

CHAPTER 13

After what happened, I was pretty much ready to consider myself the most unlucky person in the world. My life was a gigantic mess, and I couldn't fix it no matter how hard I tried.

There wasn't much left to live for, really. I had my taper (newly purchased), and of course the Tapers store itself, but other than that it didn't seem to be worth it. And even *with* the camera, I couldn't tape anything - everybody else was equally depressed and boring, which means nothing ever really happened.

Winning that competition was out of the question. In fact, after a while, I completely stopped bringing my taper with me. Not like I would have used it.

So, that basically narrowed it all down to the Tapers store. That's all I had left. Once in a while I would think, just for a second, about what life would be like without it. I never could wrap my head around the possibility.

For the last ten minutes, all I could bear to do was stare. It's the only thing I could pull off correctly, without hurting somebody or causing myself more distress. But the more I gazed at Tapers, the more I felt the need to at least walk inside.

"What happened?" said the Tapers clerk, as I stepped into the store.

I stopped and looked up.

"What do you mean '*what happened?*'" I asked.

"Did you kill the bitch?"

"No," I said. "Maybe I should have, though."

He appeared very disappointed.

"Well why *didn't* you?" he responded.

For some very odd reason, he wasn't reading a Tapers magazine that day. And that wasn't the only thing that felt off - the store looked emptier than usual, and a few boxes were lying around that weren't there the day before. I couldn't help but feel distracted by this.

"Hey," I began. "What's with all the boxes?"

He looked around.

"Uh. Oh. Yeah, I've been working on that. Don't quite feel like doing the rest right now."

"Doing the rest of what?"

"Oh. Well, Tapers went bankrupt and everything, soâ€¦!"

"*What?*"

"Don't look at me, it's not my fault. I'm just a hungry employee."

I began to panic very quickly. No, that's an understatement - I was having a complete meltdown. It felt like the entire world was going to collapse, and my body was going break into pieces and become part of the mess.

"No, really," he continued. "I'm incredibly hungry."

I stomped my foot on the floor and screamed.

"This is a disaster! Do you even realize?"

"Well, I'm not *that* hungry."

He began muttering to himself about this, completely ignoring me.

"What am I gonna do?" I said, pacing around the room. When I reached the counter again I stopped. "What are *you* gonna do?"

"Me? Oh, I was thinking of working for that new company The Tapers. Now *there's* a fun job."

Nothing was worse than this. Nothing. It felt like a *very* suitable time to go insane, but I wanted to wait it out. This had to be a joke.

Sadly, though, it wasn't. And what great timing - I was already pretty sure of it, but at this stage it was undeniable - I *was* the most unlucky person on the planet. At least, at that moment. You can never really tell, for one would need to take every human being into account, but I was very certain.

"Is it really happening, man?" I asked. "Tell me you're just pulling my leg. *Please*, just tell me this is some kind of cruel joke!"

"I don't joke," he responded. "In fact, I don't really do anything."

"What do you recommend I do, then? I mean, this is *it*, isn't it? The world is over. Everything is over!"

"Not really," he said, feeling around the counter for something. "I can still lend you that axe, you know. It's never too late."

"I don't need an axe, I need advice."

"Oh yes, advice," he said, picking up a pencil. He began scribbling on a small piece of paper. "My advice, however, requires an axe. And I have one!"

"I see. Would it help me in this situation?"

"Oh boy, yes. Well, maybe. I don't know."

"Well, does it involve murdering my ex-wife?"

"Nope, not at all."

He continued drawing on the paper, pressing the pencil down hard. I waited.

"Okay then," I said, tapping on the counter impatiently. "What's the plan?"

He made one last marking on the paper and slammed the pencil down; it rolled off of the counter while he wasn't looking. He slipped the tiny piece of paper toward me and pointed down at it.

I looked down. Staring back at me was a drawing of a small stick figure with an axe stuck far into its head. From the way the mouth was drawn, I assumed that the stick figure was screaming.

"Yeah?" I asked, looking back up with a puzzled expression.

"Kill the kid."

I almost jumped in response to that. The room got quiet soon after.

"Youâ€¦ you frightened me for a second, there." I said.

"I didn't mean to."

"Well, you just told me to kill myâ€¦!"

"Yes."

Once again, the room filled with silence. In that short period of time, it felt like nothing was actually happening. Like the world was waiting for the conversation to continue. Perhaps it was anticipating my response, hoping I would say something important or interesting.

It felt relieving, that the world was actually pausing itself. This kind of thing just didn't happen. Time never waited for me before; every moment of my life was spent catching up to it.

About thirty seconds ago, I was given the suggestion to kill my daughter; that's not the part that frightened me. He also suggested that I use an axe, one that he could have easily lent to me; that didn't frighten me, either.

The violent pictures that popped into my head, in which I viciously attacked my daughter, wouldn't go away. And yet, even *that* didn't frighten me.

The cause of my fear, and the reason that fear would not go away, was actually not any of the above things, but instead the satisfaction I gained in thinking such thoughts.

"You okay?" he asked.

Suddenly, I returned to Earth.

"Hey, uh," I began, trying to sort out my thoughts. "That axe of yoursâ€¦!"

"*Yeah?*" he asked. He was getting excited.

"I think I just might need it."

Care obviously wasn't my enemy. The more I thought about her, and the more I thought about the axe, the more I began to lose my mind. It just didn't make any sense to me, that I would get excited by this sort of thing. But I was *very* excited.

Fortunately, I was not giving in to it. There was no way I would give in. You may think otherwise, though, when given the fact that I was indeed holding an axe.

However! There is something that I need to say.

As I've made clear, Care was not my enemy. I didn't see her ever being my enemy. In fact, it was my number one goal to be friends with her, and to be a good father to her. I'll also throw in the fact that, even if I *did* want to hurt her, I would not be able to. At that moment, I had no idea where she was, and neither did anybody else.

But she wasn't my enemy.

Just want to make that clear for you.

Now, *this* is where it starts to make sense, you see. It's true that I took that axe from the Tapers clerk, and it's true that I intended to hurt somebody with it, but Care was not that person! But if she was not my enemy, who was, exactly?

Tapers might as well have been the last thing on Earth. I had no other reason to live.

And so, as a direct result of this fact, what exactly did I have left to lose? Nothing! At that point, I had it completely planned out - I was going to commit a murder, and then I was going to kill myself.

It felt like a pretty good goal. Definitely more reachable than winning that competition, which I had given up on a long time ago. And given the fact that Tapers was hosting it, I wasn't even sure if it was still going on.

I opened the door to my house, completely ready for what was to happen.

The silence was unbearable, as was the suspense. I began to wonder whether or not this was going to turn out the way I wanted. The entire scene was playing out in my head a thousand times a second, but every time it seemed even less plausible.

I walked around the house with the axe held up, waiting. Nothing seemed to be happening.

It almost felt like a relief, but then I heard a sound coming from across the room.

"Hello?" I screamed. "Are you there?"

No answer.

"I know you're in here!" I continued. "You're hiding somewhere, just waiting for the right time to get me!"

The sound of my own panicking voice put me into even bigger distress.

Nothing happened. The house was quiet, and at no point was I attacked from behind. It astonished me, even more than you would think.

I knew that it was going to happen that night. I knew it. But it wasn't happening.

"Look," I said. "You can come out now, or I can look for you. It's your choice, not mine."

Still nothing.

"Because I have a weapon, here. And I'm not afraid. As much as you may think I *am*, you are deeply mistaken. There is nothing here that can be make me more confident than I already am."

I had the strangest feeling that I was talking to myself. I knew this couldn't have been true, but still, it almost haunted me. The question of whether or not I was wasting my time rushed through my head. There was also the risk of looking like a fool to myself forever.

And still, as I stood there, nothing happened.

What a joke. What a horrible, horrible joke.

Nothing was going to happen. Nothing was *ever* going to happen.

As I walked to my couch, feeling like a complete and utter fool, I couldn't help but think about whether or not I really would have done it.

I reached for my remote and turned on the television, then sat down on the couch.

Ridiculous.

Just ridiculous.

It's not often that people become as confused as I was at that moment. I had assumed that something was going to happen. In fact, I was sure of it. And yet, it didn't happen, no matter how much I prepared for it.

I was ready to completely end it all that night. But it didn't seem like that was going to happen at this point. Maybe it would never happen. My mind was getting ready to shut down, exhausted by the strangeness of this situation.

In fact, it did shut down for a second.

That's why, as I sat down in my comfortable couch, not once did it register that there was a large man standing to the left of me.

"Get up," he said.

I immediately flew off the couch in surprise, falling to the floor. My head hit the corner of a table and I screamed in pain.

The man didn't look very happy about this. I stood up and got a good glance at him, first noticing that his clothes were made of a very shiny metal. Closer observation revealed that he was wearing a tie made out of rock.

I was staring at Hil.

He noticed the axe, which was still in my hand. He knew right away who it was intended for.

"I'm not proud of you," he said, glaring at me with his powerful glare. "You were going to kill me."

He stepped forward.

"Oh, no, no!" I said. "You've got it all wrong. I wasn't going to kill *you*."

"Who, then?"

"No one! I wouldn't kill *anybody*! I'm not a violent person."

He began walking faster, now.

"Please, stop!" I said. "I'm not violent! I promise."

However, in direct contradiction to what I just said, almost by reflex I threw the axe in his direction. It bounced off of his head and hit a window.

Hil stopped walking. He stood in silence, with his eyes closed.

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Seconds later, he began screaming at the top of his lungs. The entire house began shaking, and I tripped. My head hit the corner of the table again (same corner, too). The house continued the shake and I lied on the floor, holding on to my head.

Suddenly he stopped screaming.

"You are worthless!" he said. "You have no reason to exist. At least, not right now."

He started to walking toward me again. I was helpless, having lost my ability to move. He proceeded to lift his foot into the air and stomp on my head, not enough to crush it but definitely enough to cause severe pain.

"Your life needs fixing," he continued. "A lot of fixing."

He gave me one last kick to the head and pulled a small notebook out of his pocket, as well as a pen. The pen was made out of rock, just like his tie. He looked very good with it.

After having written something in the notebook, he tore the page off and placed it on my head, leaving soon afterwards.

As interested as I was, I also happened to be busy slowly losing consciousness.