Danny never cried out, it was too fast, too unexpected, he never believed in what we were doing, and he never believed the words as I read them from those medical files, even though there was no denying that what we were doing and what we were seeing was unmistakably real. I believed, and I knew we should have stopped. I can tell my self it was his fault for convincing me to go inside, or for kicking in that window, but I know I was to blame, I was the one who found the files, I was the one who read them. That little metal box, I was the one who opened it.

They still haven’t found Danny’s body, but they found the blood. I told them everything, I was so scared, they locked me up faster than you can say bat shit crazy, and they did say that, everyone says that. The prime suspect, yeah that’s me. I don’t blame them, a kid goes missing, blood all over the walls of an abandoned building and the only witness is a teenager saying a monster did it. Bat shit crazy. I’m not worried about the trial or going to prison or being questioned or any of that. I am worried about one thing, I saw it, just like Danny, and it will come for me just like it did for him. When its my blood all over the walls of this padded room there’s gonna be a whole lot of people who will be bat shit crazy.

There was something, in those files, something I can’t remember. I was so scared. I ran so fast when I heard it. I didn’t think to take anything with me. I didn’t think I would need proof. Hell I was the one who brought the police back there and told them something happened to Danny. Prime suspect. I watched a few of those cops puke their guts out after going in there. The look in their eyes, they thought I did it and they were sickened by me. I had blood all over my clothes, I was ranting like a lunatic. Now they just give me sedatives and keep me locked in this room. Awaiting trial. There will be no trial. It will come for me, unless I can remember. I asked for paper and a pencil. If I can write it all down maybe I can remember. They gave me a black crayon and some loose-leaf paper. My story, my confession, my last will and testament.

My name is Anthony Micelli, yeah just like the character on that eighties TV show Who’s the Boss. Everyone calls me Boss, it’s a real laugh riot. Most of those dip shits never even saw that show. I’ll come right out and say it, because everyone is thinking it. I am the son of a single mom, we don’t have much money, I don’t have any friends, except Danny and I’m not what you would consider one of the good kids. Yeah I’ve had my share of trouble, mainly dealing with skipping school and smoking weed. I’ve been in some fights but I didn’t start any of them. People like to pick on me and I don’t like to take it. How all that adds up to me killing my best friend I will never know but that’s where I’m at and there’s not one single person who is gonna believe what really happened. Maybe its better if I get pureed in this cell, at least then they won’t blame me for Danny.

It was over Spring break that Danny and I found the place. The Pembroke Institute of Psychology was basically abandoned back in the late sixties. The place stood abandoned for over forty years covered in thick foliage hidden from casual observers by the dense Michigan forest. Danny and I were wandering the wood looking for a new place to hang out and get stoned. We had nothing to do that day so we had gone deeper into the forest than we had ever gone before. We stopped to rest sitting on what we though was a fallen tree covered in ivy and moss. I can’t remember if it was Danny or me who hit the tree with a rock. We turned to look at each other when we heard the hollow metallic sound that rang out. Cutting away the ivy, moss and dirt that was built up on what we though was a log, we realized that we were sitting on a fallen sign. It was one of those large signs that are lite from inside and covered on both sides with a thick plastic. The words stenciled onto the plastic were Pembroke Institute of Psychology, black text on a white background. We were both pretty shocked, everyone in town knows about the Pembroke Institute. The stories vary from mundane to completely fucked up but everyone agrees that it was a mental institution and research facility that was suddenly closed down without any notice. They just packed up and left, locked the place up and put a gate on the road that connected the place to the rest of the world. Kids would dare each other to jump the fence and try to follow the road up. The road was completely grown over and difficult to follow. Most never found the place, just wandered the woods until they got scared and came back. There were a few stories though about kids who made it to the place. There are a bunch of stories about what happened to the unfortunate ones that found the place. I always thought it was all bullshit. I didn’t even believe the place ever existed, until we found that sign.

It was then that we realized that we were standing in what was probably the parking lot of the place. The trees here were spaced further apart and younger than the ones that we could see at some distance to the right and left. Ahead of us was what looked like a cliff or hill of some sort, covered in ivy, ferns and dense foilage. The closer we got the more it became clear that what we were heading towards was not a cliff at all. It was a large building, covered almost completely with forest overgrowth.

In places, gaps in the vines revealed exposed red brick and once we realized this was a building, shapes that looked previously like dense forest, now revealed themselves as windows and doorways. It was hard to tell just how far in each direction the building extended. The woods obscured visibility for much more than about forty feet or so. It was an eerie place. It was an assurance that the earth would reclaim itself once we were gone. We believe we are so powerful, that we have the ability to bend our surroundings to our will. But here not much more than thirty years of neglect have resulted in the near complete eradication of an entire hospital, forgotten.

We started to walk around the building. We pulled off sections of vines and found brick beneath. We cleared the vines away from a doorway; the doors were locked up tight and chained. It was obvious that no one had been here in a long time. The vines went all the way to the roof, it looked like the building was three or fours stories tall. On the ground, dirt, moss and a thick layer of leaves had taken over. The asphalt was completely covered. It was surprising that no one had found this place since the sixties. At least no one had talked about it. It wasn’t that far into the woods, I would have expected that some kids would have found this and turned it into a party spot by now.

We walked around for a while, uncovering window and doors; all of them were locked and chained. Some of the windows were boarded up from the inside and the others were so covered in thick dust that there was no way to look inside. We were there for almost an hour just walking around when Danny found a small window that wasn’t covered by vines. Before I noticed what he was doing he picked up a baseball sized rock and threw it at the window. The thick pane of glass shattered but didn’t break inward. Once he saw the thing shatter he got excited like he expected the window to be impenetrable. Grabbing a sizable fallen tree branch he made his way to the window. I protested because I knew what was coming next, if he got that window open he was going to want us to go in there and that was the last thing I wanted to do. Sure enough he got to the window and took a swing with the branch. After four swings the glass started falling inward. A few more swings and the window was gone leaving only a small square black opening. Danny smiled at me and I just stood there shacking my head.

I told him to go first, there was no way in hell I was going in there before him. I half hoped he would chicken out so we could leave. He didn’t though; he sat down in front of the opening then went in legs first. I could hear the echo as he landed on the concrete floor inside. I couldn’t see him at all, I could just see a swirling of dust coming from the opening and hear the sound of his feet echoing as he moved around. Then his head popped up at the opening. “Come on!” he said taunting me to come in or be a baby. After a few minutes of that crap I went in. I remember looking at the trees as I slide myself into the darkness. If I had only left, told Danny to come up out of there and leave that place, he would still be alive. Peer pressure is a bitch; I didn’t like being called a baby.

Once I was inside I could see Danny walking around using the flashlight on his phone so I pulled mine out and did the same. We were in a storeroom, there were shelves full of various supplies. Some of them I recognized, like cleaning products and hospital supplies, all of them were from the sixties. There was a ton of stuff in there, I was thinking that it was strange to leave all of it and not try and sell it off, when Danny found the door and opened it. It opened into a bigger room, it was really dark inside since the windows were either boarded up or covered with vines on the outside. The flashlight apps on our phones were pretty bright so we could see most of the room, and of fucking course it was a morgue. There were two metal tables in the center with drains in them and of course a wall with two rows of metal doors, six in total. The other walls had cabinets and shelves with various things, Danny started over to the metal doors when I stopped him. I said that since all the other stuff was left here, what if bodies were left as well. Danny reassured me that there is no way they would leave bodies behind and casually opened the first door. It was empty. I wasn’t convinced and I headed for the door on the far side of the room which lead further into the hospital. I could hear Danny open another of the metal doors as I was walking out into the wide hallway outside of the room. He was calling me a pussy and saying he was going to put me in one of those lockers, but he followed me out after opening the second door.

The hallway was doublewide and only about twenty feet long. I could see the double doors at the far end. There were only two other doors, one on each side of the hallway. We checked them out and found that one was a janitors closet and the other was a small office. The office still had files and what seemed to be all of the things that would have been there when the place was operational. I mentioned that to Danny and he said that maybe the stories were true.

I knew there were stories about the Pembroke Institute, but Danny had lived here longer than I had so I asked him what he meant. He told me that the institute used to be a big deal, it was created sometime in the mid fifties and it was a teaching hospital. Patients came from all over and they were usually unique in some way or at least extreme. Doctors would come here for clinical study and trials, looking for the next break through in treatments for various disorders. Graduate students would also come here to study hands on. Anyhow the stories go that something happened with a patient named Mathers Cope, I guess there were several ideas about what happened but all the stories seem to agree that after the incident the hospital closed down. It would seem that after only thirty some years the story would be fresh in peoples minds but Danny said that a lot of the people involved and many of the people who lived around here were bought off and told to move away. There are probably some holdouts that know the real story but it was enough to make the story die out. I had heard a few things about some secret hospital in the woods but I chalked it up to urban legends or just bullshit ghost stories. Now standing in the actual place I wondered what the real story was.

Danny didn’t seem as spooked by the place as I was as he headed straight for the double doors at the end of the hall. I followed him through the doors and into the darkness beyond. Our footsteps echoed through the darkness as we moved deeper into the building. A thick coat of dust covered everything. We kicked up clouds of it as we walked through the dark hallways. The walls were a mess of chipped and pealing paint occasionally taken over by water damage and mold. It was dead silent and pitch black, the light from our phones casting a small radius of visibility around us for about ten feet. It was an eerie feeling to not have visibility ahead or behind. The walls on both sides were dimly visible so we could see when we would pass doors and when other hallways extended out into darkness. I was worried that our phone batteries would die and we would be completely lost in darkness. It was daytime so this was as light as it would ever be in here. I told Danny we should turn back and come back tomorrow more prepared. I had almost convinced him when we reached a set of closed double doors with the words “Violent Offenders Ward” written on them.

I was hit with a sudden shiver of fear reading the words stenciled onto the windows of the doors. Of course this only served to peek the interest of Danny. He tried the handle of the door and to my surprise and horror they were not locked. The Danny pushed open the right side door and started to walk through. I told him we shouldn’t go in, we should go back and get better prepared. I said we should be marking our path so that we can find our way back. Danny just laughed and called me a baby. He said we could easily follow our footprints in the dust and that it was just an abandoned old building. It didn’t seem like anyone could get in here so we wouldn’t even have to worry about bums or druggies or anything. He managed to calm me down and I finally agreed to keep going. Danny said that we were here for one thing, to find the room of Mathers Cope. If we told the kids at school we stood in his room in the middle of this abandoned hospital, we would have badass cred till graduation. Not to mention how the girls would think we were fearless. I had to admit he was on to something and we were already inside, it was not like it was going to get any scarier from here.

The violent offenders ward looked identical to the other areas that we had walked through. I don’t know why I expected it to look different. The only real difference was that there were no windows on the doors to the patient’s rooms. That and they were all equipped with a sliding door which when slid to the side revealed a slot with a small shelf that was used to pass food into the room. We tried a few of the doors and found them to be unlocked. We walked through looking into rooms not really knowing how we would identify Cope’s, when we found what looked like the office of one of the doctors. The room was covered in dust like the others but the large ornately carved wooden desk and various diplomas, accreditations and plagues that hung on the walls identified the room as the office of Dr. Nolan Whitehouse. Everything was still in its place, like the man had taken nothing with him when the building was closed down. I thought this was very strange, it is one thing to leave supplies and day-to-day items behind but much of the items in the room looked like the personal affects of Dr. Whitehouse. Why would he leave all of that behind?

Danny didn’t seem interested in the doctor’s office and was trying to get me to leave. I told him he could go on by himself if he wanted but if we were going to find out which room was Cope’s we were going to have to look through the doctor’s files. If I had only gone with him, if I had only left without getting into those files, we would have a story to tell the kids at school, nothing more. I was opening the top drawer of a tall singlewide file cabinet as Danny grudgingly agreed and came back into the room. He plopped down into the doctor’s chair and put his feet up on the desk. The light from our phones lit up most of the small office but the door to the hallway was a deep black rectangle, it was like looking out into space. I began looking through the files in the drawer. My heart skipped a beat when the name appeared on the file folders tab, written in black ink on a white adhesive strip with a read line at the top, M, Cope. He was real. My hands shook as I lifted the folder out of the drawer and brought it to the desk. It was thick, but not completely filled with papers. Once I opened it I saw the two real-to-real tapes that were inside along with other paperwork. Reading the name on one of the documents confirmed it completely. The heading on the top document read “Psychiatric evaluation of Cope, Mathers”. Danny grabbed the tape reels and began walking around the office as I sat in the vacated chair and began to read.

The document was dated September 16th 1968, written by Dr. Albert Kittridge and contained basic information on the patient. Name, Mathers Cope, age fourteen, birthdate October 3rd 1965, birthplace Chicago Illinois, mother Irene Cope, Father Jonathan Cope. I could feel the tension building in my muscles as I read on. I had only heard passing stories about the infamous Mathers Cope and believed them to be made up urban legends with no basis in truth. But now I was sitting at the desk of Dr. Kittridge with this document in my hands. Nervous excitement gripped me as I read the confirmation of those stories, proof that the man and his horrendous deeds were real. The document stated that Mathers Cope was arrested, tried and convicted for the murders of fifteen individuals including his mother and father. He was admitted to the Pembroke Institute due to his age and because of his testimony. Mathers Cope admitted to the murder of his father Jonathan Cope but claimed that he did not commit any of the other murders. He maintained through out the trial, that his father and older brother were responsible. Due to the fact that the physical evidence was stacked heavily against this claim and that he did not have an older brother, several court appointed psychologists concluded that the boy was undeniably insane.

I read aloud as Danny wandered around the office opening drawers and cabinets looking for god knows what. The doctor was having regular sessions with Mathers. He hoped to get the boy to admit to what he had done and feel remorse for the crimes. Dr. Kittridge believed that Mathers was fabricating the story of his brother because he could not rationalize the horrible crimes he had committed. His delusions were so vivid and complete. The doctor had never experienced such complete manipulation of memories in all of his fifteen years in the profession.

The police where called to the cope home by Mathers himself. He stated on the phone that he had killed his father and he needed help. The officers found the boy in his fathers study with a bloody letter opener in his hand. His father lay face down on the writing desk seated in his chair. Mathers had stabbed him in the throat with the letter opener and his father had bleed out onto the desk. It must have taken several minutes while Mathers watched and did not call for help. A search of the home found the remains of fourteen other bodies in a concealed room behind the furnace in the basement. The bodies were dismembered and the parts were riddled with bite marks, which matched the approximate size and shape of Mathers Cope’s bite pattern. Irene Cope was found among the bodies and was the most recent death behind Jonathan Cope.

There were other pieces of evidence that the doctor did not divulge in his assessment but it was clear that the evidence against Mathers was pretty complete. Mathers maintained that his father had kept his brother, who would have been one year older, in the concealed room in the basement, hidden away because of his deformities. He insisted that his father had killed most of the other victims and that the ones he did not his brother had. According to Mathers his father was feeding these unfortunate souls to his brother in the attempts to fulfill some sort of ancient dark ritual. The boy testified that he and his mother had found out what his father was doing and his mother had confronted Mr. Cope the night prior to his murder. Mathers heard the struggle from his room and knew that his mother had been killed. The next morning he went to his fathers study and before he could say a word in protest, plunged the letter opener into his throat. He then called the police and ended up at Pembroke Institute.

I read the final section of the report and was about to close the folder when I noticed a hastily scrawled note at the bottom of the document. Written in black ink across the official seal that was stamped on the document, confirming this as the doctor’s final assessment of Mathers Cope. The handwriting was shaky and frantic looking; the words written sent a shock of terror through me as I mouthed them aloud. “Mathers was right, god help us all”.

As the words left my mouth Danny approached the desk with something in his hands. I couldn’t see what it was at first but noticed immediately as he put the shoebox-sized thing on the desk in front of me. It was a nineteen sixties style tape recorder with large buttons and two empty silver pins where the tape reels should go. I looked up at Danny in the darkness and I could barely see him nodding towards the two tape reels that were on the desk. I picked up the reel labeled “Mathers #1” and began to setup the recorder. I had played with my father’s old reel-to-reel tape recorder before so I knew how to fix the tape onto the machine. Danny put his finger on a section of the document in the folder, “Room 104” he said.

Danny waited in silence as I rigged up the machine. It didn’t take me long and we both huddled close as I pressed play. The recorded voices sounded so loud in the deathly silent blackness of the decrepit withering building. Danny took a seat on the desk and I leaned back into the doctor’s chair.

(Defendants testimony omitted in lieu of the actual transcribed recording)

#### Transcripts from Exhibit F, audio tape labeled “Mathers #1” ####

Interview with Mathers Cope session 1

Dr. Kittridge (after labeled K): Hello Mathers.

Mathers Cope: (after labeled M): Hello doctor.

K: Do you know why you are here?

M: Everyone thinks I am crazy.

K: You don’t agree?

M: You can just ask me what you want to. I have talked to so many of you. I am going to tell you the same thing.

K: I am not here to talk about your innocence or guilt Mathers, I am hear to help you.

M: Help me how?

K: Help you come to grips with what you have done.

M: I killed my father; I know that, I have come to grips with it. He was a horrible man doing horrible things, and I stopped him.

K: There were others Mathers, the evidence…

M: Yeah sure, the evidence shows that I am to blame. I have been through this in court and I know what the evidence says. They put me in here, they decided I killed all those people, killed my own mother. But they are all wrong; I wont stop telling you people what really happened, the truth. Would you rather I lie to you.

K: Sometimes our minds provide us with alternatives to reality, if reality is too painful. Our mind can create situations that help us cope. They seem real, and maybe portions of them are, but the full truth, the parts that are unbearable, are distorted. I am here to help you separate the truth from fantasy.

M: I know the truth. I don’t need your help.

K: And what is the truth Mathers.

M: My father and my brother killed those people. I killed my father to stop them.

K: This is one of the problems Mathers. You have no bother.

M: You want to help me?

K: Yes, yes I do.

M: Go to my house and burn it down. Make sure it is nothing but a pile of ashes. That’s how you can help me.

K: I can see your upset; we will end our session for today. I look forward to speaking with you again.

Interview with Mathers Cope session 2

K: Hello again Mathers, I hope you enjoyed the things I brought from your home. I tried to pick the books and items that seemed to have the most use. Hopefully I picked some of your favorites.

M: Did you burn it?

K: Burn what?

M: The house, did you burn it down?

K: Of course not, I brought you some things to make you feel more, at home.

M: Thank you, doctor.

K: If there is anything else I can get you please let me know.

M: You can find my fathers journal, its all there, you can see for yourself.

K: The police would have it if it were in the house, I can ask but I don’t believe they will release evidence to me.

M: They don’t have it.

K: How do you know?

M: It is hidden well, they would have to know where to look, blind chance would be unlikely.

K: I see. You seem very well educated Mathers, did you go to a private school?

M: No, my father would teach me, along with my regular studies, which failed to challenge me.

K: Well that is good. You are very well spoken.

M: Thank you doctor.

K: So where is this journal?

M: The north east corner of my fathers study. Count five wooden planks from the corner, then at around knee high, press on the left side of the plank. It will reveal a small compartment. The journal is there.

K: I will see what I can do Mathers.

M: if you want to know the truth, you will find it there. Or you could burn the house down and remove this all from the face of the earth.

K: I can’t do that.

M: If you knew you could.

K: Lets try not to focus on this type of destruction. Lets talk about you.

M: OK.

K: Do you have any friends at school?

M: Yes. I have a girlfriend too. I am not some social pariah who is lashing out at the world or something. You have it all wrong. It is not me you should be looking into. It is my father.

K: I have looked into your father. He was an upstanding member of the community from what I gather.

M: Yeah, he as was. He also had a secret.

K: What secret?

M: Get the book, you will find out.

K: I will try.

M: Please doctor, if you see it you will understand, you may even believe me.

K: OK, Mathers, I will try. I think that is enough for today.

The tail of the tape slapped against the recorder as it spun on the second reel, an endless sound lulling me into a trance. I could not believe that I was hearing the real Mathers Cope on the tape. He sounded so normal. I don’t know what I expected but I did not expect to hear a normal kid. He sounded scared and lonely. I began to feel pity for this notorious murderer whose name parents used to frighten children into cleaning rooms, making beds and all sorts of unwanted tasks. The second reel lay on the desk in front of me, I removed the first and started rigging up the second. Danny was complaining that we should go to see Cope’s cell instead of listening to these boring conversations. I didn’t agree, I wanted to know what Mathers believed happened. I wanted to hear for myself what this boys excuse could be, what drove him to such horrible acts. Secretly I found myself believing, or wanting to believe, his story. I wanted to believe that it was not possible for this boy, two years younger than me, to commit such heinous crimes.

Interview with Mathers Cope session 3:

K: Good morning Mathers.

M: Did you get it?

K: The journal?

M: Yes.

K: I have not been back to the house. I will try this evening to find it. If it is hidden in the place you described, I should have no trouble.

M: Will you really go tonight doctor? Will you really try and find it?

K: Yes, Mathers, I will.

M: Thank you doctor, you will see that I am telling you the truth.

K: Are you willing to tell me more of your story?

M: I have told the police, doctors the judge, what else could you want to know.

K: Tell me the story as if I had never heard it, as if we were just two friends telling stories about ourselves.

M: I guess I can do that.

K: Take your time Mathers, tell me anything you feel is important.

M: Well, let me start by saying… I loved my family, my father and mother were great parents and I was well taken care of. There was nothing in my past that would cause me to harm my parents. No abuse no resentment, nothing. For most of my life I thought I was an only child. It was only when I found fathers journal that I found the truth. It wasn’t until then that I remembered my imaginary friend from when I was very young.

K: Imaginary friend?

M: Yes, I had memories, very vague, just fragments from when I was young, I must have been between three and five years old. I remembered that there was a heating vent in my room that was connected straight down to the furnace in the basement. At nights I would hear crying or whimpers from the vent. I began to talk with the voice and comforting it. It could not speak only make emotive sounds, but somehow I could understand. The sadness that the voice conveyed was so deep and mournful that I was compelled to offer comfort. Eventually I was able to communicate with the voice and I would talk to it at night before going to bed. After some time it was able to say one word, it’s name, “Me”. I would try to explain that me was a pronoun we use to refer to ourselves but that it was not a proper name. The response would be simply “Me” and so I began to address the voice by that name. My parents told me that this was my imaginary friend and didn’t pay much attention to it. Eventually I grew older and moved into a different room in the house. Since I no longer heard the voice, I believed that my parents were right, it was an imaginary friend and now that I was older it would fade from memory. And it did… fade from memory.

K: You were five when you changed rooms?

M: Yes, years went by and I no longer spoke with my imaginary friend. I grew up and forgot all about it. Last year after my thirteenth birthday I was in my old room getting something out of the closet when I heard a scream. It was muffled but it was definitely the scream of a woman. There were some other scuffling sounds and then there was the distinct sound of whimpering or crying. I was shocked, it sounded just as I remembered when I was young. I called out at the vent, the sound abruptly stopped.

K: I thought you said it was a brother? You said there was a woman’s scream.

M: Yes, the scream did not come from the voice. It was someone else.

K: Your mother?

M: No, I was not sure. That day I went into the basement and there was an awful smell. It smelled like old molding clothes mixed with a coppery smell, similar to burning electrical wires. My father found me down there and rushed me out. He told me I shouldn’t go down there because the furnace was broken and it was dangerous. After that my father would lock the door to the basement.

- Long pause -

K: Go on Mathers… if you can.

M: A few months went by and my father had been spending a lot of time in his study. He was staying up late at night as well. One night I was up getting some water when I saw my father coming from the basement. It was late. I wondered what he could be doing down there at this time of night. He didn’t see me and went back into his study. I heard other strange sounds in the basement. I know my mother heard them too. She began to look worried all of the time and she looked tired like she hadn’t slept in days. She seemed relieved when my father said he was going out of town for the weekend.

K: Was it normal for your father to leave town like that?

M: No, he never left before. He told me to say out of his study and locked that door as well. I don’t know why but I went that night and tried to pick the lock. A