

Verse 1

Soil

Center

Interview

Says here you worked as a housekeeper for a few years...?

Yeah, that was the last job I had before I went to school.

And you went to school for...creative art?

Yeah, I thought I was good at art. At least that's what my art teacher told me.

You still want to be an artist?

No, not anymore.

Why not?

Guess it just didn't work out.

And now you want to be a janitor?

I need to feed myself somehow.

That's practical. As much as I'd love to hire you for your cleaning expertise, you're not a veteran. This isn't the kind of position I could justify putting a civilian into. Now, I do have another position opening up that might be good for you. Do you think your artist's mind could handle sitting at a desk?

Um, doing what exactly?

You would be working with me to take care of most of the administrative tasks and a few office jobs. Mainly accepting packages, answering phones, purchasing and the like.

Sounds...ok.

You'd have to fill out a different application, it's a little more complicated than this one.

Ok.

I'll write the job number on my card, if you have any other questions about it, give me a call, but leave a message, I often don't get to my voicemail. It would be nice to have a good office manager around for that.

An office manager? I don't know.

Check out the job description, I'll look for your application. Can you send the next guy in for me.?

Sure.

Captains log

Strange kid came in for an interview today. He could hardly look me in the face. He had a master's degree in fine arts but didn't seem to think it was worth much. I told him to apply for my office manager position but he seemed to think it would be too much for him. How do you get that far in school and have trouble answering phones?

Journal

Had a job interview today.

Really weird thing happened. I applied to a janitor job and the guy said he couldn't hire me because I wasn't a veteran. I guess it's some place where they do therapy for guys who went to war. He thought I would be good for an office manager position. That will never happen. This is the only shirt I have with a collar, I save this and my only pair of jeans without holes. Gotta keep them nice for interviews.

Maybe I'll check it out, haha, me a manager. Who would ever believe that?

I really felt naked there when he asked me about my degree. Mfa creative art. What a joke that must be to people. And a housekeeper,

how am I gonna hang out with a bunch of military guys? They'll probably beat me up and slam me into walls. Like high school all over again.

That guy was probably just trying to get me out of his office anyway. Couldn't hurt to apply.

He had me send in the next person too. That guy needs that job more than me anyway. He looked like...hungry.

Library

Chit Chat

Say Grace,

How's my boy?

Got any new books for me?

What are you talking about? All the books you read are older than me. Hah.

Oh Gracie, nothing's older than you.

You better watch your mouth. I'll come over this counter...

Oh?

Don't even say it, I could too get over this counter...well, maybe last year.

I didn't say anything.

Better keep it that way. Hah. Whatcha lookin for then?

Nothing, still working through "The Selfish Gene".

I don't know how you can read that kind of stuff. Really.

It's interesting, I don't know.

Hey, did you get that job at the center? They have good benefits.

Nah don't think so, they said I couldn't do it cause I'm not a vet.

There's an idea, you could join the service, you're not too old.

I don't think so, I've never done a push-up that wasn't required to by a gym teacher. Those guys are all hard asses.

Oh, they'll tough you up.

Not sure that would help my failing art career.

Sitting in my library reading books isn't going to help your art career.

I don't really have anywhere to work at the moment. My mom still lets me sleep in the basement as long as she doesn't have to see me. Not a very creative space.

Hmph.

Besides, the light down there isn't very good.

That woman...

Oh hey, the interview guy told me to apply for an office manager job. Do you believe that?

Of course I believe that, he must have liked what he saw in you. You're very bright my boy.

I could never do anything like that. You have to be smart and organized and you have to talk to people...

You always sell yourself too short.

I'm just not myself around most people.

That's nonsense, you are such a sweet, sincere person.

That's what I'm saying, these guys are all like manly men, they shoot guns and kill people and stuff.

You can't judge people before you meet them, you might not know as much as you think. Some people's decisions are harder than others. Life isn't so easy for everyone.

Tell me about it. Hey, I'm gonna go get back to reading about baby birds pushing each other out of the nest.

What did you say?

I guess it's a population control thing.

My lord. What is this book called?

Post-It

Reminder: Make sure he fills out that job application

Journal

This book is so crazy. It's miles of weird facts about survival strategies in animals, and then at the end he's talking about how people read his book and feel like there's no reason to go on, and how dna can effect objects outside the body, what? No reason to go on? What's do special about being human?

Shit, Grace is calling it, time to go.

Basement

Chit Chat

He doesn't do anything!

He's my brother!

He's too old to be sitting in a library all day with no job.

He went to an interview today, jeez, just give him a chance. He took one summer off after school, what do you want him to do? Go back to housekeeping?

They offered him his job back, but besides that, he's got a college degree, why doesn't he do something with that? His advisor told him there are always design jobs, why doesn't he apply for an internship at least?

Mom, you know him, he's a dreamer, he's an artist. Worst of all he's so damn shy...

Exactly, how does he think he's going to be a painter or whatever he's doing? They have to talk to people, what's the difference if he's designing things and making money?

That's just not what he wants to do.

Boy if I did what I wanted to do, I sure wouldn't be here tied to this.

We all know that well enough. Did you ever think that maybe the reason he's so shy is that all you did his whole life was criticize everything he did and remind us both daily how much you hate being a parent.

Your father left me alone with you two ungrateful brats. I raised you the same way my mother raised me.

And look how much good it's done for everyone. Maybe you should leave, then at least one of us would be happy.

Get out of my house. I don't want to see your face again.

And don't, god damn it. She slams the...She better not come back here.

Letter

My dearest darling boy,

Your sister doesn't live here anymore and I won't be able to afford this place on my own. I'm going to be moving back home to be closer to my family.

You can stay down there until I move but you're going to have to figure out somewhere to stay.

Best of luck with your art thing.

Mom

Phone

I heard what you guys were saying.

I'm so sorry baby brother, I tried to stick up for you but it blew up in my face.

Yeah, but you think I'm a coward.

Is that all you got from that whole thing? I was trying to...

I'm sorry, you know how much your opinion means to me. You're right though. I just feel all inferior like a begging dog or something, I don't get it. Probably moms dog training. Sit, eat, shut up, roll over.

Yeah but without the dog treats.

A muzzle.

But no leash.

Jesus, Marie, where are you going to go?

I'm going to Jojo's house right now, her parents let me stay there any time I want. You know that.

Lucky.

I know, we're gonna find you a way out of there. Hey, how'd that job interview go?

Weird, he said I couldn't get that job but told me to apply for an office job. I don't know if I can do it.

Oh you so can. You have to do it, at least apply. I mean it. You could probably afford an apartment then and work on your art.

Ok, I'll do it. Sheesh.

Alright, I'm here, gotta go. I'll call you tomorrow. Bye.

Library

Chit Chat

This is the number that he gave me. I don't know what I'm supposed to do with it.

Here, you gotta look up the website, that's a government job.

Government job, you gotta be like somebody to get those jobs don't you?

You don't think you're somebody?

You know what I mean.

No I don't know what you mean.

You know, I'm like a poor person. Low class, or whatever.

Young man, do you know where I come from? I was raised on a chicken farm in Alabama. If you could call it a farm, it was just a few chicken coops my father kept to pay the tax man and so we could eat. My father had to go out every day and hire himself off to cut wood or whatnot. You want to talk about poor? I had to wear my sisters old shoes. Hah.

Well you had a family.

That I did young man, that I did.

Post-It

Reminder: Tell the boy

Journal

Gracie was awesome today. She totally filled out my application and wrote me a resume. She said that everyone lies on job applications so she put her address down for me. I don't even know where to start, I'm so anxious I might actually get the job. I can't even read atm. Feels like I'm being swept downstream.

Oh yeah, I can't believe my mom actually kicked my sister out of the house. It was my fault too, she was trying to stick up for me. Maybe I can pay her back somehow.

Center

Phone

I'm glad you called, I got your resume, very nice. I should tell you though, I'm planning to retire at the end of the month. You'll be coming in just as I'm on my way out.

Oh, uh, ok.

I don't want you to let that worry you, there will be plenty of time for me to train you, although sometimes it takes the government a little longer to process new hires so we should probably get this paperwork moving if you're interested.

You mean I have the job?

Well, there are a few things that would need to happen before I can offer you the job, It's enough to know that you're interested for the moment.

Yes, good, yes, sir, I do, sir.

Ha, alright. No need to call me sir. When can you come in for a proper interview?

I'm free whenever you are, is now too soon?

I'm a little busy at the moment and I'll be out of the office until Wednesday.

I'll be there Wednesday.

How does noon sound?

I'm there.

Great, see you then.

See you then.

Journal

Holy shit! I think I'm actually going to get that job. The director of the center called me and said I might get it. I have no idea how this is going to work. Maybe I can borrow money from Marie for some clothes.

Captains log

I hired a guy fresh off the street who's staying at our shelter. Not the riskiest thing I've done but it's never worked well before.

I've also tentatively offered the office manager position to a young man who...I won't say shows promise, but I feel like this job might keep him out of trouble.

Chapter 2

Library

Chit chat

How ya doin Gracie May?

Why do you call me that? My name is Grace Odessa, I don't know where came up with that.

It's a song, singer. Nevermind, I've got good news. The director got my application and called me to tell me about the job but he says he's retiring.

What does that have to do with anything?

What if the person that comes in after him is mean? I can't work for another angry screaming, coercive arrogant, ugh. I hated my boss at the hotel.

You can't go around being afraid of the future. You don't know what's going to happen and you can't base your future on what happened in the past.

Always there with the wisdom, Grace.

You know it.

I wish I could work here.

And I wish I could hire you but you're the only person who comes in here, and they barely pay me even.

I know, just a dream.

So go on and tell me about this job, what did he say about it?

I don't know much. All he said was that I'd have to do stuff for the office and answer phones.

That's wonderful. Sure beats cleaning.

I don't know. I gotta...it might not be that easy, but I'm going to see if my sister can help me out.

Can't you just take the bus?

Not for that, I mean, look at the way I'm dressed...

Boy, I've been looking at the way you dress for years.

What are you talking about?

Here we go...

Journal

Grace offered to let me look through Jonathan's things. I guess that's a good thing but she told me an eye opening story.

Apparently she and my mother were friends growing up and lived across the street from each other, up until they got to high school and my mom made some new friends who didn't accept her. I never thought she could be that mean. But I don't know. Maybe.

Turns out Grace had some final words later in life with my mother about how she was raising me and my sister. That was the end of that. Now I know why my mom never wanted me to go to the library. I guess that's why I always did want to go to the library. Such a rebel.

Post-It

Wash Jonathan's things.

Basement

Note

Don't forget that you need to find a place to stay. You also need to figure out where you're going to keep all your art stuff. I'm not moving all of it so you better do something with it before I have to throw it all out.

Journal

I guess it's all true. I always fought against this feeling that my mom didn't want me around. Who wants to believe that? I just figure she was so stressed out from raising us. Still feel like a burden. Now I know I always have been.

Times like this I wish my dad was still alive. Maybe things would have been better for her if he was here to help. But now I don't know what to think.

How am I going to get all this crap out of here?

Phone

What? Wait. One thing at a time.

I don't know why she would lie, she said that mom used to go out to the bar and leave us home when you were like 5 and I was 3.

I remember that.

You don't think that's a little strange?

I never really thought about it. She always told me I was a great babysitter and gave me candy for it. How does this lady know that?

You know her. She was the librarian at school. She lived in the same apartment building. She said everyone knew our mom was not quite right.

She said that?

No, she didn't say that exactly. She just told me that everyone would talk about her and wonder if they should call welfare or whatever.

I knew people looked at us different but I just thought it was because we were poor.

All I remember hearing from her was how hard we were to take care of. Now I don't know what to think...do you ever wish our dad was still around?

I remember him. He wasn't a great guy. He was always yelling at her and making her cry.

Makes me wonder why she was crying and what he was so mad about.

Hey, come on now. She had a hard life. You don't know what makes people the way they are.

Fine, but why are you so quick to judge our father and even quicker to stick up for our mother?

Because I was there. I saw all the fighting and dishes broken and I was there when he threw all his stuff in his duffel bag and left! I watched him walk out the door. He never even looked back or say goodbye to me! I even remember screaming Daddy, Daddy, please don't leave me! Over and over. So fuck you if you want to think he's such a great guy.

Hey, Marie I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, I had no idea. You never told me any of this.

Why would I want to remember that? Why would I want to make him look worse to you than she already did? And why do you want me to hate the only parent I have left?

Center

Interview 2

We've got all the boring stuff done, why don't you tell me a little about yourself?

Not too much to say, I didn't really do much in high school. I was mainly into doing art and theater tech. I was in the choir for awhile cause it fit in my schedule but mostly I just worked and read books.

What kind of work were you doing then?

Washing dishes.

And you lived here your whole life?

Well, I went to college out at the private school. Their art program is not hard to get into. But, yeah, that's about as far as I've journeyed.

What kind of subject matter do you paint?

I don't really paint any more. It gets harder...

You know we're always on the lookout for activities for the vets. Maybe you could teach an art class.

Me, teach? I don't know about that. I mean, not because I don't want to but I'm not really good at talking to big groups of people. Or small groups.

None of us are at first, but you don't have to give a speech or anything, you just need to give them an opportunity to grow.

Oh jeez. Um. Can I think about it?

Of course, just give it some thought, we still have to find out if you can clear HR.

What do you mean?

Well, they do a background check and you need to pass a TB test.

What's a TB test.

Tuberculosis. After they give me the green light and I check your references. I'll need three.

Three references. That might be tough.

You have your old employer, right?

Would you accept a high school teacher?

Of course. And you can also do a personal friend if they can give me insight into your character.

I have just the person, her name is Grace and she works at the library. We've known each other for...

Haha, you don't need to tell me now. Why don't you let her fill me in, otherwise we'll have nothing to talk about. I'll let you know when I need that list.

Oh, great, thank you. Did you need me to do anything else.

Not right this second. Let us do our thing and we'll let you know as soon as we can.

Awesome.

Journal

Teach an art class. What is going on? I gave myself up for dead so many times and so did everyone else. What did my uncles say about me? Watch out for that one, no dad around. It's prison or the graveyard, something like that? But who would have thought I could be working in an office? Teaching people? I really hope I don't screw it up like I do everything else.

Captains Log

What are they doing to these kids these days? My office manager has no sense of direction. Spineless. I hate to ask him what his college experience was like. Hardly got him to answer any of my questions during the interview.

I got a timid kid to teach art classes. If only there was someone around to teach this new generation some self respect. Hard to respect people who don't do anything.

Basement

Phone

I had an idea that might get you in here sooner, I can pay you as a guest speaker until we get you on the books. This way you can also get to know the place before you start. How do you feel about that?

You mean to teach the class? Sure! I think I can get them started. Maybe I could start them drawing at first. I do have a lot of art supplies I could bring in. Would you mind if I keep them there?

No, of course not. I'll have Andy help you. Stop by sometime this week and see me. You two can use the company vehicle.

That would be awesome, thanks. When do you think you'd want me to teach the class?

What nights are you available?

Any of them. No job, remember?

Ha, yes, slipped my mind, how about Wednesday?

Deal.

See you then.

Journal

Another win. How is all this good stuff happening to me? I never have such good luck. I have to remember how to do art now. I barely passed my classes. I think the professors just wanted to get me out of there or didn't want to wreck their graduation rate. No matter, it got me this job.

I hope this Andy is up for some dust, this basement is hard to breathe in.

Phone

He's going to be fine, Marie. You said he got that job.

It doesn't matter, no, I'm not going to let him stay here, no not even if he pays me.

It doesn't matter if I'm moving or not, he's just not going to spend another year in my basement.

I have been more than patient. I've been waiting more than 20 years to get my life back. Haven't I done enough? Have either of you starved during that time? I have worked...

No you listen, you have no idea what it's like to...

If you talk to him, tell him he's got till the weekend.

Fine

Oh, you're down there. I guess you heard then.

Library

Chit Chat

I'd say I don't believe it but I absolutely do. How is she gonna do this to you right before you get a job?

I don't know. I'm feeling pretty deflated. I just hope she lets me get my stuff out of there for my art class. And I hope I can get that job still, I mean, whatever. I don't even care anymore. I knew it was too good to be true.

Don't talk like that. It doesn't matter whether or not you get that job. You can only do the best you can. Here, go look this book up.

Dhammapada. What the heck is that word, how do you pronounce it?

It's dama pada, don't worry about the h and the double letters. It's a book of wisdom from the Bhudda.

I thought you went to church every Sunday.

I do, doesn't mean I can't find inspiration in other places.

Ok, I'll check it out.

Hey, keep your head up kid.

Ok Gracie May.

Journal

I don't really know what to make of this book. It's nothing like the Bible. There's just all these one-two liners of advice like, don't do bad shit, it'll follow you around, and don't hang out with losers. Well I can't really escape myself. I'm stuck with me.

I wonder if I'd have been different if I grew up in another country. How could I not be? Feels like things are changing here. I don't really know how but it's like watching a movie that won't end and the characters don't seem to want to admit they lost the script.

Journal

Script

Two men are driving down the highway at night.

Charles: where are we going?

Frank: we'll know when we get there.

Charles: what are we trying to do?

Frank: figure out where we're going.

Charles: what are we looking for?

Frank: we'll know when we find it.

Charles: how will we know when we find it?

Frank: we'll stop looking for it.

Chapter 3

Basement

Note

Mom,

I should probably have everything out by the weekend. Not sure how long I can keep my phone on. If you need anything from me just tell Marie.

Sorry I didn't figure stuff out faster. Sorry things didn't work out the way you wanted.

Journal

She hasn't actually kicked me out yet but I have to find a place to go soon. I asked Marie if I could maybe stay at JoJo's. That's so far away though, I'd have to find a ride. I wish I hadn't sold my bike now. Never thought I'd need it.

Phone

Do you think you could give me a ride to work if I get that job?

Can't you take the bus? I mean it's really far from Jo's.

Well I was kinda hoping you could ask if I could stay there for awhile...

I wish I could but I feel like I'm already asking a lot to stay there myself. They're gonna feel like we've infested their house.

Don't worry about it, I just thought I'd ask.

Well what are you going to do? I think mom really wants you out of there.

I know I heard you guys talking through the floor. I don't have a clue. I'm a little worried about how I'm going to do this now even if I get it.

Don't think about it. I'm going to tell mom she has to let you stay until you get settled at work. She just can't kick you out right now. I don't think she's that cruel.

Sure. Maybe she'll let me put a tent up in the yard or something. Use the shower at least.

Oh god, how does this shit even happen?

I don't know. Why did I even happen.

Center

Chit chat

Oh, hey, you're the guy who I met at the interview, did you get the job?

...

Sorry, I just remember seeing you. I'll just...

He gave me the job.

What?

I'm here aren't I?

I might be working here too, so what's your name?

Does it matter?

I guess not.

What branch?

What branch?

Military, nevermind.

Oh, no, not me. My dad was in the army.

Figured.

Figured, what?

Army brat. You all look like that now.

Like what?

Helpless, hopeless, spineless and clueless.

Sorry to bother you. I...

Marines. I'm a marine. Name's Bud.

Just bud?

Just Bud.

Chit Chat

I'm Andy, you must be...

Ready to get to work.

Funny, well the professor is not in. I hear we got some art supplies to move, something like that?

It's mostly a collection of broken, well, fixed easels and some canvas making stuff. And tons of paint and brushes.

That's fine, no need for an inventory. Just need to know if it will fit in that?

Wow what is that?

Mobile command center. We use it for getting peoples attention. We deliver therapy. Also, when there are emergencies, power goes out, whatever, got satellite, everything but weapons.

It's huge, you can drive that thing?

What do you think? My tits will get in the way?

No, I just, it's a huge...

I'm just fucking with you, I drove these things in Iraq. Bout the same size as our gun vehicles.

You were in Iraq?

Damn right. Before they even allowed us in combat. I'll tell you about it sometime. I've gotta wait till the professor gets back but I can help you this afternoon. Why don't you come back around 3:00?

My mother will shit when she sees that thing pull up.

Let's bring along some toilet paper.

Captains Log

Bud is starting today. I really hope things go well. Most of the guys do ok until someone sets them off. I've known Bud for a few years now coming in and out of the center. Never had any problems from him. Can't seem to keep a job though.

Art classes should be starting on Wednesday. That is, if I can get anyone to go. That kid is kind of a mystery to me. I can't figure it out but there's something...wrong...with him?

I hope the guys don't give him too much trouble. Seems easily rattled.

Library

Chit Chat

Got any suggestions for me today Gracie?

I've got a whole list. But I've got more for you than that.

Journal

It's like a miracle or something. Gracie took me to the attic in the library today. She had a whole rack of clothes for me for work from Jonathan but the best part is she put a cot up there and said she'd let me stay here when she leaves at the end of the day I'm still going to

have to find a place to shower but it sure beats sleeping in my mom's yard.

Journal

Gracie's list

She said she thought I would enjoy these

Brave New World (Aldous Huxley)

The Canterbury Tales (Chaucer)

Hamlet (Shakespeare)

Inferno (Dante)

Fahrenheit 451 (Ray Bradbury)

Where to begin?

Center

Chit chat

How do you like the ride?

This thing is crazy.

We don't say crazy around the center.

Sorry, I didn't know...

Of course not. But we try to make people feel comfortable about being in a situation where they don't feel like they have control. You call em crazy and you alienate people. You give them a reason to crawl back in their heads and just say, yeah I'm fucked, no way out. And sometimes they take that to the extreme. Trust me little brother, it's pretty serious when someone you're trying to talk down on the phone blows their head off. These guys get feeling so they are just a burden to everyone around them and nobody wants them around. That's what we do at the center. We help these guys figure out how to deal with getting back to living with civilians. So one thing we do not do is call them crazy or even let them hear us say it.

I'll make sure to...

Just don't do it. That's good enough.

Phone

Hey Marie. What's up?

Are you going to mom's

Yeah, I'm headed over there now.

She's there you know?

So? I'm just going to get my stuff.

Why can't you just be more responsible?

What are you talking about?

I'm sorry, I've got my own life to deal with now. I can't take care of you forever. You're going to have to figure this one out on your own.

Marie, I'm on my way to get my art stuff to teach an art class.

Did you get the job at least?

Not quite, I still need to hear back about it.

Well, that's great.

You kinda sounded like mom there for a second.

Probably because I have to be in charge of myself now. I'm sorry but I've got my own problems to deal with. Look, I just called to let you know that mom wants you out. She found your journal and read it. You gotta start trying to figure things out for yourself.

I'm trying to...what? She read my journal?

Just try harder. You need to be less afraid of everything.

How am I supposed to do that?

I don't know.

Chit chat

What was that all about?

...

Nevermind, sure it's none of my business.

No, I'm sorry,

Don't apologize, you don't have to ask permission to exist. Sounds like you've been doing that your whole life.

I guess so.

Don't guess, makes you sound weak.

I suppose?

Why can't you be sure? Is it true or not?

Yes, I have always been apologizing for my existence.

Go on, you can yell, it's just me here.

I'm sick of apologizing for my existence!

Nice, feels good right?

Yes!

Now don't get too aggressive, the key with everything is balance. Assertive not aggressive, that's what I tell the guys, that's what I learned. You can't be going to extremes around these civilians. One

day your screaming in public, next day you're crying alone. Don't lose your edge but lose the attitude.

I don't think I have either of those.

No worries then. You got half the job done. Assertive, not aggressive. You are not aggressive, so be assertive.

Basement

Chit Chat

What the hell is that thing doing in my driveway.

Hello ma'am we just came to pick up a few things, we'll have her out of here in no time.

And who are you?

I'm Andy. Like I said we're here to pick up a few things.

Don't take your time. And you, I want to talk to you.

We'll be gone before you know it.

Chit chat

What's her problem? You forgot to leave the seat down?

She's just like that.

No ones just like that, what the hell happened to her?

I don't really know, she's always been a little unhappy.

With some people, unhappiness is a choice. Some not. You don't need to worry about her, what are you gonna choose?

Whatever comes my way I'll deal with I...I'm sure.

Already moving forward, let's get this stuff out of here. What's with the tent?

Chit chat

I need you to leave your keys here.

I don't suppose you've seen my journal?

What's that supposed to mean, no I have not seen your diary or whatever you wanna call it. Have you been talking to your sister? What did she say about me?

If you see it...never mind.

Chorus

Chapter 1

Outside

Journal 2

Hanging out in the park. Had to get a new journal. Luckily Andy gave me this notebook and a handful of pens from the center. I stashed a tent behind my mom's shed just in case this library thing goes South. I'm kind of afraid to go there too much now. I feel guilty or suspicious or something. Grace said that was stupid because people would be more suspicious as to why I'm not there all the time.

Either way, I don't want to be in the library all day *and* all night. So here I am. In the park. Watching people pass by. Never really noticed people very much. I always stare at the floor when I'm around anyone new. Hope this job helps with that. I'm supposed to be teaching an art class tonight but haven't had time to set anything up. Wonder if he's ever going call.

Phone

I was just thinking about you, I mean I was thinking about the job and

...oh really? That's awesome. I'm excited to get started.

Can't start til Monday?

Can I still do my class?

If no one shows up, I'll just paint a poster to advertise for next time.
Great, can I come now to set things up?

Journal 2

I can't believe it. I'm finally going to start a real job. I really don't believe it. I never thought I could do anything useful or meaningful or even interesting. I figured I'd be spending my life washing dishes or something.

Center

Chit chat

Where should i get set up?

Professor didn't say? Then just do it in the meeting room. I can help you out.

Don't you want to go home?

Can't, gotta lock up after you leave.

That's nice of you.

This place saved my life. It's no trouble. Happy to do it.

Script

Kyle: Hey Andy, is the man in?

Andy: Not today. I guess he finally has to use some of his vacation before he retires.

Kyle: Oh, doesn't matter, I'm feeling pretty good these days. Besides, he's probably out giving homeless people food or blankets or something.

Andy: This is our new office guy and artist in residence.

Kyle: Oh, Mr fancy pants, eh.

Fancy pants: Nah, I just didn't know what to study so...

Andy: What did we say? Assertive. No apologies.

Fancy pants: How's it going?

Andy: That's a little better. Go on introduce yourself.

Fancy pants: Mr Fancy pants, at your service.

Kyle: Pleased to meet you Mr Pants. Did you say new office guy?

Andy: That's right. Professor got away with another miracle. He only waited to get in here what? Two weeks?

Kyle: At least tell me you're a veteran

Mr. Pants: Can't say that I am.

Kyle: Well, this place is changing. I don't think the Viet Nam guys are gonna like that. Do you at least have family in the military?

Mr Pants: My dad and my grandfather.

Kyle: I hope you've got some war stories to tell.

Mr. Pants: Does fighting with my sister count?

Kyle: Who is this guy?

Andy: He's learning to be assertive.

Class

Looks like it's just you and me Picasso. What are we learning today?

I think...I suddenly forgot how to make art.

Far as I can tell we just need to splash some paint on these things.

Yeah, I guess we can either start drawing an outline of what we want to paint or just let the paint lead us. Up to you. They taught me to layer. Buildup over time. Fat over lean.

You mean like a beer gut? Lean over fat?

Haha, no, you put the lighter...

I know, man you're gonna have to get used to my bad jokes if you expect me to come back next week.

You're going to come back next week?

Yeah, why not? The doc is always pushing me to try new shit. I've never taken an art class my entire life. This should get him off my back for awhile.

That's awesome, I'm gonna make sure I've got some better plans if you're going to be coming back.

Alright but only if I can name the art club.

Name the art club?

A good club has to have a good name.

I always wanted to open a night club called the Meat Market.
Spelled M E A T.

That's funny, like they're all sides of beef.

How about just "Night Club"? Cause we meet at night and because...

I get it, we do meet at night but I think no one will ever go to “Night Club”, what about “Fight Club”?

I think we might get sued for that. What about “Night stick”

“Meat stick” hahaha

Hahaha. ok, it’s “Fight Club Light”.

Flight Club?

The Attic

Chit Chat

You look so nice in his things.

Oh Gracie don’t cry. I’m sorry...

No it’s not Jonathan. I just always remember seeing you when you were little at the school library. You were always so dirty and skinny. Your momma sent you to school in the same clothes every day.

Well, that was my fault, I wouldn’t wear a lot of the clothes I had. Too itchy.

Oh, you poor thing. You don’t even know what that woman’s put you through.

It sure wasn't easy living there. She'd just change the rules all the time.

Just tell him.

Tell me what?

Your father didn't get cancer. He killed himself after your mother threatened to leave him.

Journal 2

I don't know that I ever really believed that my dad just died suddenly. I don't know that I really thought about it much at all. I think I spent more time wondering what he might have been like if he'd lived. So much time spent wondering what we might have done together. What would I be like if he was alive?

I feel weird, like this news should make me sad or something. Nothing's changed. My opinion of my mother couldn't really sink much lower than it has recently. I'm sure she wouldn't want my pity but I feel pretty sorry for her. There must be some reason she's like that. I hope Grace never decides to tell me that story.

I'd hate to find out that there's nothing good about her.

Book Report

I've been reading Fahrenheit 451, pretty cool idea. The firemen burn books instead of putting out fires. The best part is that the guys who

are trying to keep books away from people are obsessed with them. Weird ending though. Bunch of guys sitting around a campfire.

Center

Flight Club

I don't know, it just works better when I'm talking.

What do you mean works better?

I just put the brush down and start talking. I can't even think about what I'm doing, then I stop talking and I'm like, what did I just paint. And there it is.

Whoa, gloomy. It's like some road no one's ever been on. Lonely.

What road? It's two lines and a blue background. How do you see a road?

It just feels like it's going somewhere but not at the same time. Kinda feels like a road that's not going anywhere.

Thanks Van Gogh.

You know Van Gogh?

What you think that because I grew up in a trailer park that I never heard of Van Gogh.

I didn't think...

Sure you thought, Mr College degree. Tell me I'm on a road going nowhere, I'll fuckin end the road you're on.

Sorry, Kyle, I'm sorry.

You don't know what sorry is.

Script

Kyle: Oh you had to go and tell on me?

Andy: What's up?

Kyle: This little whatever is telling me I'm too stupid to know who fucking Van Gogh is, then he's telling me I'm on a road to nowhere.

Andy: Are you sure that's what happened? Remember? You e been working on this. Are you sure that's what he meant?

Kyle: No

Andy: So why don't you ask him?

Kyle: Hey pussy,

Andy: Kyle...

Kyle: Hey Mr Van Gogh, did you mean that I was too unsophisticated or whatever to...I guess I don't even know what I

was mad about. But what are you telling me about being on a dead end road or something.

Van Gogh: ...

Kyle: Don't be like that. Come on.

Andy: You ok?

Van Gogh: It's fine. I just don't know what I did.

Andy: You're ok, just tell him what you meant.

Van Gogh: Your painting made me feel sad. It felt like I was on a lonely empty road. It felt like there was no difference if I turned one way or the other, it was just the same road.

Kyle: You got that off my painting?

Van Gogh: Yeah, it's...powerful.

Kyle: You see? I'm a powerful artist Andy. My art moves people.

Andy: You be good now.

Kyle: Picasso here knows I was just foolin around. Don't ya?

Picasso: Of course. Just fooling around.

Chit Chat

In case you didn't catch that, he was having a panic attack. Yeah that guy has ptsd pretty bad. Too much time behind the wheel.

You mean in combat?

Close enough, I mean behind the wheel, driving lead in convoys. Every rock is an ied out there. Very tense environment.

He got mad at me for saying he didn't know about artists.

Lotsa things can trigger hum. He used to get a lot of shit for being poor as a kid. Doesn't like to be reminded. He covers up for it with his tough guy-jokester act. A lot of them do. They don't like anyone to see weakness. It could mean life or death out there.

This is intense.

You'll get used to it. They're mostly harmless. You might get one or two that'll get upset with you but no one does much about it. They are programmed to protect.

What am I supposed to do when that happens?

Just remind him that you're friends. You want to help.

I just met him. I don't think we're friends already.

He thinks so. The military is a tribal culture. It's a fraternity, brotherhood. He's already accepted you because I told him you were ok. We trust each other like that.

This is all new to me. I haven't had that many friends before.

Too bad, now you've got a family.

Outside

Journal 2

Never knew why they put benches on this bridge. Who wants to hear all these cars driving by? Wrecks the experience, it is a great view though. Sure is nice to be able to walk to work. Sick of that park. I don't like the idea of feeding birds forever.

What a crazy day, I guess I made a friend, or two.

I asked Andy if she felt like she was being used in the army and she went off on me. She said something like "fuck that, there's no draft. Nobody put a gun to anyone's head and forced them to join. They all knew what they signed up for" and then she was like, "and fuck people who don't like war. How the hell do they think they get to sleep soundly at night? Because me and my people are out there putting our lives on the line to protect all you ungrateful assholes".

Seems their sanity is on the line as well.

Chapter 2

Center

Chit chat

Finally starting, first day jitters?

Can't tell if I'm so nervous it's making me excited or the other way around.

We'll pretend to be great actors and turn our nervous energy into a grand performance.

Sounds, fine.

You only need to practice. My advice while you're training is to just let things happen and deal with them as they come. It will take you weeks to learn this job and months to perfect.

That doesn't sound encouraging.

It's the truth, and today the truth is you will need patience to stomach the orientation meetings and the training videos. I also recommend some caffeine to stay awake.

I'll do my best.

How did your art class go? Andy get you set up alright?

...yes, yes she did. It went as good as I could have hoped. One whole person showed up.

I'll bet it was Kyle.

Why would you guess that?

He's pretty much always here, he doesn't like to be alone.

Then I can always expect at least one person in the class.

Optimism, good. You have everything you need? It's going to be a couple hours before they give you a break.

I think I'll be ok.

Good, I'll be in my office if you need me.

Journal

This is so awesome. Everyone is so nice to me here. It's so damn quiet. My boss is I think the nicest person I ever met. It's been a strange experience so far. I've always been afraid of men I guess. I never knew what to say to them or how to act. I think I always expected them to be beating everyone up and whatever other garbage I'd hear from my mom and my aunts and the tv. Not my sister. She doesn't even seem to like me now. I guess I must be turning into a man. Is that what being a man is? Being hated by women?

Whatever, I think Andy is awesome but she acts more like a dude. She told me she was a combat vet, like drove in the same unit as Kyle. She said they saw some rough shit. God, I can't even imagine making it through basic training let alone a war zone. These people make me feel so...inadequate I think, but at the same time they're

shattering my expectations. I just imagined the military full of rednecks and psychos and people who want to kill everyone. Seems more like they want to protect everyone.

Chit Chat

There are just a few things I want to go over with you.

Ok

Some of the vets can be a little challenging. A few of the guys will take liberties. A lot of these older guys especially will feel entitled to walk into sessions which was perfectly acceptable back in the day. It was more like a clubhouse. We try to keep them in the lobby if we can. Some of them won't even acknowledge you.

Ok so...

If they ignore you, just let them do whatever they were doing. There's no need to make waves

Sure.

Some of the guys will just talk your ear off. As long as you'll listen, they will talk. I don't expect you to be rude but do try to let them know when you're busy.

Alright.

And lastly, this is a readjustment center. Some of the new guys will most likely be at least on edge when they come in. Most of them don't like the idea of going to therapy and only come in when they're desperate.

Ok.

Don't let it phase you, just come get one of us and we'll take care of them. Now if someone calls in crisis, you can tell them they need to go to the hospital or call the crisis line. We don't deal with crisis situations here directly but we will do whatever we can for any vets any time we can.

Yeah.

I see you look a little stressed about that.

I just don't want to mess up.

Attic

Journal

My boss is so awesome. No ones ever been so nice to me before. Gracie has always been nice to me, but this guy cares so much about people.

Gracie said she is so proud of me. She's been such a great friend. She used to leave money in books for me. I remember when I first

found \$5 I tried to return it to her and she said, “I think you’re allowed to keep money you find in books” that went on all the way up to high school. No wonder I like reading so much...I always wished she’d been my mom.

Book Report

Inferno

This book is about a guy who goes to hell with a friend. He’s telling him about how everyone is damned and why they are punished for which sins they committed. There’s some worm people and, I don’t know. It’s like a really long poem. I don’t know if I can read this whole thing. Maybe if I knew who all these people were it would make more sense?

Journal 2

It’s getting a little...tedious? trying to live in this attic. It’s dustier than the basement was. I hate to complain about a free place to stay but man, just seems like life shouldn’t be this hard. It’s like as soon as something goes right for me, 8 things go wrong.

I think I could be a compassionate person. I never had a reason to care about other people. They mostly just ignored me.

I'd like to believe I could become a compassionate person. I'd like to be like my boss. Respectable, kind, smart. How would that ever happen?

Outside

Journal 2

Back up on this bridge. This view just goes on forever. I don't know where to go. Sick of the library attic. Can't read anymore, nothing's going in. I should be so happy with my new life but it's getting tricky. Grace let me shower at her house but it's kind of weird because she lives in one of those almost old folks homes. Which is a little weirder because all her neighbors want to talk to me. I guess anything is interesting when you're that old.

Chit Chat

Don't do it.

What?

Don't jump. You look like you're thinking about it.

Oh, no, I was just...thinking.

Life is not permanent, only death is permanent.

I'm fine, I wasn't thinking of jumping, but I guess now I am. Thanks.

Contemplating death can lead to Nirvana.

Ok. What do you want me to say, dude? That's kind of a weird thing to say.

Journal 2

What the Fuck? That Bud guy from work just walked past me and told me not to jump off the bridge. Seriously? What kind of asshole does that? Then he started saying weird shit about death. And now I have to work with this guy. Seriously, when is this madness going to stop? Everything just keeps getting crazier. Why?

Attic

Book Report

Seems all there is to do now is read. Good thing this is a modern translation of Hamlet. I still don't quite get what's going on. His life sucks, his mom killed his dad and she's using another guy to do the dirty work. Then she expects him to play along like everything is fine. But in the end, everyone dies because of, what? I guess today we would be asking what Hamlet senior did to deserve it.

Journal 2

Ok, I'm officially annoyed with that creep from work. Like I don't have enough going on and enough shit to worry about.

Journal 2

Its hard to tell who I am anymore. I have a good job but nowhere to live. I have good people around me but I feel like I don't measure up. Then there's this homeless guy saying crazy shit to me. I feel like *I'm* going crazy. Maybe he sees something I don't? Now I really feel crazy. I'm considering some insanity coming from a homeless guy. But I'm fucking homeless now too! Jesus. Where does this end?

Center

Chit Chat

Did you think about what I said?

How could I not?

Didn't mean to spook ya. I sometimes think I can see what people are thinking.

Ok great.

Hey, I'm sorry if it bothered you. It's just some eastern thought, the death contemplation thing. You looked like you were meditating.

What, so now I'm good enough to talk to?

Sorry, you just get used to people not wanting to deal with you when you're like me.

What, like an asshole?

Alright then. Fuck you too.

Chit Chat

You ok?

Why does everyone seem to think there's something wrong with me?

Maybe cause you ask questions like that. Hah, what are you talking about?

That Bud guy, he keeps saying crazy shit to me.

That just means he likes you. He doesn't usually talk to anyone. The crazier shit he says, the more he likes you. I used to work with him at the Hospital. He was a pretty normal guy until his kids stopped talking to him. Then he just kinda gave up.

I didn't...

You think people just choose to be out on the street? Out of their heads? Takes a lot to try to come back. I think he's just trying to see if you can handle his intensity. Not everyone likes it.

I can't say I like people telling me not to jump off a bridge.

He told you not to jump off a bridge?

Yeah, I was sitting on the bench and he just walked by and said "don't jump".

Did you look like you were gonna jump?

Of course not. I was just sitting there.

Maybe it looked to him like you were gonna jump. I think he's just trying to make a connection. He's actually a really smart guy, might learn something from him.

Chit Chat

How's everything going?

Fine, great, just getting ready for the excitement.

Alright, still have lots of orientation meetings and training videos to watch. Hope it's not getting too boring.

No, it's just fine. Everything is going great.

And how is your art class coming along?

Tomorrow is the second class, I think we've made some progress. We have a name now.

Name? You should have some extra students, Andy's been recruiting for you.

The more the merrier.

Chapter 3

Attic

Book report

I've heard of this book so many times. The Canterbury Tales. Pretty cool. People on a pilgrimage stories. According to the intro, he died before he finished it. Remind me not to write a book.

Some of the stories are funny, some are funnier than others. Can't really figure why Grace wanted me to read this. I can't relate to this at all.

Maybe down the road some day...

Letter

Hello Dear Boy,

I hope everything is going well with your new job. It will be sad not having you around in the library but I understand that you can't be here all night and spend time downstairs with me in the evening. That would be a prison. A prison full of books, but still.

I know you haven't gotten paid yet so I hope this finds you well. As I'm aging, I'm wondering what I should do with my estate. I have no family left. There are plenty of charities out there but I thought that maybe you would like to be my beneficiary.

All I would ask is that you make sure they don't put me in a nursing home. My memory is leaving me and all my caregiver does is try to get me to sign her as a guardian, telling me to go to a nursing home. She's always trying to convince me I'm going crazy.

I'm sure you can see why I'm looking for a trustworthy person to act on my behalf in such matters.

Well Dear Boy, please let me know if you would like to help. I hope I'm not asking too much, but I feel that we've been friends so long and I can trust you.

Yours

Grace

Journal

Is this the best or worst thing that's ever happened to me? The idea of not having Grace horrifies me, but I have a chance to pay her back. She just gave me \$100. What should I do?

Outside

Chit chat

God damn it! What else can go wrong?
How the hell do you get down. Oh jeez, I have to walk all the way...
if I had thought to bring more than one pen. What the hell is all this?

Hey.

Whhaah! Jesus man, don't sneak up on people.

Sorry. You kinda snuck up on me.

What are you doing down here?

I came to see my painting.

You did this?

I used to live down here. I talked myself into believing I was being romantic. You know, living in the elements.

What is all this?

I just started drawing people I'd knew, then they had to get smaller.
It's kind of a living portrait of my life, or at least it was.

Are those your kids?

They were. I don't own anything anymore.

You *owned* your kids?

No, your kids own you.

I don't know if that was the case for me.

Me neither.

I guess it worked out ok. I mean I'm under a bridge with a...

It's fine... You know *you* act like *you're* ok, but you don't even see what we all see.

What's that?

You walk around with the world's weight on your shoulders. You smile when smiled at. You're like a puppet, responding to prompts, reading a script. You never say what you mean, and I wonder if you even believe what you think.

Why? Why do you keep torturing me with this shit?

Because you're so close to the truth but you're too afraid to touch it.

And the truth is?

The truth is you're afraid. But you're too afraid to touch it.

Journal 2

Not even kidding anymore. This whole thing is getting to be too much.

I dropped my pen as I'm climbing up the embankment to the bridge. When I get to the bottom, I see this crazy mural painted all the way across the wall. It's like a cave painting but really intricate. It's all these people, but it's a bunch of scenes like people skiing and hiking and shit. And then who should pop up but Bud, and he tells me he painted the god damned thing.

And of course he starts telling me how you can't own a tree or some shit. Now here I am, with my pen but no sanity to speak of. Tell me I don't believe what I think. Fuck you!

Phone

Yeah, I'm fine.

Jobs going well.

Yeah I get to work ok.

Living in, well, staying at a friend's.

Sure, I don't know how long I'll still have this phone. I'm not sure why it hasn't been shut off.

No she hasn't called. I don't really expect her to. Why, does she want something?

Ok, I'll tell you if she calls.

Ok, I gotta go.

Center

Script

Kyle: Hey there Picasso. Yes I know who Picasso is. He made all the crazy looking deformed people paintings.

Picasso: I guess you could call them that.

Kyle: What are you trying to say? Just kidding Van Gogh. You should have seen your face, all thinking I'm gonna go ballistic or something. You gotta get over that shit if you're gonna last very long with me here.

Andy: You boys playing nice?

Kyle: Of course we are. I'm just hazing our new recruit.

Andy: Just remember this isn't the military, we're here to learn how to act like them, not for them to act like us.

Kyle: What? You mean soft, undisciplined and entitled? I can do that.

Andy: You know what I mean.

Kyle: What do you think I'm learning how to do art for? I'm working on the soft part.

Picasso: You're gonna be there tonight?

Kyle: Wouldn't miss it. What are we doing, learning how to make soup?

Picasso: Maybe.

Chit Chat

Looks like we got all the preliminary issues taken care of. Now we just have to get you signed up for, well everything. This job requires about 10 different permissions and validations and certifications. Not to worry, the next week or so will be a waiting game. Hurry up and wait they say. You can just answer the phones for now and I'm gonna start having you do some copying, shredded, stuff like that.

Flight club

Looks like it's just us again.

That's alright, I started taking my meds again. Apparently I'm more fun to be around, but man, I don't feel like, anything on these drugs. It's like I'm not really me.

Why do you take them then?

I just get really excited when I talk, people at work get freaked out because I'm a combat vet. They all think cause I'm in therapy that I'm gonna go crazy. It's just hard to not feel like yourself, in control, don't want to do nothing and then you get fat and never feel like fucking.

Jeez, that's, that's kinda terrible.

You know what would make me feel better? You said you never fired a gun before? I would love to help you pop your cherry. If you're scared, don't worry, I'll bring a low caliber rifle and we can just shoot some cans, seriously, it'll be fun.

I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be hanging out with you guys outside of work.

Don't listen to that crap. How else am I supposed to learn how to get along with you normal people if I only see you at my therapy sessions? Look, I'm learning how to be soft, you meet me half way and I'll tough you up, just a little. Get some dirt on ya. Scar or two. Maybe a tattoo...I'm just kidding. Man you make the stupidest faces when I say shit like that. Don't be so gullible.

Okay.

Okay?

Yeah, ok, I'll do it.

Right on. Now let's make some soup!

Outside

Journal

Kyle asked me to go do some target shooting today. Guess I'm gonna meet him at his friend's shooting range. Told him to pick me up at work. I don't even know what to expect, I'm not even sure I've been in the same room with a gun before. I figured I'd give it a, go.

He said I needed to get some dirt on me. Probably true, but I've been plenty dirty. I've actually been kind of disgusting most of my life. Wore the same clothes every day. Never showered til I was like 12. No one ever told me to do anything except shut up and stay out of the way. Wah. Poor me.

Maybe it's time to try to do things my own way. Whatever that is.

Chit chat

Pick that thing up. First thing to learn is, this thing is a tool. A weapon, sure, but it is not a shiny toy to show off to your friends. It

is a thing designed to tear flesh. Always has been and always will be. Don't try to fool yourself.

Ok. I thought you said a small rifle.

Well shit, that's the smallest one I got.

Sure, the AR-15 is a smaller caliber bullet, but will blow a hole out the back of ya. The magic of the AK is that it's built real sloppy like a Russian whore. You can just ram the pieces together, roll her around in the dirt, freeze her and she'll still fuck. Now the AR-15 is very American. It needs too much attention, only works if you do exactly what it wants. You gotta keep it clean and spend lots of time and money on it if you want it to work right. It's accurate and powerful, but there's a trade off. So we're gonna start you off with something you won't have to have two jobs to afford when it finally runs off with your neighbor and your kids.

Now that we got that out of the way. This here is the hole where the bullet comes out. Keep it pointed away from people unless of course...come over here with me.

Whoa, dude. What is all this?

This is my collection of pistols. I said I was going to bring *you* a rifle but my friend, these are for me. I'm going to decide today which one to kill myself with.

You're joking right?

No, and do you know why?

Uh,

I'll tell you why. Do you see an AR-15 here. No? That's because she took it with her, she says to protect herself and my kids from me. From me! I swore to protect her, my family and yours. And what do I get? A sloppy Russian whore. How am I supposed to live with that?

I don't know.

Well, I'll tell ya. I'm not.

You're not serious are you?

I've never been more serious. Don't worry, I wouldn't do this right in front of you. Today I'm just narrowing it down.

Have you been drinking?

Always, where was I supposed to get the cans for targets?

That's not loaded is it? Can you please put that down?

Oh right, civilians are as scared of guns. I'm not trying to kill myself in front of anyone, I'm just trying to pick out the best tool for the job.

Bang

Jesus.

Now this here is a Desert Eagle. Member when I told you about shiny guns to show off to your friends? This is one of those. The cool part about this gun is that you can change the barrel on it for

different types of ammo. That's the one the Israelis run around with. This here's dirty Harry's gun, .44 magnum. Everyone loves a good revolver, but it's known for removing certain body parts. Probably not a good idea, you have to keep your surroundings in mind and think of the aftermath, I mean, I wouldn't want to have to clean something like that up again, why would I do that to someone else?

Why are you saying all of this to me. I'm not going to just sit here and listen to all this stuff.

Why not? Am I hurting your feelings, Mr artist?

I just don't want you to do that.

And why not? You give such a shit about me? You gonna get me my kids back, you gonna get my stupid fucking wife back? How bout my house, *my* home? Are you gonna convince everyone I work with that I'm not crazy?

You can start by not threatening to kill yourself.

We'll see, now we've got a problem, you are privy to my plan. I can't just let you leave now.

...

Oh man you are such a sucker. You believe all that? You really should see your stupid face.

Ha, ok. Dude, so one thing I can tell you is that most of us stupid civilians are not used to people pointing guns at their heads and talking about killing themselves. I don't know about anyone else...

Yeah, none of you get it. Well look, I guess this isn't the time to be playing with my toys. You know, maybe I did bring you out here to mess with you a bit, but as long as I've been talking with the Doc, I've never been able to tell him that I'm not doing ok. I don't know what it is but you just talk to me like you give a shit. And I don't feel like you would judge me for saying that I don't really want to be here anymore.

You can talk to me.

If I do, you can't say nothing to Andy. I don't want them locking me up.

I don't think..

I don't care just don't tell her, please.

Of course, we're friends, you can talk to me.

Where to start? I think the thing that makes it so hard is pretending. I have to act like I'm ok all the time. Like at work, with the docs, I can't even talk to my ex without fighting and my kids are afraid of me. Mostly cause my wife has them scared of me but I get so anxious around them now. I feel like I don't want to be around them sometimes. It's just too hard.

I feel like I can't be myself too sometimes.

Just being honest. Why can't we say what's going on with us? I'm not trying to be all whiny, but how am I supposed to get along if I can't admit that I'm not always doing great? The world keeps

closing in on me and I try to keep going, but it just builds. I'm so fucking miserable and I can't say anything, I don't know how I'm gonna keep it up. And I'm all fucking afraid I'm gonna do something crazy. I'm a trained killer. You know what kind of responsibility that is? And how fucked up it is knowing that all I have to do to solve my problems is do my job. Now, the hard part is, who do I do the job on? My enemy? Or on the enemy I've become. Because, now I'm the one threatening the ones I'm supposed to protect.

That's tough.

Tough, motherfucker, I'll show you tough. I wouldn't think twice to pull this trigger if you weren't standing there.

I'm glad I'm standing here.

You're glad? Why, so you can be a hero and save my useless life?

No, because I think you're a great guy, you're funny as hell, you're really nice when you want to be. You're friendly, you talked to me the first time we met.

You have a good heart, you care about people. You're a good person.

You really think all that?

Yeah of course I do.

You don't think I'm some crazy poor ass loser?

No, I think a lot of people feel like that. Nobody really wants to say it. Life just gets hard. Sometimes I wonder if it's the people we are trying to make happy that don't appreciate us the way we need to keep going.

You don't think I'm crazy for thinking about killing myself, like all the time, I mean all day long it drives me nuts.

I read once that suicidal thoughts are like grief. It's a way for the mind to let go of trying so hard to fix stuff that we can't fix.

You are pretty insightful for an artist. You sure you didn't go to psychology school?

No, you have to be very observant to be a good artist. I've just spent too much time reading.

I think I'd rather do therapy with you.

We can hang out. I won't mention this to Andy if you don't mention us hanging out outside of the center. Maybe we'll go bowling next time.

Oh shit, what did I do now? Ok, I'm starting to see that this wasn't a good way to bring this whole thing up.

It was a little extreme.

What should I do now?

I'd say...you said your friend lives around here? Would he be ok with you leaving your guns here for awhile?

Yeah, we do that for each other. I just never wanted to be one of those guys.

Who ask for help?

I just never wanted to be that guy.

What if I take the guns? You won't even have to see him.

That'll be alright. I think I need a vacation. I'm gonna go see some of my old friends.

I can let Andy know.

She'll probably tell me it's a good idea. Fuck it, I'll go. You're alright Picasso.

You're alright yourself. Now, why don't you give me a lesson on unloading a gun, I think I'd feel better at the moment if I could handle the weapons safely.

I never loaded any of them.

Journal 2

Well, that was an interesting day.

Attic

Script

Dear Boy: What's going on

Grace: This gentleman is here to ask you some questions. He's officer Perkins.

Perkins: We got an anonymous call at the station that someone saw you sneaking into the library after hours. Ms. D here says you hang out here all the time and that you're a good kid. I don't have any reason not to believe her but i have to make a report. So what should my report say?

Dear Boy: I do hang out here all the time and I just wanted to help out a little bit. I was taking out trash from the basement out to the dumpster for Grace. It might have been after hours but I was only trying to help out.

Perkins: Is that true?

Grace: Yes, he's such a helpful person. He even helped me move my plants around the other day.

Perkins: Fine, fine, just make sure to go out the front door from now on.

Chit chat

I swear, I never did.

What happened?

I don't know, I only ever came in or out when you were here. Oh my god, I don't want to get you in trouble.

Oh, this ain't trouble. What could he really do to me?

Maybe not as much as he could do to me. Who would, you think somebody was watching or something?

I don't know. I hate to say it but...

I can't stay here anymore. I know.

I packed up some of the clothes in Jonathan's backpack for you. I didn't know what else to do.

Thanks. I guess I'll go try to figure out what to do next. Can I still come hang out here.

Of course, I would miss you too much if you didn't.

Ok, I'll be around.

Journal 2

My interesting day just got interestinger. Almost lost an almost friend. Definitely lost a place to live. Wondering if my mom had something to do with this. Maybe I'll find out. I have to go pick up my tent now. How did I know?

Chit Chat

Its not there.

What?

My tent, I put it back downstairs. It belongs to me, why you thought you could leave my stuff in the yard is beyond me. Suppose you thought you were gonna steal it?

You gave me that for my 16th birthday.

And now I'm taking it back.

...

Here's your journal. You're not a very good writer. And you should choose your friends more wisely.

Thanks for the advice. Are you talking about Grace? Did you?

...

You did. Why?

I don't have to explain myself to you

Verse 2

Chapter 3

Center

Phone

Did you know? When you called me last time, did she tell you? Is that why you called, to see if I got thrown out of my place?

It would have bee nice to have a heads up.

Even if you thought she was joking.

Ok, if that's what you want.

Bye.

Chit chat

Couldn't help overhearing. Sounds rough.

Oh sorry, I didn't think anyone was around.

What's with the backpack?

Well, if you were listening, then you already know.

Look, I can probably get you in at the shelter. It's usually pretty full, a lot of regulars, but they like me there. I can maybe pull a few heart strings for you.

I don't know, I kinda want to see what else is out there.

It's not as bad as you think, they make us stay pretty clean, change the sheets every day.

Can I get back to you?

Email

As you all know, I'm retiring next week. It's been an honor to work with each and every one of you. I feel like you are all my children and I've enjoyed watching my family grow and change.

I'd like for us all to welcome in your new director, Naomi Seville. she'll be starting next week and I'm sure you will all show her the warmest welcome that I know you are capable of.

Your Captain

Shelter

Chit Chat

Why are you being so nice to me? It's cool if you're into me but I don't really do anything like that.

Sorry to disappoint. Jesus, I can't even remember the last time... with anyone. Haha, what a relief, getting old. There's no addiction like that one. Thank God that shit is over.

What exactly?

Sex drive, it makes you acts like a moron for about 40 years, then finally shuts off. If you're lucky, your wife will be bored with you before that ever happens.

Wife? I can't ever get married now, who would marry a homeless dude with an art degree?

You got a point there. There's a story about a guy whose horse ran away. His neighbors felt bad for him but he was not concerned. When the horse came back with more horses, everyone thought, wow, what a lucky guy you are. He just said maybe. While his son was trying to tame the horses he broke his leg. Same story with the neighbors, what bad luck. The guy said, maybe. Then the army comes by recruiting soldiers. They passed him up for the broken leg. Again with the neighbors, what bad luck and the dude says, we'll see.

So I'm lucky to not be a candidate for a husband?

I'm saying you never know how something will affect you down the road, but maybe you should look for a wife who doesn't want what you don't have. This is the place.

Script

Bud: Hey Penny, this here's Picasso, as I've heard him called.

Penny: Picasso?

Picasso: I prefer Van Gogh.

Penny: well Mr Van Gogh. I prefer to know who I'm actually speaking with, I'm gonna need to see your id if you want to go inside.

Van Gogh: I prefer Vincent and I don't have an id, haha.

Penny: alright then Vinnie, what's so funny, I'm serious, you need an id to stay here. I can't just let a bunch of murderers and rapists go running around in here.

Bud: you don't have an id?

Penny: I can get you started on getting an id, I know a few people who can get you that pretty quick but you're not staying here tonight. Let me get you the form to fill out.

Bud: Hey, sorry man. I just figured...

Vincent: I had an id but I think I left it in my mom's house. I don't think I can go back there.

Bud: You don't think she'd give you back your id?

Vincent: She gave me my journal back last time but she took my tent...

Bud: Why wouldn't she give you your id? Did you kick her dog or something? Do you owe her money?

Vincent: no, I don't think she ever liked me very much.

Bud: man that's rough. Sorry...

Penny: alright, bring this back to me filled out. You get that to me by tomorrow, I'll get you in here by the end of the week.

Vincent: you got it, thanks.

Bridge

Journal 2

Stopped by the library today. Kind of told Grace that I didn't know what was going on, but lied and said I had a friend to stay with from my art class. She looked like she didn't believe me. I thanked her for the money and told her I'd do any kind of chores she needs done but I'd have to get back to her about the power of attorney thing. That seems like a lot of responsibility at this point.

This Id form is really fun too. Address, former address, at least I still have a phone. Using Grace's address. Hope that's good enough.

Chit Chat

What are you doing down here?

What are you doing down here?

I came to check out your painting.

I came to make sure you weren't thinking of doing something stupid like sleep down here.

Why not? You did.

Yeah, I've also been through basic training.

So train me.

There's more to this than being able to sleep outside.

What is it then? Tell me why I can't do anything right and why no one seems to really care about me who's supposed to, and why no one respects me at all. Tell me why no one takes me seriously.

Where did that come from?

I don't know, things are just getting to be too much.

You really want to know?

Yes, I want to fucking know.

You're empty.

Great, I'm empty. How does that help?

You said you wanted to know.

I'm not ready to hear that, great, now I'm fucking crying. What the hell am I even doing here? I'm about to sleep under a bridge and I'm being told, what, I'm too soft? I can't handle it? Tell me that shit's fine, but tell me I'm empty? What does that even mean? I have nowhere to go!

Maybe we *should* focus on finding you a place to stay...

No, let's focus on my emptiness please, since it seems to be the actual problem .

Ok, let's start with the fact that you don't know anything.

I read all the time! I just was reading "Brave New World" I'm sure you've heard of it.

Yeah, you want to be the wild man? Is that it?

I didn't get that far. What wild man?

I don't want to ruin it, keep reading. It gets even better. Books are a great way to get ideas, to escape, but you don't have any experience in the world.

I'm under a bridge with a homeless guy who took me to a homeless shelter that doesn't even want me.

That is truly an experience. I'm talking about will, drive. You don't have any self confidence. People can see it. They will always look down on you. They can smell it, like blood in the water. Most people have instincts to take advantage of others' weaknesses. You have weaknesses galore but no teeth or claws or armor.

What am I supposed to say to that? I lived in a basement most of my life trying to stay out of the way, not being too much trouble for my mom, trying not to embarrass my sister at school. And all I wanted to do my whole life was disappear. I guess this is my chance. They say careful what you wish for, don't they?

They do. Maybe this is just what you need. I'll come check on you tomorrow. You got a plan for cleaning up in the morning? You got enough food?

Yeah, I'm fine.

Stop by the shelter, I'll get you something to eat.

Journal 2

As if I didn't have enough to deal with. This guy Bud is a real pest. This painting is amazing though. I'm thinking of painting my own mural on the opposite wall. What would I even paint? He's got all these army parts, friends looks like. Family, there's a plane on there, I wonder if he flies those. Hmm. Mine would be, a basement. I wouldn't even have to paint anything. Although it is nicer down here. Fresh air, sounds from the river flowing by. Beats the musty sewer smell and the glugging of the sump pump. Getting cooler out at night but I think I'll start a fire anyway. How do you start a fire?

Shelter

Script

Bud: Didn't get too cold down there for you did it?

Vincent: No but I couldn't make a fire because I didn't have anything to light it with.

Bud: It's a damned good thing too, do you realize you could have ended up in jail? You could see a fire under that bridge for miles. You do realize you can't start fires under bridges, right.

Vincent: I suppose I do now.

Bud: Hey, don't sweat it, we live and learn. Come here and meet my best friend Paul, say hello to Vincent.

Paul: Hi Vincent. Your the one under the bridge huh? How you like that mural?

Vincent: It's great, I stare at it a lot, kind of inspiring all the things that Bud has done.

Paul: What has he done?

Vincent: All the planes, all the mountains, just everything in there.

Paul: Those planes are bombers from Viet Nam. Bud's dad took off for the war when Bud was a kid, never came back.

Paul: did you see the mountains, he was stationed in Frankfurt as a lifeguard at the base pool. He spent all his time skiing and hiking and swimming.

Vincent: doesn't sound so bad.

Paul: why don't you join? Better than being under a bridge, or in jail.

Vincent: never thought of it.

Paul: you're still a kid, they'd take you.

Vincent: I don't know, I just got a new job.

Bud: Alright, think he's had enough for now.

Paul: good to meet ya son. Remember, army is better than jail and jail is better than starving.

Chit chat

Oh, lookie here, got his form filled out and everything. You work at the Center, what are you doing here?

Things didn't work out at home. My mom had to move home so, I just didn't have a place for awhile.

You expect me to believe that?

Uh.

It's not a big deal. You might see a few familiar faces. Most of these guys go there for, whatever they do there, drink coffee and play pool I guess.

So, what about the id?

Yeah, I'll send this in, should only be a few days, I'll call this number?

Thanks, that would be great.

You know, I don't think I would have to notice if you want to take a shower when you visit here in the mean time, just make sure to wear slippers in there. You don't want to take any chances.

Chit Chat

What's the good word?

You weren't ever in combat? Why would you let me believe that?

I never said I was in combat.

But weren't you a client at the center?

There are other reasons they will see you there. And I don't think I need to explain myself to you.

I'm not mad that you weren't in combat. I just felt really stupid mentioning it to your friend.

Again, what exactly do I owe you?

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything.

No worries, but shouldn't you be getting to work?

Center

Chit Chat

Why is everyone always trying to talk me into joining the army?

Not everyone, I'd say you're an Air Force kind of guy. Haha. I think it's cause they like you. They want you to be one of us. Plus a lot of us were also born without much hope. We understand.

What's this? You packed me a lunch. How do you know?

First of all, I didn't pack your lunch. My women's group did.

Other people know that I'm out on my ass? People I haven't even met?

And second of all they call themselves "the raging B's" and they are all coming to your art class tonight. Don't worry about it we all know everything about each other. Vets can be gossipy.

That's good. But...

Don't mention it, they are happy to come and they are always looking for someone to cook for.

Have you heard from Kyle?

No, don't think we will.

Why's that?

Can't say for sure but usually when a guy goes to a place like that, they get this idea in their head that hanging out with people from the old days holds you back. They just look at this all differently at civilian treatment. It's a new day in psychology. At least as far as ptsd is concerned.

I don't know about any of that, but if you hear from him, tell him I said hi.

Journal 2

I miss my basement sometimes. Everything out here just keeps happening at the speed of light. I don't think I've ever been noticed by so many people in my life. My mom and sister ignored me. School teachers didn't want to deal with me. My classmates seemed like they didn't want to have anything to do with me. College wasn't any better, couldn't make friends, didn't want to socialize. I guess it's really my fault. I never wanted anything to do with them either, did I?

Flight Club

We're here!

Yes, the Raging B's are in the house.

Where's our little boy?

Did you like your lunch, I made the cookies.

I make that tuna sandwich every day. I've got the recipe perfect.

And I grew all the vegetables myself, same garden after 25 years. Had to buy the fruit. Weather's no good here and I'm all out of apples.

Let's let the boy teach his class, what are we doing tonight professor?

Um I guess we can start with setting up the easels.

We brought our own, we already set them outside, it's so nice out.

Oh, well we didn't get very far. We came up with a name and we started doing an experiment letting the paint take us wherever it wanted. Following it around the canvas and letting it just flow.

Ok, that sounds all artsy-fartsy. We already brought the subject. We usually do this at the painting store.

Except they serve wine.

Now you know why we set up outside.

What was the name?

The name? Oh, we called it flight club.

Flight club? Why don't you call it Ladies Night Club?

We were actually thinking...

Or just Ladies' Night!

Sure, I...guess. So you guys do this often?

Every week.

So you already had an art class.

We just heard you ran out of students and wanted to help out.

Plus we wanted to check out the new recruit.

Well let's get painting, I'm not driving home in the dark.

Chapter 2

Shelter

Chit chat

Got your id.

Already?

Told you I knew people.

Wow, look at that, my name in print.

Now that you're famous, you gonna ask me out?

Funny, I'll let you drive my caddie, when I get one.

How are things going at work?

Could be better, could be worse. No worse than this I suppose.

This job is awesome, I love helping these guys out. They treat me like a queen. That's me, queen of the homeless shelter.

Thanks for getting me the id. I guess I'll need a tour?

Can't leave my desk, Bud's waiting for you, just go in through there.

Thanks.

Script

What do you think?

It's nice enough. The beds aren't very comfortable.

No about Penny?

Yeah, she's nice too. She got me my id like overnight.

And...?

And she seems to like her job.

Well, what did you guys talk about?

She told me she was the queen of the homeless or something, I was really just looking at my id.

You're such an idiot.

What? Why?

She's been talking about you all day. Asking when you're coming back, talking about how she got your id.

Great, now what?

Now you ask her out.

...ask her out? Out where? I'm not asking anyone out. Oh, she did ask me out, kind of. I thought she was joking. You guys are joking. Ok, you got me. We can stop the hazing. Very funny.

No, we're serious. She has been going on and on about you.

I don't think I can, I'm not going to...There's no way. What would we even...Yeah, she already knows too much about me.

You'd be stupid to pass up a girl like that, trust me.

Weren't you just telling me how awful all of that is?

Sure, but you can't let life pass you by. That's all part of it. You live you learn.

You live you learn, you end up under a bridge painting murals.

You're gonna be on your feet in no time, you've got so much going for you.

And that is, what exactly.

A good job...you've got an id.

Nice one. Anyway, I'm just gonna go to bed, it's been a long night.

Chit Chat

Hey. Hey. Hey. Are you awake? Hey

What, what's going on, something wrong? Oh, Penny. What's the matter?

Nothing, I'm just leaving now and I thought I would offer you a place to stay.

Stay where?

At my place.

Oh, I uh, I gotta get to work in a couple hours, so I think I'll stay here for now.

I meant that you could move in if you want, not permanently but you could stay awhile, till you get on your feet, you're too young to be in this place.

You got a room for rent or something?

No, you can just, crash on the couch or whatever.

Um, I hardly know you.

But I know you.

How do you know me? I just met those guys.

I have to run a background check on everyone that stays here.
You're pretty squeaky.

Squeaky?

Clean. You have no record at all. Just a birth certificate, a social security number and a passport. Where did you go?

Go?

With your passport?

Nowhere, I got it as a joke.

A joke passport?

The joke was that I could sell it down the road, but I guess I always hoped I would use it someday.

Let's go to South America. I always wanted to backpack through the Andes.

I'm sure that would be fun. I hope you get there someday.

I mean like now, like soon. Do you want to go with me?

I can't leave my job. Sorry I couldn't afford to do that.

I have money. I've been saving up. I never go anywhere but here and home.

And you would pay for me? Why?

You could be my protector, I'll pay you to be my bodyguard.

I don't know, it seems kind of crazy. I wouldn't even know where to start. I mean it sounds awesome but...

I knew as soon as I saw you that God sent you to me. I've been dreaming about this for so long. I just knew you were the one that would go with me. I can see it all already. It's fate, destiny.

If it's fate that brought me here, I wish it would have found a nicer path.

The lord works in mysterious ways.

Maybe, but I've got to get some sleep. Can we talk about this tomorrow? I'm sorry but I really just need to sleep before work.

Of course, just think about it, but I know that everything is going to be perfect. It has to be.

I'll see you tomorrow.

Bridge

Journal 2

Ok. I think I'm going to go mad. I take one step out from under the safety of my broken home and the world just seemed ready to eat me. Everyone seems to want something different from me. I don't know what it is I'm supposed to do or be. I'm not ready for this world. Unprepared.

Chit Chat

What are you doing over here?

I was just trying to see your painting from a different perspective.

Oh, any different?

Just seems smaller, farther away. Not as intimidating.

Intimidating?

The pressure, to be so successful, heroic the idea that you can push ahead and achieve some kind of greatness. There's so many great people in all the stories you hear as a kid, but none of that stuff is even possible it seems. What about all these guys that have gone to the desert, they don't seem to feel like heroes. They've all got ptsd from thinking rocks are bombs. They say that suicide is the number one killer over there, from boredom. What does that say about our culture? That the toughest guys' weak spot is lack of entertainment?

Wait a minute, first of all, fuck you! You can't reduce someone having a complete change of environment to lack of entertainment, what do you know about it anyway?

We're under a bridge aren't we?

As far as heroism goes, it's all a fine way for everyone to keep on believing that our actions are justified. What are we supposed to do? Walk around like philosophers claiming that god is dead and nothing

matters? Why would anyone go on? What point would there be to any of this?

What is the point of any of this?

As far as I can tell, our dna used some fungus to build our brain and now we just cultivate mold. Or maybe aliens did it.

What?

I'm just joking, a little levity.

You think my breakdown is funny?

Look kid, I'm just trying to show you that you can't take this all so seriously. Life is a joke, and the jokes on you. None of us ask to be here. No one gets to pick who they start out as. We don't know what we're supposed to do except by looking at the people around us. We also get to know that we will end someday and that we're most likely being controlled by others. We're just running programs. The thing is, you have to learn how to make the best of it. You don't have to hate being under this bridge or feel bad about who you are. You don't have to live up to anyone else, not hero or villain. You just have to make your life feel worth while to you. You get to decide what is important. You get to make your own values and make the world the way you want it. But you also have to live in a world full of other people who have the same problem. You just have a privileged view. You've seen through the cracks. You learned early that life is not always wonderful and worthwhile.

It's too complicated. Every person I meet is just another pile of problems. Sad, lonely, crazy, dying, empty. Why do we keep going?

What's the alternative? We are meant to work together. Our mushrooms are trying to reconnect. They're all alone up in our skulls. So we tell stories that connect us.

Funny. And they leave you guys all out in the cold...

My own decisions brought me to where I am. I made my choices and I'm paying for them. That's what a man does. He does whatever needs to be done, he pays his dues. He helps his friends. He lives with the outcome of his decisions.

And doesn't cry about shit. What a rave review on manhood. Sign me up for a life of agony.

That's only part of it. It's also about being smart enough to move on and realizing that you can't fix *everything*.

What's the payoff?

In the end, the only payoff is to know that you could have done worse. So try to do some good if you can.

So what do I do now? You know that Penny asked me to move in with her last night, or go to South America or both, I don't even know.

That's great!

Is it? She woke me up in the middle of the night telling me how God brought me to the homeless shelter and that I'm her destiny or something. It was kind of crazy.

How do you know God didn't bring you there?

Journal 2

How do I know God didn't bring me here? Let's see. Assuming God is the one who decides our fate, who has decided my fate so far? I work for the government, they might be god. I owe my boss my livelihood, he might be a god. My mother created me, indoctrinated me and kick started my new life, she could be god. Bud likes to mess with my life. Maybe he's a god. But I think he's right. I have to decide. Either I'm my own god and I have to make my own way, or God is in me pulling the strings. I guess it's time to let go.

Whatever happens now, I will accept my fate.

Center

Chit chat

You look like shit.

I feel like shit.

You gonna be ok?

Everything is perfect. Everything is great

Ok. Come on, what's wrong?

Maybe you can shed some light on something for me. I just got an offer to move in with a woman who didn't ask for money but offered to pay for me to go to South America with her to be a bodyguard or something.

I'd say that's a pretty sweet deal, how long you known her?

About 3 days.

Wow, where'd you meet her?

At the homeless shelter.

You mean Penny? You think I didn't know?

Right, of course you know.

I've been trying to set her up with my friends for years. She dated Kyle for awhile, said he's too opinionated. You, though. I guess she knew what she was looking for.

What, a pussy?

No, asshole, a nice guy. Most of us go for the alphas. Maybe she's on to something.

So I'm a beta.

You're sweet, kind. You're smart, like an intellectual. College boy and all.

I went to art school.

And she runs the homeless shelter. To her, you're an intellectual.

South America is hot. I grew up in a basement.

Shit, I'd be the first one on the plane.

Journal 2

Andy thinks I should go with Penny. I guess she knows her. Apparently I'm her type. Whatever that means. She called me a nice guy, an intellectual. I never felt smart at school. I never knew what I was doing. I couldn't talk in class about any of the stuff they were saying. I didn't understand art at all. I'm a fake. A phony, but people see me as a nice, smart guy. How did that happen? I guess that's what the world wants me to be. Didn't I say I'd go with the flow. Maybe this is a sign.

Flight Club

We decided on a new name for you professor. Night of the Raging B's.

For me?

No stupid, our art club.

Uh, oh, what?

We are called the raging b's because we all have B names, Brianne, Brenda, Bethany, Bonny and Bella. You probably thought it meant raging bitches, but that's true too! It's a double entendre, that means it has two different meanings. We are the raging bitches and we all have B names.

That's cool.

You look scared little boy. Don't worry, we won't eat you.

You might not. I will. Come over here you sweet thing.

Let me get a piece of him. Looks tasty.

Haha, ok, give him a break, what's on the menu tonight, besides boy meat?

She's kidding, don't look so afraid, we're just playing with you.

I'll play with him.

Stop it, you are so horrible. Look at how scared he is.

You don't need to be afraid of me, I'll treat you so nice you will forget your name.

Bridge

Journal 2

I really miss my basement. I don't know what's going on with people. I never knew they were this messy. I feel a little weird about the art group tonight. They didn't even notice I was there except to make innuendoes about having their way with me. Reminds me of that scene from the holy grail, where one of the knights ends up in a castle full of horny women. I always thought that would be awesome but I'm starting to think differently.

Anyway, I guess they're doing my job for me. They bring their own canvases, brushes, paint and even easels. And wine of course. What good am I? They paint what they want, they show up when they want and leave me to clean up. I guess being a bodyguard would at least be better than this.

Not sure how long this art thing will last like this. Maybe I should paint my own wall. I'm not that good at art. Not like Bud. What am I good at? I was looking at a calendar in Andy's office, said something like finding true purpose is learning what you're good at and using it to the greater good. What am I good at? Nothing?

Suffering. I'm good at suffering. I think that's the only manly thing about me. I'm good at suffering silently. Suffering.

Chit Chat

Oh, hey.

You don't look happy to see me.

Should I be?

Hey, I've been thinking about what we were talking about. Maybe this is all just a charade. Maybe the truth is that it's all breaking down. Maybe things are just changing, for good. I can't change my life now, but I can try to change yours. All I can say to you is what every wise man has said from the beginning. Be kind to everyone you meet. Be gentle with peoples feelings. But I'll also add, be ready when shit hits the fan.

What does that mean?

It means don't get too weak to defend yourself or those around you.

So I should sacrifice myself for what?

I'm saying we all should make a little sacrifice for each other. All of us.

All I'm good at is suffering.

Then suffer for us all. That's what the monks believe. Their suffering protects us. It's like global karma. The more they suffer themselves, the less suffering there is for others.

Great, I don't think I'm ready to sit around in a hair shirt.

Of course, you have a whole life to live. You will suffer against your own will. And you can call yourself wise when you stop struggling against it. And learn how to do good from it.

Like, use it for the greater good?

Yeah, something like that.

What's the greater good?

If I knew, I wouldn't be here. Would I?

Journal 2

Suffer for the greater good he says. How boring. I've been looking at that blank wall now for awhile. I don't think I'm gonna paint it. I don't have anything to paint. A basement, art school. There's nothing inside me apparently. I'll use what's already out here. I'm gonna write my journal on the wall. Leave my story behind as a warning? No a lesson, take it or leave it.

(???????)

Shelter

Chit chat

Sorry I keep giving you life lessons, I think I'm just trying to somehow make up for all the parenting I didn't get to do.

Didn't you get to see your kids ever?

Yeah, on the weekends. And then all we're doing is partying because heaven forbid one of them goes home and complains about

anything at all, then she can stop letting them come over until I get a court order and how long will that take, and you never know if that blows up in your face and you end up seeing them with a social worker. So you gotta be squeaky clean and kiss their asses, gives them a false sense of importance. Maybe that's why I like you so much. You don't expect the world to just give you everything. Shit you don't expect anything at all. There's no room for discipline with them, no time to teach them anything. All they know is media, watching their parents fight, whatever they pick up in school, no family ties, no history. There will be nothing left of me in this world.

I'll remember you.

Thanks.

What's your real name anyway?

You wouldn't believe me.

Try me.

It's Reverend. Means "one to be revered". The irony. I showed you mine...

I'm whatever people call me.

Chit Chat

So what do you say? You wanna go hiking in the mountains with me

That does sound really awesome. I can't think of many things I'd rather do but I don't think I can make a commitment like that. I definitely wouldn't be able to do it anytime soon.

Oh, it wouldn't be so hard. I've already got the whole thing planned out. I know all the places I want to stay, all the trails I want to hike. All we have to do is take you shopping for some gear. What do you say?

I just can't do that right now, my whole world is all up in the air at the moment...

Ok, I waited this long. How about being a roommate? You give that any thought?

No not really, like I said, waiting for the dust to settle with this job and...

Ok, well let me know when you make up your mind.

Chit chat

What the hell did you say to her?

I just told her I wasn't sure I could go to South America with her right now.

She stormed off for that?

Well, she seemed upset when I said I wasn't sure about moving in with her. I mean...

Oh, yeah, boy, hell hath no fury.

I just meant. Forget it, seriously, I don't even know her.

She seems to think she knows you.

I don't even know me.

Chapter 3

Bridge

Chit chat

Aren't you gonna stay by us tonight?

Yeah, probably. I just didn't feel comfortable being there at the moment.

Oh, don't let her rattle you. You're gonna have to get used to that.

I grew up with my mom and sister. But why should I get used to it?

In case you ever get married.

Get married, why? So I can get divorced? So I can pay child support and alimony and have everyone hate me. No thanks. I can hate myself just as good as anybody.

A little cynical, are we?

You live in a homeless shelter, you have nothing but a painting to prove you were alive. You don't exist.

Journal 2

The reverend took off in a hurry. Guess he didn't like what I had to say. What do I have to say? Start at the beginning.

Journal 3

Had a job interview today...

Center

Chit Chat

Looks like we've just about got you squared away with onboarding, just in time for the new captain.

Oh, she's starting today?

She's coming in today for a walkthrough. She won't start until next week.

So you're just about out of here huh?

That's right, been too long in the saddle. Oh, right, I need your drivers license number to sign you up to use the vehicle.

I've got this.

This is an id card, but do you have a drivers license?

I have my passport.

No, sorry, you need a valid drivers license to drive the car. Do you really not have one? There are a lot of things you'll need to do with it...how did i let that get past me? Is there any chance you can get a learners permit or make an appointment for a drivers test soon?

I can try.

Chit Chat

Why didn't you tell me you can't drive? I thought you were just afraid of my huge truck. Do you even know how to drive a car?

I tried to drive my moms car when I was 12. She freaked out and...

I don't know how this is going to work. There's so much crap we have to do. You have to do.

I'll take a driving class, I can, I can. Wait.

Script

Naomi: this is the boy in question?

Captain: this is he, meet Naomi Seville, your new supervisor.

Naomi: you can call me Ms. Seville but I don't know for how long. Your boss here tells me you've run into a snag with a missing drivers license. How do you make it to 23 without a drivers license? I don't really see how we can or why we should keep you on.

Captain: I thought we could at least give him a chance to get one.

Naomi: I'll give you a week to come up with a license.

Captain: can I talk to you privately? Excuse us.

Boy in question: sure

Chit Chat

I don't know what's going on. We just talked about how we were going to try to keep you busy with other things until you got your license. Now she does a 180 on me. I'm so sorry, I don't know what to say.

It's ok. This seems like a fitting end. Bad luck. Am I still doing the art class?

Of course, that was never even on the table. I'm so sorry that this is happening. I thought it would be a great opportunity for you. I thought it would be a way for you to grow and figure out what you're strengths are.

I figured that out. This place is too good for me anyway. I knew that from the start.

That's not true. You are a very fine person. I hope you don't forget that. Some of us just need more time to bloom.

I'm just a weed.

Shelter

Penny's looking for you, says she has something for you.

Great.

Why so glum?

I think I kind of just got fired.

You too?

What? They fired you too?

Bet your ass they did. Andy walks up to me as I'm walking in smiling and say "your services are no longer required" and walks away.

You gotta be kidding. The new director just gave me a week to get a drivers license.

What the hell? How can she get away with that? I'm going to complain.

To who?

I don't know but it's not right.

What is?

Chit chat

Bud said you had something for me?

I do.

What's this for.

It's a key to our apartment silly.

Our apartment? I'm sorry, this just isn't a good time, I just got...

Fired. I know. Andy called and told me. I just figured you definitely need a place to stay now. Why do you look like you're going to cry?

I'm not going to charge you rent, not until you find a new job.
Where are you going? Wait.

Chit Chat

What's wrong, why you packing up?

I don't know, I just can't stay here anymore.

Why not? What did Penny have for you?

I just need to leave. I don't feel comfortable here anymore

Hold on...

Center

Journal 2

Wow.

Script

B1: Hello lunch meat.

B2: Lunch meat, he's a breakfast sausage.

B3: Boy meat, it's what's for dinner.

Hi. Are we still doing the class tonight?

B4: we were just told to wait until you got here.

B5: now you're here, here she come...

Naomi: so the ladies here tell me that they already had an art class before you came here.

Lunch meat: I guess they did, but...

Naomi: tut, no need, they also told me that you don't do much as far as teaching goes. Bella picks the subjects and the rest of the ladies set up. What exactly are you contributing?

Breakfast sausage: ...

Naomi: exactly, nothing. I'll need a written or typed statement of your intent to resign from a contracted position.

Dinner: can I give it to you now?

Naomi: yes, and please take all of your junk out of the storage closet.

Notebook Page

I resign.

—Boy in Question

Bridge

Journal 2

I don't know what I'm going to do now. I guess I could go stay with Penny, find a different job. Take care of Grace? Find Bud a place to stay. Seems like a tangled web that I don't know how to navigate. I'm not sure I'm cut out for all this. I don't know how to survive. I don't even know how to drive. I can't even take care of myself. How will I take care of anyone else?

Journal 2

What a bunch of bullshit, he paints pictures of his happy family, his glorious victories, his magical moments. Even now he can't let go of the dead dream. A dream. How can I take any of this seriously when the people I'm supposed to look up to aren't even real?

How am I supposed to follow in the footsteps of these hardworking and selfless men whose work adds up to nothing and leaves them with nothing? Being a man doesn't appear to have any benefits.

Journal 3

I'm writing this directly on the wall because my journals are burning on the other side of the river. I'm waiting for the cops to come because the wind blew sparks into the dry grass and started the

bridge on fire. Now my stuff is all wet because I had to jump in and swim across the river to get away from it. I should have had Bud teach me how to light a proper fire. Looks like I'll have to figure something else out, there's gotta be a better way.