

THREAD OF RED



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aner

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<https://aner0.github.io/insaint>
you probably reading this from.

you're allowed to cringe.

english's my 3rd language, there will be grammatical mistakes.

i hope you like it!

PROLOGUE

It was a cold fall in South Dakota. The wind carried the scent of damp earth and decaying leaves, a reminder that summer had long since died. A crow perched on a telephone pole, watching the town wake up, black eyes reflecting nothing. People were minding their own business and living the dull day's routine. The same old men sat outside the gas station, sipping their coffee. The same tired parents rushed their kids to school, honking at red lights. Nothing ever changed here. But maybe that's what made it the perfect place for someone like him.

Yet the high school boy was dealing with his another victim. Seemingly innocent student's acts were disturbing, gruesome even. The town's streak of being unbothered by violence has been broken.

Aiden woke up at 6am and started to get ready. Everything is supposed to be perfect and peaceful, his morning routine rarely changes. He brushed his teeth and ate breakfast, cereal before going. The milk in his cereal was ice-cold. Each bite crunched between his teeth, echoing in the empty kitchen. The clock on the wall ticked steadily—too steadily. Like a heartbeat, but not his own.

Then he locked the door and drove his old Lexus LS to school. As he drove, he saw a mother walking her child to school, their hands intertwined. She looked down at him with soft eyes, full of warmth. Aiden tilted his head. People like her never realized how easy it was to lose something.

He sees these sights everyday and doesn't get tired of it. It frankly doesn't matter if it changes or not. He only cares about himself and his pleasure.

Nevertheless, when parking he saw his best friend Xavier in the driveway. As Xavier stepped out of his car, a few students waved at him. Someone called his name from across the lot, asking about an upcoming test. Even the teachers passing by gave him approving nods. He was the kind of person everyone liked without trying too hard.

Xavier? Well, that's the only person that slightly matters to Aiden. He was perfect for many, including him. Straight A's, teachers adored him, always willing to help, full of empathy. The last one is the opposite of Aiden, but Xavier doesn't see that, he only sees his dear friend in him. Xavier ran a hand through his dark hair, adjusting the strap of his bag. He always walked with purpose, never sluggish, never rushed. Even now, as he turned toward Aiden, his expression was open, trusting. That blind trust amused Aiden more than anything. He was surrounded by life—people calling his name, clapping him on the back. The kind of attention Aiden avoided. But when Xavier saw him, his smile never faltered. That was the difference between them. Xavier chose to care. As he approached, the morning sun caught in his eyes, turning them a lighter shade of brown. For a second, he seemed to hesitate—like a shadow passed over his thoughts. Then, just as quickly, he smiled.

Chapter 1

CINDY

Hey Aiden, did you hear anything about our missing classmate?" His friend Xavier got close and was surely concerned; he was a famous volunteer in the town.

"Not really, who are you talking about, though?" The boy answered, pretending, but he made sure no one saw who last saw her.

"About Cindy, you two don't know each other? Can't believe it... Interesting." But they did talk; his friend thought he was going crazy, his good memory is failing?

"Hm, maybe i just don't remember her name, but with whom was she last seen with? Maybe they will help." He knew she was a troubled individual, and could easily run away after another fight with her mom. But saying this will be the contrary of his words, that they aren't even acquaintances.

"Uhh, i'm not sure; i just started to ask people if they knew anything about her. But anyway, thanks, bro." He got out of the class to continue his interviews.

Cindy wasn't that type of person to catch Aiden's attention, but some guys really liked her. He always wondered for what, but it was her looks, charm, and her "personality.". For him, she had absolutely no character, just a hollow being, filled with selfishness.

However, Aiden doesn't really get the most emotions, but it was obvious. Basic appearance for the popular girl: auburn hair with vivid highlights in it, tanned skin all year, even though the sun showed up well only in the summer, and

bright makeup. She was the mean girl in the class, and maybe even in the entire school. Cindy grew up in a home where appearances meant everything. Her mother, an English teacher, had high expectations and cared a lot about reputation. She was strict, constantly correcting Cindy's behavior, looks, and speech, making her feel like she had to be perfect. Cindy learned early that being pretty and admired gave her power—especially in a town where social status meant everything in high school. But deep down, she was insecure. She wasn't necessarily hollow like Aiden thought—she just played a role so well that even she started to believe it. Her “mean girl” act wasn't just for fun; it was a shield. Maybe she had been bullied once, or maybe she watched her mom struggle to be taken seriously and decided she'd never let herself be weak.

She hated Zeke because he represented everything she tried to suppress—awkwardness, vulnerability, and not caring about social norms. His existence felt like an insult to the image she worked so hard to maintain.

His eyes lit up when the news about her going missing got to him. Though he was the only one, happier than ever, proving his “weirdness”. Her mother looked for her all night and showed up to work really late. She asked Xavier, the monitor of the class, to ask students for any clues. Many were annoyed; she asked everyone about Cindy in every class she taught that day. Yet her fans looked for her more intensively than Xavier. He was just doing his job.

Xavier noticed that Cindy isn't the first person to have gone missing in the town. He walked past the same building on the way to school. There was always the same homeless person sitting on a bench next to it. That man had a hard life, being born from a teenage mother who also was a meth addict. And Xavier knew that; many rumors were spread. He

often gave the man some leftovers or spare money; he felt bad for people like that. Xavier thought that no one deserves this kind of life. And then, the hobo vanished, not even leaving his stuff behind. Like, no one was sitting there for years. It really concerned Xavier; even though they weren't close to each other, he was still a figure in his life. They talked about life sometimes. Yet Xavier hoped that the man would find a better life in the place he went to, getting his things together. But then everything was ruined; someday he got on a cycling ride around the town, and the man was nowhere to be found. He even asked people if they had seen him, and the answers were not comforting. Now he's sure missing. Now Xavier could ask the morgue questions if some man was found or not. However, he didn't know the name or any other details. He chose the morgue anyway, and they didn't have any new corpses in a week. Xavier filed a report to the police, but no one will search for a hobo; he's not the only one in here.

Xavier would ask people about Cindy less enthusiastically if this wouldn't happen. This is the beginning of the investigation.

But Xavier needs to know what truly happened. Was it a murder, disappearance or just a runaway from home? Cindy is not a type of person to get away for too long, she thought people would think that she is weird. And if she was running away, she'd probably just go to her friend's house. He asked all of them, and Cindy wasn't there too. Something definitely happened to her. Zeke is too suspicious to know nothing. That's why Xavier went to Aiden's desk and started a conversation.

"Let's hang out after school, i need to tell you something." he asked.

“Why not? Let’s go to the diner, i’m really hungry.” Then, the bell rang.

All the lessons that today had been short and boring, and the school atmosphere was suffocating, because of all the fuss about the disappearance. For example, the class clown didn’t even get to do his shenanigans, and everyone found out that his not only the most obnoxious person in the whole school, but also the most fearful. The teacher’s pet was supporting the devastated mother like it was her sister, who had gone missing; offering help and encouragement. The bully was already burying his mate in his not very bright head, instead of picking on some wimp in the school corridor. Cindy’s best friend, Sophie, didn’t talk to anyone on that day, well, she didn’t know that would make her suspicious. She was desolated and

had no words. The highlight of the day texted her on MySpace that night.

*“Hey there... This bitch won’t stop calling me names! She’s so fucking stupid, literally ruining my whole life. I feel that i can’t do it anymore... She’s just a setback for me, and i can’t do shit about it! I’m leaving this town for good! Forever! I can only tell you this... I feel that you’re my only true friend. Thank you for everything. XO”*she wrote.

The best friend was confused; Cindy never texts like that, never says thank you, and would never leave the town and never say goodbye to *her*. Someone else wrote that. She was pondering, who could that be?

The two friends went to the diner like they had planned. The place was down the street from Aiden’s house, where all the hangouts were happening. Old 1 story building holding a lot of memories, welcoming everyone who came there. The

two entered with the door creaking, and Xavier sat down on the nearest table to them, full of anticipation.

“You wanted to talk about the disappearance?” Aiden asked as he sat in front of Xavier.

“Yeah, i think that someone did that to Cindy and she didn’t actually run away.” he earnestly replied.

“And why is that? I think it’s a bit early to conjecture. It’s up to you though.” he tried to giggle awkwardly to defuse the moment.

“It’s the... Everyone in school don’t have a clue where she was last with. They might be lying because her mother is a teacher here. She’s really worried.”

“I heard rumors that she was always fighting with her mom. Why fight if you’ll spend all your time looking for your daughter.” smirking.

“That’s why it’s interesting. Something had happened to her. Also, do you remember that weird kid, Zeke, from our math class?” Xavier fidgeted his hand and looked him in the eyes.

“Yea i’ve seen him. Why asking?” he had caught Aiden’s attention long before the incident.

“Did you know that Cindy was bullying the hell out of him for almost no reason.” That’s serious for Xavier.

“I never really did anything about it. He wasn’t her only victim.” Aiden tried to make a pitiful face.

“Hm, I understand, but don’t you think he could do something to stop it?” Maybe that comeout is too radical for the situation, but it doesn’t cancel out anything.

“Like take revenge?” Aiden called a waiter, politely raising his pale hand, and one immediately turned to then, approaching.

“Exactly. Did you see his grin when her disappearance was announced?”

“Maybe he’s not implicated, just happy that she’s gone.”

“If only i knew...” he touched his curls and looked away.

“Xavier, i can watch over, get to know him better.”

“For real? I was too busy for this.” his eyes sparkled.

“For sure, i’m invested in this mystery too. Now why are we here...”

That’s a great plan for Aiden, getting Xavier’s trust. But he needed something more. Aiden politely raised his hand to call the waitress, she immediately saw and approached, there wasn’t much people around.

“Hello guys, what can i get you?” changing the supporting leg to the other, holding a small notebook with a pen in her hands.

“Um... I’d like to get a bacon egg and cheese.”

“What beverage would you like?” the woman asked.

“Some Seven Up please. What about you Xavier?” Aiden looked at him as he gave away the menu to his friend.

“Probably a cheeseburger, but no pickles please... And for a drink i’ll have coke, thanks.” he smiled.

“No problem, wait for 20 minutes or more!” then she turned back and walked to the kitchen.

Next day, he approached Zeke at recess. He was quiet, not talking to anyone, like every other day. Just reading his criminalistic journals. Always weird to the majority, but Cindy worsened the situation and no one else wants to be around him. Aiden got closer to Zeke’s messy desk and started a small talk. The boy was stunned, his bright eyes lightened up, but he didn’t make any eye contact.

“Hey Zeke” he paused to see his reaction “How’s it going?”

“I- Um. Okay i guess... You need something?” he was visibly stressed by the sudden interruption of his lonely day.

“I just wanted to know. What are you doing right now?”

“N-nothing really, reading an article about Columbine.”

“Eh, i don’t think school is a place for that kind of stuff. Anyway, tell me more.” he sat down next to him.

Zeke visibly blushed due to the embarrassment of the situation. Why would someone like Aiden talk to him so suddenly? Why would he want to know about it?

“I didn’t think much when i brought it here... I’m sorry if it breaks the rules of the school...” with fear in his voice.

“I’m not gonna snitch on you! I’m just worried about someone else doing it.”

“Thanks... You’re not concerned about me reading this?”

“Not really, maybe i like that kind of stuff too. Whatever.”

“R-really? Why didn’t you tell anyone- Oh... I understand.” Zeke stuttered.

“Um. What’s your favorite case?” he asked awkwardly.

Zeke fixed his long dark hair and took some newspapers and books from his backpack. He was truly enthusiastic about it.

“U-uh, i like school shooters, but serial killers are much better.” visibly stressed under the pressure, but really wanting to share his interests.

“Really? Who’s your favorite?” Aiden still kept the mask.

“Why would you w-want to know so bad?” he panicked.

“Why not? Maybe we share a like. Don’t be nervous.”

“Okay... It’s Zodiac. He’s so mysterious, i find that very interesting.” voice cracks as he spoke.

“Cool, and no one caught him yet! I want to ask you a question.” he grinned.

“W-what is it?” trying to answer.

“Have you ever thought about killing someone? I’m not going to tell anyone.” waiting for the answer. Zeke froze on the spot, not knowing what to say, with a chance of getting a friend, he slowly muttered: “To be honest, y-yes. Cindy pissed me off every day, I’m glad she’s missing now...” then sighs softly.

“So, you’re not the one who killed her?” there was such mockery in his hazel eyes.

“W-what do you mean, s-she was killed? Seriously? No i’m not! I’m too weak for this. But i want to.”

“I heard some rumors, that’s why i asked. Many suspect you, but i’ll protect you!” knowing that no one could hear them.

“Oh... T-thank you so much! We are talking for the first time, but share so much in common.”

“Yeah, i’ll see you. I’ll go back to class.” he got up from the table and left the cafeteria.

“Nice to know you more...” now he’s lonely again. He didn’t have any friends to talk to. But still, he’s happier than ever! Meanwhile Aiden was on the way to math class. Some girls saw him and pointed:

“Hey Addy! How’s it going? Why do you wear that jacket every day? Show some skin!” they laughed.

“Hi there. Why would I? It’s still cold outside.” he glanced at the giggling group of teenagers.

“We want to see you without it, hahaha.”

It’s obviously wasn’t picking on him, Aiden was indeed attractive to most. Which is one of his powers too. Aiden wore this jacket to hide some wounds and scratches on his hands from the victims. He waved to say goodbye and headed to his destination.

Xavier saw him and Zeke talking to each other. Immediately he approached and asked:

“Hi Aiden! How’s the conversation was going? Did you hear something interesting?” he acted like it was a win in a sports league.

“Actually, not really. He started spilling about his interests, that was very suspicious. He likes serial killers.” Aiden didn’t want to eliminate Zeke at the spot, he’s keeping him for later.

“What a weirdo... Anyway, something about Cindy perhaps?” his smile faded.

“He said that he didn’t do it, that he’s too weak for it. I don’t know if you should believe him, but he’s so unsociable, he’ll probably tell the truth on the spot.”

“I see your point... But can you insinuate more for now?”

“As you say Xav.” he smiled. Xavier was filled with hope again.

While the two talked, Zeke appeared in the class. His books crushed on the table as he sat down anxiously. It was a math test, therefore everyone had only one thing in their head—mathematician formulas and how could they cheat or ask for help from. Except Aiden’s new pet. He gazed at him the whole lesson, which disturbed Aiden a bit. He was the only hope of getting a friend in high school, that’s why. No other possible reasons.

When the test had ended Zeke approached him himself, asking:

“Um, we know each other better now, right?” Awkward.

“Right. What do you want?” he glanced.

“If i bother you, you should tell...” Zeke didn’t want to seem annoying so bad.

“You don’t bother me at all. Want to go to my place?” he asked patiently as he packed his bag.

“You’re inviting me? O-of course! I haven’t been to a classmate’s house since forever...” inside he was hoping.

“That’s sad. It’s the last class anyway. Let’s go.” Aiden called and came out of the class with Zeke, and his eyes glowed brighter than the sun.

Aiden had an old car, on which they got to his house. It was neither big or small for this neighborhood.

They entered the house and Zeke looked around.

“It’s a little messy right now, sorry.” he welcomed.

“Are your parents returning home any soon? I don’t want to surprise them in any way...”

“Don’t worry, i practically live alone here.” he sat down on the couch. “Sit here, don’t be afraid.”

“Okay. But why though? If that’s not a problem...”

“My parents are divorced, and i live with my dad. He’s always on some business trips, so I’m by myself. I love it.” he smiled.

“Same for me honestly... My parents don’t care about me at all. They don’t care about my feelings, and that i’m getting bullied.” his voice trembles and he looks away.

“I’m sorry you feel that way.” Aiden tried to show empathy.

“Hm, it’s pretty hot here... Can I trust you?”

“Yes, don’t worry... But how is that related?”

Aiden took off his jacket and put it on the couch. There were several scars seen on his arms. His companion’s eyes were drawn to them. Before he could react Zeke took off his shirt and only t-shirt was underneath. “You c-cut too?” he asked. Actually Aiden’s marks weren’t quite alike with self made wounds.

Aiden saw his self-harm scars and realized, that Zeke is even an easier victim than he thought.

“Um, no, a random dog attacked me. I asked only because everyone around asks me what happened. It was annoying.” he smirked.

Zeke put his shirt back on, faster than he could, turning redder than his cuts.

“I-i’m um- I’m so sorry, pretend like n-nothing has happened!” he turned back closing his face with hands. Super awkward.

“Are you actually okay though.” with a concerned look. His classmate turned to him “I’ve tried to quit so many times but i can’t. This is the only way to get through.” eyes watering.

Aiden got annoyed but he needs to fix the situation. He leaned back and said “I can help you i guess.”.

“Do you want to cut someone’s flesh instead of yours?”

Zeke looked at him, like his family was announced dead: mixed expression, both scared and amused. “W-what do you mean by that?” he said.

“Would you be pleased by someone else’s pain?”

“I-i don’t know, i’ve never tried that... D-did you?”

“Oh, you wanna know so bad?” he replied.

“Only if you want to tell yourself...” he feared.

“I’ll think about it...” he got up from the couch “Are you hungry?” like nothing happened. It confused Zeke, but he didn’t have any choices.

“Kind, of...” looking up at him as he said. Aiden got up and walked towards the kitchen calling his new friend.

“Sit down then, i’ll heat up the stew.” he pointed to a black wooden table with 4 chairs. Then he pulled a full metal pot out of the fridge and put it on the stove.

While the pot was cooking they talked with different intentions.

“Well, it’s time. Hope you like it.” he smiled and filled the perfectly clean plate. Aiden put it in front of Zeke like a caring mother and sat next to him.

The wimp looked at the food and started to sense something with his nose. He has never felt it before, but it gave out pork for some reason.

“What a weird smell... Maybe i shouldn’t really eat this?” he thought to himself in confusion: “But i’m really hungry and don’t want to disappoint him.” He then poorly spooned up some food and took it to his face, carefully smelling it again. Aiden interrupted him by staring intimidatingly, waiting for Zeke to finally put it in his mouth. It tasted as weird as it smelled, but because of Aiden’s presence and visible pressure he swallowed it. The meat was confusing: a stringy texture with a porky flavor, but sweeter. It left an unpleasant aftertaste and Zeke didn’t take that well.

“Should i continue eating that...” he thought to himself, not wanting to make it even more uncomfortable. Then Aiden looked him straight in the eyes and asked:

“Do you like it? You seem hesitant.”

“O-of course i do, i just haven’t tasted anything like this before. You cook pretty well for our age...” he replied. Zeke was so scared to stop eating, so he forced himself to take another bite. While he was chewing the tough meat Aiden asked yet again:

“Do you ever wonder what human flesh would taste like?” Aiden offers seconds, watching his reaction.

“Um, not really, is there’s a problem?” his eyes started to thrash around the room in fear. Weird thoughts were racing in his mind, he doesn’t know Aiden well, the trust issues just hit.

“Okay then... You don’t taste anything *wrong*, do you, Zeke?” Aiden couldn’t resist but tease him even more, waiting patiently for his responses and behavior. As Zeke heard the question, he looked even more confused and he put down his spoon. His new friend saw that and gently pushed the plate closer. Zeke realized what’s actually happening and

his eyes were fixed on one spot, paralyzed by fear. Aiden saw that Zeke would stop eating his food and mockingly said: “You’re done already? That’s disappointing. I thought we were sharing something special.”

Zeke came to his senses and cleared his throat: “Y-yeah, I realized I’m not that hungry anymore, thanks for the food.”

“You’re welcome! If you’re done, mind doing something else?” he smiled like nothing happened.

“Like what? I’m kind of a boring person to talk to...” he frowned.

“You’re absolutely not! I appreciate that we both share the same interest, - true crime. Isn’t that great?” he said.

“It is... But what true crime does with doing something together? Like reading?” Zeke asked anxiously.

“Reading? I see you doing that all school day, and you’re still not bored of it?”

“Not really, but i would love to do something fun... I’m not used to be around people like you, or in general...”

“I see... I have something outside, but I don’t know if it will be really fun to you.” he stood up from the chair.

“Whatever you say, it’s your house anyways.” he was very excited, but tried to hide it. He stood up from the table too, wanting to clean after himself. When he approached the counter, Aiden ran to interrupt him, not out of manners, but out of not giving him away. Still he couldn’t hide a bit of nervousness in his tone:

“Hey Zeke, that’s very nice of you, but I can clean it myself since I’m the one who invited you over today.” he then smiled and jauntily whipped the unfinished plate out of his pale hands.

“Uh, okay...” the excitement inside faded away as Aiden put the food on the counter next to the metal sink.

“We shall go.” he said and headed to the back door. Zeke followed and they both got in the backyard.

“Looks nice... But what do you want to show me there?” he nervously turned to Aiden. He chuckled:

“I thought you’ll say that it’s quite neglected, I need to get my shit together here. And... just follow me.”

There, through unkept bushes, a tool shed was seen, and Aiden went straight to it with Zeke trailing. Aiden turned to him and asked:

“You don’t tell secrets?”

To be continued...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Я предатель я хитрец чик ты не жилец -Айден