**Bullet in the Brain**

1.

“He breathed out a piercing, ammoniac smell that shocked Anders more than anything that had happened, and he was beginning to develop a sense of unease when the man prodded him again with the pistol.”

This moment serves as the first time in the story thus far that Anders has shown any hint of fear. While the narrator simply describes it as ‘unease,’ it can be inferred that Anders’ real fear is running much deeper, and the reality of his unfortunate situation is finally starting to hit.

2.

“After striking the cranium the bullet was moving at 900 feet per second, a pathetically sluggish, glacial pace compared to the synaptic lighting that flashed around it.”

While at first just a conglomeration of anatomy language, this description epitomizes Anders’ own apathy towards his life. Even when he is feeling himself die, he struggles to think of anything beyond the physical nature of what’s happening. If anything, this is a deeply emotional moment of Anders struggling to let himself *feel* in the last seconds of his life.

3.

“Anders did not remember how his eyes had burned at those sounds.”

Albeit a short sentence, this is the protagonist’s first foray into showing his emotion. The fact that his eyes burned at the sound of poetry is something that the narrator chooses to reveal about him proves that despite his cold-blooded exterior, moments of deep feeling still overwhelmed him.

4.

“He did not remember deliberately crashing his father's car into a tree, of having his ribs kicked in by three policemen at an anti-war rally or waking himself up with laughter.”

Without overtly stating anything, the narrator delves into Anders’s more complex emotions: his possible depression, his passion for causes, and his deep desire for humor. Now, Anders is a fully fleshed human being struggling with the same innate human pitfalls as the rest of us.

5.

“But for now Anders can still make time.”

Until this point, the story presents Anders as a protagonist who never had much time for anything, including his ex-wife and daughter. However, this short-lived moment provides a gut-punch in that Anders, for the first time in what might be his life, is not only making the time to remember, but allowing himself to.

**Hunting Knife**

1.

“I liked to stand out there and look back at the shore, at the long white beach, the red lifeguard tower, the green row of palm trees—it was a gorgeous scene, maybe a little too picture-postcard perfect.”

This is the narrator’s first attempt at creating a sense of unease. Everything about where he’s staying sounds dissatisfying in its perfection. However, it can also be assumed that the narrator is dissatisfied by most things, and has a hard time feeling genuinely happy about his place. His use of the words ‘picture-postcard perfect’ seem to serve almost as a premonition.

2.

“Light filtered out through the small frosted-glass pane in the door, but I couldn’t tell if the room was still occupied.”

This moment, like so many in the story, is jam-packed full of meaning, yet very little is said. While not the first time the speaker’s perspective of reality is called into question, it is the first time that something feels obviously *wrong.* He is unsure of what he’s seeing, and the language used, although not particularly emotional, creates, again, a sense of unease.

3.

“It was like looking through a special color filter, one that made some things more colorful than they really are and left others as drab and drained as a corpse.”

Throughout the story, the narrator’s description of his conditions is drab. Despite being on vacation, everything around him appears ugly, too orderly, uninteresting. This moment exemplifies those feelings, of how even when he sees the beauty, he believes it to be fake, and things that are normal as dead and unfeeling.

4.

“In the light, it looked like the stem of some ferocious plant just breaking through the surface of the soil.”

This moment is perhaps the first in which the narrator allows himself to describe something beautifully, or even hopefully, yet the object in question is a sharp hunting knife that could so easily kill. The more overt language here creates a strong sense of foreboding and fear for the narrator, who is connecting more deeply to a knife than to any other character presented.

5.

“Come tomorrow, I wouldn’t be here anymore.”

At this point it becomes clear that leaving is more than just going home. While a short, simple sentence, the narrator’s curt syntax goes to show not only how clearly disconnected he is from reality, but also how unpredictable and unreliable he is.