a laugh. It was Summer of 2015 and I had just started dating Casey so things were still in those beautiful beginning stages. You can draw a lot of parallels to new relationships and the honeymoon phase of drug use, but at age 25 the honeymoon had long been over with drugs (the honeymoon of Casey and I's relationship would follow). I had been out of prison only 7 months and was already on GPS tether for dirty urine violations. My Parole Officer, John Murphey, had put me on it for 90 days.

My 90th day fell on a Tuesday, and my parole report day was Thursday so I ended up having to wear it an extra two days. I was on day 91 of 90 when I overdosed, almost made it. I knew I had to report on Thursday so Heroin and Cocaine where a no-go. With the classics off the table life was looking like it really sucked until Slick Billy Townes hit me up on Facebook Messenger with a word so perfect the chances seemed divine: "dones".

Methadone, the perfect drug for my circumstances. At the time Tuscola County Parole was only testing for three drugs Marijuana, Cocaine, and Opiates. Of course that's literally the three best ones but it leaves a lot of holes. The glaring one is Benzodiazapines, fact I had been taking advantage of since the internet was ripe with credit-card accepting dealers for legal research chemical benzos like Etizolam, Clonazolam, and Phenazepam. Casey was a true benzo enthusiast in the worst way and I was eager for someone to accept me so the benzos came to my house by the case.

First I was getting Etizolam, tasty little pills from India sealed in legit blister packs that had such a distinct rattle my package of 20+ 10-pill blister packs would sound ridiculous when even slightly agitated. It was incredibly obvious from the shaking sound that pills were in the container but Etizolam is not scheduled so seizures were non-existent. I was once caught with 7 Etizolam Pills in my boxers (Note: My Probation Violation paperwork states these were found inside my ass, this is not true and I will later clarify the events that actually took place) and was not charged after they were identified by the Michigan State Police lab.

Casey, like Little Red Riding hood and her hot porridge, was not happy with the Etizolam. Despite being legal and fairly cheap they were not strong enough for her even while eating 25+ at a time. So I started ordering the pure powder and liquid solutions for more potent dosing. This still didn't please her and this malcontent attitude would haunt our relationship.

I wasn't using dope every day at this point, but I was more than a chipper. I had to report and drug test every other Thursday so I would give myself 4 full days to clean out. Out of the 10 days I could use I probably copped something 5 or 6 of them. John Murphey wasn't showing up at my house randomly or dropping me out of the blue so I felt pretty safe. He wasn't giving me any out time on my GPS tether beyond work and gym time though. This made scoring very difficult and I had to rely on middlemen. Nobody was ever a better middleman than Slick Billy.

I met Slick Billy a few months earlier in Brighton Center for Recovery, a semi-bougie rehab filled primarily with alcoholic housewives and rich suburban dopefiends that would be deemed "soft" in The Joint. There is always a sprinkling of a few real Junkies though, and they always manage to find each other. I had overheard Billy say "Rib Shack" which is a fantastic BBQ eatery on the East Side of Saginaw. I had noticed him in the halls before but never spoke to him much less know he was from my city. We quickly found out we had the same dealer and the next day left AMA (Against Medical Advice) to cop dope with my \$1,500 check the jail had released me with (I was arrested with \$1,500 at the mall after smoking a blunt with the Salvation Army Bell Ringer).

After I was put on tether I had no way to make my way to the south side of Saginaw and cop the fire heroin and crack the Sunny Side Boys were pushing. I thought over who I could have make the run for me. No matter how I sliced it I was going to have to hand over my money to an addict with my entire trust behind it. I hate to rely on anyone for my high and I was jaded to dope friendships from the beginning. I don't believe in any free rides in the dope game and always make it worth a person's time but I've learned most addicts will fuck you over, especially when it's specifically drugs you're dealing with, in a heartbeat. When I handed my \$200 to Billy the first time I figured he was on his way straight to the Sunny Side, but if he would return to me with my share of the dope remained to be seen.

The South Side/Sunny Side are synonymous and the area gang has been in operation since the 90s but hadn't held a strong foot in the drug market in years. While I was in prison Mike "Casa" House had written me a letter telling me "I got about 8 different plugs... ALL SUNNYSIDE BOYS" and spoke of amazing prices and availability. Heroin was \$100 a point in prison and his tales of \$120 grams captivated me. It's sad to realize I had already planned my downfall from my prison cell.

The first time Billy came back with my dope. It took 4 hours for what was an hour total of driving time plus whatever time the dealer had him wait. He always took 3+ hours and sometimes would go for hours without answering his phone, driving me mad. I would go through the 5 stages of dope loss. However even when it really looked bad, when it looked like that monkey on his back finally took the wheel for good, Billy would always come through. For \$200 worth of dope I would get maybe \$100. It was a lot of driving for him combined with the fact he actually came back made the mark up worth it. I'm not really certain that he's white, but Slick Billy Townes is a Solid Honkey where it counts.

Billy messaged me about the Methadone at around 10pm. For once he actually had the drugs on him and I wouldn't have to wait for him to cop, this brought me joy and comfort a non-drug user cannot imagine. His friend with the pills was asking \$5 a piece for 10 milligram pills, which is pretty standard for this area. To have them delivered at that price was more than reasonable. I told Billy I'd give him \$120 for 20 pills delivered and he made his way out to my grandparent's house in Vassar.

Due to a driveway alarm Billy and I would have to practice an awkward maneuver where he would park his car on the side of our country road in the middle of the night and walk down through the ditch, cutting across the middle of the yard as to not set off the alarm, then finally up to my porch for the handoff and a quick fist bump. Due to the timing needed to pull this off stealthily we would start texting when he was roughly ten minutes away. This was the time would move in the worst way, anxiety would cause my stomach to churn and I would often dry heave. Once the dope was in my hands a calmness came over me where I felt like I didn't even actually need the dope.

I stood on my porch and squinted contact-less eyes across my grandparents sprawling lawn and saw Billy's truck pull off onto the side of Frankenmuth Rd. I saw interior lights come on then off and stared into the darkness and saw nothing for some time. Finally a figure came into my view and I recognized Billy with his signature long hair. It was the type of wavy long hair a huge percentage of woman absolutely love, he's one of the few guys I've ever met that truly has excellent long hair that doesn't act feminine with it in any way. He wore an unbuttoned flannel and wore a joker-like grin as he treaded softly on wet grass towards me.

"Thanks, my buddy needed the cash. I threw in a Neurontin for free."

"No problem, dude, it was perfect timing," I clasped Billy's hand in a show of respect then turned back to get into the house.

I was sad when I realized I had nothing to shoot. I truly love the ritual of shooting up, after your brain becomes habituated to "needle in skin = touch of god" popping pills just doesn't compare. I briefly considered shooting the methadone but it would be a waste. At most I could fit one pill in a syringe and I'd need at least 7+ of them to be worth it. I figured with my current dope habit 100 milligrams of Methadone would do me good. Unfortunately my judgement was clouded for I had been eating Etizolam for the past few days. I had probably consumed 25mg or more in the 24 hours preceding this which put me in a state of "high" but not "lit" or "fucked up". This 4/10 rating increased exponentially when an opiate is introduced due to the synergy benzos and opiates have. 100 milligrams of Methadone was way too much and I was lucky I didn't die on my grandparents couch that night.

Amazingly my opiate and benzo tolerance was so high that even while in the middle of a benzo bender 100 milligrams didn't take me down. I was more than high for night, but still functional. I had saved the other 100 milligrams for the next day since I had something special planned. I had out time on my GPS tether until noon and Casey was coming to my mothers the next morning which meant I could get laid. Being on tether and being on heroin are two things that really fuck up your game and Casey was the first and only bonafide

“hot girl” I’ve ever dated.

I woke up early to shower and prepare myself for later and ate the remaining ten methadone. Once again I went back to my comfort zone, to be honest I never left. On this massive amount of Methadone and Etizolam I was still moving and communicating clearly, my brain as well as my body was intact. The same could not be said for my penis. Men over 50 share my praise for science when I present to you the invention of the dick pill as one of the most significant medical discoveries in modern history. All of the sudden an entire section of the male population was “back in the game”.

Being a man of reasonably high natural testosterone levels I have never yet had to rely on this pills for anything other than opioid induced ED. My best friend, Clark, had stolen a few from his dad and in a rare moment of foresight I purchased a few in case of emergency. That emergency came a few weeks later when I lost my virginity on 15 Norco and a Cialis (I, however, did not come). I learned that first time that the pills definitely work, they are not like bullshit SSRIs, you take a pill and your dick gets hard. I learned that a young man like myself, even when under influence of heavy painkillers, does not require a full boner pill.

After I finished my shower routine I reached behind my dresser and pulled a blue diamond shaped pill from my boner pill stash spot. They were still there after over 5 years and I was impressed with myself with my forward thinking. I thought about bringing only half of it, but decided on the full one just in case. I did not want to have any sort of problem performing.

The drugs were taking a more pronounced effect on my mind as things began to blur. I come back into it and I’m with Casey. Her blonde hair looks like copper in some parts and I look at her small upturned nose and almost can’t take the beauty. I had had one high school girlfriend and while she was pretty she wasn’t like this. Her resplendent allure contrasted sharply with her spit fire attitude but this early in the relationship her anger hadn’t turned towards me yet. I looked at the generous curves on her hips and just couldn’t wait.

In the spare room at my mother’s now, I fold half of the Cialis into a dollar bill and crush it with a lighter. Casey looks on but doesn’t say anything, it’s not that she’s scared, she just doesn’t care. The absurdity of snorting a boner pills strikes me but its 10:30AM and I only have until noon. I specifically remember how long the half boner pill took to kick in orally when I lost my virginity all those years ago, causing me to take the other half creating an uncomfortably powerful hard-on.

The glossy shell on the Cialis pill is causing problems. It seems like they make pain pills easy to abuse on purpose because they crush down cleaner than most any other pill. The Cialis was refusing to crush fully down to powder and stuck together in clumps on the dollar bill. I gave up on this method and scraped the clumps onto a dresser and proceeded to run a credit card (Ok, let’s be honest... I don’t remember what card I used but it definitely wasn’t a credit card) over the semi formed pile. The dick medicine worked with me a little bit and broke down into a chunky powder that I accepted was as good as it was going to get. I rolled up the dirty \$1 bill and placed end to my

nose as I leaned my head to the dresser and inhaled through my nose. The powder didn't go up smoothly and irritated my sinus everywhere it landed. As I lifted my head up I saw chunks fall out of my nose and onto the floor. That's the last thing I remember.

My memory is completely black at this point but Casey and my mother filled me into the events. I proceeded to mount Casey and we had sex for a few minutes. My strokes slowed down further and further, and my strokes aren't too long to begin with and what was a decrease in motion turned into a cease of motion. Casey called out my name as my 215lb post-prison frame laid atop her naked body. Casey was stronger than any woman I've ever met but she could not roll my limp body (and hard dick) off no matter how she tried.

She saw no other choice but to eventually call my Mother. She rushed in to the vision of two overweight people on top of each other mid-fornication. She leaped into action and rolled my potato sack body off of Casey. As my limbs dangled and rolled she was greeted with my chemically enhanced super big-OK, super hard- dick. Thankfully my mom is notoriously chill and laid back as well as always down to get me laid, she never gave me any shit for this ordeal.

I came to sitting on my mother's couch, the people standing over me seemed like astronauts. I felt like I died in "Westworld" and someone/something else was looking over my body.

"What did you take?" the voice demanded to know but I was incapable or response.

"You need to tell us what you took," he wasn't letting up. I could hear the words but I could not comprehend what was really being said to me. My ears rang like I had just taken a hit of nitrous and my head ached with a lack of oxygen.

"Morphine," I managed to spit out. To this day I don't know why I lied about what pharmaceutical drug had taken but I did. One of the EMTs had found the other half of the Cialis on the dresser and had been trying to determine what it was.

"This is a... Cialis?" both EMTs erupted in laughter.

"At least he would have died happy!" Casey looked at the EMTs with disgust and for once I wished she'd go off on them instead of the waitress at Applebee's. The EMTs proceeded to make a few more jokes at my expense when one of them noticed the black tether on my ankle. I quickly tried to think of something with a brain still ringing. A pedometer? An insulin pump? It was to no avail because they solved that mystery and alerted my probation officer.

I was taken the hospital, Bay Medical, where I hit 'em with the classic. I didn't overdose, you see, I was "suicidal". This move has worked for me numerous time in the past when I was scheduled to report to parole/probation when I still had drugs in my system. Things blurred as Casey brought Etizolam into the hospital for me and later into the psych ward, she was good for stuff like that. I spent about a week in the psych ward before being incarcerated. I had to spent about 2 weeks in county jail, staring at walls, followed by 45 days in IDRPs (Intensive Detention Reentry Program) which is just jail, then 60 days in TriCap (The Parole Violator Camp).

Journals #1

Unknown date

Today was a roller coaster. Woke up arguing with Sarah, my girl. I think... I can't really remember but that's how most mornings begin. Smooth called and it was payday so all bets were off. I got dressed and Smooth had his sister drive to the motel to pick me up to grab my paycheck.

I got into the back of a decent car and there was a beautiful pit bull pup in the back seat with me. Smooth's sister is a bit darker than him, sometimes I'm pretty sure Slim is mixed. I walked into Got Burger and put on my mask. I had to work in 90 minutes and I'm grabbing \$180, like I couldn't wait. Thankfully the mask works and no one suspects anything deceitful.

I originally wanted a \$60 of heroin and \$20 of crack. The boss overpaid me by about \$40 so I decided to get more. Unfortunately he only had \$60 worth of heroin on him, some drug dealer. He offered a huge rock of crack if I spent an extra \$20 so I went ahead and spent the \$100 like a stupid addict. I had just told them I don't even like more than \$20 worth of crack and almost never buy more than that. Smooth insisted I "smoke the crack, man, don't shoot it" and went on a long tangent about how I needed to start "loving life" and once again mentions when Brian shoved ice cubes down my pants. Finally he hands over the drugs.

We walked from my job a few blocks to his uncles, who also smokes crack. Since he was letting me use his pipe and house I told him I would smoke the rock with him. First things first though, I shoot the dope in his bathroom. Sarah's Christmas present to me was a beautiful red hoodie with built-in headphones for draw strings and I use these as a tourniquette. This makes me feel guilty. The dope is surprisingly good for Smooth who usually sells poor quality heroin. The \$60 isn't that horrible sized either, but it is on the small side. This dope was the first dope that felt like real heroin, and not fentanyl, in a long time. I was able to do a lot without being in sleepy zombie mode or ODeD. The high was more euphoric and long lasting. I did finish the whole \$60 in the hour I was there though. I let both Smooth and his uncle smoke my rock and end up getting 4 giant hits off it myself making it not a bad deal. My earring but I don't throw up.

As I expected I shouldn't have bought that much crack. Only the first 2 hits were good. It leaves me shaky with a lot of anxiety despite the heroin kicking strong. Smooth's uncle makes a big deal of me sharing the crack and offers to have his man drop me off a pack for free to try. Smooth flips out at this attempt to poach me as a customer but it doesn't escalate. I looked at my phone and saw I was going to be late for work and did the last of my shit.

Thankfully the crack was fading enough so I could at least appear normal on the outside when I entered work. Or at least normal enough where no one said anything. I work with a bunch of straight-laced Palestinians who would have cut into me if they suspected I was high. I genuinely love them.

Eventually the shaking and anxiety cease and I can enjoy the heroin. I don't get why I even speedball since every time I do just heroin it's better.

I do very well at work for awhile but quickly become emotional as is common with heroin. My post on reddit had gotten 8k upvotes and was huge. I know it sounds lame but I was really proud of this. I see myself as such a loser, never been able to create art. But I've had a few really huge forum threads over the years. If I compiled it all it'd probably be 100 pages of a book and have 500k-1 million views, ten thousand comments. Not just random message board posts, legit essay style pieces and long responses to questions as well as tons of short stories. All chronicling this horrible addiction of mine. It's weird to be such a nobody in life... but online so many people enjoy my writing and wish me support. It hurts me that Sarah dislikes this. It's not even her making fun of it, calling it lame. It's that she just doesn't care... she wouldn't take the time to bother to read it unless it pertained to her and she could be upset with it. When I told her about the numbers of views and comments I achieved all she said was not to write about her.

I tried to apologize to her for some past wrongs and she tells me I bother her with the shit I say. I don't get why she's with me as it just seems like she hates me. As the night got worse I told her I was struggling and asked for some help, maybe just to be assured I'm loved but she has gone to sleep and doesn't respond.

The whole shift at work I was tossing and turning in my brain over spending the last \$70 of my paycheck or getting Sarah a gift. I ended up confessing my cravings to my coworkers who took my phone and made it so smooths number was both deleted and blocked so I couldn't find it again. I wish I wouldn't have gotten high in the first place. I will likely have minor withdrawals tomorrow. I am still proud I won that battle though. Before this at work I got very emotional and upset inside after being minorly chastised for making a few small mistakes on orders. I kept an calm face throughout though. After Khalid deleted Smooths numbers I gave him a hug. I make \$8 an hour under the table cooking burgers for a Palestinian who did 10.5 years in the feds for money laundering. I work with 2 stoners, a gay Albanian immigrant whose Americanized, one dude fresh from Yemen who I am good friends with despite him not knowing much English. The rest are Palestinians. Being around so many middle easterners reminds me of high school but I've grown to really love the people I work with. All the wonderful Muslim people who wish me the best and provide real friendship make me question some of the political beliefs I subscribe to. I am in no way conservative, at least not like other conservatives. I'm not one of these people calling for us not to basically ignore all these acts of terror. However when I see articles that reflect this viewpoint they seem hateful and I question if they're on the right side. Too many Muslim people have just been too good of friends to me throughout life.

I came back to Derrick and Dustons and smoked. Derrick has been taking bars for days and it makes me sad to see addictive behavior in him as he just generally seemed like a stoner.

I get picked up at 11am and have to get some sleep. Maybe I'll get Kratom tomorrow. I hope that for once Sarah and I can just get along and I can enjoy

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being with her. Maybe I'll just submit to everything just to avoid fighting. I think I will, half to see that happens, and half because I want to remember what it's like to just spend the night with the girl I love without arguing, just enjoying each other's company. I doubt it will happen but the goal sounds nice so maybe it will be worth eating shit. The downside is that there is a very slim chance this will work and we'll probably still fight and I'll have played yellow for nothing. Best of luck.

1-18 2:17am

Just got out of work and I'm smoking a joint at Derricks. Today was a rough day at work but my drug intake has been greatly reduced. On Monday I did probably 5 or 6 \$20 packs, Tuesday I did 3, and today just 1. I'm going to try to just take Kratom tomorrow and ween myself down. I feel retarded for getting a physical addiction again but I've done it a million times so I'm apathetic to any regret.

I've been getting the \$20s through Rachal whose been living with me in the motel. She's a butch lesbian so it's not weird and although there are some idiosyncrasies of hers I dislike for the most part she is easy to live with. She's been trustworthy and I enjoy her company so I've let her stay.

The dope she gets is weird, but good. It's little light red rocks that kind of look like make up. It even draws up pink/light red. It comes in little tiny ziplock bags like I used to see in east Detroit. The guy lives right next to the motel and most times we can cop within 20 or 30 minutes total. This feels like real heroin, I've gone irresponsibly hard on it two days in a row and didn't fall out. Instead I was nodding hard, even when standing up. It remind me of when I first came home from prison and was getting high like in the old days. I've been booking Rachel up fat in exchange for using her connection.

I have to get to college Wednesday. If I don't get my classes set now I never will. I'm fairly confident I will get it done but you never know with a junky.

I've got to lower my weed and drug intake then quit. I'm going to start making a daily goals list. Today I didn't smoke a cigarette.

Today is the first day of the week I go into work without any heroin in me and it's a 9 hour shift. It's going to be hard not to smoke weed after that one. I do notice Kratom holds me over better than heroin.

1-18

Not a bad first day off heroin, but I only took the Kratom 3 hours ago. The 30 half gram capsules of Kratom make me actually feel slightly good, above sober baseline, but yet the heroin withdrawal creeps below the surface. Even though my mood is decent and my outlook positive there's a tainted feeling running deep within my bones that I've come to associate with coming off a heroin binge more than withdrawal. If I have been clean a few months and binge for 2 days I will not feel withdrawal but more of a hangover. The main symptom of which is a generally scummy, sickly feeling, but nothing close to actually being sick. It serves as a strong warning I never heed.

It's 4 hours after the Kratom dose now and I'm hitting the other vices hard. I've drank two large glasses of real coffee and I find I crave instant and feel the

familiar nostalgia of the coffee I used to make in prison. I rounded scoop Keefe Alturo blend instant coffee, 2 non sugar sweetener, and a scoop of whey protein.

1-19

Relapsed today kind of bad. I blew \$150 in about an hour. I barely got anything out of it so at least it won't kick my withdrawals back in too long. My grandmother sent me some money so it wasn't a huge financial loss and I'll still be able to meet my goal of buying an Xbox one.

I woke up after after maybe 3 hours of sleep already in pretty mild withdrawals. Smooth had been calling me which was my first trigger. I was supposed to go to College today but had no bus fare and was withdrawing too hard. When I come back from home Monday I'm going to grab some Kratom and get a ride to college so I can't procrastinate any further. This is my last week and I absolutely have to make this happen.

I ended up caving and had my grandma send me \$120 and called Smooth. He was over in about ten minutes which is really rare for the doorman. I spent the \$10 I had on me and the shot took me off E. After all the dope I did I never got much beyond that.

When I went to pick up the Western Union I ran into Rachel who was on her way to cop. I gave her \$20 to grab me one of her bags. When she returned with it she told me her dealer had ran out of baggies and put both of ours in the same bag which was a lie and a way for her to take half of the \$20 I paid for. I had trusted her more than this but it didn't surprise me when she did it. I don't plan on fucking with her anymore.

I ended up getting a dime of dope, followed by a \$50 more dope, a \$20 of crack, a \$15 of heroin and \$10 of crack, followed by another \$15 of heroin and \$10 of crack on front. So now I have to see him to pay him back. I'm going to try my hardest not to get more which shouldn't be hard since his dope sucks. If I had a reliable connect for good dope I'd be a lot worse off right now.

I can't stand being a slave to so many substances and I don't know how I'm going to kick them all in time for school. The withdrawal won't be too bad and I might just maintain on Kratom. I just have to come to the decision not to pick up the phone and call the dopeman. Once I get in school I'll have something to drive me. I moved here to get away from drugs but your vices have a way of finding you.

I remember how I found heroin here in Ypsi. I was living at the ¾ house at the time but was already doing Kratom and smoking weed. I was walking home from from work one day and saw a skinny dude with coke bottle glasses smoking a cigarette. I needed a light so I struck up a conversation. As we were smoking he asked if I smoked herb, I assured him I did. He then asked me if I did acid and once again I said yes. I wanted some bud so I went up to his apartment and scored. I deduced he was a junky pretty quick but it was a week or two before I made the call and asked if he could get dope. That was the beginning of all my serious problems here in Ypsi.

Brian's apartment was basically a trap. It was technically his girlfriend, Katy's apartment but he ran it. Brian was something of a professional middle

man, the type that supports his habit by having both an amazing connect and a pretty good clientele of people unable to score for themselves. Dealers would often hang out at the apartment to sell as well. I went through Brian for a while before he fucked me over on some packs. I ended up meeting Rachel at Brian's but didn't actually hang out with her until later.

Sarah and I have been getting along and she has a job interview Monday so I'm very proud of her. For all the problems we've had I know she really loves me and has stuck by me through numerous county jail bits and parole/probation violation programs. I see her Sunday and I won't be feeling too well from lack of heroin so I hope we can get along. When I'm half dead from withdrawal it always makes me feel better just to have her there with me.

I need to make a plan. Today is Friday and I've already fucked up today. A bottle of 30 Kratom caps is \$10. I'm going to try to buy 3 tomorrow for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Tomorrow will be a rough shift with only Kratom but Sunday shouldn't be too bad since I don't work. Monday I'll take my Kratom and go to college to sign up for classes. If I need to get another bottle to make it through work then so be it. Once I get 3 days taking just Kratom I should be over the worst of it. I refuse to dose Kratom more than once a day which means about half of a day is spent in withdrawal since the Kratom doesn't hold me a full 24.

I've been stressing about Sarah tonight as is typical after drug use. When I'm in the right state of mind I don't stress more than I need to. I worry about her being with other men but more I worry about her not loving or wanting me anymore. Like maybe she just talks to me and sees me once a week as a favor to me. I can't expect her to stay in every night though, we aren't even technically together. It's hard to hold down a girl when you aren't physically there. In reality she makes time for me every week and we talk every day so I shouldn't worry so much. Lately I've been the one to text first though and that sucks. I just want her to be totally in love with me again. Sometimes I get these fleeting thoughts of suicide that tell me people would understand if I killed myself. Like Sarah would understand how much I love her and how much it hurt not to have her heart. Maybe the courts, judges, and POs would understand how hard of a battle it is for me to get clean, such a battle that I killed myself instead of fighting. These thoughts fade though and even in withdrawal I don't feel suicidal. Withdrawal makes me apathetic to everything... my life, my problems with Sarah. Sometimes I wonder if it feels better to be half-high and suicidal or withdrawing and empty.

It felt therapeutic to write that. I want people to eventually read these and I feel like writing about my girl problems is boring. There's nothing more pathetic than a clingy boyfriend and I don't want to be that.

On a lighter note things were pretty wild at the crack motel today. I heard 4 instances of prostitutes fucking loudly with the fake screams and moans common to prostitutes. Then when I was smoking a cigarette in the hallway I saw a couple exit a room and begin arguing over crack.

"Give me my half! I have the shooter"

"Break it and half and let me pick mine!"

"You aren't getting the pipe until you break me off!"

Relapse

Eventually the girl busted out the crack pipe to her mans dismay, as they were only a few feet from me.

“He doesn’t care! He lives in Ypsi!” She said in regards to me seeing them smoke. I had just taken a hit myself, little did they know. I left them to argue and as I was walking back to the room I saw the Indian female manager quickly moving towards then and was glad I wasn’t going to be around for that.

It’s almost the end of the work shift now and I asked Derrick if he wanted to smoke after but he’s just going home and going to sleep so it looks like I’m going to be all alone in the motel room. The room feels like a jail cell during these times and I’m certain I’m going to break down and start crying the moment I’m alone. I think I’ll put on a podcast and try to forget my situation. Hopefully I’ll sleep late and won’t have to suffer too many hours alone by myself. There’s nothing to look forward to until Sunday when I see Sarah. I think if I looked at things objectively I’d see that it’s over, that it’s been over, that it wasn’t that good to begin with. I don’t want to accept that because I couldn’t imagine feeling more alone than I already do.

Journals #2

1-20// More of the Same

Got high again today but I don't feel too guilty. Smooth knocked on the motel room door at 9am to collect the money I owed him. I didn't get much sleep due to what I can only assume was a prostitute in the room next to mine. From 3:30am until past 6am she would scream and moan loudly in the way only prostitutes and porn stars do.

I fronted a \$20 off Smooth at 9am and managed to fall asleep by 11am. At 3pm I woke up and departed to collect my check and pay Smooth back.

At this point I stop writing due to how rough I feel and continue to tell the story the next day. I've taken Kratom and I'm smoking tons of weed with a house full of people in bay city for a smoke off. I feel good and want to write so I continue the story where I left off

It was the first nice day in a while in Michigan. Most of the snow has melted and this decaying area seems to be absolutely glowing. I'm not high but I'm not sick either and it's the closest I can feel to normal lately so I can actually appreciate the view. The beauty is almost too much to take in after the dull motel room and I have to put my head down briefly.

I know what Elliot Smith meant when he said, "gonna walk, walk, walk, 4 more blocks plus the one in my brain." The walk is 20 minutes but feels like 30. I run into Smooth and he tells me he took a hit of acid. In my experience whenever black people take acid it's really funny and this rule once again proves true. I pick up my money without incident and pay back what I owe plus buy a fat \$60 of some truly garbage dope. It's pretty much a white trash dope fiend shit show after this so if you're reading this expecting the diary of Anne frank you picked the wrong read.

I do the true dopefiend move of using a public bathroom to shoot up. Of public bathrooms places like McDonald's are the least junky-ish in my opinion. I go to a cafe that has a bathroom key you have to ask for because people come here to shoot up. I buy a \$1.75 San Pellegrino and not just because it's what Patrick Bateman drank in America Psycho. It was the only water available.

The key is attached to a big tin mug and I feel stupid to be on such an obvious dope chase in front of all these nice college students. I try to make small talk with the cashier by complimenting his tattoos. For some reason I bring up prison and how the prison tattoo guy spelled my mom's wrong and it is very awkward and cringe worthy. Sarah said I was high functioning autistic once and even though she said it was just meant to be an insult I always suspected she may have been serious. Maybe she has a point, but at the time none of this mattered. I had picked up a wet dirty cigarette butt from the parking lot because this reality is better than the nightmare of cooking up a shot and not being able to draw it up.

I put half of the dope in my cooker. It's super light tan rocks that dissolves very quickly in water. I draw up using my disgusting cotton, register, and slam quickly. Despite being a large shot the effect isn't much more than a slightly improved mood with that very little rush.

It did have enough of an effect to make me decide to go over to Brian's trap house of an apartment. He had ripped me off a few weeks earlier but he has the best plug, Polo, and I consider asking him to cop for free to make up for what he owes me.

I foolishly buy another \$20 of shitty dope from Smooth before entering Brian's. Brian isn't even there and it's just Katy and two younger black crack dealers who I didn't think I knew but one remembers me. He says he saw me overdose at the trap before and thought I was going to die. This is not the first time I've heard things like this. I genuinely like Katy and kind of missed her. She's gone from snorting to shooting heroin but her main addiction is crack. She asks me to buy a hit for us and since I'm using her house to get high this is etiquette. I call over one of the dealers and ask to buy a dime rock. He makes a minor show of acting like he's doing me some huge favor because, "I usually sell \$20s, dog".

I break the rock in half and prepare another shot of the shitty dope. I load the pipe with my rock and smoke it completely and manage to shoot my weak dope before exhaling a cloud of crack smoke that's still so big after holding it in I know it's going to be a strong one. The hit of crack was generous but nonetheless only \$5 worth but it's potent so I get a minor bell ringer. The cocaine is outperforming the heroin by a long shot and I don't really feel much of anything from the heroin.

Brian returns and makes an apology and agrees right away to buy me 2 packs for \$30. 2 packs would normally be \$40 and I'd have to break him off one effectively making one pack \$20. One pack is guaranteed to get me anywhere between "plenty high" to overdosed. I putz around running to the store to buy single cigarettes and drinks. The dopeman Brian goes through, Polo, has drivers that deliver for him which is usually an indication of good quality product. He says 15 minutes and usually takes 30 but today he's true to his word. So is Brian and he delivers me 2 untampered \$20s of very potent dope. Even though we are both strung out I first feel respect for him making it halfway right. Then I see regret for ripping me off flash over his face in a genuine and unpretentious way. I am able to forgive him and go to get high on some good dope for the first time in a while.

Things blur and the night ends.

1 - 21// Return to Bay City

Today is Sunday so I'm going back up north to Bay City to see Sarah. She's staying at the house of a guy she cheated on me with when I was locked up. The fact I put up with this says something about how much I love her, or maybe how pathetic I am. I pick her up and she is in a surprisingly good mood and lunch goes fine. I have purchased 3 bottles of Kratom to hold me over and they are doing their job but do not take the edge completely off.

Sarah wants to go to a "smoke off" so we call a ride from our friends Allen

and Marcus. Sarah, Alex (Sarah's nephew), Allen, Allen's girlfriend, Marcus and I all pack into a tiny hoopty car that looks like it can barely drive. Due to all the weight the wheels are constantly scraping and I'm terrified of getting pulled over as I have warrants. We must have looked ridiculous, 2 people in the front and 4 people crammed in the back. Not to mention Sarah, who is a rather large girl, is sitting on my lap and has to lean her head down due to the car roof.

We swing by the house of an old Vietnam Vet who grows medical marijuana and I buy \$40 worth of weed. I also buy Sarah some alcohol to improve her mood and make her tolerable to be around. We go to the house of an older, white, gang banger. If there's one thing more pathetic and cringe worthy than a white gang banger its a white gang banger over the age of 30. Bay City is kind of a white ghetto and a lot of people here are white trash. Allen, his girlfriend, and Marcus are good people though.

More and more people arrive and it turns out I'm the only person with weed. I feel like Sarah used me since it's always my money spent on weed. It hurts me that she cares so little about the money I have to work so hard for (I make \$8 an hour) but I'm sure the thought never crossed her mind. There's a guy there Sarah fucked when we were broken up, he's older, drunk off his ass and has a crack pipe in his pocket. If this is one of the guys she sleeps with what does that say about me? I try to block it out of my mind. The conversation is local gossip and vapid bullshit so I decide to read my book. When there's a group of people around I can't get a word in with Sarah because she makes herself the center of attention. If I try to tell a story or comment on the topic she raises her voice or cuts me off, to be fair this rude habit of hers applies to everyone though. This used to upset me to no end but I've grown used to it. Seeing how little she values my opinion or conversation does hurt though. In my head I call this the "Sarah show" because of her tendency to hog the conversation and stand up during the long diatribes, usually about other times she got drunk or just plain old shit talking a person who is not there to defend themselves.

Sarah wants to smoke crack and tries to get some from a wigger for free. I text her angrily and tell her if she smokes it I'm leaving. Even though I haven't remained sober I am trying and if she smokes crack it means I will too. I would never bring drugs around her when she's trying to stay clean but I've never expected this same respect from her, nor have I ever got it.

The chance to score some benzos arises so her nephew and I quickly depart to buy 30 Valium. Although she expects me to give her 15 of these for free she does not want to walk the 10 minute trip to grab them with us. I buy 20 of them and offer Sarah 7. She is not happy with this even though 7 Valium is a large dose and she didn't pay for any of it. She throws a minor hissy fit and insists she won't feel it at all... even though she ends up being belligerent due to the mix of benzos and alcohol. The Valium takes all of my concerns and self esteem issues away and I feel human again. All I want to do is be quiet and spend time in my own world where the cares and stresses have melted away.

Time ceases to exist and my memory and consciousness only come in flashes. I've taken 30mg of Valium and now I want to write again. I'm with

Relapse

Sarah and it's going surprisingly well and my prospects of sex look pretty good. Getting and maintaining an erection will be hard and I will not likely be orgasming. At this point I take more Valium and I am near blacking out. Somehow I know whatever good thing we had between us is over and done with, but anything is better than being alone.

1 - 22// Grandparents

The next day I wake up still in a haze and have my family pick me up. Since Sarah has read my journals she saw I had relapsed and told my family. They tell me they're not taking me back to Ypsilanti and I don't know what to do with myself. Home is death for me, the last time I was at home I overdosed twice in three days. I have a life, a job, and true friends in Ypsilanti. Thankfully I am able to convince my family to let me return and I only miss one day of work. I return to the crack motel on Tuesday January 23..

I have a good amount of money and make the poor decision to get high before heading to college. I am registering for late classes and need to take placement tests. I buy a few \$20 folds of heroin through Brian and it is amazing dope. I ride the bus to school and manage to find my way to the testing center in my heroin daze. I can't tell if the placement test is really easy or if I'm just dumb and it's all going over my head. It turns out I get a perfect score and qualify for everything. For the first time in a long time I am proud of myself.

Like a true dopefiend I manage to parlay this success into a failure. Instead of returning directly to work I head back to Brian and Katy's to get more dope. The dope and crack takes hold and I become "stuck". Being stuck is when you start getting high somewhere and don't leave until all the money and drugs are gone. I keep telling myself "I'm only an hour late, I can make an excuse that the test ran late". One hour turns into two and eventually it's 3am and I've missed my shift completely. Brian and Katy begin arguing over missing packs of dope and it looks like it's going to get physical. Plates get smashed and I decide to leave before the cops show up. I find out later the cops did show up but they didn't answer the door. The walk back to the motel is cold and lonely but the opiates filter this experience into a pleasant one.

Wednesday 1 - 24// Addict Excuses and 3rd Chances

I know I am in trouble at work and I'm afraid to go in. I message the group chat with a bullshit excuse. I tell them the night before I left my phone at college then got on the wrong bus and had to walk 10 miles home and that's why I missed work. I really doubt my co workers and managers believe this but they don't call me out. I feel an incredible sense of guilt over lying to these people who have been so good to me, given me so many chances and shown me more love than people have in years. I want to change so bad and there's nothing I desire more than to make these people proud. They took a chance hiring a drug addict felon and I'm letting them down. I won't give up though, I will beat this disease. Despite everything they allow me to work but tell me one more no call/no show and I will lose my job. I resolve not to let them down like I do so many others.

Relapse

I did not plan on sharing my journals with people I know in real life, but Sarah posts them on facebook to show everyone I have relapsed. I manage to stay off the heroin and only take Kratom. I don't feel too bad surprisingly.

Barroom Heaven

The treadmill drones behind the sound of my headphones as I try to will time faster and get to my 30 minute goal. My breath is heavy but clean and there's a jiggle in my midsection but less than ever. A pathetic site I must have presented in the gym, heaving away on that treadmill at Noon on a weekday surrounded by housewives who, like me, were also unemployed but not judged by society like I.

I've been clean from dope for 7 weeks and for the most part I feel normal. After The Incident I stopped using after sitting in jail for 8 hours. I didn't realize how far back down the rabbit hole of dope I had gone again, it has a way of doing that. I was granted a second chance once again on tether. I can't help but think my Probation Officer had influenced this lenient turn of events but I can't say for certain.

I'm still allowed to smoke Marijuana which amazes me. I've smoked weed everyday for at least 6 months and especially before workouts. I never thought I'd say it but I'm trying to cut down on the marijuana use and maybe eventually quit. This Tony Robins-esque self improvement routine feels good yet shallow. How many times have I been here before? Sure that I had done dope for the last time. Every time I've went to rehab, every time I shuttered through a week long detox sleeping on concrete slabs in the county, every time I've been made to face the consequences of my actions. I know I'm doing good but I can't accept it.

Self destruction never made sense to me, the idea that people are afraid of success. I don't think I do that, as a matter of fact, I don't do that. The reason I go back is just simple nostalgic delusion. Looking back and feeling the warm blanket of the first time real heroin went up my nose and thinking, no, knowing that it would feel that way again. That \$20 fold of fentanyl mix injected in the Burger King bathroom with a bent syringe never compares to that first line though. That is not to say it isn't intensely pleasurable! I hate when people act like shooting dope is some misery filled time. There is misery and despair but there is also euphoria and unbelievable heights of endless hedonistic love.

Everytime I relapse and the rush of dope hits and then disappoints. It doesn't matter though because it still feels good, it's impossible for it not to. It might not be worth it on a whole but in that moment the feeling is priceless. The idea that you can exchange money for something so divine seems hard to believe and it's amazing more of the world doesn't know this secret. I haven't spoke or had a true social interaction with a peer in months and the solitude of my sobriety weighs heavier on me each day.

I think about all of this everyday and how even fentanyl is better than how I feel sober. My Grandma coughs more and more and I have realized I will attend my first funeral soon at age 28. The other day I ate a marijuana edible and some Gabapentin and was particularly spaced out at the gym. Afterwards, I walked across the street and ate lunch with my Grandma (74), Great

Relapse

Grandma (93) and Aunt (74) at my families bar in Town. As I sat there a surreal feeling came over me where I couldn't imagine a world existing outside the room I was in and as I sat there with all my family I thought to myself maybe this is really what heaven is.

PART FOUR

HER

Matching Audrey

Then one day, all of a sudden, I wasn't lonely anymore. Thursday, August 4th of 2022 my life changed when I met her. I don't remember what I was doing up until the moment I saw her picture. I was at the gym and the day was a carbon copy of the last dozen. Nothing noteworthy to distinguish days had happened in weeks.

The first photo I saw of her was a cute, filtered face. The Picture is what hooked me. The Picture was the second photo I saw of her. That's where my memory begins: the first time I saw that succubus/angel.

I stare at the phone in my hand, slack-jawed and awestruck. Built of tiny, perfectly-placed pixels is The Picture. In it: A sexy she-devil with jet-black hair sticks her tongue out towards the camera. She is a vampiric figure and playfully beckons to me through The Picture. *Chase me! Fight for me!* Her coat hangs open to reveal a tube of fabric wrapping across petite, polite breasts. A taught upper-midsection compromises as her body lowers into a sexy paunch.

It's the beginning of the month and my Adderall script was both renewed and increased. The amphetamines coursing through my was gasoline and this picture alone was the spark. Red-hot lust drove my fingers to frantically message her profile on the dating app. She tells me her name is **Audrey**, and I figure anyone so beautifully elegant just has to have a movie star name like that. I send her pictures of my body and she flirts back.

I was beginning to feel like finding a good woman on a dating app was akin to trying to win the lottery with a scratcher you found in the ditch. I had been on a real shit run with the apps. The kind that makes a man want to really throw in the towel. They can be a fantastic way to meet people, but they're such strangers that the chances of hitting it off are sweepstake-esque. Tonight, for the first time in my life, I won the jackpot.

Most girls want to text for three weeks before they meet up for a date; Audrey agrees to meet me in ten minutes.

The luck created a surreal feeling inside me as I walk away from dumbbells I left on the gym mats. I don't even bother to return them to the rack as I pass back by them returning from the locker room. I reckon I can be home and do my A1 hygiene routine within 45 minutes. I check times and make estimates as I race home.

Rushing to the bathroom, I grab my face care products. First, I apply a layer of Paula's Choice 2% AHA liquid exfoliant to remove the layers of dead skin off the surface of my face. AHA (alpha hydroxy acid) serums are less harsh than BHA (beta-hydroxy acid) ones and better suit my dry, flake-prone skin. I leave it on two minutes less than recommended to ensure my face is not red with sensitivity- common directly after using chemical exfoliants- when I meet her. While it sits, I pop a fresh blade cartridge on my Gillette Mach 5 razor and line up my beard. Then I dunk my head into the sink full of water, splashing it with fresh water from the faucet after. I pump my bottle of Cetaphil 3 times

and rub my hands before lathering my face.

In the shower, I scrub my body slightly raw with Irish Spring. I hit every nook and cranny, and for some reason, I ensure I use both hot and cold. Nizoral shampoo soaks into my scalp as I double-check my hygiene mental checklist. I look down, see my public hair is hopelessly out of control, and curse my incel-ish negligence. It's simply too late- I can tell it's an hour job, minimum. I opt to hit just the edges and base of the shaft. I figure I'll lean into the rugged masculinity that comes from a full bush.

I hop out, dry off, and being the second part of my skincare routine. I only pat- never rub- my face and hair dry. Scooping a finger into a jar of CeraVe moisturizer, I try to calm myself. The cream refuses to blend into my skin because of sweat; I am undeniably nervous.

I look at my naked body in the mirror. My upper body is wide, thanks to round deltoids that pop like bowling balls atop 18" arms. The top 4 abs of my stomach stick out clearly, and I suspect the rest are only hidden from excess skin, reminders of being fat. Now I look like some sort of prison frat boy. The black-ink tattoos give my appearance a different vibe to those who don't know me. I've had strangers ask me if I was law enforcement or ex-military countless times.

I thought being in shape like this would change my life; when it didn't, I only pushed the bodybuilding further. I was at my absolute peak build. My date tonight might be long-awaited validation that a better body equals a better life. Never once have I had a true *hot chick* enthusiastically want me over to her house. I didn't prep this hard for job interviews.

We had exchanged a few messages while getting ready. She suggested "Netflix and chill" and I had frozen in shock. I had figured, contextually, that sex was on the menu...but *she* had flirtatiously enticed *me*. Immediately, I asked if she was open to a date. I suppose I am just an old-fashioned lover boy at heart. I felt like a dweeb after asking as the message hung on the screen like bird shit. I sat, dejected, until she responded in the affirmative with a smiley face emoji. I yo-yo'd back up from defeat as quickly as I had fallen. She lived half an hour away in Bay City, the same as my ex.

Driving down M15 I can't help but imagine what Audrey is like. She had to be at least a bit witchy or goth based on The Picture.

I send a text letting her know I'm 20 minutes away. It sits on my phone pending and doesn't show delivery status. I start to panic as an unreasonable amount of time ticks by. This is what happens when someone blocks your number. My heart screams and falls apart.

I realize she's canceled and doesn't want to go through the awkward formalities of making up an excuse. She already gave me her address and would probably freak out if I still showed up. For a brief second, I logically think it through: If she didn't want me over then she wouldn't have given me the address. I pause, briefly consider...and reject. Panic fills me again as I wonder what wasn't good enough this time.

I yo-yo again, this time sideways, when my phone rings from Her number. "Hey-y-y, sorry! My phone died," it was the first time I heard her voice. To tell you the truth, it's one of the only ordinary things about her. She sounded

Relapse

like a normal, educated, classy woman. I would later learn she had a vocal affectation that could melt me sexually. She explained her phone died, and we were still on for the night. Just like that, I am euphoric again. I was too close to turn around now anyways; it would have always been worth it to at least drive by.

I've had countless moments in life where things cosmically shifted under the seismic pressure of fate. Always for the worse and always the result of my poor decisions. This was the first time things went the other way. I've always struggled with a concrete religious belief, but this twist of fate made me feel like there was a God who loved me. I had been back home for almost 9 months and barely talked to anyone. The all-encompassing loneliness had gone on so long that I forgot the burden it really was; I had gotten institutionalized in my solitude. It was like I was seeing black-and-white and had forgotten what color even was. I don't know how long life had been colorless. I would have to go back to my early twenties to find anything resembling happiness, and even that is polluted with addiction. I do know that it was on her porch that I started seeing color again that day. I didn't even notice the change until a few days later: when I woke up and didn't think about getting high.

Meeting Audrey

Sex Scene

*"I guess I'm kinda pretty
And at least I'm not dead
Though I'm addicted to drugs
I can still give good head"*

- SPIKE FCUK "*Junkie Logic*"

We laid in bed together awkwardly as the laptop played Netflix. Punchlines made her shake in guttural laughter. Our bodies weren't touching. Once our talking ceased my understandable nervousness shifted to panic. I needed to get the ball rolling again. I was literally *in bed* with her... she's gotta be waiting. Even with all this context busting me upside the head, I can't bring myself to believe she *wants* me to use her like I want to right now. She's just too hot: magazine hot, playboy hot, small-titty-goth-girlfriend hot, succubus hot.

I could lie and say it was courage, but in the end, her property of being irresistible pushed me to make that first move. I started reaching my arm around her, prompting her to cuddle back into my body. Her natural response was good enough, but the little *sigh* made it perfect. Fuck, I'd almost call it a moan.

Right away I explore with the fingers of my right hand. I feel each ridge of her rib cage. I trace slowly upwards over each bump- towards her chest. *Bump*, one rib. Her petite breast inches closer. *Bump*, the t-shirt feels thin over her skin. *Bump*, there can't be many ribs left. I wait for a bump, don't feel it, and realize I've reached the bottom part of her right breast. I pause as I briefly consider her level of consent. She's breathing happy sounds and I can't help but feel a connection to her.

I didn't know where exactly my fingertip was, but she just knew I was just about to trace across her nipple. As soon my finger dragged across the soft puffiness of her areola she burst into a moan that clearly needed getting out. She muzzles closer into me, wiggling her butt against my front side. I'm rock-hard and I feel myself shift and grind against her plump black jeans. She knows exactly what the fuck she's doing.

All inhibitions drop and we both turn on and get down. We pick up the tempo and dragging my finger becomes purposely pressing, teasing, probing her nipple. She gives up this secret- how to make her squirm- to me without asking. She doubles the grinding of her ass and starts to get greedy. She doesn't stop moaning long enough for me to kiss her, so I decide to interrupt one. Her lips snatch up my face and attempt to suck in my soul. She is a succubus with kissing: a she-devil at making out.

All we're doing in junior high stuff, yet I've never been more turned on. She rolls over to face me more as we begin to make out in earnest. Now I feel the front of her; perfect small mounds set across her taut stomach. Our bodies fit together like puzzle pieces. All her bumps ebb and flow against my muscular

build. She alternated between sucking and biting my upper lip. She takes charge and I let her lead the way. She gets aggressive with the nibbles. I get aggressive back.

I rip away from her face- towards her jugular- and latch onto her neck gently. I wasn't comfortable or confident enough to bite hard yet, but she *yelped* anyways. I think she just wanted to make clear what she liked. I suck her neck right up to the point of potentially leaving marks, then back off and start again further down. I run out of neck and we go back to kissing.

I don't even realize I'm rubbing her tummy under the shirt now. My palm pets in zig-zag patterns up towards her breasts and I finally cross over the soft nubs- she bites down on my lips in ecstasy automatically. I wince in the language of pleasure and pain. We both work together taking our shirts off. I want to fuck her.

For the first time, I start working my hands south. I hook a finger under the waistline of her black shorts and start to feel around. Her skin feels impossibly smooth; she definitely just got out of the shower. I catch the top button and she gives no resistance when I finger it out of its hole. I lock eyes with her while she nods: *yes*. I push things forward and keep going. Breathing starts to quicken.

Three silver buttons unfasten in a row: *pop, pop, pop*. I place a hand on each side of the black denim shorts and begin to pull down. She wiggles her butt side-to-side in compliance. Either the shorts are too tight or her ass is too fat because the shorts still hold tight and her entire lower body gets lifted off the mattress trying to take them off. I stand up on my knees as I pull the shorts up off her legs vertically. We lock eyes and I don't even look at her underwear until she's laid back down.

I see the cotton underwear already stained with a dot of cum and run the back of my hand over her mound. She shudders and the warmth excites me. We sync up to take her underwear off next.

I saw her totally naked for the first time as she lay on her back. She was sex, lust and youth captured in a svelte six-foot frame. She was gifted in every form. I reach underneath each thigh, push, and her legs roll back and open up. She had the most adorable hole I ever saw. It was the only part of the night I didn't gauge permission for. As soon as I saw it- I buried my face in it. I tried tracing the tip of my tongue around the perimeters at first, but quickly lost control and found myself thrusting my tongue deeper and deeper into her. I rotated, shifted, and forced my head in different ways trying to work my tongue in even further. It takes me a minute to even realize Audrey is bucking back against me- grinding against my face in tandem with my tongue. She likes it as much as I do.

Leaving her wet, I ask for permission to fuck her. She mouths the words as we lock eyes. That's when I see it: the girl from *The Picture*. With her glasses off and her hair slightly messy, I can finally see that *je ne sais quoi* that had me hook, line and sinker. She is two different people with or without glasses. She might be a spy.

My cock is so hard it hurts- I had taken a Cialis earlier I did not need. I figured the Adderall- which currently pushed my randiness to new heights-

would potentially render me impotent, so I had opted to take a boner pill for insurance. She was better than Cialis; she gave me those bursting, powerful, high school boners. Visions of plump bratwurst exploding on grills went with the pain of over-erection.

I press the engorged head of my dick against her. I encounter resistance, despite how much I had just done with my tongue. I spit into my hand and rub between her legs; using the last bit to lubricate my tip. She rolls her legs back above her head as I try again. I feel the same resistance, but push on. I feel a little give, but mostly just more built-up resistance. I went to ask if she was OK, but before I could she nodded. I pressed against her hole harder, this time leaning my weight into her. At this point, if I slip into her it's going to be quick. I keep leaning when suddenly the straw breaks the camel's back.

My cock slides into her in one swift motion. I feel a pleasurable pain as her initial choking tightness passes over my cock from head to base. Every time a guy has sex with a girl he really likes for the first time, he inevitably tells her she is the best he's ever had. Except one time it's true, and that's what I am experiencing right now. I resign to the fact I will not last long- this is the best ass I've ever gotten.

I thought sex stopped feeling this good after one's teens. I lock eyes with the vixen and she bites her bottom lip blissfully. With confidence that surprises me — I snatch each of her hands and pin them down. The sultry eyes she shoots at me confirm her gratification and make me go in for a kiss. I lean my body flat-down on top of hers. We press together and I feel her pulsing warmth stretch across my stomach. Even underneath me, in a position of submission, she leads us kissing. I know I'm close and ask if I can cum inside of her.

Yes. She squeaks the familiar word out in a way I'd never heard before; it melts me. I pump harder and harder as she buries her claws into my naked back and scratches down— like nails on a chalkboard— and it pushes me over the edge. Warm ropes shoot from the base of my cock, through my shaft, and deep into her. Simultaneous, her body tenses in orgasm, and suddenly my cock is being squeezed and cinched even more. I'm fighting against being squeezed out, still exploding inside her, when I feel warm stickiness spread across my stomach from her own orgasm. I feel relieved I don't have to wonder if she came now.

Post Sex

CHAPTER ONE

Grand Rapids

1. WEDDING BELLS

*“Out of all those kinds of people
You got a face with a view
I’m just an animal looking for a home
Share the same space for a minute or two
And you love me till my heart stops
Love me till I’m dead”*

- The Talking Heads *“This Must Be The Place”*

When I met Audrey she had a friend’s wedding coming up in a month. It was 2 hours away, in Grand Rapids, and she had planned on taking her friend Emma. After a few mentions, I realized that Emma was her guest and that her attendance wasn’t set in stone. I never would have imagined this girl I just met would invite me to something like that, but eventually, it seemed like a slight possibility. My heart leaped at just the chance but didn’t dare to push.

I forget she’s 6 years younger than me. I forget she gets lumped into categories, just like me. I forget she questions the mirror as I do, sometimes. I didn’t realize she was still human. I hadn’t discovered how larger-than-life she was.

I’m not sure how Audrey and Emma going to the wedding turned into Audrey and me. It was the first of many times Audrey took a major leap of faith blending me into her life. I didn’t push her to include me this time, but I think it inspired me to set a tone. Having her choose *me* to go to the wedding with her over a friend? These

things didn't happen to me. I was 32 and had never even been to a wedding. I had been floored by the feeling I got when she'd invited me over to her house out of the blue. This was like my first IV dose of Audrey. With that taste, came the knowledge the button existed to be pushed. I loved that feeling of Audrey inviting me into her life. I wanted more. Eventually, I would become a vampire; compelling Audrey to invite me into her life. I would drain her, but that was a long time out. This was a vacation during the first month we met. This was the height of the honeymoon period.

I remember proudly telling my family of the invitation. They offered me the use of a credit card to buy myself a proper suit to wear. They seemed so proud of who I was at this time. I had been living at home with them, clean, for 8 months at this point. I got a car, started driving, and didn't go off the deep end. I was spending long periods away from the house with this girl and coming home sober. They were more than happy to help this happen.

2. MALL DATE

Audrey was making \$20 an hour, but she had the fashion taste of a woman who made \$50. We didn't even bother anywhere local and planned a weekend trip downstate to a good mall. I had only known her for three weeks, so I was still walking on eggshells. Except she also made me more comfortable than anyone else in my adult life. I handled my time with her delicately. The drive down to the mall had a carefully curated, mindfully crafted playlist of songs I wanted her to hear.

I love riding in the car with her. We're both huge on physical touch, but her hand on my thigh is specifically special. Joining I-75 South, she would move that palm over to my leg, settling into the long drive (In later months: arguments leading to long periods of silence, broken by that hand reaching over, extending the grace of undeserved forgiveness). We share the radio fairly well. She plays chess on her phone. I stare at her out of the corner of my eye and I'm pretty sure she can't see me. I think sometimes I catch her doing the same. The last car ride I ever went on with her was this trip in reverse.

Walking through the busy metropolitan mall, I am always posturing myself to be her boyfriend. I make sure and hold her hand, just in case it isn't obvious. She later pointed out this as being a time when people

gave us looks. I never saw it.

It might have been the third day we hung out, I took her to dinner at a busy restaurant. I felt proud being with her. She dressed well. You could tell she was smart. I liked how I looked, physically, but being with her made me feel good about who I had become. I felt that again at the mall. This type of woman wasn't possible in my life prior. I'm a dickhead when it comes to showing her off. I'm worse at bragging about her. *Look, but don't touch!* The way I wear tank tops to show off my deltoids and upper pectorals is mimicked in the way I proudly showcase her.

At the mall, she is in her wheelhouse. She buzzes from rack to rack, lifting price tags to her head as mall-music drones on mindlessly. Sometimes I check my phone, just for something to do with my hands, but mostly I watch her. I love seeing her enthusiasm and passion at work. True love might be not hating to shop with your girlfriend.

I want to spend money on purchases just to keep watching this. I want to press the button and watch her repeat the process of searching, comparing, deciding, and purchasing again. In my mind, this is the defining moment of the relationship. I need this wedding to go perfect, thus the more perfect these purchases are, the more perfect the weekend will be. I'm moderately worried about looking good in formal clothes and there's not enough time for tailoring.

We settle on a shirt a bit too tight, slacks definitely too tight and a jacket slightly too big. The shoes, the shoes she picked out were primo, though. She found a simple, beautiful dress cheap. I'm at the register checking out when she buzzes off to the racks again. The rosy checkout girl at Express looks up at me like she actually wants to converse. She seems shy by nature and you can tell she's debating on saying something. I give her a friendly look to signal that I'm open to talking.

"Are you two? A...coupl-" I cut her off and enthusiastically confirm, yes, she is my girlfriend. The checkout girl doubles my enthusiasm, strangely congratulating me and insisting she thinks it's wonderful, "just great", that I am dating my girlfriend.

This was the first example of an odd type of liberal pandering people sometimes did to me upon learning about my relationship. Audrey returns to the register and the checkout girl tells her about her sister. She says her sister is just learning to do make-up and asks Audrey for Youtube channel suggestions. The exchange is awkward, but the girl's heart is genuine. The sister element makes it less random

and more understandable.

We had everything we needed for the wedding, but I wasn't satisfied. I wanted more for Audrey. At this point, it wasn't just about trying to impress her or win her over. I hadn't had a day like this... ever. I guess you could say high school, but that's not the same thing as doing it in adulthood. She gave this to me, she offered me this adventure. I hadn't gone on a (good) adventure in years. The gratitude I felt towards this beautiful woman couldn't be described. I wanted to let her feel it in every way. There wasn't a single door I didn't hold open, a bill I didn't pick up, a much-needed massage I didn't give, or an outfit I didn't compliment.

In my vast knowledge of the female species, it comes to me: a purse. Having cracked the code, I rack my mind for purse manufacturers. My inner monologue races: *Coach makes purses. Coach was popular when I was in high school. Is that too old? I don't want to suggest a shitty company. I might look stupid if I make a shitty suggestion.*

We land at Kate Spade and she picks out a big yellow purse. I beam with joy as I see the smile on her face in line. In my mind, this is a positive action in total absolute. During this trip, especially with this specific act of purchase, I have improved my relationship with money. Not only with gifts, but with the experience and memory created from the shopping, I scored points. This mentality had been cultivating already, but before could have been attributed to the chivalry of dating norms requiring a man to pay for things in early courtship. This was the start of a bad habit. It was the start of a good weekend.

We were done shopping, but not ready to leave. We get turned around and walk in loops, but eventually find the exit. Savoring the moment, we sit down to take pictures. On the bench in front of the mall, I took one of my favorite pictures with her. I would show off that picture to everyone I knew in the coming weeks. Her hair somehow had gotten messy and fell in a sexy way not dissimilar to when she sleeps. She secretly took a picture of me walking away, carrying the shopping bags. I cherish the memory.

3. FIRST TIME

The trip was a week later. I get it cleared with drug court and my probation officer. They seem more than happy for me; I was sure to tell them all about Audrey and why this was a good thing. As much as her

career accomplishments and social status, I show off her beauty in pictures. I look around at my life and realize all the authority figures are encouraging me to go on a road trip across the state with a girl. My life is vastly different than it was before.

I had been to Grand Rapids once before on a bus layover. I met a girl off a Facebook group named "Heroin Hunnies". My family knew about that one too, but I left out the Facebook thing. This was an actual wholesome thing I was doing. I realize that I've never been on a trip with a woman before. Grandpa was so enthusiastic he told us not to skimp on the hotel and scored us something decent. In less than a month my entire world flipped upside down. I was having the experience I always wanted in my twenties. I was in normal, healthy, sober love.

This was right around the time I told her I loved her. It took about three weeks, but I felt it in two. I remember times in the car when I just wanted to say it- blurt it out. I remember moments of flirting where I wanted to scream it. I whispered it to her, while she slept, a few times. I think I accidentally said it once while we were high on Ketamine.

One day we're talking about our relationship and dancing around the edges of the topic of love. We don't actually mention it, not using specific words...but I just get the feeling she's thinking the same thing. She tells me she thinks she has something she wants to tell me. I think maybe this is it: the time to say it. I think maybe not. I take the leap of faith anyways. I say it. I tell her *I love you*.

There isn't any silence or pause.

Time freezes anyways.

She says it back.

4. THE EXECUTIVE SUITE

A week later and the purse thing already has a sequel. I get \$300 to give Audrey in aid of the rent she owes. It isn't enough to actually cover it, it doesn't bail her out of any trouble, it's basically just me giving her \$300. She insists that I shouldn't do it. I read it as a social formality. If someone offers me a slice of a full pizza, I always decline the first time. I'm not sure if it really, really helped the situation or if I just bore her down. She eventually relented and allowed me to give it to her though. I felt like I was doing a good thing, not just in a selfish way that benefits my relationship, but like I did a true act of good. This

wonderful person deserves three million dollars, what I give is paltry.

On the drive to Grand Rapids I stop at McDonald's to use the bathroom and give her the money. The conversations leading up to it were starting to stir thoughts that maybe there was a downside to this. I pull my wallet out of the center console and produce three crispy, fresh \$100 bills. Handing them to her I catch a look in her eye. Was it hesitation? The thought about downsides stirred more. The look flashed away and was replaced with a smile, and I mentally sighed in relief. I was right, I did the right thing.

Once again we ride in my car and I feel so content I don't even need to talk. The curated playlist rolls on as we alternate between conversation and warm silence. I don't feel the need to fill lapses of conversation anymore. With her, I am where I want to be. I don't feel the self-doubt that drove me to put on a tank top that morning, worrying in a big city there would be better-looking men and that I need to show off my muscles to compare. After a brief absence, her hand returns to my thigh and I realize that thought was stupid. The confidence never lasts, but I feel like It's building into something.

Grand Rapids is a huge city, but our hotel is more outside the downtown area. The GPS directions skip around and we loop around a parking lot twice before finding our hotel. It's surprisingly nice and the weather is beautiful. I get this deja vu feeling of when I used to step off the plane in the Bahamas with my family as a kid. That "start of the vacation" slap of warm air. I didn't know feelings like this existed as an adult. Audrey makes me feel all kinds of things I haven't felt in years.

Here, with my woman, at a hotel on vacation, I make the most of it. I feel like an executive and the \$180 room is a penthouse. The lights in the bathroom don't work? That's just a feature, no worries, we'll just move the table lamp in. Not one, but two K-Cups sit beside the coffee machine. Hotel Coffee machines are always so impossibly small and cheap looking. Where can you even buy those in stores? There must be a warehouse in China pumping out tiny hotel coffee makers. Silly thoughts like these come to me on adventures like these with her. I get this feeling I used to get on school trips. I never had vacations with friends, only family, so school trips were the only trips I went on with peers. I never got the girl on those trips. On this one I already had her.

We settle into the room and she unpacks way too many clothes for a 2 day weekend. We hang up all of our wedding clothes and I realize why hotels have racks to hang stuff. I realize maybe that's why cars

have clips to hang clothes too. I realize normal, adult people need to maintain pressed clothes while traveling and that is why. I realize that I'm one of those people right now.

I lay back in my bed and just watch as Audrey gets ready for the night after taking a shower. When I had heard the water stop I thought about seeing her naked and hoped. The door opens and the sound of the bathroom fan and cellphone music gains in volume. She steps out and just like every time I am stunned by her naked body. I'm not exactly horny, but I take in the sex appeal. She's focused on her routine and I just sit back and admire the lunar pale curves of her buttocks where no tan can be found. Her back is crisscrossed in an insanely dark orange sunburn. It's a few weeks old at this point, but it remained our whole relationship. I've never seen a sunburn last so long before. She puts on a pair of jeans with so many tears it hangs open and gives an almost bell-bottom appearance of width. She walks from the bathroom to the full body mirror doing girl-things to her face with girl-utensils. She still hasn't put a shirt on and I'm wondering if it's just to tease me.

I pull out my phone and sneak a photo of her in the mirror. She's topless and you can see a few pixels of nipple reflected in the mirror, but it's classy. Her hair is wet and you can see it stuck into strands she caresses with her brush. Upbeat pop music bops on with the tinny acoustics that come from cell phones in small spaces, and I can tell Audrey is lost in her own world. It's one of those moments of passion and enthusiasm I love to witness. After she spends roughly 90 minutes getting ready for the night, I start my routine. Thirty seconds later, my shoes are tied and I'm ready to go.

We head downtown twisting through the busy veins of a metropolitan expressway on our way to a trendy Sushi restaurant. As we approach the neighborhood gets more upscale and hipster. It reminds me a bit of Petoskey and I'm grateful not to have the feeling of imposter syndrome I often got there. Being with her does more for me than the clothes, muscles, or haircut. She exudes class and it's partially contagious to me. Once you start feeling like white-trash it takes over like a disease. In this neighborhood, my tattoos don't stick out and it seems possible I'm another regular office guy.

Young couples-hip, urban and fit-walk the sidewalks as we search for parking. The struggle for parking is a minor annoyance, but I make it a bigger deal than it is to cope with the realization I'd much rather live here. I found a spot a few blocks away and pulled in front of the

meter. I struggled with the digital meter like a country bumpkin and felt embarrassed. Audrey figured it out for me.

Stepping across clean sidewalks in the warm summer night I thought, "this must be what bonfire weather feels like in the city." All the restaurant's The imposter syndrome starts to creep up again as I think, "she is more like them than she is like me."

5. THE INSTIGATOR AND THE GRACEFUL

We had our first major fight that night. It was over the vaccine. This was summer 2022, so a lot of people were having that debate. I don't think either of us had any true investment in the debate. Neither of us had ever mentioned anything about vaccines or lockdown. It was a topic I could passionately debate, but without much actual passion. Vaccine mandates made no impact on my life, so I had no investment.

I used to think she was just repeating talking points. As if I wasn't. Only the clarity of hindsight allows me to see how arrogant I was at that table. I even let my tone slip into that of one I would banter with a stranger. I forgot she was my girlfriend. My girlfriend who is smarter and wiser than me. It's sad to think I was so invested in the culture war that I underestimated my girlfriend.

Looking back, I think I had a certain undeserved tinge of confidence in my voice. She could see my arrogance. It was an ugly side of me. The throbbing urge to play devil's advocate and poke the proverbial bear. It reminded me of something in my father, something in my grandfather. It wasn't all of me though. My mom and grandmother diluted the cruel edge into something that just comes out in my worst moments. It comes out during times of fear. I didn't want to prove Audrey wrong in this instance. I wasn't even gun-to-the-head sure *I was wrong*.

I had already had worried about clashes like this. People are so divided now. It's like there's these two polar extremes of which I fit into neither. I simply don't have the bonafides to the conservative tough guy, yet the opposing side has never been welcoming either. There's this stereotype from Hollywood that the nerds, dorks, theater kids, and alternative kids (the less popular kids, all in all) are actually warm and accepting, while the hot, popular, cool kids are judgemental. I've found it to be the same on all sides. I worried that this stupid civil war fad of culture-war would overpower love.

I've never been able to understand what doesn't make me back down in these moments. Logic would follow that if my fear is losing her, then I should not argue further. Instead, I keep pushing. Do I really want to be right that much? I look back at these moments and realize I am the asshole. I look back and love how she stands up for what she believes in. We disagree, debate, learn and grow. In my time with her I expand out while simultaneously digging deeper into myself.

She makes arguments for mandated vaccinations. I make a stupid joke about "my body my choice" and I see anger flash across her face. Immediately I regret it. My childlike need to always be funny. I still don't know women, but I like to think now I don't approach debates with my girlfriend like I would a stranger on the internet. She's six years younger and infinitely more mature. She fulfills my Oedipus complex and makes me glad to have it.

The tone shifts to something even worse and more silent. The discord between us is palatable. The waitress checks in on us, picking up plates, and it's one of those awkward moments where you smile and pretend everything is copacetic. The way she can break into a smile as she helps the waitress sticks out. I love that she helps the waitress. I want her to forgive me. Regret. Going too far.

I start thinking crazy thoughts. It's the end. She probably wants to go home now. She's going to dump me when we get back. This was doomed to fail. I aimed too high. I blew it. It's over. Life is going to go back to what it was before. School starts and I'm doing it all alone. Once school lets out my day will be done. This was just another taste of the real world the universe gave me. Sorry guy, try again. Why did it have to be this girl? She seems like *the girl*. Then she reaches over and takes my hand. I look up into her eyes and realize it's all ok.

It always was.

6. CEREMONY AND BONDING

Her lips stood out bright red under her parted brown hair. She went with a subtle makeup application but allowed herself to work her eyes into something gorgeous. The dress she had picked out was perfect. She had beautiful shoulders and everyone could see. The dress is

classy and tries not to show off much, yet her hourglass figure wins the tug-of-war and shows itself off anyways. I *love* it.

The self-doubts I had from the night before are gone. I have the hottest girlfriend of any room I am in. People look at us the way I looked at people last night. My confidence surges so much that I have no fear over attending this; my first wedding. I had imagined needing Xanax, Bud Lite, heroin.

The suit felt tight and uncomfortable in the car. I was hoping it would loosen up. I could use a 12 hour fast right. Will I be able to dance like this? I don't care, I will anyway.

We enter the venue and I take everyone in. They all look like nice, proper, good people. I feel like I actually fit in, like I belong. I might have a backstory, but these people want me for what I am *now*.

Nine months later. Walking on the treadmill for the third hour in a row, writing. It's 1 pm and I haven't said anything out loud yet. Some days go by without speaking out loud at all. I look back and honestly consider this one of the happiest days of my life. It's the one memory I always come back to. Spending too much time in its reverie is guaranteed to make me cry. I know I haven't forgiven myself just because of how guilty it makes me feel. I hold it next to felony fuck-ups in terms of severity. The life I was getting a preview of was one I always wanted. More importantly, it's what my family sacrificed so much for. I forgive them for not understanding the relationship, but I know in my heart the day I lived then was all they ever wanted for me. I didn't think about doing drugs. It was the first day I thought of *not* doing drugs. The high point was the dancing.

We go back and forth from dance floor to table. Neither of us dances in the big crowd, but neither of us are wallflowers either. It's moments like these I realize we aren't so different. I see what she sees in me and why she asked me to come. It's the most (or closest) I've come to true self-confidence, it had to be for me to dance. Every time we stopped dancing, I ask for more. She is a much better dancer than me. She can keep a beat. She can boogie. She makes *me* dance better. I don't want this moment to end. I record this moment with my eyes. I record it with my phone.

The music-a mix of milquetoast hip-hop and pop-wasn't my favorite, but I still get into it. I pray for a slow song to dance to. Aren't they supposed to throw flowers at these things? This is a decent-looking crowd of people, but my girlfriend is still notably prettier than all. We stick with another couple, who slightly mirror us in looks

compared to the rest. The boyfriend looks exactly like a guy from my gym, except without beady eyes. The girlfriend is pretty in an extremely prim way. Like a young prep-school Jodi Foster. They are both normal people with normal jobs. We chat as normal couples do. I feel normal. The ecstasy from dancing dies down as we socialize more.

The boyfriend pulls me into a corner. He lowers his voice and speaks in hushed tones. He confides in me that he recently got a DUI. He talks in a whisper of shame that shows he views the charge as a major one. I debate letting him in on the joke, the joke that he is dancing around confessing a DUI to a felon like me. I decided against telling him. I'm going to be someone else today, someone normal. I give him advice and let him know what to expect. He works in HVAC and is a little more blue-collar than the rest of the crowd, similar to me in a way. Shooting the breeze, while our girlfriends do the same a few yards over, I feel like one of the guys. I turn sideways to steal glances at her in variable intervals.

The way she sips her drink is so delicate. As if the plastic cup is one of those frail glasses that can shatter from an opera singer. She puts it up to her lips gently. Other people might not notice, but I bet she's being mindful of her lipstick. She's on-point like that. She sips, lowers the glass, and the drink looks just as full. The nips are most classy like that.

She didn't catch the bouquet. It makes me think of marriage with her. I already am head-over-heels, but now I envision it clearly. I look around at the sheer intensity of the event; The decorations, the food, the music, and the ceremony beautifully presented by a young friend. Audrey deserved this level of celebration. I would settle for a courthouse wedding-I'm white trash like that. I start to panic about the visitor seating. She has way more friends than me, hell, I barely have any family. She's artsy-She'd want something...witchy I bet! I hope I don't have to wear anything goofy.

We talk about plans for after the reception with other guests. I can tell by Audrey's voice she's not committed to the idea. We're both a little bit tired. Not too tired to do something casual together, but too tired for a social expedition. After a full day like this, I'm almost certain she wants to just lay back. I have no problem with either; that's what's great about this girl. She's an amazing time at the height of socialization or just lazing around the house, binging Netflix. In the end, we decide on a night inside together.

In the room: She looks good. Damn good. I spend hours in the gym

every week just to have my body. She looks even better and was just born like that. I suppose her time investment is in the mirror with brushes and palettes instead of in the gym with weights and treadmills. If you've never seen her, Audrey could be described as sensuous and professional. She is a sexy librarian. She's voluptuous in a way I've never seen a fit girl. When she takes off her glasses it's like she's a whole other person.

I've always heard about vacation sex. Audrey and I are compatible in a special way; we link together. It's like pizza; it's never *bad*, just not *as awesome*. When she's really in the mood-and wants to make it an event-she can take me to places I never knew existed. In this, she is my teacher. I'm 40 pounds heavier, slightly taller, and have more tattoos-yet she wears the pants. Especially in times like these. It's never been like this. It's ok, I let go of control. She takes it.

7. YELLOW BRICK ROAD

The last day was bittersweet. Something felt like it was ending. I would probably only leave her side for a day or two, but I wasn't ready yet. I tried to be mindful and stretch the day out; however, it's impossible not to slip into the moment. I stop caring and just go with the flow.

The bellman cart overflows with our (Read: her) luggage and is difficult to navigate through the hotel hallways. It careens like a shitty shopping cart and I struggle to wrangle it into an elevator. Audrey carries a simple purse and does not notice my woes, and I keep it that way. I hate for her to carry anything or open any doors. It's an expression of my acknowledgement of who she is and what she's done for me. My life didn't have weekends like this before.

We go antiquing with a friend of hers, Margo. Margo looks like a bookworm movie character. She was one of those people you could somehow tell just by looks was very intelligent, but also cute. Movies always cast a regular hot chick and just nerd them up, that's what she reminds me of except with the nerdiness being genuine.

For a second I assume she won't like me. I don't know anything about her, but I assume. I hear about her biology job and wonder if she can intuit my past. I get in my head about it. I feel stupid a few minutes later when Margo includes me in the conversation. I scold my

mind for playing tricks on me.

Margo shows us a 3 story antique thrift store. Part of me laughs about how much of a nightmare this would be to some dudes, but I always enjoy these trips with her. She makes me think of *Antiques Roadshow* with the way she rattles off information about this old junk. I find a Keith Richards biography I don't plan on reading and buy it. Mostly I just follow the girls.

We pick out a cute antique Starbucks coffee mug to give to her roommate. She is watching Audrey's dog this weekend as a favor and we appreciate her. Audrey doesn't know that before leaving I slipped the roommate \$30 for the consideration. I remember a character from *The Sopranos* once left a \$100 bill on his Mother's fridge anonymously. This always struck me as a real masculine move, and I try to imitate it. I suppose a normal person just calls it altruism.

By the time we're done shopping I can tell Margo approves of me. This felt truly good. Audrey came from a different crowd than me. I don't care what people say, *everyone* is judgmental. I think the roommate likes me, as difficult as that dynamic is. I crave the approval of strangers to a sick degree, so with the friends of my partner it can be vicious. Sometimes I'd rather just not try and remain a mystery. Let people form their own mental image based on social media and pictures. Let them define me by my physique rather than my person. One is undeniably good; the other is subjective. The other has limited fans. The other is niche.

It takes a long time to remember the details about self doubt. This day is instead defined by the drive home. Even the shopping trip was almost forgotten to time, because the drive home carved such a deep punctuation into my memory. The drive home is the first thing that comes to mind when I think of the following things:

- That day.
- That entire trip.
- Rainbows.
- Driving in those weird rainstorms that suddenly start and stop.
- The phrase "best day of my life"

We are in the middle of the state when it starts pouring rain. Big glops smash the windshield and almost deafen the music. The only word to describe it is "percussion". I grip the steering wheel tighter as a semi drives by and blasts us with spray. I veer to the shoulder. Audrey and I yip and yelp like we're on a roller coaster. *Hold on,*

Pooker! I correct back and it eases up.

It was never dark, but the sun comes out more as the rain eases up. We can see more storms and rain ahead. I can tell we're going to be going in and out of them. Then I see the rainbows.

Stretching through a baby blue sky was not one, but two rainbows. They glisten next to each other over a field to our left. Audrey takes turns taking pictures with both of our phones. For a second I worry they'll disappear too soon, and we won't get a chance to just enjoy them together. Thankfully, they hang out with us for miles. I feel her hand on my thigh and take a hand off the wheel to meet it. She squeezes me rhythmically three times. *Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze.* She told me it means "I love you."

CHAPTER TWO

We're All Stars In The Dirty Show

1. WINTER

*I hope I cut myself shaving tomorrow
I hope it bleeds all day long
Our friends say it's darkest before the sun rises
We're pretty sure they're all wrong*
— The Mountain Goats, “No Children”

Rear-right tire slaps curb and for a minute I think Julia was right about the alignment. She can be a real nightmare in the car; to the point where it's better off to let her drive my car. If she's just riding she fidgets and fucks with every knob, button or switch in the car. Sometimes, I try to time the intervals between either something getting fiddled with or her expressing the need to fiddle with some settings- it's never longer than ten seconds. I acquiesce to her command, but in a way different than with Audrey.

Julia and I haven't dated in 7 years and are more friends. I think I see her more as a big sister. I've always had a predilection towards more full-figured women, but Julia was the first dominating woman I was attracted to. She was my first true adult love, really.

I fell head-over-heels for Julia soon after I had gotten out of prison. I was looking something like a muscular French bulldog- strong slabs of muscle that were covered with a mild layer of fat- from all the weightlifting. I met her on Facebook; arguing with some people on a status over the morality of a news story. It was a story about a petty crime committed by a drug addict. Commentators failed to see nuance

and degree, and basically advocated for the death sentence to punish this petty crime. Julia and I argued against these people, then began messaging each other

I was on tether during the summer and driven out-of-my-mind with loneliness and boredom. Julia made the effort to come out and see me; that meant a lot. I had never had a chick make the solid half-an-hour drive before. It was embarrassing to be on tether and it made it difficult to meet women.

She got a ride from a friend and was dropped-off on a warm summer day. The pool was open and we made plans to sit by it. She always looked great by the water; like she belonged. She strut down my driveway and it's one of those mind-projector memories I can play clear-as-day. It was the day I met my best friend.

She was shorter than I imagined. Her thighs surged out to a crescent moon shape in the best type of thick. She had a tummy and she *rocked* it. I didn't know this person would define the next year of my life, but I wouldn't have been surprised to find out. She had *dark* sunglasses on that just could *not* hide her soul at that moment. It was beaming out of her as she walked down that driveway, and I couldn't wait to meet it. She's one of the few girls that has beautifully built *shoulders*; they are elegant, yet muscular in a way that makes me think of volleyball players.

Julia is far too tough to ever be described primarily as "cute". Words like "beautiful" and "pretty" fit more. Her overall face, hair, skin, and teeth are just slam-dunk good genetics. She has healthy blond hair that smells great naturally. Her hair and face make you expect Aryan-esque blue eyes, only to be met by green. Her nose is small and slightly upturned, in a good way.

Above her beauty is her friendship. Julia has had unconditional love for me similar to GamGam. She's the only one who has consistently stuck around throughout the years. She held my hand as I choked back tears at GamGam's funeral. We get into pride-fueled disputes where we don't talk for weeks but also fall right back into place when we make up. I pull my car into her driveway and aim behind her car. I brake, shift to park, and hop out nearly all in one motion.

I feel bad for ever being mad at her. She always had my best interests at heart, even when she expressed them in violent ways. I wanted to spend the rent money on dope one time and she chased me with scissors. We were young and dumb. She had a fire of life in her that drove me crazy after all that time cooped up in prison. My best

friend gave me some unforgettable memories: her knocking out a wanna-be gangbanger, fighting other women who showed interest, out all night cruising the tri-cities. She is number one on the platonic MySpace Top 8 of my heart.

Today I'm short on my Suboxone and she has a few to hold me over. Julia always comes in tight in spots like these; she's like some sort of *Dog The Bounty Hunter* for pharmaceuticals. Walking into the house, I kick my shoes off as the frantic skittering of a dog's paws slap across hardwood floor from the other side of the house. The drumming builds with intensity and Frank— Julia's pit-bull— comes sliding across the kitchen floor.

Frank looks is rippled with strong slabs of muscle and looks like he did hard time in the animal shelter. He has a smile so big it make's the Cheshire Cat look like Eeyore. His stubby tail wags as he runs in place; claws skating against hardwood. Julia enters the kitchen wearing black yoga pants in a way no other woman can. She hands me five plastic wrappers of Suboxone; I already sent her the money through PayPal. Without acknowledging the deal, I immediately launch into a bitch-fest about my girlfriend.

"I spent \$350 on an AirBnB, plus the tickets, plus whatever other food and bullshit we spend along the way. All I'm saying is I want at least *a little* power in the relationship. I know that no one will ever love me like I love them, but..."

I feel the rage boiling in the pot before Julia douses them.

"You think just because you spend money that she respects you? You're so fucking stupid. How can you be in college?" Julia says with genuine venom. She can be a real gamble with mood. I also suspect she feels some sort of jealousy for the emotions I feel towards Audrey. The degree of Casey's vitriol makes it impossible to hide that she feels *some* sort of animosity. She claims it's only about the money I spend on Audrey, and how it hurts I never tried that hard with her. I feel that the differences in their bodies might not have something to do with it.

"How can you expect someone to love you when you don't even love yourself? I don't need any motherfucker telling me what to do or where to be. Couldn't be me— *shoo-o-o-t,*" Julia's voice trails off in my mind and I start to nod along. She's bitching about my girlfriend she's never met before. Not so much about her as about me and how bad I am at relationships.

I've been confiding in Julia a lot lately about my relationship. Audrey and I are on the rocks. We always have a tendency to oscillate,

but right now it's something specific. Doomsday is creeping nearer and nearer; sometimes, in flashes of white-hot anger, I want it to come. There is something inside of me cruel and evil. I don't yet know what it is, but it's there. Trenbolone and amphetamine fuel memory-projector imagination-reels of rejection that fuel resentment ready to blow.

Julia talks shit to me for amphetamine and Suboxone. She holds no boundaries with these substances. She calls me: retard, addict, one-who-will-not-change, dumbass. She is not wrong. She loved me enough to tell the truth. I hate myself enough to ignore it. She is one reason I can't say I wasn't warned. She knows me in a way no one else does and saw it coming. She is the definition of tough love.

Trenbolone is an anabolic steroid that produces rapid results at the expense of potential harsh side effects. It is known in online bodybuilding communities as "the relationship killer", but I knew better and ignored warnings. It is known for causing paranoia and hyper-sexuality. I am prone to these already, and they were greatly exacerbated from this. The effect it has on my physique is nothing short of superb. Each individual muscle quickly sheds fat and becomes carved-out into an individual component strand-by-strand. The Tren chisels my muscles until the definition slaps you in the face.

I had tried a short run of tren once before without any bad side effects. I ended up bailing on the cycle, but I was still able to see the incredible androgenic potential of this compound. I only used it for about a month and never went over 280 milligrams a week dosage. I didn't have any psychological changes that I had noticed; the only psychological change I noticed was a *huge* increase in my sex drive. I craved filthy, nasty, sweaty tweaker sex and with the body tren gave me I could get it. Julia hated that I used them, but would even concede this fact.

I had decided to run tren again in anticipation of an adult art show Audrey and I were attending: The Dirty Show. Audrey described it as North America's biggest erotic art expo. Pictures of previous years showed walls covered in all kinds of sensual imagery; genitals and bodily contortions filled canvas. Burlesque dancing and stripping would be performed all night along with novelties such as bondage and rope-play.

We both needed a vacation in the worst way. Audrey had been working over 40 hours a week, dealing with the death of her dog, having massive stomach issues and dealing with my ever-destabilizing

mental condition. I was about to fail Calculus II and GamGam had barely been gone a month. Audrey specifically needed space and time to herself, while I wanted the opposite. I wanted to live in her skin... or anything to avoid going home. We needed a weekend to get *away* from home and be someone else- to be a different couple. Audrey assured me costumes were common, although she does just love any excuse to play dress up.

I planned on a shirtless costume with chains reminiscent of a Roman gladiator. Audrey must have changed her costume plans a hundred times. Components shifted daily and I never gave any single details too much faith. All I knew was that it always turned out sexy. I think the indecision is all just part of the ritual for her. She makes deadlines based on shipping times that run right up until the brink of time. The messy chaos of the outfits' genesis gives way to something beautiful. I'll never forget how she looked that night. She was the most beautiful girl at the event and her title received no challengers.

I bought these golden chains that wrapped around my upper-torso for my costume. It fit a little tight, but overall looked breathtaking. I had never had this sort of sexiness to me. I was worried the costume would look homoerotic, but instead its sexiness was more of a chippendales vibe. I pictured myself walking into the event full of confidence...thanks to my physique. The only way I could go shirtless was *ripped, shredded, lean*. I wasn't confident going shirtless with a physique that was attainable naturally. I should have remained with my regular doctor-prescribed Testosterone Replacement Therapy dose. The always-present craving for *more* convinced me the entire art-show-vacation would be *better* if I was in movie star-level fitness.

The months before the dirty show were spent pumping barbells and dumbbells in gyms. I wanted to both burn fat and gain muscle. I chased ass relentlessly, making Audrey swat me away in so many ways. She gives me an innocent hug and I can't help but pull her buttocks towards me- pumping her warmth into me. Every night I eagerly await her body; she's generous enough to give it to me most-all of them. It's not enough for me, I cannot be satiated of my need for her. She feels one or two degrees warmer than any other woman I've felt.

2. PROJECTIONS

I woke up to the house silent in a way that's new since GamGam passed. She would often be silent in the morning, yet I still knew she was there. I felt that indefinable warmth that comes from sharing a house with a loved one. I woke up now with that odd feeling that comes with certain privacy. Unless it's a woman, I don't usually like the company in the morning, but GamGam was an exception.

She smoked cigarettes at the table until about 10 am; as late as she could without Grandpa smelling after work. Marlboro Menthol Ultralights: the quintessential old lady cig. I hated them; I could smoke a few hits off one, max. She always waited at the bottom of the stairs to needlessly remind of appointments. It was an unbearable annoyance at the time. I'd give anything to have it back. I miss her. I miss appointments now.

Sometimes I forget she died and expect to see her in the chair. Those days don't happen much anymore. The dog goes to work with Grandpa, too, so I truly wake up in solitude. I always wondered how I would feel losing Grandma. I really don't feel much of anything. I want to tell myself I just handle death well, but I know it must not have hit me yet.

Audrey and I broke up five days before Grandma died on Christmas; we got back together five days later. I binged on Audrey and haven't come back down since. It's not as good as when we reunited. She's started to feel like dummy-dope. I do all the right things, push all the right buttons, and she doesn't produce the desired effect. Talk of moving in and renting apartments gives way to talk of distance.

I grit my teeth, mentally, and load up my car for the weekend. This is our Valentine's Day weekend. It might be do-or-die for our relationship. I resolve to have a positive attitude and not break down and squeeze too hard. I catch a mind-projection of Lenny from *Of Mice and Men* crushing the girl's skull because he got carried away petting. I feel as helpless as Lenny sometimes; at least Lenny had George. I can't stop smothering until I snuff out any hint of love. Resentment billows up in oily clouds above what I destroy. I picture myself floating on top of the tar-colored nimbus floating over scenes from the last weeks. I look down and watch a memory play; I stomp down noisy stairs enraged as Audrey sits smoking wax in Justine's room, oblivious. In another: Audrey frowns in the kitchen as my eyes tear up.

A few days ago, it was Tuesday, I think. We didn't plan on seeing each other, but I showed up anyways. I had a legitimate need to grab some schoolwork...but more so didn't want to face *Alone*. I "ask" to spend the night in a pushy way. A few moments tick by and I realize it's a pantomime display of the emotion "hesitation".

White-hot coals burn my chest from the inside out. I feel the air leave my lungs through my nose. Tears well up and threaten escape. I give myself to her and she rejects me. I want to burn it all down. I search for words, fail to find them, then stomp off towards nowhere in particular.

I pick up books and clothes. I'm not moving out - it is not my intent to communicate that - but the gesture is meant to invoke that fear. The shot flies, falters - misses. She is too strong- it doesn't work. She holds the boundary strong and the waves of psychic tears I send are no match. I wave a white flag. We talk- the tears finally come.

I snap back into reality. Lately, I find myself replaying moments like these over and over. I try to change things, I re-run scenarios - I picture where I would be now. In reverie, my temper runs cooler and I don't lash out. I give her time to breathe and spend time at home with Grandpa. Reality never quite matched up with the plans.

I pull into Audrey's driveway; she's still at work. I have a few hours to prep for our vacation. I shove all previous insecurities deep down and shift to intense focus. I have to make ground beef tacos for dinner. They must be done *perfectly* to accommodate Audrey's stomach issues. I can pack all of my stuff and all the shared things. I must wash and dry two loads of laundry. Audrey will be home by 7, but I don't want her to lift a finger. In fact...I'll give her a massage. It's crucial I take as much stress off of this trip for her as I can.

The relationship is seen through a robotic, lifeless lens. I picture all good and bad deeds being calculated, reviewed, and weighed against a balance sheet, followed by Audrey passing down judgment on our relationship. I refuse to trust the process, in fact, I try to game the system harder. I reminisce about the first Detroit shopping we took together for the wedding. If I took her shopping on the drive down it would set the tone for the weekend. She would buzz around the store enthusiastically as I strut behind her. Moods would be lifted for the rest of the night. It was more of a *guarantee* than a manipulation.

The bedroom's mountain of clothes is reduced to hill after one load of laundry. I begin to chop vegetable and season ground beef in a skillet for dinner. I bought a cast-iron skillet to help truly *brown* the

ground beef; only the best for Pooker. I pack my hygiene and vacation clothes and move them to another room to free up space in the bedroom. I'm not sure exactly what Audrey wants to bring, but I want to make sure her room is as free of clutter as possible to make packing easy for her. Everything within my grasp I take care of for her. I want to ensure this weekend moves as if it's on rails for Audrey— she deserves it.

An hour later and my checklist is complete. Laundry sits folded, bags lay packed in front of the door and the aroma of crisped beef floats out from the kitchen. Inside the kitchen, pots and pans sit atop the stove. Taco meat, slick with oil and fat, sits crumbled in the cast iron skillet. Onions and peppers sauté in another. Finally, a copper-tone pot of gently bubbling oil awaits corn tortillas. Everything is exactly ready for Audrey.

Audrey got out of work at 6:00 pm, so she should be home no later than 6:20 pm. Twenties minutes go by and I check her location on my phone. It shows her near her mother's apartment...which doesn't make sense. Why would she need to stop there? Feet pound creaky spots of the floor as I pace circles. The phone shows Audrey should be approaching the house any second. The lighting in the room shifts as headlights approach the window.

I dash out the front door, bare-armed against the frigid winter air, and hop into my car. I shift into reverse and pull out of the driveway to let Audrey in. Frustration begins to build when I hit the curb pulling out and remember Julia's incessant nagging about the alignment. "*Your tire pressure's OFF!*" I hear hear screech in my head. I pull alongside the curb— bumping it again— and wait for Audrey to pull in so I can park behind her. Audrey sit's in her mother's car ahead of me without pulling in. Time ticks by as I crane my neck and try to tell what she's doing. The base drum in my chest picks up tempo.

What the fuck is she waiting on? I yank the shifter into drive and pull forward.

"Are you gonna' pull in?" I ask, wondering if she can feel my animosity. I'm surprised to see Audrey's mother with her in the front seat. Audrey just looks at me puzzled, then explains she doesn't even need to park in the driveway because her mom is taking the car. They were just having a chat before she left for the night. Embarrassment drips down my face and I wonder if they can tell how psycho I am at this moment. My pokerface never was one for winning, so I decide to

flee before they can get a good look.

Audrey's mom is quiet, unassuming and shy. She makes herself distinct with buzzed short hair and faint remains of a German accent which refuses to be completely evicted. If it weren't for these things she might seem ordinary, but by having hand in creating Audrey makes her, by definition, inherently *extraordinary*. There's something intimidating I can't put my finger on about her, and it makes me careful not to push too hard getting to know her. I'm a people pleaser to the core and crave the validation of this woman. Audrey is my surrogate mother in some ways

CHAPTER THREE

Relapse

BREAKUP

"Let's just have some fun, let's tear this shit apart

Let's tear the fucking house apart

Let's tear our fucking bodies apart

But let's just have some fun"

- Of Montreal *"The Past Is a Grotesque Animal"*

GETTING DRUGS

USING